

'Pure Gold'



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Paul Sadler

Malone more than football

"There is always great joy in learning that something you've said or done has been meaningful to another, especially when you do it without any thought of receiving anything in return. Your gift doesn't even have to be material. Helping others in any way — with a smile, a nod or a pat on the back — warms the heart."

— John Wooden

Sometimes, Terry Malone doesn't want to be "Terry Malone."

The guy who's won a national championship as an assistant coach at Michigan, the guy who was on New Orleans' staff when the Saints won a Super Bowl, the guy who's been charged with reviving Purdue's offense as its new coordinator.

When Malone is entrenched in the community, he may be most in his element.

So he will find a place that needs volunteers and lend his hands, maybe helping with Habitat for Humanity projects. He'll find a place that needs food to be packaged or supplied and lend his hands, maybe serving at a food bank. He'll find a place that needs resources to support its mission, maybe visiting a local homeless shelter, like he did in mid-April in Lafayette.

He'll rise up and meet needs.

He'll rise up and soften hearts.

He'll rise up and fuel spirits.

"He has a heart for the community and wanting to serve. I think that's one of his best leadership styles is that he leads by serving and putting others above himself," said seven-year NFL veteran David Thomas, who played for Malone in New Orleans from 2009-2013.

Malone's heart of service was cultivated as a kid growing up in a large Irish Catholic family with three brothers and two sisters in Michigan and role-modeled by father Paul, old-school tough but with a heart of gold, and mother Miriam, the ultimate encourager. Maybe all the kids "wants" weren't met growing up, but all the needs were.

It was a stable, nurturing environment.

It was an atmosphere that shared blessings and joy with family and friends, that taught the importance of earning respect and giving it, that stressed loving in deed not just in words, that shaped a desire for truth, that put weight on not just working but working well and to a certain standard, that promoted humility and selflessness.

It was a culture that ultimately produced six college graduates — three from Marquette, two from Cornell and Terry from Holy Cross.

It was an upbringing that molded the kind of husband he's become — he and Ann have been married 26 years and he says he's prouder of that relationship than anything else in his life. And molded the father he's become — a nurturer to four now-grown children who haven't been intimidated to branch out, who seize new experiences and who cherish life as they make their own journeys.

It was the reason Malone has his priorities so firmly set.

And football is not at the top.

It's family and faith. Maybe football comes in at No. 3.

It makes him no less of a coach to admit such things — it just may add to Malone's appeal.

He's absolutely a man who's willing to work, expending the double-digit-hour days necessary in the office to watch film, lead and attend meetings, teach techniques, share information and devise schemes to flummox defenses. But he's always been just as likely to use that time to inquire about a player's family, encourage one to pursue higher standards and do everything in his power to facilitate those pursuits.

In nearly every measure, Malone seems to line up with one of his favorite coaches. A basketball junkie growing up, Malone gravitated toward John Wooden's teaching philosophy and approach. Wooden's sentiment to "not let making a living prevent you from making a life" certainly holds true with Malone.

"I think it's been important for me never to allow my job to define who I am," Malone said. "I don't believe in that. I think that it gives you a lot of false prophets when you feel as though what you're doing is more important than other things in your life. I've seen too many guys really crash because of that. I hope that never happens to me.

"(Football has) been a major part of my life, my whole life. And yet it's a career. It's what I do for work. The nice thing about football is that it can be a passion, even though it is a job. And yet at the end of the day, it doesn't make a great family member, it doesn't make a great wife. I'm very lucky to have that in my life, but I don't really count on it as being something that I have to go home to every night."

"We can give without loving, but we can't love without giving. In fact, love is nothing unless we give it to someone."

— John Wooden

In September 2009, tight end David Thomas learned he'd been traded: He was headed to New Orleans from New England. He didn't have much time to prepare for a move — the pre-season was starting just over a week after the deal was made. So Thomas had to leave his wife and two sons in the Northeast for a new job and a new life. He was in New Orleans for more than a month without his family.

Terry Malone, Thomas' position coach, knew the difficulties of facing a new situation, acclimating to a new offense, finding a comfort level with new co-workers and missing a family. So Malone regularly asked Thomas for updates on the transition, showed concern for Thomas' wife's plight — she had to make a 1,500-mile move with the boys on her own — and checked in to see if it was going smoothly. Even after Thomas' family arrived and, ultimately, was expanded with the birth of a daughter during Thomas' time in New Orleans — the Malones got the baby a pink giraffe that she still sleeps with —

Malone kept up with changes, always wanting to stay informed.

As a four-star high school recruit and a Rose Bowl champion with Texas before being drafted by the Patriots, Thomas had plenty of coaches rising up to the pro ranks. But none were quite like Malone.

"Terry is one of the most genuine coaches I ever played for," said Thomas, who's retired from the NFL and now works for the Longhorn Network. "He really is passionate about his players, both on and off the field. ... He just went above and beyond, more than anything. The reality is at that (NFL) level if everything is going well at home, everything is going to be better at work. So I think there's always the concern (from coaches), but he went above and beyond and made sure he always interacted with my family after the games and always asked about them and made sure everything was OK."

Though Malone described the NFL dynamic as more of a "partnership" between its coaches and players than the true player-coach relationship in college, he has taken the same tact at both levels.

Malone got into coaching because he wanted to make a difference — like he'd experienced in his own life playing for Detroit Catholic Central's Tom Mach and Holy Cross' Rick Carter. Malone even considered coaching basketball, not just because he loved the Xs and Os and coaching strategies but because he thought a basketball coach could have more influence on players because there were fewer of them.

He's done just fine reaching a bigger scope of guys in football, though.

At Purdue, Malone quickly has gained respect over his 15 months on the job by the way he's handled players, first as tight ends coach and now in the broader role as coordinator, which has put him in the sphere of more players. That includes sophomore starting quarterback David Blough, who's been impacted even by seemingly small gestures by the veteran coach.

In mid-April, Blough was spending one of his off days from class at Mollenkopf and popped into Malone's office. He noticed the row of playbooks on Malone's top shelf and asked to peek at one from the Saints matchup with the Cowboys — Blough's a native Texan — from 2014. Blough, partially, wanted to be able to review the Saints' Drew Brees-led offense to see its similarities with Malone's new system for the Boilermakers. But with Brees coming to town later that week for a groundbreaking ceremony for the new football facility, Blough, honestly, wanted to be able to have some conversation points prepared for his first in-person meeting with the future Hall of Famer.

Malone obliged, allowing Blough to look at the scouting report, and then went a step further.

"Do you like that?" Malone asked.

When Blough responded in the affirmative, Malone told him just to keep it.

"He didn't even think twice," Blough said, shak-

"The way he treats people is just awesome."

— David Blough

"(In New Orleans), he had a great influence on a lot of people."

— Drew Brees

"There's no phoniness about him. What you see is what you get."

— Pete Carmichael

"He wants people to feel good about themselves, whether it's staff, whether it's the (players on) offense. That's genuine. And he goes about it that way, tries to be very inclusive with people."

— Darrell Hazell

"He's really quite an extraordinary individual. He sees there are more than Xs and Os. One of the great qualities that Terry brings is an overriding sense of purpose."

— Dan Malone



Tom Campbell

Terry Malone has experienced the pinnacle of success in coaching, winning national championships at the college and NFL levels, but he got into coaching to shape lives. And many say he has done just that.

ing his head. “A tool for me to get better but a gift from him that means something probably a lot more to me than he even thinks about.”

It’s in bigger moments, too, that Malone has impressed the young QB.

Like when he urges Blough to step out his comfort zone — in more than football. Malone has encouraged Blough to keep taking mission trips to South Africa. Blough will make his fourth visit to an orphanage there in May. And Blough knows it’s not just because that may seem the right thing to say — he’s seen how Malone’s substance is about more than calling plays, how there’s more depth of insight than football knowledge.

“It’s in the man he is. You can see it just in the way he treats people and the way he cares for his guys — he’s about creating men,” Blough said. “Yes, the winning is great, but he sees where he can make a difference. You see he’s part of the cancer walk (before the spring game), and he genuinely cares about the well-being of others. It’s nice to be around. It’s always positive and uplifting.”

But that’s not just a persona Malone assumes for trying to build up players.

He’s impacted coaches he’s worked with, as well.

Current Saints offensive coordinator Pete Carmichael joined the franchise only weeks apart from Malone in 2006 — then Carmichael was the team’s QB coach — and they struck up a fast friendship. Carmichael admired Malone’s devotion to his family, oftentimes seeing Malone’s sons around the Saints complex or at the team hotel nights before games. Malone and his wife Ann also were quick to invite Carmichael and his family over for dinner. Their conversations during the week may have been centered on football — they were together daily preparing each week’s game plan — but they didn’t stay there.

“That’s what probably made us be as close as we were to each other: Our faith and families were an important part of our lives. We didn’t let the business side of it affect that part of it,” Carmichael said. “He really enjoys getting to know people, and I think people see that he cares about them more than just football. I think that’s a strength of his. People gravitate toward him because they know deep down he cares for them. He’s really interested in what they have to talk about outside of football, their family or what they have going on in their lives. He takes an interest

in that and it’s real. There’s nothing phony about him. He really enjoys people.”

“There is nothing stronger than gentleness.”

— John Wooden

It was an obvious moment to be a proud big brother.

The Saints had advanced to the Super Bowl, and Terry Malone played a key piece, helping prepare the tight ends and the offense each week throughout a season that included a franchise-record 13 regular-season victories.

Dan Malone, the oldest of Paul and Miriam’s six kids, was invited with most of the rest of Terry’s extended family down to Miami to share in the festivities. It was a perfect pay-off for all the support and sacrifice the family had made during his coaching career, Terry Malone said.

And after New Orleans pulled the upset, as players took turns hoisting the Lombardi Trophy, Terry Malone’s family was right there with him on the field,

celebrating under a confetti shower.

It was a glorious, rewarding moment for all involved.

Especially Dan. He'd met Terry at the team hotel upon arrival to the city to tell his younger brother what an accomplishment it was just to *be* at the Super Bowl. A comment to which Terry promptly responded — with “absolute fire coming out of his eyes,” Dan says — that there was no happy-to-be-here mentality, that anything short of a victory would be devastating.

“I’m not happy we made it until we win,” Terry told him.

So when New Orleans did, beating the five-point favorite Peyton Manning-led Colts, Terry Malone could have gloated. Could have reminded his oldest brother of the conversation.

But he didn’t. He just smiled and laughed and was eager to share his joy.

“We have fun with it,” Terry Malone said of the journey. “I’ve got such a tremendously strong support system that the wins and the losses, they don’t make my structure buckle at all. It’s strong.”

And *that* is really what makes Dan beam.

Over the years, Terry’s family has been gathered in parking lots waiting for him to exit after games that didn’t finish in resounding ways. The family would be devastated after a loss, commiserating in the residual disappointment. But then out walked Terry, head high and smiling.

“That’s inspirational,” Dan Malone said. “It’s something that walks the talk. I’ve been more proud of him at moments when his team just gave it their all and came up a little short than when we were down in Miami after winning the Super Bowl. Because at that moment, everybody is your friend and it’s easy to be smiling and waving at the crowd. But the choices that people make when the chips are down define them.

“My brother is pure gold.”

That’d be something Miriam, who’s 87 and still lives in the Detroit area, would say.

She’s Terry’s biggest supporter. She’s the one who’ll flat-out say he’s the best football coach in America and the best son in the world.

When she does, Terry just kind of shakes his head, thinking, “Gosh, she’s out of control.”

He would never dare hold himself in such high esteem.

In fact, he doesn’t seem interested in thinking about himself much at all.

That’d mean he’d be putting himself first, instead of others.

And that’s not how Terry Malone was built.

“I don’t feel as though I am anything extraordinary,” Terry Malone said. “I think I’m a guy who is loyal and works hard, but very, very fortunate to be in this position. I don’t feel as though anything I’ve done deserves a whole lot of applause.

“I’ve been very blessed with a lot of great opportunities. I’m very, very thankful for those opportunities and the experiences I’ve had.” *******

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Gregory Phillips
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Phillips, a junior receiver from Lithonia, Ga., was one of 19 football players to earn Fall Academic All-Big Ten honors. To be eligible for Academic All-Big Ten selection, student-athletes must be letterwinners in at least their second year at their institution and carry a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.0.

Women’s cross country and soccer had 14 honorees, second only to football. Men’s cross country had 13 members recognized and volleyball eight. Volleyball’s total marked half of the roster.

Women’s cross country sophomores Kendall Hacker and Reagan Lear were recognized for having perfect 4.0 GPAs. They were two of merely 21 individuals across the seven fall Big Ten sports honored for perfect marks in the classroom for any conference school.



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