

## Beyond the Playbook: Charles Walls' Blueprint for Leadership

Charles Walls, Vice President of Player Personnel for the Philadelphia Eagles, doesn't just make decisions that shape one of the NFL's most prominent franchises, he embodies what it means to lead with empathy, resilience, and intention.

In his role, Walls oversees both the pro and college scouting departments. He has final input on every player acquisition, whether it's through the NFL Draft, free agency, or a trade. His responsibilities also extend beyond evaluating talent. He's part of the team that interviews and vets new coaches, and he informally advises the player development program, helping athletes navigate the challenges of life in professional football.

His path to executive leadership was shaped by his earlier experiences as both a player and a coach. These roles gave him something he now considers indispensable in his current position: empathy. "I know what is physically required to do certain things we're looking for," he explains. "I've experienced what it's like to try and teach a player how to execute a certain play or learn a certain technique." That understanding allows him to connect more deeply with athletes and coaches, not just as assets or colleagues, but as people.

Balancing the demands of NFL leadership with personal well-being isn't easy. Walls admits it's tough. Small moments of peace, even a quiet minute in his office, help him get through long days. But he lives for the bigger windows of recovery, particularly the offseason in June and July. "My summer vacations mean the world to me," he says. "They really allow me to reset."

That discipline around rest is part of a broader commitment to mental health, a topic Walls speaks about with clarity and honesty. Decision-making in the NFL can be brutal, but Walls finds stability through preparation. "We prepare for every scenario when it comes to player acquisition," he says. "It doesn't mean I haven't gained a few gray hairs." When his mental resilience is tested, he turns to a trusted circle of friends, what he calls his "personal board of directors," for wise counsel. He also relies on music and workouts to decompress.

According to Walls, mental toughness is often the separating factor between athletes who merely flash brilliance and those who sustain success. "Especially in this day and age of social media," he says, "you need tough skin. In a market like Philadelphia, New York, or L.A., you can get eaten alive for a misstep."

Though his playing days as a college offensive lineman are behind him, Walls still commits to physical wellness, just differently. He lifts heavy, but he's also developed a love for long bike rides. His physical routine also includes journaling, reading, and watching movies. These habits help keep him sharp amid the nonstop pressure of his job.

When evaluating athletes' long-term potential, he emphasizes that no detail is overlooked. Medical evaluations are extensive, and injury history, stretching all the way back to childhood, is always reviewed closely. In his words, "No stone is left unturned."

As a leader, emotional intelligence is another essential part of his approach. "Emotional IQ is underrated," Walls says. "You need it to connect and reach others. A big part of winning is culture and chemistry. If your team and staff are devoid of emotional IQ, good luck." He manages his own emotions through breathing and perspective. "I remind myself it's a privilege to even be in the position to make decisions."

His relationships with players aren't confined to performance evaluations or negotiations. They're built on shared interests like music, vacations, cigars, and movies what he describes as the everyday stuff that humanizes even the most elite athletes.

Walls believes that true success in football, or any career, hinges on a balance of mental, physical, and emotional health. "That's the holy grail," he says. "At times, I've seen tremendously physically healthy athletes spiral out because the other two weren't dialed in. Stress is a big factor in a lot of the diseases we battle in our country. It's incredibly important to manage it well."

His advice for young professionals is direct: Only take jobs with organizations that prioritize holistic well-being. "Some companies will bury you into the ground," he warns. "Know who you're going to work for and with."

Looking back, if he could offer his younger self one piece of advice, it would be to start stretching earlier. "I wish I could go back to age 12 and emphasize more mobility work," he reflects. "I started lifting very early but didn't know anything about that part of it. Still to this day, I have to remind myself that stretching is more important than lifting."

Charles Walls is more than a decision-maker in the NFL. He's a steward of people, culture, and growth. His story is a reminder that success isn't just about the next big move, but about staying grounded, connected, and healthy along the way.