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**Tim Lightfoot:** Hello and welcome to the weekly edition of the Huffines Institute for Sports Medicine and Human Performance Podcast. I'm your host Tim Lightfoot and we're so glad that you took the time to download us and you joined us today for another interesting person in the world of sports medicine and human performance.

As we always do, we have someone, maybe a little bit different for you but no less important. We have Mr. Kevin Ozee with us. Welcome to the podcast, Kevin.

**Kevin Ozee:** Thank you, Tim, I appreciate it.

**Tim Lightfoot:** We so appreciate you taking time to chat with us today. I'm going to tell the audience a little bit about you and they'll start to see where we are going with this conversation today.

Mr. Ozee is currently the Director of Athletics for Southlake Carroll independent school district. That is up around the Dallas area. He has a Master's degree in educational administration from Texas A&M University. He has also been a classroom teacher, been an assistant football coach and has been an assistant principal at one of his former schools. He is a member of the Texas High School Coaches Association, a member of the Texas Girls Coaching Association. He currently oversees all the athletic programs at Carroll Senior, Carroll High, Carroll Middle and Dawson Middle Schools. That means that he manages 68 coaches and programs that include over 2500 athletics and 20 different teams.

It keeps you busy, doesn't it?

**Kevin Ozee:** Pretty busy, yes sir.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Really a special congratulations go out to you, Kevin, because we found out that you've recently been named the National Association of Sports and Physical Education's Athletic Director of the Year.

**Kevin Ozee:** Thank you very much.

**Tim Lightfoot:** That's pretty cool. It is given in recognition of athletic directors who exemplify the highest standards of their profession. That is really a cool honor.

**Kevin Ozee:** Thank you. I'm very blessed.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Have you been awarded that or has it just been announced and you will get awarded at a later time?

**Kevin Ozee:** It has been announced and I go to Charlotte, North Carolina in April at the National AAHPERD convention.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Fabulous, enjoy Charlotte.

We want to talk about your role as an athletic director. Sports Illustrated rated your athletic program at Duncanville, when you were athletic director there as one of the top 25 in the nation in 2005. What do you think set your athletic program apart from the rest of the programs in the nation there?

**Kevin Ozee:** I think the Sports Illustrated came out and the rankings, that was based on the success of the athletic program, the historical success. I think the key that has kept the ball rolling, not only in Duncanville but in Southlake Carroll, first and foremost we like to pride ourselves and say we are an education based athletic program. Truly when we say “student athlete” we really put the emphasis on that, be we also expect to win. When you place those expectations and set the bar very high and have great coaches and great kids they fulfill those expectations most of the time.

**Tim Lightfoot:** So many times now when you talk to people about student athletes and how we really do think they are students first and athletes second, some people go, “Yeah, right” and wink, wink kind of thing. What do you do there to make that distinction, to make sure you are an education based athletic program first?

**Kevin Ozee:** Well, in Southlake it starts at home as our parents and our community is a pretty high achieving, Type A personalities who expect success at home. It starts there. And our coaching staff, we preach it a lot and we try to protect the true essence of being a student athlete in terms of...really modeled after what you guys do at the college level, if our kids go on a road trip they are taking their laptops, they are taking their school books and they are doing their work. And of course all of our coaches are full time teachers so they have a tutor right there with them on their road trip.

We do different things, just like you guys do in your athletic program with the tutorials and the study sessions and things like that as well.

**05:16**

**Tim Lightfoot:** Your coaches just aren’t coaches, they are teachers as well?

**Kevin Ozee:** Correct. In the state of Texas it is a UIL rule that coaches must be full time employees of the district. We take it a step further, each district may decide what is the definition of a full time employee, we take it a step further and state they have to be certified teachers. So everyone of our coaches, except for our men’s coordinator and our women’s coordinator, every one of our coaches are full time teachers as well.

**Tim Lightfoot:** While we are talking about coaches and them being full time teachers, what other kinds of characteristics do you look for when you start to hire coaching staff?

**Kevin Ozee:** I look for the energy. There has to be an energy and connection with kids, especially the teenage population. If you ever coached or taught middle school kids you know what I'm talking about. There has to be a connection there. There are thousands of people out there who probably know more about a particular sport than others, but they can't relate to kids. And one of the things that I do when we interview coaches, I make them teach a lesson. I've interviewed many former professional athletes who have just retired and they want to come coach and they may know the sport but they cannot get up on a chalkboard in front of me and teach a lesson and so it is not that they are not knowledgeable, they just have to teach and connect with kids. I've always said if they can't teach me a lesson during an interview then how can they teach a group full of 8<sup>th</sup> graders?

**Tim Lightfoot:** It adds a little bit of pressure to an interview I would bet.

**Kevin Ozee:** It does. That is not the initial interview, it is later on down the line. One of the things and one word of advice that I would give towards your audience is I see guys getting out, especially college football players, college athletes, professional athletes, like I said earlier, and they know the sport, there is no doubt about it, it is the teaching side that they need to hone their skills on. I would say that is at any level sport, not just high school and middle school.

**Tim Lightfoot:** So, a good coach needs to be a good teacher?

**Kevin Ozee:** Absolutely, no doubt about it. And that's what we pride ourselves on. Going back to your first question, we look for great teachers first, because I always preach to our coaches if I get a call from their campus principal that they are not cutting it in their classroom there is no questions about how great a coach they are, they are going to have an opportunity to move on elsewhere. Our philosophy is if they are a great coach, they are a great classroom teacher and vice versa.

**Tim Lightfoot:** That's the first thing, they better be a good teacher or they are not going to coach for you at all?

**Kevin Ozee:** Absolutely.

**Tim Lightfoot:** We talked a lot about the kids and connecting with the kids, many people would think that the sports programs in school are kind of extra-curricular activities. What roles do you think sports play in a young person's life?

**Kevin Ozee:** We pride ourselves, I mentioned earlier, we use the theme that we are an education based athletic program.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Right.

**Kevin Ozee:** And our athletic classes are in the school day and it is an actual class. We pride ourselves and we take that seriously that that is a class, no different than a math class, English class that the kids are going to throughout their day. And that sets us apart from an intramural program, from a club program or anything like that because we believe that athletics, not only athletics but all extra-curricular activities are a very important part to the total education process for a student.

**Tim Lightfoot:** What kind of values and work ethic do you think that students that go through athletic programs get that benefit them later in life?

**Kevin Ozee:** I think the biggest thing that kids as they mature they learn the value of teamwork. And I would venture to say that there's very little that has been accomplished in this world that you didn't have to help with. And sports, I think sports is probably the only domain out there that once you get on the field or the court there are no barriers to race, religion, gender or anything like that. That's neat thing to see kids learn that through sports, the value of teamwork, the value of decision making.

Our technology world is producing kids who struggle at making decisions because it is made for them through technology and sports is still pure. I've heard statistics that a point guard coming down the court in a basketball game, by the time that point guard gets to half court he or she has already made 50 decisions in their mind.

**11:00**

**Tim Lightfoot:** Wow.

**Kevin Ozee:** And that just comes automatically. I think that is why we see so many athletes who excel once they get out in to the real world, as we call it, in to the business world.

**Tim Lightfoot:** You know you brought up a point there and I think about how when these students are working together as an athletic team they don't see race, religion, color, whatever. Sports really is the ultimate melting pot, isn't it?

**Kevin Ozee:** Really it is a neat thing to see. Even when you get teams playing against each other it is just a neat thing that sports is interwoven so much in to our society. That to me, the teamwork piece is critical.

**Tim Lightfoot:** To shift gears a bit, how is the current emphasis on injuries, especially in football, changing your role and the coaches roles with these student athletes?

**Kevin Ozee:** You know, I would venture to say that most coaches and most athletic programs take injuries very seriously and I think the media aspect has certainly brought a lot of tension and made everyone more sensitive to the issue. We've always tried to be on the forefront of injury prevention and then injury rehab if there are injuries.

There are certain things that have come down the pipe in terms of legislation, like concussion injuries, that have forced us to do some things and really it was seamless for us because we were already doing those things. Most athletic programs in the state of Texas, especially the larger ones, I should say most 4A and 5A programs were already doing those things.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Just for our audience, we have quite a few listeners that are not in the state of Texas, when you are talking about a 4A or a 5A school you are talking about how many students in the school?

**Kevin Ozee:** Correct.

**Tim Lightfoot:** How many students are in those schools?

**Kevin Ozee:** Sorry, 5A the cutoff level, I believe, was 2300 students, maybe 2200 students.

**Tim Lightfoot:** A large school.

**Kevin Ozee:** Between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Now, you have an interesting situation where you have, if I recall correctly in Carroll where you have a senior high which is 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade and you have high school which is 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Kevin Ozee:** Correct.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Those are both 5A?

**Kevin Ozee:** Well, it is all one school. It is two campuses but it is all one school. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, we actually have a shuttle bus system that runs between the two campuses. They are all on the same sports teams, they are all in the same band. Like I said, some classes are shared between campuses that they shuttle back and forth to.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Along that line, high school athletics in Texas is a different animal than almost anywhere else in the country, isn't it?

**Kevin Ozee:** Yes sir.

**Tim Lightfoot:** How would you describe it? Say you had a friend, an athletic director in Maine, how would you describe the differences in Texas from everybody else?

**Kevin Ozee:** Well the two big differences that I have already alluded to is all of our sports has an athletic class during the school day. We are on what we call an AB block system where we have four 90 minute classes a day. If you are a student athlete in the high school or the senior high one of those four blocks you are going to be in your athletic class. So the coach, UIL rule which is governed by the state of Texas, allows us to work out in that sport for 60 minutes of that 90 minutes class period. So for 60 minutes they can practice, lift weights and do whatever is

sports specific. And the other 30 minutes is what we call leadership and motivation. That is where we emphasize character curriculum. That is where we emphasize the tutorial process, so on and so forth.

**15:39**

So the first thing is having that class period during the school day. And the second thing that is huge for us in Texas is the coach being a full time district employee. And most other states that I am aware of coaches are lay people who come after school. Now they do have a core group who are teachers at the school, but most of their coaches they hire and they come in after school, so what you are getting is a banker, an attorney, an auto mechanic or whatnot coming to coach after school.

**Tim Lightfoot:** And they don't necessarily have formal coaching training.

**Kevin Ozee:** Correct. And that is where we go back to the...we pride ourselves on the safety aspect. You asked about injuries...all of our coaches have all those first aide, CPR, AED certifications. We go through safety training exercises. We go through all this different training continuously that I am not sure is happening in other places if they hire coaches that just come after school.

**Tim Lightfoot:** The other interesting thing about Texas sports that I would like for you to comment on is the scale, especially high school football. It is not uncommon to have stadiums here for high school football that seat 10-12,000 people.

**Kevin Ozee:** Our stadium seats 12 ½ thousand people and out of five home games we will fill it up two or three times a year to capacity. We opened at Allen ISDs brand new stadium last year, their \$60 million stadium seats...I think it has 21,000 seats and I think we had 23,000 at the game.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Wow. I want the audience to get that, for the people who are not in Texas, that was a \$60 million high school stadium that seats 21,000 people and they filled it to 23,000.

**Kevin Ozee:** Yes. We've play a lot of our playoff games at Cowboy stadium and we played in the state championship in 2011 and I think we had 45,000 people at the state championship game. They do a deal on the Dallas Morning News every year about how many more people, more fans attended the Texas state football championship than half the bowl games that are played at the college level.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Why is it so big in Texas, especially high school football?

**Kevin Ozee:** I think in Texas it is a community event. I know at our place in Southlake it truly is a community event. We'll have the RVs and the tailgaters start coming in on Thursday.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Thursday for a Friday night game?

**Kevin Ozee:** Yes. And they'll set up their RVs on Thursday and start tailgating and cooking and all that for a Friday night game. And we kick off at 7:30, but by 5:30 our parking lots are full and it is just a sea of green, green and black is our color, and the kids, the small kids they all want to be dragons. They are all dragons.

Our community, you heard that small towns shut down on Friday nights?

**Tim Lightfoot:** Yeah.

**Kevin Ozee:** Our community doesn't completely shut down, Southlake is a big town, but most of the people of Southlake are at the stadium. It is just an awesome sight to see. I think if you go to that comparison with a small town that literally does shut down, that is what their lives revolve around.

The other thing that is huge about football that I think people miss is it is not just football. We have a 400 member band.

**Tim Lightfoot:** 400! Wow!

**Kevin Ozee:** Our cheerleaders, there are 20 or 30 cheerleaders. We have our Bells, which is our drill team, there are one hundred, an award winning in their dance program. And so you are talking about not only the football team but all the other extracurricular groups that are involved with the Friday night performance.

**20:03**

**Tim Lightfoot:** It really is a community get together?

**Kevin Ozee:** Oh, absolutely.

**Tim Lightfoot:** It is interesting it hasn't happened to the same extend with other sports, say soccer in some parts of the country or some of your spring sports. But something about football galvanizing a community like that.

**Kevin Ozee:** Again, it goes back to the aspect of all these different groups that are represented at a football game. The other sports we are seeing...you used the soccer example, soccer prior to its inception with the UIL, soccer was a big club sport and it still is. But, I think you see a lot of tendency to gravitate towards that and soccer. Volleyball is really booming as a club sport. It is kind of the club scene and there is not really the community...you have kids from all different communities on a club.

**Tim Lightfoot:** It is interesting you bring up club sports. That was something I had listed later on, I have a couple of friends who are athletic directors in other parts of the country at high schools and they see club sports as competition, actually it is a big competitor for them. And I know actually in one situation that some of the high schools have dropped a couple of sports just

because they didn't have enough people to participate because the people were doing all club sports, primarily baseball, volleyball, soccer in particular. Do you see that kind of competition happening in Texas here?

**Kevin Ozee:** Yeah, it is a concern. It is a concern that is really starting to impact us. Really the concern for me and for the kids is that it goes back to what I mentioned earlier about an education based athletic program. We are not just putting a team out on the field to win ball games. We are trying...we really try to take pride in that we are educators first. What I am seeing in the club scene is a lot of broken promises and maybe that...I'm not grouping all the club coaches in to one pot because I know there are tons of great, great club coaches, but I've seen some who this is their career, is to make money off of kids and to make promises to the parents that they are going to get them college scholarships and so on and so forth.

Some of the sports, as I mentioned like soccer, soccer was a big club before it was adopted in Texas by the UIL and the college coaches go to the club tournaments to recruit. And I understand that, parents want their kids to get a college scholarship so they are going to go where the college recruiters are. That is becoming more and more prevalent in volleyball, baseball. It is a concern for us and we'll just have to see what is going to happen.

The other thing I see happening with the clubs is the money, I mentioned the money involved, we can't compete as a school district and some of it is legally, what we have to abide by our rules is taking kids all around the country to play in these tournaments. How much can we afford uniform-wise? So, I'll just go back and say our governing body, the UIL, there are rules in place for a reason. We have practice limit rules, game limit rules and so on and so forth. And there are reasons for that and that is for the kids health and safety.

One of the things that is really concerning me is we are seeing a lot more overuse injuries with kids.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Yeah, because in the club sports they don't have the rules as far as how much practice and playing time and all.

**Kevin Ozee:** Correct. I'll give you a prime example. We are in our high school baseball season right now and I met with a parent whose child has an injury and we started digging down and come to find out the kid played in 75 baseball games last summer. They were on three different club teams. It is this feeling, the parents are sold this deal that if they don't keep competing they are going to fall behind.

**25:03**

And we're trying to preach through our coaches at the high school level, you know what, give your kids a break, let them take a month off. Whether it be in the summer or Christmas-time, whatever it is let them take a month off and just be a kid. Let their bodies heal.



We are seeing a lot of back injuries...we have football players who are playing fall baseball in a club and they will show up with a back injury and it is that they will go in to a collision sport can causes a torsion injury on their backs swinging a baseball bat and it just doesn't work. You are getting back injures...we are trying to preach to the parents that more is not always better.

There is a reason why high school sports, collegiate sports, professional sports have season.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Right.

**Kevin Ozee:** the other thing that is really scary for us up here in the Metroplex and I don't know if this is prevalent around the country or in other metro areas. We are starting to see spring tackle football for youth kids and it is scary as heck to me. I worry about the burnout factor, number one and two, the injury factor of overuse.

**Tim Lightfoot:** And it is not just seven on seven, it is full tackle?

**Kevin Ozee:** Full tackle. It is daddy coaching, which is scary. Again, going back to...I'm sure there are millions of great, great coaches who teach fundamentals, but this is what our coaches and I, this is our livelihood and we go to school, we go to conferences, we try to keep up with the latest teachings and things with teaching fundamentals to kids. By the time we get them sometimes they've been taught really bad habits.

**Tim Lightfoot:** You know you bring up a good point indirectly and that is the difference between high school athletics and club sports is accountability. In the high school setting you certainly have accountability to your principal, your athletic director as a coach, to the parents and to a great extent to the school board. And in club sports you don't have that accountability.

**Kevin Ozee:** I think that is a true statement. I am not as aware of all the inner workings of all the clubs. I know that there are some great, great clubs and I know that they have the kid's best interest at heart. However, I also know that there are some clubs that...I'm going to give an example here, that the director of this particular club, every kid who signs up in that club \$100 of their entry fee goes directly to this director.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Wow.

**Kevin Ozee:** And they have like \$250 teams in this club. So you know, to me the money issue...I think you go to every high school coach in Texas and...You've always heard that cliché "We didn't get in to this for the money." And I think that is what you are seeing on the club side and a small percentage is hurting the rest of the clubs, the majority of the people who are trying to do good things for kids. It is also hurting the high school programs.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Yeah.

Let's shift gears a little bit from this and then we are going to wrap it up here. We always ask our guests how they got in to what they are doing? My question to you, was there any coach or

teacher that really impacted you and influenced your current vision and direction on how you help young people?

**Kevin Ozee:** My dad is a retired high school football coach and athletic director. He spent 37 years in the business. This basically is all I know. I got out of coaching at one point and went in to private business for about three months...

**Tim Lightfoot:** That was enough?

**Kevin Ozee:** This is all I know. I joke that I have 42 years of experience in this business...because that is what we did throughout the week and went to ball games. My dad was a huge influence. I chose Texas A&M, I had some small college football offers but I chose to go to A&M and I knew at the time that I wanted to coach. I was very blessed when I got to A&M through connections with my dad that I got involved with Coach Slocum and Coach Cassidy, the football program and I was actually hired as a student manager. And at the time, I went from being a high school football player to a student manager and there was some stigma with that. I realized that...

**30:24**

**Tim Lightfoot:** Everybody thinks you just wash jerseys and stuff!

**Kevin Ozee:** But I knew that was my way in and it actually helped pay for my education and then in 1994 Tommy Tuberville who was our defense coordinator, asked if I was interested if I was interested in working in the football office and so I did that. I was hired to what was called a “restricted earnings coach”. I don’t know if you guys still have those or not. We were truly restricted in our earnings! I did that in ’94 and ’95 and then I went from there to coach at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. You know Louisiana Lafayette. And from there in to high school ball at Duncanville. And that is how I kind of progressed.

But my dad was an inspiration. Coach Slocum and that staff back in the early ‘90s at A&M. I’ve got to give a shout out to Dr. John Hillel. I was saddened to hear of his passing last week. He was a great mentor. Dr. Ashley was a mentor. He was in the sports management program there.

**Tim Lightfoot:** I’ll remind our audience that we did do a podcast with Coach Slocum a month or so back and you can certainly go on our podcast list and I think you will find a lot of the things that Coach Slocum talks about has been talked about here by Kevin.

We are running really short on time here and, Kevin, we’d like to give you a chance to give everybody a take home message. What do you want people to remember from this podcast?

**Kevin Ozee:** I’d just like everybody to...number one, I appreciate the opportunity. I’d like to invite anybody who I can help through my role, welcome them and invite them to contact me, usually email is the best way, it is on our website. I really have a passion for helping coaches and

helping kids and I really would like to preach to, especially the students who are wanting to get out and get in to coaching, to make that the priority. Don't make the priority of making money or becoming a head coach or inventing a new offense or things like that. Make it a priority of educating kids to develop them in to community leaders. And also when they do become head coaches and athletic directors to help develop coaches to reach their full potential.

**Tim Lightfoot:** Excellent take home message. Thank you so much for taking the time to visit with us today, Kevin. It has been great.

**Kevin Ozee:** Thank you.

**Tim Lightfoot:** I want to thank all of you that are listening for taking the time to download and listen to us this week. If you are a regular listener you know that we have a podcast question of the week and here with our podcast question is Kelly.

**Kelly:** What are the two differences between athletic programs in Texas and other states?

**Tim Lightfoot:** Excellent question. Be the first one to send us the correct answer to that in our email at Huffinespodcast @HLKN.TAMU.edu and you'll win one of those nifty podcast T-shirts. We hope that you will all take the time to join us next week when we have another interesting individual from the world of sports medicine and human performance.

Once again, thank you Kevin for being with us. You've been great.

**Kevin Ozee:** Thanks, Kevin.

**34:51**