

How a Lesson from College Football Helped Me Fight Anxiety in the Military



By Joe Byerly

My favorite time of year if here -college football season.

And while I enjoy spending my Saturdays watching football with friends and knocking back a six pack, I also enjoy studying the coaches. How do they turn losing teams into national champions? How do they maintain dynasties? How do they develop their assistant coaches -who in turn go onto win national champions?

While I'm a diehard Georgia fan, I've spent the last few years studying University of Alabama head coach Nick Saban. Love him or hate him, he has an impressive track record. And more importantly, one of the lessons I've taken from him has helped me overcome job-

related anxiety.

In Monte Burke's [*Saban: The Making of a Coach*](#), he describes one of the keys to Saban's approach to football. It's called *The Process*. Burke describes it as, "The break down of things -like meetings, practices, games, and seasons into smaller pieces that can be handled without anxiety. It provides a way of functioning without being overwhelmed by the bigger picture."

Saban doesn't want his players to focus on the season, the game, or even the quarter. He wants them to focus on the next play. He wants them to focus their efforts on 7 second intervals -the average time a play lasts in football.

How does this approach apply to the military? In my experience, we encounter events that can overwhelm the most resilient people. Whether it's planning or executing a complex operation, enduring a year-long overseas deployment , or persevering through a leadership crucible - when it feels like the weight of the world is literally on our shoulders .

The Process helps us ignore all the things that are outside of our control. It helps us keep that overwhelming feeling at bay. It helps tamp down the anger of being put in unfair situations. It allows us to focus on our next move, our next step, making the decision *we* need to make. It helps us break through the resistance that will inevitably hold us back.

For me, focusing on *The Process* has helped me be decisive when I needed to be. It's helped me produce when I was under a time crunch. It's helped me through long tours away from home.

So, next time you feel anxiety starting to creep in; When a deadline gets moved up or you think the odds are against you, focus on *The Process*. The next step. The next 7 seconds right in front of your face.

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And Go Dawgs!

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