



John Amendt has been running his pest control company for 37 years all while making his mark as a football coach at the high school and college levels.

GAMEPLANNING FOR SUCCESS



BY BRAD HARBISON

Pest control operator and football coach. These two occupations seemingly have very little in common. Not true, says John Amendt, owner of Glenolden, Pa.-based A.Amendt Pest Control Company and a successful football coach for 40 years, which includes his current stint as secondary coach at Widener University. “(Coaching) really has helped my business,” he said. “It’s helped me learn how to manage people. A lot of the same type of gameplanning you do in business, you do in football. It’s a good marriage of the concepts.”

Amendt certainly knows a thing or two about running a pest control business. Since he returned to family-run A.Amendt Pest Control in 1970, the company has gone from a three- to a seven-person operation and experienced 800% sales growth.

“My company is still growing, maybe not by leaps and bounds like some, but it’s been steady growth,” he said. “I like owning my own business. I like that we have been able to create jobs. I like that we have been able to provide stable employment for people.”

LIFELONG PURSUITS. Amendt’s involvement in pest control and football go back to his childhood. His parents, John and Phyllis Amendt, founded A.Amendt Pest Control in 1957, after learning the trade from next-door neighbor Jim DiBruno, Sr., who worked for Vogel-Ritt, a highly regarded Philadelphia pest control firm that later was sold to Terminix.

In the company’s early years, John Amendt, Sr. would go door-to-door soliciting customers, while Phyllis took care of

accounting, scheduling, and other office responsibilities.

A.Amendt Pest Control was a part-time business for the couple; John had a full-time job working for SEPTA (The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) — a local bus-trolley transportation company. “He would work from midnight until morning (at SEPTA), sleep until noon, then go out and spray houses, all while raising five kids,” Amendt recalled.

John Amendt, Jr. started working for the family business while in high school in the mid-1960s. While in high school, Amendt also excelled in football. He was a defensive back for (Philadelphia) West Catholic High School, which won the Philadelphia City Championship his junior year. Amendt enjoyed playing football, but also loved the strategy involved in the game, so after graduating from high school in 1967 he began coaching football at the C.Y.O. (Catholic Youth Organization) level. Amendt would go on to coach at Philadelphia-area high schools and at the college level, where currently coaches.

Amendt also took a liking to his summertime profession and after graduating from high school he enrolled at Penn State University for a two-year pest control course. Studying under renowned Penn State entomology professors Bob Snetsinger and Dave Snyder, Amendt said he received “the foundation for a pest control career.”

Amendt’s plans were temporarily put on hold in 1969, after he was drafted into the U.S. military. Amendt served in the Naval Reserves for one year, before returning to his family’s pest control business in 1970.

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PCO PROFILE

RETURNING TO PEST CONTROL. In 1970, Amendt began his full-time employment at A.Amendt Pest Control. The company offers termite and general pest control services and prides itself on delivering pest control with a “personal and professional” approach.

“We run a good business and respond to customer needs and that is how we market ourselves,” Amendt said. “The business has been built primarily on customer referrals. We do some Yellow Pages advertising, but primarily it is word-of-mouth.”

A recent reminder of what Amendt likes about pest control occurred this summer when he responded to a service request from a condo complex in suburban Philadelphia. Rats had nested under a wooden deck and were getting into one of the units through a conduit. Amendt took care of this service request by enlisting a subcontracted carpenter to fix and modify the deck and he baited several traps. “I enjoy the challenge of solving people’s problems and helping them out. In this case, it was reassuring the customer that by using the snap traps the rodents were not going to eat the bait and then die in their homes,” he said.

Another niche for A.Amendt has been the company’s termite and wood-destroying insect services, where Amendt has earned

STAR PUPIL

In a coaching career that spans 40 years, John Amendt has coached many standout football players, including one of the sport’s best-ever — Marvin Harrison, the 8-time NFL Pro Bowl receiver of the Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts and favorite target of Colts QB Peyton Manning.

From 1986 to 1989 Amendt was head coach of Roman Catholic High School in Philadelphia. Harrison was a member of Roman Catholic’s freshman team during that time. “I never envisioned the kid being a future Hall of Famer, but he was a special talent,” Amendt said. “Back then, not many teams in the Philadelphia Catholic League played freshmen on the varsity squad. Looking back, he probably could have, but maturity-wise we didn’t think he was ready.”

Harrison played running back on the Roman Catholic freshman team. Even back then, Amendt could see that he possessed rare talent. “You would give him the ball and he would take off, then kick it to second gear, then someone would close on him and he would kick it to third gear...and then he was gone.”

Throughout the years, Amendt has admired Harrison’s playing career as well as the way he conducts himself off the field. “I ran into him at the airport a couple years ago and talked to him for 10 to 15 minutes. He was dressed casually in jeans and didn’t have an entourage. Nobody even recognized him. He’s a humble, unassuming guy.”



Colts receiver Marvin Harrison.

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a reputation for providing high quality, detailed inspection reports. "I took four years of drafting in high school and I use those skills today," he said. "Each customer receives a detailed graph with the inspection report."

Amendt also said an important factor in the company's success has been low technician turnover. The company has two

25-plus-year employees in Robert DiBruno (30 years) and Robert Kalbach (25 years).

WORK-LIFE BALANCE. Much like his dad, John Amendt has a lot on his plate, between running his pest control business and coaching football.

During football season, when practices usually run from 4 to 6 p.m., he arrives in



John Amendt in front of his office, located in Glenolden, Pa. Amendt is able to schedule coaching around his work responsibilities.

the office early (about 7 a.m.) and often has to return to the office after practice for a couple hours. (Widener University is about five minutes from his office.) During summer, when the team has morning practices, he will work later into the evening.

"It's just a matter of budgeting your time," he said. "Fortunately, I have a fiancé (Linda VanDerslice) who understands that come September she won't be seeing much of me. She knows that when it is fall, I am the coach."

Amendt also said he couldn't do it without having veteran technicians like DiBruno and Kalbach on his staff.

But the payoff Amendt gets from coaching make the sacrifices all worthwhile. "I just like working, developing players, teaching the game of football," he said. "I like the strategy of the game. It keeps my mind sharp. Getting players ready for games, studying film and putting a game plan together. I want to continue to keep coaching for several more years."

An added bonus of coaching football has been making community ties that have helped Amendt grow his business. "A lot of players, ex-players, parents of players have gotten to know me, so in a way it has helped me market myself." 🐜

The author is Internet editor of PCT Online.

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