



Vince Lombardi
By
Benjamin Hertz

Every February, millions of sports fans tune in to watch the National Football League Championship, better known as the Super Bowl. The winning team has the distinct honor of raising the Vince Lombardi Trophy and celebrating the fact they are the best football team in the world (fineawards.com). But how many people actually know who Vince Lombardi is, his values, and why he is arguably the most iconic figure in professional sports? In today's fast-paced digital society, information, inspiration, and entertainment can be obtained by holding a smart phone in the palm of your hand. But in 1967, life was different and many people in the United States rallied around their sports team for an identity, and the gritty Italian coach of the Green Bay Packers provided fans, not just in Wisconsin, but in the rest of the country lessons in commitment, dedication, and honesty after winning the first Super Bowl (profootballhof.com).

Born June 11, 1913, in Brooklyn, New York, Lombardi was the oldest of five children from Italian immigrant parents who were deeply involved in the Catholic Church. At one point, Mr. Lombardi thought he would be a member of the clergy and enrolled at the Cathedral college of Immaculate Conception. Yet, he was an excellent athlete and ended up playing football at St. Francis Preparatory School and later Fordham University (biographyhost.com). His football mind led him to coaching jobs at West Point and then with the New York Giants in the National Football League. The opportunity arose to take over a Green Bay franchise that was falling on hard times and coming off a 1-10-1 season" (profotballhof.com) and he took it, becoming the head coach and general manager. It was here that the real legend of Lombardi began to develop, as over nine years he imparted on his players-and the community as well-the ideals of dedication, love, passion, and pride. It is also important to note that our country was a post WWII society, in the middle of the Cold War, and as previously stated, needed someone to rally behind. Lombardi's coaching philosophy provided our country with that much needed inspiration. Quotes like "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up," or "Winners never quit and quitters never win," resonated with his team and society (biography.com).

When the Packers won the first and second Super Bowls, he cemented himself as not just someone who said inspirational things, but DID inspirational things. Tragically, just three years after his first championship win, he died of colon cancer (biography.com), and the league subsequently named the championship trophy in his honor (fineawards.com). Though he was gone, his legacy remained, challenging the citizens of our country to live our lives the best we can so we can make the world a better place to live (profotballhof.com). All of society-doctors, engineers, inventors, laborers, and teachers were pushed to do better. Today our country is thriving. We can watch big games on televisions and celebrate with friends and family, but we should thank men like Vince Lombardi for providing the foundation for us to do so.



Sources:

1. The Pro Football Hall of Fame "Coaching Character"
2. Biography.com "Vince Lombardi"
3. Biography Host "Vince Lombardi"
4. FineAwards.com "The Vince Lombardi Trophy and the History of the Super Bowl Championship Trophy"
5. Inside Fordham "Scholar Describes Vince Lombardi's Contribution to the American Obsession with Winning"