



*Galen shares light moment with late Penn State Coach Rip Engle during a dinner honoring Hall in Williamsburg in 1961.*

## Hall Gets Job Done . . . His Way

By Norm Carlson  
*University of Florida*

With Galen Hall there is no question that what you see is what you get. There are no pretenses.

As the media and Florida fans have gotten to know the 45-year-old Gator head football coach, the reaction has been the same. He is described as low-key, laid-back, quiet, honest, humble, unassuming, a good ole boy and the media's favorite tag of "unflappable."

All of the above accurately portray Hall's characteristics; however, in these days of the terms "intense" and "workaholic" used to symbolize the nature of a coach who is successful, you might wonder how the Florida head man gets the job done.

"He doesn't shout and scream, and is never negative," says former star tailback

Neal Anderson. "He has confidence his players will play hard and he is a patient teacher who prepares you to play relaxed and confident. It is a positive experience and football is fun, even in practice."

Anderson's comments indicate that the Galen Hall philosophy on football is reflected in the way he handles his team.

"Football is very important to those who are playing the game, but it is not the ultimate thing in anybody's life," Hall says. "You have to keep in perspective the fact it is not a life-and-death situation or World War III. There must be discipline and self-sacrifice in order to achieve athletic success, but there must also be fun in playing the sport."

Hall's peer group in coaching and

athletic administration believe he has one of the sharpest minds in the game.

"There probably isn't a better 'X-and-O' coach in college football," says Gil Brandt, vice-president of the Dallas Cowboys. "He knows the game, knows how to attack defenses and always has the calm and presence of mind to be able to think under pressure during the course of the game. He is a great Saturday coach."

The Hall leadership talent goes back to his high school days in Williamsburg, Pa., where he was a star athlete in football, basketball and baseball.

"He was a good, quiet leader not a showboat," says his mother, 71-year-old Grace Hall. "He didn't want to be in the

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foreground getting the credit.”

Don Appleman, head basketball coach at Williamsburg High, told Mike Bianchi of the Gainesville Sun that Hall stories are still legend in the area. Samples include the time he went to a major league baseball tryout and hit seven of 25 pitches into the bleachers.

Hall was a highly-recruited 195-pound quarterback who chose Penn State over Southern California. He grew to 215 pounds by his sophomore season at State and more resembled a linebacker than a quarterback.

“He had huge thighs like a lineman,” said teammate Don Jonas. “He could play the game, however.”

As a sophomore Hall threw a 19-yard touchdown pass off of a fake field goal attempt to beat Bear Bryant’s Alabama team in the 1959 Liberty Bowl, 7-0.

Another Hall accomplishment ranks as the favorite story of Jim Tarman, the able Penn State athletic director, who was sports information director there when Galen was playing.

“Galen was probably the most respected player we had,” says Tarman. “Everyone called him ‘Butch’ and he was truly one of the boys. He understood the game so well it was like having a coach on the field, and that fact was never more evident than in 1961 when we played Georgia Tech in the Gator Bowl.

“We only had the football for two possessions early in the game and were already behind, 9-0. Tech got a touchdown and then a safety when Galen was called for intentional grounding in our end zone.

“Joe Paterno was the offensive coordinator up in the press box and when the safety was called he was so enraged he raced down to the sideline and met Galen as he walked back up the field.

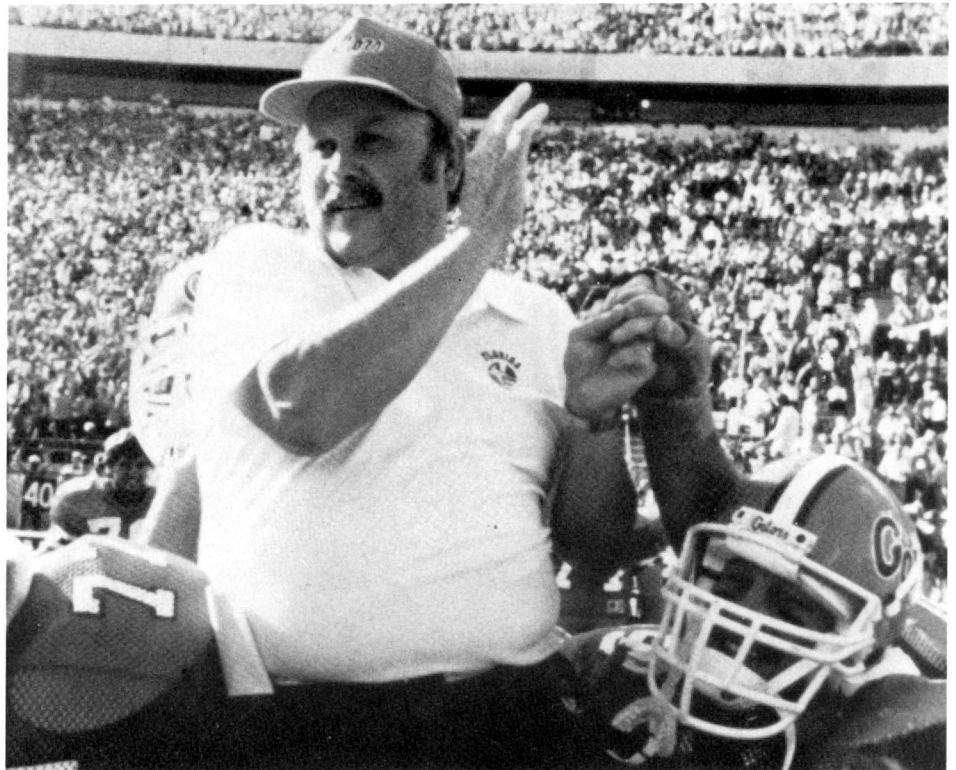
“Joe said something like ‘What the %&C\*#(\$ is going on down here?’ to Galen, who looked him right in the eye and said, ‘Coach, don’t worry about it, we’ve got ‘em where we want ‘em.’”

Quarterback Hall, who had figured out the Tech defensive scheme in the first two Penn State possessions, went on to throw three touchdown passes and earn the game MVP honors in a 30-15 triumph.

Hall is not exactly compared with Johnny Carson on delivering one-liners, but he does have a dry sense of humor, often throwing out a joke in such a matter-of-fact manner that you must be paying close attention to get it.

For example, he once told a player that his rules on length of hair were simple: “Nobody can have hair longer than mine,” he said. Hall, of course, is bald but the player had to think about it before doubling over in laughter.

Hall is a pragmatic person, who, when asked to describe himself by one member of the media, replied, “I’m a realist and an optimist.”



*Galen led Florida to a 9-1-1 record in his first season as head coach.*

“He’s just a great guy who is so real and natural that people who don’t know him well can’t believe it,” says his extroverted wife Elaine. “They look at him and wonder ‘can this fellow be for real?’”

When Hall graduated from Penn State in 1962 he went on to a brief career in the NFL, playing for the Washington Redskins in 1962 and the New York Jets in 1963.

He spent two seasons at West Virginia (1964-65) as offensive backfield and ends coach, and then went to Oklahoma, where he was to work with the Sooner offense for 18 years before joining the Gator staff in the spring of 1984.

At Oklahoma, Hall was not in the limelight despite a record of success matched by few, if any, offensive assistant coaches in college football. In 11 seasons as offensive coordinator for the Sooners, they won two national championships, nine Big Eight titles, led the nation in rushing four times, were second three times, third twice and fourth once, the lowest ranking any of his offenses recorded during the period.

He developed Heisman Trophy winners Steve Owens and Billy Sims, All-American running backs Joe Washington, Elvis Peacock and Eddie Hinton, and wide receivers Tinker Owens, Billy Brooks, Steve Zabel and Al Chandler, all of whom went on to play in the NFL.

After 18 seasons at Oklahoma, following the 1983 season, Hall decided it was time to move on for a variety of reasons. He was married to the former Elaine Hatch in January of 1984, and they wanted to start

a new life together, and the itch to become a head coach reached him.

“I thought it would be good to diversify my coaching background,” he says. “Spending 18 years in the same system tends to make people think you can only coach a certain style of offense or team. I looked at Florida as an opportunity to grow and gain experience in a good program so that would benefit me somewhere down the road when a head coaching position might come open in college or professional football.”

Mike Shanahan, the ex-Gator offensive coordinator, had worked under Hall as a graduate assistant at Oklahoma and he recommended him to Coach Charley Pell when he left for the Denver Broncos. It turned out to be a tremendous blessing for both Hall and the Gators.

The great finish of the 1984 season is history. What does Hall look for in the future?

“We want to field a disciplined team which plays hard, but has fun playing a game,” he says. “We want players who graduate from Florida and represent the school and its athletic program with class. If we can manage that we will win more than our share of games over the long run.”

For Galen Hall, who wants to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative, the challenge to overcome the scholarship caps installed under NCAA sanctions is a big one. He has always been a winner, however, and those who know him best believe this will continue to be the case.