

An uncommon hero, Tim Fontenot achieves significance as he makes a huge difference on the football field and in the lives of students and athletes alike in our community. Nine years ago, Tim crossed all boundaries—racial, social, economic, religious, and physical (“across the railroad track”)—to bring one town’s rival high school football teams together to play in the "Tee Cotton Bowl." Ville Platte High School is a mostly black public school, and Sacred Heart High School is an all-white Catholic school. They were separated by four blocks and train tracks but shared in common losing records and play-off hopes.

The two schools started playing each other in 1975 and continued until 1984, when a move in classification discontinued the games. In 1999, both schools moved back to the same classification. That year the Ville Platte Bulldogs beat the Sacred Heart Trojans, 39-13. Tim's son told his dad that it was “the funnest game of the year.” This significant remark sparked Tim to say, "To have an all-white team versus a predominately black team play each other so hard and still be friends shows that sports can be a force for good."

So, Tim organized the yearly Tee Cotton Bowl, purchasing a huge silver punch bowl filled with cotton (representing Ville Platte's cotton festival) and a football. In the last nine years, Sacred Heart and Ville Platte's football teams have faced off in the city's Tee Cotton Bowl.

Tim breaks down all barriers by having the teams eat and pray together. The morning of the game, about 250 students from both schools come together to pray for each other to do their best as they break bread during a breakfast prepared by volunteers. Tim’s impact is seen when the attitudes of players show respect to one another as they join hands to pray during breakfast. Tim achieves significance with the “path of allegiance,” as pep rallies are held at each school and the visiting team begins its march. Across the railroad tracks, the visiting team (in full uniform) walks to the home team’s field, ready to meet their "friends" in rivalry.

Last year, Tim had a fireworks display and skydivers, wearing jerseys of both teams, deliver the game ball right onto the field. Tim's ambition was represented when he had NFL Films send a crew down to do a feature story that inspired the late Pope John Paul II to send a letter and blessing to both teams.

Tim says, "I put the game on because God gives us this special bond between the two schools and teams. Despite their different racial, social, denominational, and economic makeups, His Precious Gift to us is how we play the game. It is our gift back to Him! When we honor God in our small way, He honors us in a *big way*! We can't out give God!" To me, Tim strives to follow Jesus’ words: "If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand" (Mark 3:25, NASB).

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