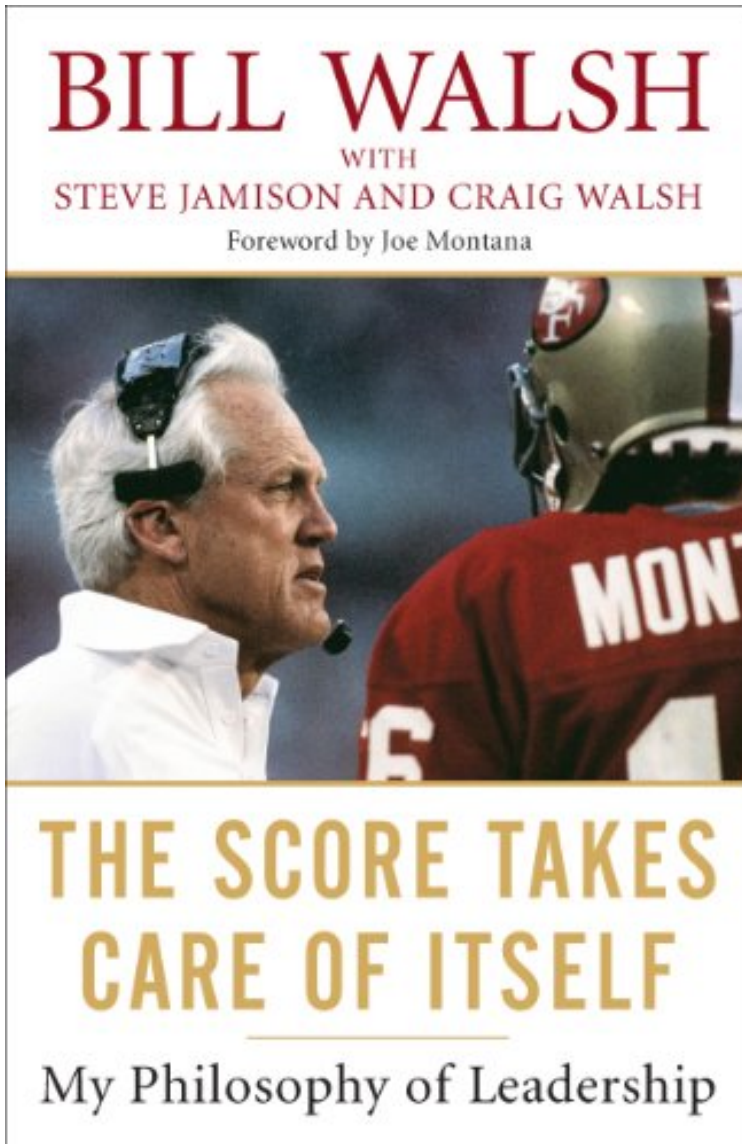


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The Score Takes Care of Itself: My Philosophy of Leadership



Par Bill Walsh, Steve Jamison, Craig Walsh

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe last lecture on leadership by the NFL's greatest coach: Bill Walsh Bill Walsh is a towering figure in the history of the NFL. His advanced leadership transformed the San Francisco 49ers from the worst franchise in sports to a legendary dynasty. In the process, he changed the way football is played. Prior to his death, Walsh granted a series of exclusive interviews to bestselling author Steve Jamison. These became his ultimate lecture on leadership. Additional insights and perspective are provided by Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Montana and others. Bill Walsh taught that the requirements of successful

leadership are the same whether you run an NFL franchise, a fortune 500 company, or a hardware store with 12 employees. These final words of 'wisdom by Walsh' will inspire, inform, and enlighten leaders in all professions.

How to Know if You're Doing the Job When I give a speech at a corporate event, I often ask those in attendance, "Do you know how to tell if you're doing the job?" As heads start whispering back and forth, I provide these clues: If you're up at 3 A.M. every night talking into a tape recorder and writing notes on scraps of paper, have a knot in your stomach and a rash on your skin, are losing sleep and losing touch with your wife and kids, have no appetite or sense of humor, and feel that everything might turn out wrong, then you're probably doing the job. This always gets a laugh, but not a very big one. Those executives in the audience recognize there is a significant price to pay to be the best. That price is not something they laugh at.

Coaches Aren't Supposed to Cry: Survive One Minute at a Time In my second year as head coach of the San Francisco 49ers, we were preparing to play the defending AFC East champions, Don Shula's powerful Miami Dolphins, a team that was formidable, especially at home in the Orange Bowl. The showdown came in week eleven of our schedule and at the worst possible moment for me because after a great start to my second season three straight wins against the New Orleans Saints, St. Louis Cardinals, and New York Jets we had lost seven consecutive games. Our year was imploding. (The previous season, my first as head coach, our record had been 2-14, which meant that since I had taken over leadership of the 49ers we had won five games and lost twenty-one, the worst record in the NFL.) A loss to Miami on Sunday would be our eighth in a row and likely have enormous consequences, including the possibility of my being terminated or at least being put on a death watch by the media as an unofficial lame duck and powerless coach. Conversely, I recognized that a victory against the Dolphins would stop the hemorrhaging and provide hope for salvaging the last part of our season, which, in turn, could have a positive impact on the following year. Huge stakes were on the table. I was somewhat hopeful, perhaps even optimistic. Nevertheless, the professional and personal magnitude of the upcoming Miami-San Francisco game clouded the entire week's practice for me and created a brittleness in my behavior that was out of character. I was brusque, short-tempered, and not as tuned in as I should have been. The game itself played in suffocating Florida heat and humidity turned into a bruising battle in front of over seventy-five thousand screaming Dolphin fans who had packed themselves into the stadium. For the 49ers it was like going to a wild party to which you are uninvited and unwelcome everybody tries to throw you out the window. Miami's tropical sun had pushed daytime temperatures into the nineties, and dusk didn't bring them down. In fact, the heat seemed to get worse, as if we were playing in a swamp, trying to move in quicksand. None of this appeared to affect Coach Shula's team. They built an early lead and held onto it throughout the game. It seemed evident that we were headed for our eighth straight defeat a potentially disastrous event. However, with time running down less than two minutes remaining 49er kicker Ray Wersching, perhaps the league's best field goal specialist, calmly nailed a winner to get us within a point: 17-16. Immediately, the entire San Francisco bench leaped up, pumping their fists and yelling wildly. You could feel this huge surge in momentum erupt. Unfortunately, it was a short-lived surge; our field goal did not count. Tommy Dismay, a holding penalty was called against us and the score was nullified. Quickly, I again nodded at Ray, who strapped on his helmet, trotted out, and calmly kicked another field goal from five yards farther back. Again, raucous cheers erupted on our bench, but immediately another flag was thrown and another penalty called against us. Now the line of scrimmage put us out of field-goal range and forced us into a passing situation; we needed a first down to retain possession of the ball. Quickly, we completed a pass that gave us just enough yards to pick up the first down. The 49ers had survived for the moment, stayed alive. Or so it seemed. As I watched in disbelief, a linesman raced in and gave Miami a spot so friendly it could have gotten him elected to local public office. Our drive had been stopped three times in a row under increasingly outrageous circumstances. What made it maddening was that Shula had been berating officials throughout the game whenever they made a call against the Dolphins. This seemed to be his reward a spot he had to love and two penalties against us on the previous plays. As bad as the 49er season had become, nothing this agonizing and damaging had happened to us before. And the crowd loved it. Sensing the imminent kill, fans went into a stadium-wide uproar as we silently turned the ball back to Miami the game essentially over as the Dolphins extended our losing streak to eight games with their 17-16 victory. The pain of that loss haunts me even now as I think about those final seconds ticking off the clock. It was a horrible and numbing defeat, overwhelming for me because of its potential impact a job I had worked for my entire adult life was in jeopardy but also because of the stupid, self-inflicted, almost suicidal way in which we lost. As the crowd roared its approval and Miami players and fans swarmed over the field, I stood alone on the sideline in a cocoon of grief, emotionally gutted, wondering if I had the strength to even get back

to our locker room. Unless you've experienced this type of emotional shock and the bleak interior landscape it creates, it's hard to comprehend the impact. The memory never leaves you and acts as both a positive and negative force, spurring you to work harder and harder while also creating a fear inside that it might happen again. (For me, that fear eventually became more than I could handle.) Now Shula trotted briskly across the field to shake hands and offer a few perfunctory words of condolence. I have no clue as to what he said, but even though I was in some state of shock, instincts took over. I offered my hand; he shook it, shouted something in my ear, and disappeared back into the public pandemonium and celebration at midfield. The next few hours until we got out of the stadium complex and arrived at the Miami airport remain a blur. I can't remember what, if anything, I said to the players and coaches in the locker room or reporters in the press room. Probably I was on some kind of automatic pilot and experiencing what victims of violence go through when they blot out the memory of the assault. While the moments immediately following that game are missing in my mind, the long trip home is vivid. Coaches aren't supposed to cry, but I'm not ashamed to admit that on the night flight back to San Francisco I sat in my seat in the first row of the plane and broke down sobbing in the darkness. I felt like a casualty of war being airlifted away from the battlefield. Bill McPherson, Neal Dahlen, John McVay, Norb Hecker, and some of the other San Francisco assistant coaches and staff understood the grief I was experiencing and shielded me from any players who might come into the area they huddled around my seat, blocking off view of me, while making small talk and eating peanuts, acting like we were all involved in the conversation. Believe me, I was not participating in whatever it was they said or eating peanuts as I slumped down, depressed, in my dark little space, contemplating whether I should offer my resignation. Most debilitating of all devastating was a gnawing fear that I didn't have what it takes to be an NFL head coach. At one point I actually decided to hand in my resignation the next morning; then I changed my mind. I have tried to describe my anguish, but the words come up short. Everything I had dreamed of professionally for a quarter of a century was in jeopardy just eighteen months after being realized. And yet there was something else going on inside me, a voice from down deeper than the emotions, something stirring that I had learned over many years in football and, before that, growing up; namely, I must stand and fight again, stand and fight or it was all over. And that was the instinct that slowly prevailed as we headed home in the middle of a very dark night. I knew that in a matter of seven days the New York Giants were coming to town with the sole intent of making sure that neither I nor the San Francisco 49ers would stand and fight again. In my mind or gut and in spite of the pain, I knew I had to force myself to somehow start looking ahead to overcome my grief over the debacle in Miami or it would severely damage our efforts to prepare properly for the battle with New York; my comportment would directly affect the attitudes and performance of everyone who looked to me for answers and direction. I had to do what I was being paid to do: be a leader. I wish I could tell you that's what happened that I simply turned a switch and was magically transformed from an emotional basket case into an invincible field general. It wasn't that way. It took time for me to stop despairing and regain some composure, to settle down and start thinking straight, but gradually, during those hard hours on the flight back to California, I began pulling myself together. In the NFL events occur hit you at supersonic speeds with volcanic force during the regular season. There aren't months or weeks to recover, not even days. Usually only hours or minutes. While you're throwing a wolf out the back door, another is banging on your front door and two more are trying to crawl through the windows. I could hear the New York Giants at our front door. I can say with some pride that by the time we landed at San Francisco International Airport at 3:15 A.M. after a six-hour flight, I had pulled myself out of the hopelessness and begun working on the strategy we would employ against the Giants when they arrived in a week. I was wobbly but back up on my feet again. I even ate a couple of bags of peanuts and drank some orange juice. Those awful feelings brought on by the events in Miami were in retreat because I was able to summon strength enough to pull my focus, my thinking, out of the past and move it forward to our next big problem. It does take strength to shift your attention off the pain when you feel as though your soul has been stripped bare. At times like that I would think back to my days as an amateur boxer, when I'd see a guy knocked flat on his back and then awkwardly struggle to one shaky knee. Everything is blurry, his balance is gone, consciousness is tenuous, he's bleeding and bruised, but as bad as things are there is one message he hears ringing inside his head: Stand up, boy; stand up and fight. I know because as a young man I was that boxer. NFL football is no different from any professional endeavor, boxing or business or anything where the stakes are significant and the competition extreme: When knocked down, you must get up; you must stand and fight. When the inevitable setback, loss, failure, or defeat comes crashing down on you losing a big sale, being passed over for a career-making promotion, even getting fired allow yourself the grieving time,

but then recognize that the road to recovery and victory lies in having the strength to get up off the mat and start planning your next move. This is how you must think if you want to win. Otherwise you have lost. For me, on that flight back home after the Miami loss, it meant working one minute at a time literally to regain composure, confidence, and direction. Failure is part of success, an integral part. Everybody gets knocked down. Knowing it will happen and what you must do when it does is the first step back. It's what got me up after being knocked down and almost out in Miami. I knew I had to stand and start facing the imminent challenge of a battle with the New York Giants. One other thing about that upcoming game: On Sunday we defeated the Giants 120 at Candlestick Park and regained a little equilibrium, even momentum. A week later we beat New England 21-17; the next week the 49ers engineered one of the greatest comebacks in NFL history. Trailing at the half, 35-7, we defeated New Orleans in overtime, 38-35. In fact, in spite of losing to the Atlanta Falcons and Buffalo Bills in our last two games to finish with a 6-10 record, the worst was over.

Unbeknownst to me, we had hit rock bottom against the Dolphins. Sixteen months after I spent part of a transcontinental flight experiencing an emotional meltdown, the San Francisco 49ers became world champions, defeating the Cincinnati Bengals 26-21 at the Silverdome in Pontiac, Michigan, in Super Bowl XVI. In fact, a football dynasty was in the works. During the ensuing fourteen years, the San Francisco 49ers won five Super Bowls. It happened only because at the moment of deepest despair I had the strength to stand and confront the future instead of wallowing in the past. Many can't summon the strength; they can't get up; their fight is over. Victory goes to another, a stronger competitor. Competition at the highest level in sports or business produces gut-ripping setbacks. When you're fighting for your survival professionally, struggling when virtually no one else knows or cares, and there's nobody to bail you out, that's when you might remind yourself of my own dark night of despair. When you stand and overcome a significant setback, you'll find an increasing inner confidence and self-assurance that has been created by conquering defeat. Absorbing and overcoming this kind of punishment engenders a sober, steely toughness that results in a hardened sense of independence and a personal belief that you can take on anything, survive and win. The competitor who won't go away, who won't stay down, has one of the most formidable competitive advantages of all. When the worst happens, as it did to me, I was helped by knowing what it took to be that kind of competitor to not go away, to get up and fight back. The Miami game was not the last time I faced a grim situation as head coach, but when downturns occurred during the upcoming years, I tried to adhere to some simple dos and don'ts for mental and emotional equilibrium in my personal and professional life; nothing profound, just a few plain and uncomplicated reminders that helped me manage things mentally and stay afloat: My Five Dos for Getting Back into the Game: Do expect defeat. It's a given when the stakes are high and the competition is working ferociously to beat you. If you're surprised when it happens, you're dreaming; dreamers don't last long. Do force yourself to stop looking backward and dwelling on the professional train wreck you have just been in. It's mental quicksand. Do allow yourself appropriate recovery/grieving time. You've been knocked senseless; give yourself a little time to recuperate. A keyword here is little. Don't let it drag on. Do tell yourself, I am going to stand and fight again, with the knowledge that often when things are at their worst you're closer than you can imagine to success. Our Super Bowl victory arrived less than sixteen months after my train wreck in Miami. Do begin planning for your next serious encounter. The smallest steps/plans move you forward on the road to recovery. Focus on the fix. My Five Don'ts: Don't ask, Why me? Don't expect sympathy. Don't bellyache. Don't keep accepting condolences. Don't blame others. *Revue de presse* "Bill Walsh was one of the NFL's all-time best; a creative genius, a master at management, and a brilliant student of human nature. *The Score Takes Care of Itself* is his own personal and powerful road map to success as a leader whether in professional football or anywhere else. Terrific reading; tremendous insights." -Roger Goodell, commissioner of the NFL "*The Score Takes Care of Itself* is a leadership classic—a magnificent step-by-step tutorial on how to achieve success. It is practical, profound, and perfect for today's ultracompetitive business environment. Indispensable reading." -Pat Williams, senior vice president of the Orlando Magic and author of *What Are You Living For?* "*The Score Takes Care of Itself* is not about football. It's about how to treat people right. How to get the best out of the people around you. How to be a highly effective leader. I am thankful that this book about Bill Walsh's leadership point of view is now available to inspire countless leaders to come." -Ken Blanchard, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager* and *Leading at a Higher Level* "Bill's personal examples of how he implemented and executed each of these steps in the transformation of the San Francisco 49ers creates a fascinating story of business, football, and triumph. More than anything, Bill's story reminds business leaders that success is not accidental but rather the result of deliberate and tenacious preparation." -John F. Milligan, Ph.D., president and COO of Gilead Sciences,

Inc.