

*(This message was presented to the Barren family as a handwritten letter.)*

It is truly an honor to share in the celebration of the extraordinary life of my friend Mark Barren.

To Jennifer, Jamie, David and Andrew: please know how special Mark is to so many of us!

I first met Mark in the summer of 1976 (or 1977) at the Big-33 Football School at St. Bonaventure in Olean, New York. His dad Dan and I were on the teaching staff, and Mark was flying around and zipping passes from sideline to sideline. It was obvious that Mark had “it.” He was not just a fine athlete... he was humble, positive and a natural leader. I knew he was destined to be a difference-maker.

As my assistant coaching career took me from Akron, to Miami, to Syracuse, to Ohio State, I had the good fortune to keep in touch with Coach Dan Barren and keep tabs on his talented son Mark.

Mark’s decision to attend Wittenberg was a bit troubling to me as I was a Baldwin-Wallace graduate. Believe me, in those day, Witt vs. B-W was just like Ohio State vs. Michigan! Truly I knew those Tigers had a great teammate coming their way!

During the end of Mark’s career at Wittenberg, I even talked to our Buckeye head coach, Earle Bruce, to see if we might entice Mark to come and make us better by joining us as a graduate assistant coach. To get one of those members of the Barren family dynasty could serve us well!

I chose to put this letter in a “game plan folder” because I truly admired Mark’s Game Plan for Life. He was in “Quest of the Best” for young people athletically and academically. It was always about the kids and the TEAM.

Having worked with high school coaches for the last 36 years, the great ones are obvious. The great ones like Mark approach the job as a calling. Mark was truly called to love his kids, teach them with passion, and help them to become more than they even thought was possible. He wanted them to excel in the classroom first, then on the field of battle. Every day he taught the lessons of life.

Every one of us who were blessed to be touched by Coach Mark Barren are better for it! His legacy is truly in the lives he touched.

Go Maroon & Gray! Go Scarlet & Gray!

Jim Tressel