

Fatherhood comes first, then the game

When I am asked for my advice on how to succeed in life, I often answer: dream . . . dream big. And it will be a dream come true Sunday when I walk onto the field to coach the Pittsburgh Steelers in the Super Bowl. It is a dream made possible by the incredible effort of my players; the unwavering support of the owners, the Rooney family, and Steelers fans; and the steadfast love of my family — my wife, Kiyah; my mother, Julia; and especially the man I call Dad.



USA TODAY

Commentary

By Mike Tomlin

baseball or catch a pass. He was teaching me how to be a man. He was teaching me how to be a father.

I had big dreams when I was a child. But without my dad, those dreams might not have come true. He brought stability to my life. He made my world a safe place in which to think and to learn. And though not every boy may aspire to become a football coach, every father can aspire to become the dad of his child's dreams. But to make that a reality, fathers must choose daily to work toward that goal.

In my own home, that means I make my wife and our children — Dino, Mason and Harlyn Quinn — my No. 1 priority. I try to start my day by eating breakfast with my children. In those minutes, I learn what's going on in their lives, and have the opportunity to share the values my wife and I want to pass on to them.

I also try to make my life fit into theirs. When I can, I drive them to school, coach their sports teams and go over their homework. If they're proud of me for coaching the Steelers, that's great, but I want them to know that my primary purpose in life is to be their dad.

Dreams can take us far; they can take our children far. But our children need our help. They need dads who believe in those dreams as strongly as they do, men with the maturity and wisdom to guide them to the place where their dreams are within their grasp. Children need a father like my own, who day by day and year by year lifted me higher and higher, until the possibility of my dreams was well within my reach.

I would not be coaching the Steelers in the Super Bowl now if it weren't for the man who walked into my life when I was a young boy and became my dad. I've always dreamed of being a champion, but it was my dad who championed my dreams.

Mike Tomlin, the Pittsburgh Steelers' head coach, is also a spokesman for the fatherhood program All Pro Dad.

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