



## *With Strong Roots, You Can Turn the Game Around at Halftime and Win.*

It was the 1985 Football Season and the second game of the season. I was defensive end for the Chicago Bears and our opponent was the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. We were losing 14-0. We hadn't scored a single point and our defense could not stop Bucs star running back, James Wilder, who already had rushed for 100 yards in the first quarter. The second quarter clock ran down and, thankfully, it was halftime. Our legs were dead, our hearts were down. We felt defeated. But not Coach Mike Ditka. He knew we were a talented team, more "deep-rooted" than our opponent. He knew we could tap into those strong roots and dig deep to renew our strength and spirit. We regrouped, adjusted our game plan and returned to the field with a new sense of vigor and fortitude. After halftime, we played the game like the world champions we were to become that year. Without a great coach, who knew us so well and inspired us when we were down, we would have lost the game. Instead we beat Tampa Bay 28-14 and went on to win Super Bowl XX.

All of us need to cultivate strong roots in every aspect of our lives to grow and prosper. Deep roots are the very core of strength. A tree with sturdy roots can weather the wind, rain, drought or disease. With strong roots we will grow, not fall. I like to compare Summer to the second half of a football game. Plants that showed little or no life during the cold of Winter, "the first half," are rejuvenated. Their roots, still strong and alive, sprout new branches in the Spring. Like a miracle, brown twigs show their resilience by sprouting new leaves and blooms. By the Summer, strong trees bear rich fruit.

Coach Mike Ditka "dug deep" to reveal the true strengths of my football team and rally us to victory. At All Sports Community Service, we mentor young men and women so they will grow a foundation of deep roots and be victorious in the game of life. Many of the students we help come to us at their own personal "halftimes." They often feel defeated or just need someone with a strong helping hand to reach out and say "You can win!"

All Sports is entering a new season...our "second half." The students you generously supported have grown strong and blossomed into doctors, lawyers, teachers, coaches, program directors and parents. Not only are our first graduates flowering in their own careers, but today the deep roots that they established in the "first half" of All Sports provide the stability and spirit for new growth. Our original students have become mentors to the next generation. They've established scholarships and lead charitable foundations. Our mentors even attend graduations, sporting events and special celebrations to lend a supporting hand to a young man or woman whose parents can not.

Success has many parents. Thank you all for being there for All Sports since our "kick off" in 1991, when we first assisted 15 students with their dreams of being the first in their family to attend college. Our vision - that every deserving student, supported by an adult who is an All Sports alumni, will come back and, in turn, support another - has been planted and grown. We invite you to continue this quest. With your matching gift of only \$500.00 per semester, we can continue to provide for the new students who will be going off to college in the Fall. Your contribution will continue to grow, well beyond All Sports' winning "second half."

*If you would like to help an All Sports student reach their goal of a college education, please contact:*

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or call 813-966-1008 or 813-348-3729