

## [10 Things I Learned About Practicing Law From Playing Football](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on March 1st, 2013

When you were growing up, did you play a sport, play an instrument or sing, or act in your school plays? If so, I bet you learned several things about discipline, commitment and practice that have helped you practicing law. I know I did.

On my birthday last week, a friend from high school posted this photo from the local newspaper from way back when. It made me think what I learned from playing football. Here are two important points:

1. When this photo was taken I actually played tailback not quarterback.
2. Yes, my nickname was "Corky." I hate to let that secret slip out. I had to lose that name when I became a lawyer. I always wished my parents had decided on Dell rather than Corky, but...



Here is what I learned playing football in high school that applied to my work as a lawyer:

1. I was not good enough to play at a major college. It was a good thing I had a plan B.(While practicing law, I lost my largest client twice. I always had a plan B.)
2. Success during the season was directly related to the work done in the off-season. (Success helping clients was directly related to how I spent my non-billable time.)
3. It takes a team: The line, and the fullback in the case of the photo, were extremely important. (I got to a point where I had to rely on delegating work.)
4. As Vince Lombardi said: To be successful I had to keep my eyes open and run for the daylight. (As a lawyer, I looked to my clients' potential future problems or opportunities.)
5. You begin each season with a detailed playbook.(I had a plan for each year.)
6. The playbook should be designed around the strength of the players. (My plan focused on talents and my interests.)
7. No matter how good the playbook, you have to be willing to change the game plan to be successful against a specific defense. (I constantly changed my plan during the year as new opportunities arose.)
8. During a play you have to be able to adapt to the circumstances you confront. (I frequently was first to try new technology-like video cameras.)
9. You cannot win with a one dimensional offense. (I focused on both building my profile and building relationships.)
10. Learning how to respond from a disappointing loss is very important. (I lost some trials and was turned down by some potential clients. It was challenging, but important to get up and try again.)

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**Cordell M. Parvin** built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of ***Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout*** and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, [www.cordellparvin.com](http://www.cordellparvin.com) or contact him at [cparvin@cordellparvin.com](mailto:cparvin@cordellparvin.com).