

John Boccacino:

Hello and welcome back to the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. I'm John Boccacino, senior internal communications specialist at Syracuse University.

Fran Brown:

I think it was a lot of the coaches I had, like a lot. I've always come across some good positive men. And when you come across good positive men and they were teaching me the right things and wanting to see me be successful, it kind of poured into me. You always take all the good that everyone gives you and you want to be able to give back. You want to be able to help. You want to be able to push young men to go and be successful in life. Football has changed everything. It's helped me be where I'm at today

the Eagles win, I'm excited. I'm happy that the Eagles won. So I was just thankful for them. I'm happy for everyone. I'm just happy that everyone got to have an opportunity to enjoy their Saturday night and not have to say, "God, we lost." Of course there's some things they're going to critique on me. And give me all the critiquing that you possibly can. I'm good with it. It's part of the game. But just thankful and happy that everybody got to enjoy their Saturday.

John Boccacino:

Now I got to ask you to be real with me for a second. How nervous were you before kickoff? Were there nerves?

Fran Brown:

Yes, there were nerves. There was uncontrollable nerves. Guys are lucky it wasn't like, a restroom on the sideline. Yeah, I were extremely nervous. But in the same tense, when you prepare, it's a little bit of anxiety, so that's a part of the game. But I knew we were prepared. I didn't lack preparation, so it was just football. And just because you prepared doesn't mean that you have to come out with a W.

John Boccacino:

What was your message to the team after the victory? Again, you know, got Georgia Tech coming off that big win over Florida State, coming up this Saturday. So what did you say to the team after the win?

Fran Brown:

I congratulated them. It was that first time all being together. So I congratulated them. I told them I was thankful for them and I'm so happy to be the head coach. And then I also told him that wasn't our best football. We have to pick it up. We have to play better football. You have to start fast, and there's certain things that we have to do. But I told them, I kept reminding them that I was so happy for them. I was extremely happy for them, but there's a standard that has been set here that we didn't reach. But we still were able to win. And sometimes that happens, but there's a standard that we must reach on a regular basis and it just starts in practice. So that's kind of what I told them.

John Boccacino:

little things. And then our core values, we are DART, so we need to be able to live DART at all times. So being detailed? Are you accountable? Are you relentless towards being able to concentrate on a game? And when things are going the wrong way, are you displaying toughness? Can you do that? Are you showing that you're tough?

John Boccacino:

Where did you get influenced for that DART philosophy? I love it. I mean you're basically teaching, like you said, detail, accountability, be relentless and be tough in everything you do. How did you come to that philosophy?

Fran Brown:

"That's why I'm coming here because that's who I was." And he meant it. And most people don't just talk that way.

But he didn't want to... I mean, he's a Chancellor. So just think of all the education and the degrees and what he can be talking to me about or just, I mean he said, "All that stuff is great. What are you going to do with the diamonds in the rough?" He said, "Because there's a lot of people that have come to this school that just need to be shined up." And I was just like, "That's me." And that's why you coach. That's why he's a Chancellor, because he's thinking about that. You know what I mean? And that's, when you really think of it, to me that's powerful.

John Boccacino:

And I'm glad you bring up, because that "diamonds in the rough" comment during your introductory press conference was pretty powerful to hear. And you've obviously stayed very close to your hometown of Camden. You've brought a bunch of really solid football players and even better men from Angnd tois

John Boccacino:

Yeah, I would agree. And the fact that it's a carryover where you have no problem resonating that relationship message. And you talked so much about the importance of building those relationships. Whether it's with the aunt, the grandmother, the church leader, whoever you're recruiting after, relationships are everything. How do you say to the recruits, so it's not just about like, "Hey, I'm here for you," but "You can trust me. I'm going to take your son and really mold them into the person that we want them to become when they leave Syracuse." How do you emphasize that?

Fran Brown:

I just could feel it. It's always a feeling, right? You could tell them whatever you want. It's the feeling and it's consistency. They feel it, they understand it, they know it. And then it consistently happens. And I consistently do the same thing. Whatever I say I'm going to do, I'm going to do it. If I say something, I have to do it. And I stand on my name. So when I'm saying it and I don't do it, then I'm messing my name up. Why would I mess my own name up?

And then I got Fran Brown, Junior. So everything I do, I have to do it the right way so that way his name's not messed up. One of the things, a lot of guys always want to have children and when they have children they just naturally name him a junior. They're such and such. You willing to protect his name for him now. It's not just you protecting it for you. Now you got to make it right for him. So I got to make this world a little bit easier for my son by continuously doing the right thing, but making it hard and teaching him. But I need some doors to open up for him that probably weren't open for me. That he can now, they naturally be in because of the hard work that I'm going to continuously do.

John Boccacino:

This has been evident from day one. You want the city of Syracuse to buy into this football program, but you want to be a part of the community, the community service. And I loved your quote I read on one of the local news stations. Where you said, "You need to give me 30 hours of community service, but that's for the team. The rest, what are you going to do for yourself to go above and beyond just that number, just that threshold I place out there?" How has your team responded to that and how have you really been able to give back to our community so far in your first nine-plus months here?

Fran Brown:

Well, everybody already got their 30 hours.

John Boccacino:

I'm not surprised.

Fran Brown:

Yeah, everybody got their 30. They're working on their own hours now and they did that. We had those 30 hours done within three months. So everybody got their 30 hours and they're working on their own time now and just doing different things to give back.

John Boccacino:

I want to go back to when you were hired for this job. What made this the right position and the right fit for you and your family to come and be all in like you've always mentioned?

Fran Brown:

I grew to truly like the athletic director really fast. Talking to the chancellor was another piece. It was like he told me they would be behind football and they feel that this could be a driving force for the athletics in this school. And then this is the first college I've ever really known about, knowing someone that was going to play football got to know _____, because he was from where we're from. And they sent us all the games and we got a chance to go watch them play in the Meadowlands.

And it was just like, everything was just fitting. There was already a few kids here from the city I'm from. It just all fit. You know how it's just certain things that just fit together. And as it fit, it was perfect. And I wanted it, though. This is something I talked about. I spoke on this, I spoke it into existence. I spoke on it about three, four years ago. And I said, "You know what, I'm going to be the head coach at Syracuse." I said this three years ago. I said, "I'll be the next head coach at Syracuse." And I lived it and I worked for it and I just kept going and God gave me what I worked for. He just knows the time.

John Boccacino:

Now I know you mentioned the reverence for the tradition. I know in your office you've got the 1959 team photo of the National Championship team that won the Cotton Bowl. So with success... I know you want that title, you want to get Syracuse back to the top. What's it going to take and how are we building day by day to get to that vision?

Fran Brown:

This time I'm really really locked in and focused on the day. I mean, we already know who we play this year. So we got to truly one week at a time. Just keep building it one week at a time. But staying focused on our prayers, staying going to class, sitting in the first two rows, getting good grades academically, doing community service. Just becoming a better man on a daily basis. And then that will happen.

That 1959 team, they had a lot of good men on the football team. They were mature and did what they were supposed to do. So the more men we get on the team, it's going to help us. I mean of course NIL and all those things of that nature, you're going to be able to get some really good talent. So just hoping that we'll be able to get some great donations and things of that nature to be able to help us continue to bring in talented players. Because they don't all have that mindset. So to get some of them to be on, they like what I'm saying, but they still want to be compensated for it. These kids can play football. So as long as we would be able to compensate them and be able to play them, I'll turn them into men. And as I turn them into men, men win games.

John Boccacino:

And how about the connection with the past? I know there were a lot of alumni on the sidelines for the win over Ohio. You've emphasized connecting with the past Orange greats. How has that gone so far to get these current student athletes with the alums?

Fran Brown:

It's going well. I mean they come up, they pop up at practice. I'm really pleased, man. Most impressed with Keith Bullock. He's came up several times and just talk to me all the time. Dwight Freeney is another one. McNabb... Just, those dudes are really on it. Of course I could reach out to Don arius whenever I want.

John Boccacino:

Oh, sure.

Fran Brown:

But it's so many guys like PJ Alexander, you know what I mean? I mean, just so many of those dudes that are just always, "Hey, Coach. You need anything we here. We got you. Just let us know anything you need. We got you." So they're always around, man. It's an honor to have all those dudes around. I get opportunities to have those guys reach out to me all the time. I mean, and it is good because the players get to know like, "Hey, you understand the defensive line that was here? The Four Wheelers? All of them got drafted." I'm saying they all went to the NFL and played a long time. And you got Winters who's going to come up and do some stuff with us. Who's amazing when it comes to just come back and hand things and that nature. So I mean, I'm just thankful that they all locked in and just helping us. They don't have to do it. And then by them doing it, I appreciate it and it means a lot. Which is why I work all the time. They deserve to be laughing and talking trash about their college team. They put the work in when they was here. So they're like, "Nah, this is how it's supposed to look."

When the 1987 team be talking trash to me and saying it's a certain way it's supposed to look. Because that's what they did. A quarterback was extremely talented, all that stuff. So it's a certain way, a better look. And when I go back now, all them ballgames and all that stuff they was doing 2000, 2001.

Somebody told me the other day, he said from 1980-something to 2001, they won 70% of their games.

From 2003 to 2023, they won 40%. It's like 70% of the games then, and then now. You just look at how ur Whist em (need

Thank you, and I'll see everybody Saturday. I know they're going to have fun. Be loud. I don't want to be able to hear myself. Go Orange.

John Boccacino:

Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the 'Cuse Conversations Podcast.