

February 18, 2021

Lawrence M. Coco, III
Head of School
Jackson Preparatory School
Post Office Box 4940
Jackson, Mississippi 39296
VIA EMAIL: LCOCO@JACKSONPREP.NET

***Re: Notice of Resignation and of Intention Not to Seek
Contract Renewal as Head Football Coach***

Dear Mr. Coco:

Since 1997 I have served as the head football coach for Jackson Preparatory School. During that period it has been my honor and privilege to help to build, and to be associated with, a high school football program with a sustained track record of success that is unmatched in Mississippi.

I am not motivated by pride to make that statement. I am instead inspired by the pleasures and satisfactions of reflecting upon the good fortune that I have enjoyed by coaching innumerable talented, hard-working, and competitive athletes, and by helping them to attain their goals as individuals, on and off of the field, over the course of more than two decades. My sense of honesty requires me to freely admit that I learned more from them than they did from me. The rewards of these relationships truly became magnified over time, as they transformed and strengthened into cherished, enduring, and loyal friendships.

When I think about the sacrifices made by our players' families, and of the unwavering support that they provided to our program over the years, I cannot help but to smile, and to be moved by my appreciation, awe, and respect for them. I also reflect with wonder upon the countless moments, shared with educators, administrators, and parents, as we remarked upon the personal growth, increased maturity, and deepening of character that we witnessed in the young men who played on Prep's football teams.

I looked forward to coming to work each day, knowing that I was a member of an athletic program which includes some of the most thoughtful, dedicated, creative, energetic, and enthusiastic coaches, assistant coaches, trainers, and support personnel to be found at any high school in the U.S., bar none. Thanks to their authoritative leadership and seasoned experience, our football teams are focused, confident, and prepared when they take the field.

Jackson Prep is a class act, and its football program is strong, established, and highly-respected. Its foundation is rock-solid; it is "the best of the best." Prep's athletes

train together, they win together, they experience disappointments and losses together -- and the coaches, family members, faculty, administrators, and fans are with them, providing positive spirit and encouragement, every step of the way. The bonds between coaches, players, families, friends, and fans are at the heart of every great football program. Nowhere are these connections stronger than at Jackson Prep.

President Kennedy said that the best time to repair the roof is while the sun is shining. Without question, the sun shines intensely and favorably on the football program at Jackson Preparatory School, and its roof needs no repairs.

And that's why I have now decided that it is time for me to move on.

I am not retiring; rather, I'm going to look for another roof to repair while the sun is still shining.

I have always believed that there is wisdom in "going out while you're still on top," and that's what I aim to do here. I have no regrets, and if I had to do it over again I wouldn't change a thing – and there aren't too many coaches who are able to say that, believe me. Football is my life's work *and* my recreation; it's in my blood and it's in my soul. Coaching football isn't for everyone, but it's my dream job, and I have been living my dream since 1971. It just doesn't get any better than that. And I intend to keep living my dream for as long as the Almighty allows me to do so.

I've made my mark upon Prep's football program, and it's been a greatly fulfilling and incredible period in my life. Each Friday night spent on the football field with our staff and players was one of excitement, surprise, learning, and – above all else – fun, teamwork, sportsmanship, and dedicated effort. Handing over the reins to a new head football coach is a necessary step that I must take so that I can explore new opportunities and accept fresh challenges. My players and coaches know me well enough to know that their best interests, and the best interests of the future of our football program, were at the forefront of my mind as I was making this decision. I wish them well, and I am certain that they will understand that it is important to me to leave the program while the sun brightly shines upon it.

I will welcome any opportunity to provide my guidance and counsel to Prep until the completion of my current contract. Thank you for allowing me to serve this fine institution as its head football coach for the past twenty-four years. I say again, with heartfelt sincerity and gratitude, that it has been my honor and privilege to do so.

Best regards,

Ricky Black