

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

8 NCAA PLAYOFF APPEARANCES • 5 MIAC TITLES • 2 NCAA WEST REGION CHAMPIONSHIPS

ROYALS FOOTBALL

This letter was sent to Coach Johnson and the football staff following the 2014 season. The writer of this letter is Stewart Van Duzer, the father of Will Van Duzer (senior defensive lineman). He has offered to be available to any families of prospective student-athletes to offer his insight and perspective into Bethel University and the football program.

Coach "J,"

I have been thinking about this letter to you for quite some time. While my thoughts (and the empty feeling in my stomach from the finality of the season being over) are still fresh, I wanted to get it done. Though I am sure I will never be able to adequately relay my feelings, I wanted to give it a try.

About four years ago my son, Will, was trying to choose the school he would attend to play football. I was very involved with him through the process and took him to the various schools for his visits. I too wanted to "interview" the coach(es). We intentionally saved Bethel for last in the process. Coach Miller had spent quite a bit of time speaking with Will, but that was early in the process. As with many of your players, Will had been offered a DII scholarship of \$20,000 per year. Sounded really good to me, but we still had a visit with you to do and an overnight stay on campus for Will.

I vividly recall our meeting with you. After about 10 minutes of talking with you, Will turned and said "Dad, this is where I am going." BOOM, just like that! Of course I was saying "wait a minute son, what about that \$20,000 scholarship?" It didn't matter, his mind was made up. After a night on campus with players, his

mind was further made up. And with the decision my checkbook was forever significantly lighter.

But also, and most importantly, Will's life has been forever impacted by that decision, that day, in your office.

You know this, but I want to say it to you! The program you have built at Bethel is AWESOME! I wish there was a way I could shout it out to every high school student-athlete and family that they need to experience what my son, our family, and friends experienced the last four years. Your program is one of a kind, no doubt.

My son was already a believer when he started at Bethel, but through four years of your program and the work of you and your coaching staff, he matured not only as a player, but most importantly as a man. The lessons you teach and drive home while working with these young men are truly impactful. I have seen it over the last four years. The relationships he has built with other members of the team are remarkable. The life lessons he has gained while playing for you will forever impact his life. I have no doubt in my mind that he will be a better man, husband, father, and coach because of the time he spent in your program.

This is truly "legacy stuff" that you and your staff are doing at Bethel. These young men will take what they have learned and experienced and repeat in their relationships. In Will's case, he has a passion to coach. The good news is that I am confident he will try to impact his players in the positive way that he was impacted at Bethel. He will certainly love his players the way he saw that done while in your program.

I know you know this, although the victories and records are great, the really big stuff is what is going on in the hearts and minds of those players, and ultimately what they will do with those lessons over their lifetime. Those lessons will have an impact on families and society as a whole. THAT is really cool stuff!

Steve, if I can ever do anything to help you or your program, just know that I am available. If I can ever talk to another family about the program and the benefits of attending Bethel, I would be very happy to do that.

I am going to miss watching my kid play ball. I still don't know how I will get used to not having that be a part of my life. I am also going to miss being as close to your program as I have been the last four years as a result of Will not playing anymore. I will keep your program in my prayers as you continue to impact and change lives in the future.

Thanks again for all you have done! As I said earlier, I know I have not adequately relayed my feelings here, but just know how much you mean to me.

God Bless you always and abundantly!

Your Brother in Christ,

Stewart Van Duzer
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