

## Donovan McNabb

is one of the all-time great quarterbacks in NFL history and will always be a local hero in Philadelphia. But today, he spends much of his time coaching athletes who are too young to remember his playing days.

BY KURT SMITH

# FOREVER





# A LEADER









During his tenure with the Eagles, McNabb led the team to five NFC Championship games (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2008), and Super Bowl XXXIX. He is also the Eagles' all-time leader in pass attempts, pass completions, passing yards, and passing touchdowns.

what they see Patrick Mahomes do or what they see Aaron Rodgers do. And I think that's a negative because not everybody is on their skill level, not a lot of people can do what they're doing at this particular point."

Most of the young players McNabb coaches don't remember his playing career. But their parents do.

"The last time I took a snap was nine, ten years ago, and that was in Minnesota toward the end of my career. A lot of these kids have never seen me play. It's more the parents that know a lot about you.

"And I have no problem with that because I'm not coming in there, Donovan McNabb, NFL quarterback, I'm coming in as Donovan McNabb, quarterback trainer, that's going to help you be able to perform at a high level and prepare you from a mental and physical standpoint.

"I'll show up at their games and write down some different things that we can do on our next couple of sessions. I'll be there when they need any assistance. Maybe something

just of the game of football, but of being a leader in life.

Ty Thompson, a University of Oregon freshman, is one young quarterback who McNabb has mentored. As FanSided reports, Thompson is already a strong candidate for the starting job and is Oregon's top-ranked quarterback commit of all time.

"I've had an opportunity to implant my wis-

dom," McNabb told *JerseyMan*, "on the things that they want to accomplish. I try to prepare them from a fundamental standpoint of knowing the intricate parts of the game. And, also, provide a little bit of spark for these young men, to give them that confidence that they can play this position at a high level, if they put the right time and effort into their craft.

"So many times, you see trainers doing

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happened at practice, and they don't understand why, how they can change it or things of that nature.

"If I have a kid that's in middle school, I want him, by the time he graduates from eighth grade, to be mentally where the sophomores are in high school. We know your body's going to develop at some point. But from a mental standpoint, are you able to get out on the field and tell ... every player what

they're supposed to do, explain to the coach what you're seeing from a defensive standpoint, what blitzes they're doing, how to attack those blitzes?

"That right there gives you the upper hand when it comes to a lot of these kids who are just athletic, because now there's a trust value that coaches are starting to build with you, because they know you're well prepared and understand the games."

And yes, you have to handle shots from critics. As we all remember, McNabb knows that better than anyone.

"It's not just younger kids," he continues, "it's adults too, who have issues with criticism. With social media now, people don't like something that you post, or people comment negative to you, it affects them, instead of just moving on and using that as motivation."

So, is he tempted to tell young QBs not to

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"Smile. That's what I did!" McNabb says with a laugh.

As with many of the good guys in sports, it's the preferred way of enjoying retirement.

McNabb lives in Arizona now, mostly just because the weather is better. It was where he started training in the second year of his

There are always arguments with every Hall of Fame induction about who got slighted. Donovan McNabb shouldn't be the subject of one.



Photo Philadelphia Eagles

Maybe someday Ty Thompson, or another McNabb pupil, will get that done for him." ■