

Larry Brown: Paying the Price

by Mark A. Latterman

"A man can be as great as he wants to be. If you believe in yourself and have the courage, the determination, the dedication, the competitive drive, and if you are willing to sacrifice the little things in life and pay the price for the things that are worthwhile, it can be done." -- Vince Lombardi

Legendary National Football League Coach Vince Lombardi taught Larry Brown that you must pay the price -- both on and off the field. NFL Most Valuable Player-turned entrepreneur Brown is traveling the country reinforcing a back-to-basics message for young and old alike: that sports can provide important life lessons.

Vince Lombardi recruited Larry Brown to play for the Washington Redskins in 1969. Although he measured in at less than six feet tall and weighed only 195 pounds, the coach noticed the running back's speed and power. But Lombardi also noticed the rookie had trouble getting off the ball at the snap. Some said Brown was too slow off the snap to cut it in the NFL. The coach dug a little deeper and discovered that Brown was deaf in his right ear. Lombardi had a small hearing aid mounted in Brown's helmet, which helped make the running back competitive and embark on a remarkable NFL career.

As one of the football greats with the Washington Redskins from 1969-1976, Larry Brown worked hard, was tough in body and spirit, and ended almost every game in pain.

"It was Vince Lombardi who taught me -- not just by words but by example -- exactly what it meant to pay the price," Brown said recently.

In his rookie year, under Lombardi's guidance, Brown gained 888 yards and garnered an invitation to the Pro Bowl. Coach Lombardi died in 1970, but the seed was planted and Brown continued to thrive with the Redskins under Coach George Allen.

During his eight years with the Redskins, Brown racked-up an awe-inspiring record on the field. He rushed an average of 1045 yards per year (an average of 82 yards per game), and was named to the Pro Bowl four times. In 1972, he led the NFC in rushing with 1216 yards -- despite missing two games because of injuries. Brown helped lead the Redskins to the Super Bowl and was named the League's Most Valuable Player.

Larry Brown's performance has matched -- or exceeded -- most runners inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame in one regard. According to records compiled in the *Football Register* and *Pro Football Hall of Fame All Time Greats* by Don Smith, only Jim Brown, Gale Sayers, and O.J. Simpson averaged more yards per year in rushing and receiving.

When Larry Brown retired from pro football in 1976, he had earned 5,875 rushing yards -- then the all-time record for the Redskins. He also had 55 touchdowns under his belt -- also a team career record.

Brown turned what he learned about focus and discipline on the football field into a winning formula in the business world. He has worked as a personal financial management advisor with E.F. Hutton, coordinated community affairs activities for the Xerox Corporation, and now works in commercial real estate as vice president of the Michael Companies, Inc.

Brown has also served as a presidential appointee to the National Council on Disability and has worked tirelessly to raise funds for historically African American colleges and universities, and has worked with youth, the underprivileged, people with disabilities, and senior citizens.

THE COFFIN CORNER: Vol. 20, No. 5 (1998)

"Vince Lombardi taught me that it's not just how much time you put into your work, but how organized that time is," Brown said at a recent speech to the Lansing, Michigan Economic Club. "You can get more positive results from 15 minutes of practice than most coaches get out of three hours. There was no magic formula. It came down to another word: focus. If you're not focused on the football field, that translates into missing a block or dropping a pass. You make mistakes like that, and you lose games. If you're not focused in the business world, that translates into not following up on assignments or showing up late for meetings. You make mistakes like that and you lose customers or clients. Make them often enough and you're going to lose your job or your business."

Coach Lombardi told us that "the pride of success is hard work, dedication to the task at hand, and determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand." Larry Brown has lived up to that standard -- both on and off the field -- and is one of the all-time football greats of our time.

Lawrence Brown, Jr.

Running Back 5'11 195

College: Dodge City CC KS; Kansas State

High School: Schenley [Pittsburgh, PA]

Born: September 19, 1947, Clairton, PA

Drafted: 1969 Round 8 Washington

Year	Team	Gm	RUSHING				RECEIVING			
			ATT	YDS	AVG	TD	No	YDS	AVG	TD
1969	Was	14	202	888	4.4	4	34	302	8.9	0
1970	Was	13	237	1125	4.7	5	37	341	9.2	2
1971	Was	13	253	948	3.7	4	16	176	11.0	2
1972	Was	12	285	1216	4.3	8	32	473	14.8	4
1973	Was	14	273	860	3.2	8	40	482	12.1	6
1974	Was	11	163	430	2.6	3	37	388	10.5	4
1975	Was	14	97	352	3.6	3	25	225	9.0	2
1976	Was	<u>11</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>5.8</u>	<u>0</u>
8 years		102	1530	5875	3.8	35	238	2485	10.4	20