



# SCRIMMAGE!

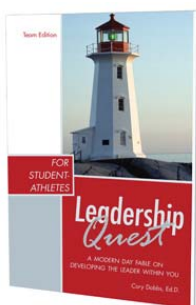
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## A Season is a Lifetime

Team Building and the Team Life Cycle

Whether you assign leadership responsibilities to your student-athletes or leaders come forward based on a desire to lead, teaching student-athletes about the team life cycle will help them make leadership decisions that align with situational needs and team goals. Offer your support to your team leaders as they learn to “read” the context in which they will be making leadership decisions.

There are a variety of models out there for distilling the dynamics of team building. The one that I think best fits the rhythms of a competitive athletic team’s life is Bruce Tuckman’s 5-stage developmental model. This model focuses on the growth and changes through which a normal team progresses in a healthy manner. The model illuminates the challenges of building and leading effective teams.

### STAGE 1: Forming (The Orientation Stage)

In this stage, team members are generally unfamiliar with each other and are in the process of getting to know one another. During this stage of team development, team members feel uneasy about trusting one another and are uncomfortable with being vulnerable in any way. Player interactions with each other tend to be shallow as common team experiences have yet to be shared. Tension can be high because team members have yet to learn how to solve problems or differences with each other.

**Team leaders should know that their teammates might be asking themselves:**

- ★What am I required to do?
- ★Will I be able to contribute?
- ★Who can I trust?
- ★Will my teammates accept me?

**During the forming stage team leaders might:**

- ★Make deliberate plans to break down

- ★Ask questions and be open to listening to teammates as they discuss who they are and what their goals and dreams are.
- ★Discuss with team members expectations for personal development and team cohesion.

### STAGE 2: Storming (The Conflict and Chaos Stage)

This stage is usually the most difficult time for student-athletes in the life cycle of the team’s development. Team members are still navigating relationships and learning to trust one another. Emotions can be somewhat volatile during this stage as team members learn to cooperate, trust, and work with each other. Conflict occurs as roles on the team begin to become slightly clearer—though perceptually many athletes might view roles as having already been defined. Cliques generally begin during this stage as personal differences come into view as team members spend time together.

**Team leaders should know that their teammates might be asking themselves:**

- ★What’s in it for me?
- ★What is my role? And do I like this role?
- ★How do I compete and cooperate with my teammates?
- ★Why do I have to sacrifice my ways for the good of others?

**During the forming stage team leaders might:**

- ★Discuss as a collective unit the behaviors and attitudes that align with the team’s goals.
- ★Identify individuals that are engaging in negative actions and display attitudes that might spoil the building of a cohesive team.

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- ★ Confront carefully holding team members accountable to each other.
- ★ Foster the development of a shared team vision.

### STAGE 3: Norming (The Cohesion Stage)

During this stage, team conflict and chaos subside as the team achieves a sense of cohesion. When the team reaches this stage, team members feel a sense of unity and responsibility to other team members. Encouragement and acknowledgement of individual and team successes are the norm and commitment to team goals begins to take shape. A collective identity materializes. Close relationships will bring trust allowing team leaders to offer team members more constructive feedback.

#### Team leaders should know that their teammates might be asking themselves:

- ★ Do my teammates appreciate me for who I am?
- ★ What is my value to the team?
- ★ Do my teammates value me as a member of this team?
- ★ Who is committed to our team's mission and goals?

#### During the norming stage team leaders might:

- ★ Assess progress toward team cohesion and team goals.
- ★ Identify and find ways to break down “new” barriers that are limiting commitment to each other and the team's goals.
- ★ Keep team members focused on the team norms—those acceptable behaviors that are shared by the team's members.
- ★ Revisit the “I can trust you when...” and “I can't trust you when...” exercise.

### STAGE 4: Performing (The Achievement & Esprit de Corp Stage)

During this stage team members have settled into comfort zones related to self-identity and belonging to the team. Members begin to see who they are as a collective unit and what they can achieve together. This stage of development is marked by team member maturity and comfort with respective roles. Players become more resilient emotionally and recover much more quickly from “down” performances—individually and collectively.

#### Team leaders should know that their teammates might be asking themselves:

- ★ What new goals can the team achieve
- ★ How can the team improve?
- ★ What can I do to contribute to taking the team to the next level?
- ★ How do we share responsibility to make necessary changes?

#### During the performing stage team leaders might:

- ★ Identify ways in which each team member can increase accountability to one another.
  - ★ Refuse to let outside distraction enter into the team atmosphere.
  - ★ Take responsibility for pushing teammates outside of their comfort zones.
- ★ Guide teammates in shrinking their zone of acceptance. Continue to pursue excellence.

### STAGE 5: Adjourning (Death of the Team)

The final stage of development is the process of bringing closure to the team's development. All teams end sometime. This is not a negative thing, it is reality. In high school seniors will go on to college; in college seniors will go on to begin their professional lives. This stage provides an opportunity to celebrate the successes and growth of the team.

#### During the adjourning stage team leaders might:

- ★ Find creative ways to celebrate the successes and achievements of the team.
- ★ Identify ways for the outgoing players to remain connected to next season's team.
- ★ Begin working towards your next set of challenges

