

Coach Dad

Working Beat Sheet

ACT I — THE FRACTURE

BEAT 1 — Jonathan Has Everything Except What Matters

Jonathan Reese is a successful corporate attorney relentlessly pursuing partnership. Even during the biggest moment of AJ's young life, Jonathan is distracted by work as AJ helps Blacklick win the Ohio state football championship—relying on a secret audible that only two people on the field are aware of. After the victory, Jonathan flashes AJ the Reese family's silent "wow" signal, but his son ignores him. On the ride home, Jonathan's wife, Sam, shares an uncomfortable truth with him: While Jonathan has provided everything for his family, he has become emotionally absent from his son's life.

What changes: Jonathan believes being a good father means providing for his family; AJ needs his father to actually be present.

BEAT 2 — Fate Intervenes, Pulling Jonathan Toward the Team

When Jonathan learns he has been passed over for partnership, his boss and mentor, Ari Eisenberg, encourages him to keep pushing. Jonathan responds by throwing himself even deeper into work. Meanwhile, the Jefferson Township School District's tax levy fails, forcing the elimination of athletics until billionaire Robert O'Farrell—known as Bobby O—steps in to privately fund the programs—with one stipulation: the coaches must be volunteers. When Blacklick's replacement football coaches are seriously injured just days into preseason camp, Sam convinces Jonathan to help temporarily.

What changes: Two worlds that Jonathan has kept separate—career and family—begin moving toward collision.

BEAT 3 — Jonathan Becomes Coach

Jonathan reluctantly walks onto the practice field and discovers a program in chaos. One player, Sebastian Sullivan, has become a toxic influence; AJ is frustrated and isolated; and a hearing-impaired transfer quarterback, Brady Troy, is struggling to find his place. But something unexpected happens to Jonathan: football awakens a part of himself that has been dormant for years. What was supposed to be a one-day favor becomes a commitment when Jonathan agrees to become Blacklick's head coach.

What changes: Jonathan crosses the threshold. He is no longer simply AJ's distracted father watching from the stands. He is now Coach Dad.

ACT II-A — BUILDING THE TEAM

BEAT 4 — Jonathan Demands Discipline

Jonathan attacks coaching like a lawyer: preparation, structure, accountability and rules. Everyone is treated equally—even AJ. But Jonathan's approach collides with Sebastian's arrogance during an opening-game loss when the toxic quarterback ignores Jonathan's instructions and, as a result, thwarts Blacklick's comeback. Jonathan responds by doubling down on the culture he wants to create.

What changes: Jonathan discovers that establishing a disciplined culture will require more than rules—it will require confronting those who refuse to accept them.

BEAT 5 — Jonathan Chooses Culture Over Talent

AJ reluctantly follows Jonathan's requirement that teammates spend time together outside of football. In doing so, he discovers an unexpected friendship with Brady, the deaf transfer. Meanwhile, Sebastian and several teammates are implicated in an off-campus criminal incident. At a contentious School Board meeting, Jonathan refuses to compromise: players willing to do things the right way matter more than talented players poisoning the program. Sebastian is out—but he vows revenge.

What changes: Jonathan makes his first major sacrifice as coach. He risks the season to protect the culture.

BEAT 6 — Blacklick Reinvents Itself

With its quarterback and several important players gone, Blacklick appears finished. Instead, Jonathan embraces his volunteer coaches and an unconventional West Coast offense designed around Brady's abilities. Brady, Casey Kaufman (his ASL interpreter), and the team develop hand signals and a hand-clapping cadence to overcome communication barriers. AJ sacrifices his offensive role—and potentially the school scoring record—for the good of the team. Blacklick starts winning, AJ and Brady grow closer, and a fractured collection of players begins becoming a family.

What changes: The team's apparent weakness becomes its identity and ultimately its strength.

BEAT 7 — Jonathan Learns the Meaning of Parental Love

Coaching transforms Jonathan everywhere else. He mentors younger attorneys and develops technology to help the firm serve clients better. In a private moment, Ari shares with Jonathan the painful story of losing his infant son, giving Jonathan perhaps the most important lesson of his life: *a father's job isn't to make his children love him; it's to love them regardless*. Then Ari suddenly dies, requiring Jonathan to step up and help others at the firm through their grief. Following an emotional victory over the region's top-ranked team,

Jonathan is at a loss for words. Brady steps forward, says “Toach,” signs “love you,” and hugs his coach. One by one, the other players follow—everyone except AJ.

What changes: Jonathan has learned how to love and lead other people's sons. The one relationship that matters most remains unresolved.

ACT II-B — LOSS, SACRIFICE AND REVELATION

BEAT 8 — Jonathan Chooses People Over Ambition

With Ari gone, Jonathan’s workplace rival, Warren Scott—a conniving, manipulative figure—takes control of the law firm and forces Jonathan to choose between football and his career. For nearly a decade, Jonathan has sacrificed everything to become partner. Now, confronted with the choice, Jonathan chooses the team. Warren fires him.

What changes: Jonathan finally sacrifices the ambition that defined him. He chooses people over professional status.

BEAT 9 — AJ Finds Love and Almost Loses It

While Jonathan deals with the professional consequences of his decision, AJ's personal life changes dramatically. Casey—Brady’s ASL interpreter—encourages AJ to ask out the team manager, Shea Brooks. AJ is crestfallen. He's developed feelings for Casey, while he considers Shea, at best, plain. Nevertheless, he reluctantly complies with Casey’s request. What begins as a favor develops into deep affection for Shea and a genuine relationship between them. Then Sebastian makes good on his vow of revenge: a manipulated AI recording appears to show AJ cruelly mocking Shea. Devastated, Shea withdraws from both AJ and the team. Jonathan, however, immediately believes his son.

What changes: Earlier, AJ questioned whether his father really knew him. Now Jonathan demonstrates that he knows his son's character well enough to stand behind him when the evidence says otherwise.

BEAT 10 — The Truth Comes Out and AJ Finally Sees His Father

With help from Walter Bachman, a mysterious figure who has quietly inserted himself into the unfolding drama, Jonathan uncovers Sebastian's sabotage and exposes the AI recording as a fraud. But another truth also comes to light: AJ learns what Jonathan has sacrificed for the team—and therefore for him. Jonathan gave up everything professionally—the partnership he had spent years pursuing. For the first time, AJ sees his father differently.

What changes: The father-son relationship begins to heal—not because Jonathan explains himself, but because his actions finally speak loudly enough for AJ to effectively hear.

ACT III — THE CHAMPIONSHIP

BEAT 11 — Jonathan Finally Becomes Coach Dad

On championship morning, Warren's false accusation gets Jonathan detained and threatens to keep him from the game. Fulfilling a promise made years earlier to Ari to look after Jonathan, whom Ari considered like a son, Bobby O intervenes, clears Jonathan, and rushes him to the stadium aboard Emerald One, the billionaire's multimillion-dollar helicopter. Along the way, Jonathan calls his older children and finally says the words he has avoided for years: "I love you."

At the championship, Blacklick falls behind and discovers that its opponent, Coldwater Bluff, has obtained its playbook. With Shea's help, Blacklick reinvents itself once again. Brady regains his confidence. AJ repeatedly chooses the team over his own scoring record.

In double overtime, the players ask Jonathan to trust them and go for the win.

Jonathan does.

And in the ultimate callback, Jonathan calls a secret audible—known to only two people on the field—giving AJ the opportunity to win both the championship and the scoring title.

Before AJ returns to the field, Jonathan stops him. Unable to get the words out, he uses the language this team has taught him and signs: "I love you."

AJ scores. Blacklick wins. He and Shea reconcile in the end zone.

In the celebration, AJ finds his father and flashes the silent Reese family "wow" sign that he refused to return at the beginning of the story.

Father and son embrace.

Jonathan finally tells him aloud:

"I love you, AJ."

What changes: Jonathan began the story believing his job as a father was to provide. He ends it understanding that his real job was to be present, to sacrifice, to trust—and to love.