

---

RAISING THE BAR ON TEAMBUILDING

---

# **Coaching for Leadership**

## How to Develop a Leader in Every Locker

Cory L. Dobbs, Ed.D.

Coach's Guidebook



[www.sportleadership.com](http://www.sportleadership.com)



*In high jumping years ago, from high school track meets to the Olympics, the men and women who won always used the traditional scissors kick. Then Dick Fosbury showed up and invented a whole new way to jump over the bar, which came to be called the "Fosbury Flop." Very soon, if you couldn't convert your old belief in the scissors kick to a new belief in this more effective "Fosbury Flop," then you could no longer compete in the event.*

*-(McFarland, Senn, & Childress, 1993, p.184.)*

#### RAISING THE BAR ON TEAMBUILDING

The Academy for Sport Leadership  
[www.sportleadership.com](http://www.sportleadership.com)  
[info@sportleadership.com](mailto:info@sportleadership.com)

Copyright © 2017, Second Edition 2020 by **The Academy for Sport Leadership 121721**

This book is copyrighted material. All rights reserved. It is against the law to make copies of this material without getting written permission in advance from The Academy for Sport Leadership.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

The roots of this book started several years ago as a workshop workbook. Since then I've bulked up my "manifesto" so that it delivers a wider-range of concepts, frames, tools, suggestions, and greater detail. However, I have maintained the workbook format, so that it now acts as a guidebook for coaches interested in coaching for leadership. The book still takes on the workshop approach—the framework includes intense exercises that offer a guide to the practice of "coaching for leadership," a potent skill set for helping student-athletes reach their fullest potential. It provides the reader an opportunity through which he or she can explore the unconventional implications of *Coaching for Leadership* and how to design a catalytic leadership experience by developing a leader in every locker.

Over the past decade I've developed a process to apply *Coaching for Leadership* (this includes the *Teamwork Intelligence* workbook) in a deliberate, conscious, and directed way. Following the process does not guarantee success on the playing field, but it will help you and your players plant the seeds for future success with a higher probability of building a team culture that will make for a successful, enjoyable, and educational team experience.

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	page 5
<b>Pregame Warm-up</b>	page 23
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Half</b>	page 35
<b>Focus: Coaching for Leadership</b>	
<b>Half-time</b>	page 79
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Half</b>	page 93
<b>Focus: Developing a Leader in Every Locker</b>	
<b>Postgame</b>	page 137

**How can a book or a course on leadership  
help a coach become a better leader?**

Good leadership and coaching is not inborn. It is the result of a slow, long, painful process beginning with awareness. That awareness comes in two ways: learning from books, classes and lectures *and* learning from doing and being. That said, books, classes and lectures do create awareness, raise one's consciousness and direct one's efforts in the right direction doing the right thing. —Dr. Jerry Lynch

## **The Academy for Sport Leadership Focus Statement: Redesigning the Student-Athlete Experience**

My basic proposition in this guidebook is that student development should be the organizing principle for student-athletics. Specifically, I suggest that there are three broad areas of development that can be a part of the team sport experience. All effective sports programs develop the participants' personality, guide them in maturing through social roles, teach how to navigate and learn from experiences such as failure, adversity, teamwork and even success, and learn how to build durable and enduring relationships.

To be clear, the most important expectation is for the coach and players to create an environment in which personal growth, learning, and maturity are possible, desirable, and intentional. This proposition rests on the long-term positive impact sports participation can have on the young people playing at the high school and collegiate levels. Keep in mind as you read; development is not solely a physical experience, but involves cognitive aspects of leadership and team building along with social contributions that serve to foster broad-based development of the full-range of human talents and potentials of every student-athlete.

### **EVERY ONE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SUCCEED**

*In the movie *Stand and Deliver**, based on a true story about Jamie Escalante, an empathetic and energetic math teacher in an East Los Angeles high school, takes on the challenge of transforming low performing students into results-driven learners. Most of his students, from low socioeconomic families, are performing at levels well below their grade. The school's culture acts as an invisible hand guiding the students along the low road. The low performing kids are left to lose in life. Escalante, however, seeks to change the school culture by helping his students excel academically at a high level. He approaches the reality of the situation with the mindset that within each of his students is untapped potential. He sets an ambitious goal of having all students taking AP Calculus by their senior year.

Poverty defeats many people. Hardship erodes motivation. Escalante brought about change by leading, teaching, and by nurturing the kids from fixed to growth mindsets. He motivated previously unmotivated students by guiding and influencing, not by issuing orders and using fear and punishment to command compliance. Leaders that teach—coach for leadership—shape people's opinions and win their enthusiasm. They do this by using every opportunity to send out their message and effect how their followers think and behave. Escalante created an environment in which underperformers shifted their mindset from apathy to challenge—from losers to winners.

Escalante's mission and vision became a reality. He stood up and delivered. His students stood up and delivered. This might seem like a feel-good Hollywood movie, but it's not. It is a human story; one in which a group of people overcome real hardship by adapting and adjusting. Escalante's students learned the valuable lesson that everyone has the potential to succeed.

Now, here's the catch: do you really think you can integrate into your program the idea of a leader in every locker? If you don't think most of your players have the potential to succeed in learning how to become a leader, then it's likely they won't—on your watch. But if you *stand and deliver* an environment in which every student-athlete can learn to lead, well then I'm hedging my bet that, like Escalante, you and your student-athletes will succeed.

# INTRODUCTION

## **First Things First: Developing the Next Generation of Leaders**

By design I've written this *Coach's Guidebook* to be practical rather than theoretical, but it does have a thesis. Student development, I assert, is the specific function and contribution of collegiate and high school team sports, and the reason for their existence. Student development includes and involves developing intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal relationships, establishing identity (to include that of a leader), learning to learn from experience, advancing morally, progressing autonomously, maturing in judgment, fostering emotional intelligence, and promoting performance and results as a basis for taking action.

This guidebook will help you to become a better coach by becoming more attuned to what leadership is, how you are expressing it in your coaching role, and how to develop leadership skills in every one of your student-athletes. **At the heart of the *Coaching for Leadership* concept is the fundamental premise: leadership isn't just about sports. It's about life!**

I created The Academy for Sport Leadership to provide resources for coaches interested in developing the two to three team captains they anointed each season. After all, most coaches I knew at the time would bemoan a lack of leadership from their student-athletes. This, I thought, is a problem worth solving. In the beginning it was clear that coaches chose for the captain role those student-athletes they deemed to have the "right stuff," or by default—the players with seniority. My thinking was that with better internal team leadership—that provided by the team captains—the team would become more cohesive and likely to win one to three more games.

However, over time I began noticing that team captains rarely performed well, and when they did it was simply more a case that the leader's teammates were, by tactful obedience, inclined to go along to get along. This confounded me. Yet, the more I learned the more I became convinced that leadership is learnable and teachable.

I cannot stress strongly enough that I now believe that everyone possesses the capability (mostly untapped) to lead; the critical difference being the learning of a new set of cognitive (mindset) and behavioral skills. Leadership is teachable, involving much more than one's personal attributes and character traits. This discovery has led to my critical analysis of the traditional team captain approach and it must be said that doing so is tricky business. You might argue with the premise, of course. After all, most coaches for most of history have utilized the *few team captain* approach. And most student athletes, you'll contend, aren't capable of leading their peers. However, what if you put on a different set of lenses and see leadership and leadership development in a different light?

*Coaching for Leadership* starts with the desire to make a difference in the lives of student-athletes. It has to do with long-term value of behavioral changes that help students learning to

lead and how to build high teams. **Every coach must recognize that he or she is in the business of behavior change.** This is why the pressing need to understand human behavior.

The *Coaching for Leadership* journey goes beyond the age-old model of planning, organizing, and controlling. The first step we'll take is to take a broader view and add the human side (guiding and engaging) of things to the developmental process.

TAKING A BROADER VIEW OF LEADERSHIP Exhibit 1

MANAGING Structural / Transactional	GUIDING Intentional / Relational	ENGAGING Intentional / Relational
Planning	Alignment	Authentic
Organizing	Motivation	Connecting
Controlling (Process of being shaped)	Results (Process of becoming)	Involvement (Process of becoming)

### TAKING A BROADER VIEW

#### MANAGING (Hierarchical)

The managing model is an expression of the “great man theory” of leadership that held sway for many centuries. This practice of leadership involved mechanically managing people and resources. The three-part managing cycle of planning, organizing, and controlling fit the assumptions of the command-and-control mindset as well as the scientific management approach of Fredrick Taylor. Together, the managing cycle and scientific management certainly accounted for some great achievements, but in today’s world seem a little out-of-step with the emphasis on human potential. The deeply engrained managing cycle has not been displaced, much of your coaching time is spent planning, organizing, and controlling; and with the introduction of data scientific management is bound to step forward and regain a place in the practice of coaching. But it is clear; the managing model has its limits. **Like it or not, today, everyone needs to be a leader.**

#### GUIDING (Network: Configuring Strengths to Meet the Challenges of the Context)

**Alignment** Context has enormous influence over behavior. We’re all influenced, to a great extent, by situational determinants. Situational awareness is necessary to understanding how a context shapes individual and collective actions. Much of how we “see” and “interact” with the social world around us is shaped by the context. A key skill for *Coaching for Leadership* is deciphering the context in which you are coaching and leading; that is, understanding the situation—in all its complexity—around you, your team, players, parents, staff. Understanding the context is critical to creating and utilizing elements necessary for alignment. **When trying to change a situation, you need to understand the situation as it is before trying to change it.** Successful change starts with an examination of what currently exists, such as student-athlete readiness, forces for and against change, team culture, beliefs, and values. Alignment is derived from defining a mission—why you do what you do—and conviction of values, goals, and vision. You must, in the end, configure the strengths of your student-athletes to expand your leverage and produce desired results.

**Motivation** You can use tricks and strong-arm tactics to gain short-term compliance, but manipulation doesn’t earn you the commitment you need to create a high-performing team. You have to know yourself, know what motivates you *and* your student-athletes. You have to

have passion for *Coaching for Leadership* and your players have to see your passion. Another thing about motivation: when student-athletes live in fear, fatigue, or anger they hold back. When you coach for leadership, you empower your student-athletes to realize their gifts and talents.

**Results Good intentions don't lead to action; commitment does.** Once your student-athletes and staff are aligned with the mission, vision, goals, and values, you need to hold them accountable—and the first thing to hold them accountable to is their own accountability to the team. It's a *Coaching for Leadership* imperative that your student-athletes know what they are responsible for and that they are accountable for those responsibilities to each member of the team. Team results are an outcome of the interplay between coaches, players, systems, processes, and team culture. When it comes right down to it, you need to understand what goes on with and between team members. To inspire student-athletes to be the best teammate they can be, to lead, to follow, and to contribute to the team, you need to understand what is important to them and why. A cohesive team requires a great deal of trust among its members. If that trust never fully develops, or if it is threatened, individuals may feel they are not accepted by the team leading to the likelihood of unwillingness to fully contribute.

## ENGAGING

**Authentic** Great *Coaching for Leadership* starts with authenticity. As a leader, you have choices to make: how you spend your time, what you say to your athletes, how you communicate your vision. **If you don't really believe in what you are trying to accomplish (such as coaching for leadership), then your student-athletes are likely to not follow you very far.** Your student-athletes can see through you, because they are constantly watching you to see that what you say matches with what you do. Staying authentic can be a challenge as the season unfolds. However, if you lose sight of who you are and what really matters to you, and how all that relates to your pursuit of *Coaching for Leadership*, little progress will be made. If you aren't authentic you won't go very far in your efforts to coach for leadership. Building trusting relationships is the only way to ensure your impact and influence on others. Trust is the foundation of all good relationships. Authenticity—yours as a leader, and the student-athletes' as team members—is the key to trust and the basis for *Coaching for Leadership*.

**Connecting** *Coaching for Leadership* recognizes leadership as a relational process and that by connecting with the players, coaches are leading others to lead themselves. The goal is to build shared purpose. Connecting to others is tough to do unless your heart is part of the mix. *Coaching for Leadership* involves deeper interpersonal relationships so that you can draw upon all of your own resources to fully engage your players and staff in a meaningful manner. **To reach your staff and players you need to reach their head and their heart. This takes connecting, not just communicating.**

**Involvement** The best coaches at *Coaching for Leadership* are those who treat their athletes as students. **They don't let ego get in the way and they don't always need to be right.** They recognize ego is always at play (theirs, the coaching staff and the players), fear is natural, and pretty much everyone feels insecure at one time or another. *Coaching for Leadership* stresses

empowering the student-athlete to seek, embrace, and to demand leadership opportunities. You do, however, need to keep your finger on the pulse of what's going on, but you should be willing to let student-athletes solve problems and provide you with feedback. Finally, prioritize your student-athletes. This sounds simple and obvious, but it's easier said than done.

## The Vital Role of the Coach as a Leadership Educator

*"In the eyes of most observers, my title is 'Coach' Wooden, but this is not what I would list first on my resume or business card. From my earliest years I have viewed my primary job as one of educating others: I am a teacher."* -John Wooden

It cannot be overstated that leadership is a complex and often bewildering experience. To teach leadership is oftentimes equally elusive. To be a leadership educator you have to be *willing and able* to see the leadership and influence opportunities you might have missed before. You can start by recognizing that your athletes need guidance in developing their capacity for leading themselves, leading others, and leading with others.

*Coaching for Leadership* begins with you taking a bold stand on transforming your team building process. Building a high performing team is possible only with commitment from you, your staff, and your student-athletes. Team building is an extraordinary partnership. ***Coaching for Leadership is an iterative activity, an ongoing venture of co-creating opportunities for student-athletes to practice leadership.***

*Coaching for Leadership* places relationships in the center of teamwork; the linchpin to high performance is how the student-athletes work together—both *on and off* the playing field. How often do you find yourself thinking that relationships are “nice to have?” And when interpersonal conflict occurs, you simply dismiss it as normal operational behavior—which it is but what matters is how it's handled and resolved. Many coaches give lip service to relationships. *Coaching for leadership* rests on the principle of not leaving relationships to chance. Consider what might happen if you are totally committed to coaching for leadership.

It's important to note, however, that much of what passes as leadership today is nothing more than manipulation of people by sticks and carrots – threats and rewards. That's not effective leadership for the long-term and certainly is limited as a method of teaching leadership. True leadership seeks to motivate people by an appeal to the head and the heart, not by the demand of command and control. Compliance seldom, if ever, leads to authentic commitment. And loyalty is not something you can demand—it is something your student-athletes grant to you when they know you've got their best interest at heart.

As a leadership educator your main task is to create a psychologically safe environment in which your players want to learn how to become team leaders. This is not a trivial distinction. A learning climate characterized by trust and openness is critical to encourage young people to respect and appreciate their teammates, coaches and the learning process. Strategies for

transformative learning should be purposeful, planned, and productive. The following seven conditions are helpful in creating a psychologically safe learning environment favorable to promoting a transformational experiential approach to leadership development.

1. Student-athletes need to feel comfortable with the concepts of leadership.
2. Student-athletes need to know about the practice and the processes of leadership.
3. Student-athletes need permission to make mistakes.
4. Student-athletes should have a sense of purpose as it relates to leadership. They need to have an answer to the question “Why lead?”
5. Student-athletes should begin to develop an awareness of their individual strengths and weaknesses as leaders. They need feedback.
6. Student-athletes need to monitor and adjust behaviors intended to influence others. They need to take the appropriate action from feedback.
7. Student-athletes should begin to learn the complex practice of self-reflection.

At the heart of developing an effective team environment lies how team members reflect on what they are doing to create the conditions necessary to achieve their goals. When a team’s members work together great things happen. But when they work at cross-purposes adversity is right around the corner. The results of my research over the last decade have been clear. We can develop the leaders our teams and our society needs, and I believe everyone who aspires to lead or train to lead can learn from leading in the sport setting.

The first step in tackling any leadership challenge is self-awareness. Take a hard look at yourself. Examine your experience and results working with student-athletes. If you find yourself “searching” for leaders year-after-year, it’s a good bet you’re not yet a leadership educator. *Coaching for Leadership* helps solve this chronic issue.

Do you have a formal philosophy of teaching leadership and teambuilding? This is an important question for any coach to ponder. How will your style work when teaching these two pillars of student development? Your student-athletes should be the beneficiaries of your teaching and leadership, and how you model the role of a leader will impact their growth and development. The challenge for most coaches, then, is learning how to become an effective teacher of leadership. It’s likely you’ll have to learn skills such as the patience to tolerate mistakes, to trust others, to empower your players, and understanding when to raise or lower expectations to meet the capabilities of each individual.

## **Designing Developmental Opportunities**

**Your role** as a leadership educator includes the responsibility of providing those in your charge opportunities to try out the new attitudes, behaviors, and skills they are developing.

In his revealing book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell’s account of success turns up some very surprising insights. At least surprising to those willing to listen and learn. As he closes his book Gladwell succinctly summarize his findings: “Everything we have learned in *Outliers* says that

success follows a predictable course. It is not the brightest who succeed...Nor is it simply the sum of the decisions and efforts we make on our own behalf. It is, rather, a gift. Outliers are those who have been given opportunities—and who have the strength and presence of mind to seize them.”

Leadership writer Peter Drucker was a true genius. He was an amazing thinker, influencing much of modern leadership thought. An emphatic Drucker advised, “Leadership is a skill that can, and must, be learned.” As a teacher of the world’s leaders, Drucker didn’t see a need to enter into the nature vs. nurture debate. He simply declared that leadership can be learned. And as we know from experience, parents, coaches, and teachers play a significant role in the learning process.

Learning is a personalized process that intersects with the emergent and deliberate situations in a person’s life. Student-athletes bring to any learning environment an array of assumptions about what is right and wrong, true and false, good and bad, important and unimportant. It is critical that you afford your players opportunities to lead and provide them appropriate growth-producing feedback. Many student-athletes want to learn to lead; they have energy but do not know how to use it. Developing the young persons’ capacity to lead requires a learning climate—projects, practical experience and conditions that make it safe to learn to lead. As a coach committed to Coaching for Leadership, this is largely your responsibility.

Likewise, if we stop equating leadership with celebrity, it will quickly become clear that leaders come in all shapes and sizes. A healthy perspective should include Gladwell’s words, “to build a better world we need to replace the patchwork of lucky breaks and arbitrary advantages that today determine success—with a society that provides opportunities for all.”

Think for a moment, what is necessary to initiate the process of leader development? Opportunity. How do student-athletes learn to lead? Opportunity and reflection on their experiences. Therefore, give your student-athletes an abundance of formal and informal opportunities and experiences enabling them to learn to lead. As a noted leadership expert says, it your responsibility to “release their energy.”

### **Coaching Points**

- Provide meaningful leadership learning opportunities.
- Guide leader to recognize and understand emotions and how they affect others.
- Encourage leaders to put themselves in someone else’s shoes.
- Provide leaders the opportunity to contribute to a larger purpose.
- Prepare leaders for leading in different venues (work, social, family).

## **THE BIG SHIFT: UNLOCK YOUR TEAM'S POTENTIAL BY CREATING PLAYER-LED TEAMBUILDING**

### **LAYING THE GROUNDWORK**

The concept “player-led team” conjures up a narrow-range of responses that, more often than not, include a healthy dose of skepticism. Player-led, inferring leadership by the players, is one of those slippery concepts that every coach knows about but finds difficult to deploy. However, the reality is that the underlying forces of teamwork are player-centric and enable and nurture the co-creation process of teambuilding. This is why coaches today are interested in exploring the learning aspects for student-athletes—learning to lead self, lead others, and lead with others. The driving assumptions are that a player-led process will lead to a collectively, reflectively, and relationally smarter team; that all student-athletes are capable of learning to lead; and that team leadership is grounded in a team learning together.

Years ago when I was finishing up my doctoral research, I had a meeting with one of my advisors. He began the encounter by asking me, “Cory what is the best way to learn something?” Having just completed a lengthy research project grounded in experiential learning, I said confidently, “The best way to learn something is to experience it yourself.” My advisor turned to me and replied: “No, the best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else.” Yet, over the next couple of years, I still believed experiential learning to be superior to teaching as a way of learning. Until something happened that changed the way I thought about peer leadership and teambuilding.

A young up-and-coming coach asked me to observe her team over a series of practices. At a tense point during the final practice the team’s last player on the bench halted practice to help another player execute a drill properly. During this “incident” she spoke boldly to her teammates, inviting them to “do whatever it takes” to execute with precision. She went as far as telling her teammates to “stop practice if you need to.” Did I just discover a leadership secret?

For student-athletes, speaking honestly to peers about interpersonal and performance issues is downright terrifying. I have seen student-athletes literally get sick to their stomachs with fear before going into a team building session where they are expected to lead a difficult discussion with teammates. It’s hard for most people to confront a peer who has failed to meet expectations. And far too often personality conflicts or lack of trust damage relationships by being swept under the carpet.

With the experience of the up-and-coming coach in mind, I began researching and practicing peer leadership. The outcomes that emerged from peer leadership were initially a bit mysterious. Like a diligent detective I kept searching. What I discovered was that the real mystery is this: Why do so few coaches experiment with new ways of thinking?

During the early part of my career with The Academy for Sport Leadership, I wrote, researched, and worked with sports teams to create better team leaders, mostly helping prepare team

captains. I was brimming with good intentions, but I never felt comfortable with the evidence—the results of the team captains. The effective team captain was a rarity; most of the leadership of the teams I'd spent time with was still provided by the coach and his or her staff with team captains expected to lead in the shallow matters.

Over the next few years, as I researched and practiced player-led team development, I encountered stiff resistance from many coaches. One superstar coach bluntly informed me that players should have no influence on the direction or decisions of the team. He carefully imparted the “my way or the highway” approach to coaching. “The players play, and the coaches coach,” he said, “and if any player thinks he can coach, well, we take care of that rather quickly.” After conducting an in-depth review with his student-athletes, it was clear the players had little respect for the coach and did only enough to get by.

As I began working with more sports teams interested in player-led leadership, the evidence that emerged was positive. With training, student-athletes were taking initiative and exercising resourcefulness in their efforts to team build. Collaboration and cooperation, not command and control, proved to be the most effective strategy for increasing player leadership performance.

I felt optimistic. I discovered that teaching student-athletes a leadership framework distinguished cohesive teams from dysfunctional teams. I came to the realization that the moment a player engaged in the process of teaching a teammate, the dynamics of the moment changed. The act, whether small or large, impacted the participants in a positive way. I was witness to numerous small actions being amplified and creating a whole new perspective. I was compelled to investigate the hidden dynamic behind this behavior.

The best explanation is that the players value learning by peer-teaching. Sure, experience is vital to the process. It provides the raw material. But when a student-athlete engaged in peer teaching—a kind of peer leadership—something extraordinary happened. Those doing the teaching exhibited hyper-engagement with the context and its momentary needs. And those being coached acted in a grateful manner to their peer teacher. When a player is *willing* and *able* to share knowledge or insight with another player, they transform the moment, the teammate, and the team.

The end goal of player-led teamwork is for the student-athlete to learn, to grow, and to nourish the teambuilding and team leadership processes. This article has a simple aim: to get you to look at new ways of thinking not as threats, but as opportunities to learn; specifically, to get you to think about player leadership and teambuilding. You will learn that coaching for leadership is a healthy shift that can make the difference between an average team experience or a transformative experience. You will also learn that teambuilding is a complex co-creative process and you will come to appreciate how teamwork intelligence can guide the leadership development of every student-athlete.

## THE BIG SHIFT: THE QUEST FOR OPTIMAL TEAM LEADERSHIP

This chapter is for those coaches who want to coach for leadership. Specifically, it is for those who want to become more effective at building their team's capabilities by actually developing the leadership and teambuilding talents of their roster of student-athletes. The basic idea is simple. Take the time to develop and grow the leadership qualities and teamwork intelligence of the student-athletes. To do this requires a deliberate effort from the coaching staff—help guiding each student-athlete to seek out leadership opportunities and how to learn from their experience. The desired outcome is a player-led culture, one in which the players take a hyper-active role in building the team.

Today, the idea of player-led teams is gaining steam, and for good reason. Legions of coaches are changing things up because team culture has emerged as job one. There is no factor more important for a coach than creating an environment where all student-athletes can grow and develop leadership skills and teambuilding knowledge and capabilities. It is equally important that student-athletes have a pathway—ownership and autonomy—to contribute their people skills. When coaches refocus on the interpersonal potential of team member attitudes and actions, they unleash untapped and overlooked capabilities. From this new vantage point, coaches gain a whole new perspective about how to foster high achievement drive and motivation within the team environment.

What makes player-led teambuilding unique is its underlying goal: to help student-athletes to see more in themselves than they currently believe possible. It's about helping student-athletes climb out of their self-imposed view of "I'm not a leader," to embrace the idea of having a legitimate role to play in building the team. It's about teaching student-athletes to lead and to follow—knowing how and when to move between the two.

Here's the voice of a player-led team member: "We came together, and we understand that it can't just be the coaches on us anymore. We have to hold each other accountable. We say things like, 'We're our brothers' keeper.' We have to take that into heart, and we have to mean that every time we step on the field."

Of course, it is seldom that easy. If it were, most coaches would quickly integrate a player-led mindset into everything they do as a team. If you're frantically searching for a quick-fix method of leader development, this method is not for you. As you will see, utilizing player-leadership is challenging, but worthwhile.

I define player-led teambuilding as the practice of a purpose-driven group of athletes self-organizing to build a team through shared leadership—players leading players. This involves a radical shift in the ways players and coaches interact socially and interpersonally. There's a distinct change of gear from the coach with "My way or the highway" control to maximizing player performance and inspiration through the way team members interact with and depend on each other. The purpose of teambuilding and team leadership is to create an environment in which every member is fully engaged. It is about *the players* creating a place in which they perform their best—that it is player-to-player relations that unleash the natural flow of

relational energy student-athletes bring to the team. This represents a huge shift from the two-team captain tradition.

**IT'S COMPLICATED!**

- Coaches fear the messy unknown
- Coaches fear losing control
- Players fear vulnerability
- Players fear failure

In the role of team leader, the student-athlete must shift his focus from a self-centered perspective to a team-centric mindset; one that highlights the interdependent connections with teammates. When this happens team members take each other's well-being into account and build relationships of mutual respect, honor, loyalty, and understanding; where each player contributes to each other's growth and development and the fulfillment of each other's hopes, dreams, and aspirations.

The coaching role and goal is to *enlighten* and *empower* student-athletes to create an environment in which *they* challenge, communicate with, lead, and inspire one another. While coaches organize the team, it is the players that infuse the team with purpose, dignity, and significance. The cornerstone of a player-led way of coaching is the belief that all student-athletes have untapped leadership and teambuilding potential. However, achieving pure player-leadership proves elusive for many coaches because they have no way of knowing whether or not they are effective at developing team leaders. To start, they need a way to figure out how to get student-athletes working together in a fundamentally different way.

My research efforts with my company, The Academy for Sport Leadership, have opened my mind to what it takes for coaches to coach for leadership and players to learn and use teamwork intelligence effectively and efficiently. The primary problem is that coaches think about leadership too narrowly. They treat leadership as a trait one either possesses or lacks. Seldom does a coach consider leadership development as a set of skills to teach. For both, coaches and players, I have tried and tested various combinations of skills and techniques which have proven to increase individual and team performance potential.

Creating player-led teambuilding does not depend on the student-athlete possessing the right traits; rather, it demands that the coach teach leadership in a way that eventually leads to an optimal path for team leadership. The key to moving to a new leadership operating system depends on establishing new norms and behaviors. This requires a Big Shift—creating a new infrastructure designed to foster a learning oriented culture. Meaningful changes take place by establishing what the team's members should stop doing, keep doing, and start doing.

**THE BIG SHIFT: A LEADERSHIP SYSTEM UPGRADE**

To fully grasp why a Big Shift is necessary, we must understand why coaches tend to operate reflexively when presented with teambuilding issues. At the core of the Big Shift is a set of assumptions and propositions coaches make about student-athletes and their leadership

capabilities and potential. It is essential that every coach look into the mirror and question their assumptions. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. Do you believe that student-athletes can lead their peers?
2. Do you believe that student-athletes seek responsibility *and* accountability?
3. Do you believe that student-athletes respect and respond to peer leadership?
4. Do you believe that student-athletes naturally want to learn how to lead?
5. Do you believe that only coaches are responsible for the leadership success of the team?
6. Do you believe that student-athletes need to be controlled and their behavior modified to fit the needs of the team?
7. Do you believe that without control by coaches, student-athletes are passive?

At the core of any theory of leadership are assumptions about motivation and organization. Almost all teams approach the design of a student-athlete leadership system by choosing a select few players to be team captains. The primary assumption undergirding the two (or three if you insist) team captain system is that leaders are born—they possess traits that naturally make them better leaders. However, if we are serious about unleashing the potential of each player to contribute to leadership and teambuilding, we must commit to finding a better way of developing team leaders.

An upgrade of a leadership system entails mutual learning—coaches and players—that generates a shift in values, assumptions, and behaviors, so that leadership is invested in the full team, rather than just a few team captains.

The Big Shift is a new way of structuring team leadership by distributing leadership responsibilities—a true paradigm shift. The shift entails moving from the underlying unilateral command and control structure, towards a relationship-driven structure that engages all team members in leadership activities. This is the essence of a player-led system. In order for the shift to player-led teambuilding to reach its full potential, the shift must involve a new way to define leadership roles, responsibilities, and accountability.

The first role to be adopted is that of the coach as a leadership educator. The foundation of becoming a leadership educator is a growth mindset and the expanded teaching ability of coaching for leadership. Coaching for leadership is far more than just assigning team captains and occasionally meeting with them to ensure the team is “running smoothly.” The coaching for leadership coach is comfortable with distributing leadership to his or her student-athletes and knows what to look for and what kind of feedback is likely to be helpful developing team leadership. Dobbs (2017) has described this as a requirement for the coach making the big shift to developing a leader in every locker.

To many coaches, the idea of “a leader in every locker” sounds unusual, suspicious, and is met with deep skepticism. That’s because the traditional team captaincy approach has seldom been challenged. Mostly, it’s simply been accepted as the “way life is.” If you dig deep you’ll find, for most coaches, letting go of control is hard to do because they feel responsible for the outcomes

of all decisions. Consequently the coach finds himself or herself focusing exclusively on short-term task-oriented results at the expense of the more complex longer-term relational and learning goals.

The next generation of student-athletes won't develop as leaders unless given opportunities to learn, to think, and to grow into a leadership role. For this to happen, coaches need to reconfigure many of their essential coaching habits and practices. For example, coaches will need to, but likely struggle with, the communication challenge of shifting from mostly "telling" players what to do, to knowing when to "ask" players for input. "Do as I say," is an unwritten code of coaching. Telling is so ingrained that we don't think about its effect. However, the *right mix* of telling and asking is crucial to creating a we-centric culture.

To design a player-led teambuilding system requires coaches to undergo a heart-set and mindset transformation; a logical and emotional shift that changes the way a coach thinks about teambuilding. Making this shift means more than just transferring a few decisions to the players. The more forward-thinking coaches see the limitations of the traditional "control" model and are on board with the need for change. They embrace change as the very essence of a transformational coaching journey—they have clarity and confidence about altering *what is* and adapting to *what can be*.

The Big Shift demands deep sustainable change. It's rooted in a transformation of the coach's attitudes, assumptions, and of course, behavior. They do this by building positive relationships, providing emotional support, and fostering respect; by reorienting how the coaches and players work together to build a potent learning environment. It follows that, while all coaches seek to improve, deep change must be driven by a tolerance for ambiguity and acceptance of uncertainty. Unlike established routines, ambiguity is part-and-parcel of significant change because you simply cannot predict and control everything involved in the chain of events of complex change.

Yet, invariably, something special happens to teams that struggle through the change process. Players and coaches must depend on and trust each other in new ways. Teams that work through the early phases of change begin to think, feel, and act in new ways, fostering an attitude of "we are in this together."

### **THE BIG SHIFT: BREAKING THROUGH THE COMFORT ZONE**

Before you tackle your change effort, take a moment and ask yourself the following questions: What is likely to happen if you teach all student-athletes to become team leaders? How do you install a leadership development process? How does a leader in every locker threaten your leadership? Is this too disruptive for coaches? Student-athletes?

In my workshops, I ask coaches to identify and list some potential problems and possible risks that might emerge if they are to go "all in" on creating a player-led teambuilding team. I encourage you and your staff to spend twenty minutes exploring and examining potential problems and possible risks.

## Potential Problems

## Possible Risks

Effective coaching for leadership is about how coaches and team members come to see each other as an integral part of the teambuilding processes. A person's performance will always be consistent with what they internally believe they *can* or *should* be producing. And a major component of one's belief in his or her leadership potential is built upon the impact of internalization of what influential others—teammates and coaches—think of him or her.

Let me state the obvious; leadership and teambuilding are very much a “we thing.” It's a matter of how “we” develop solidarity and unity, empathy, and trust. The stubborn resistance that only a select few players are capable of leading is a major barrier to student-athletes becoming team leaders.

It's important to note here that what you think and believe about student-athletes and leadership matters. Your sincere belief that they can lead and that now is the time to become a team leader will powerfully influence your student-athletes acceptance and adoption of the practices of team leadership.

### **THE BIG SHIFT: DRILLING DOWN**

Many coaches hold to the assumption that student-athletes are unable to effectively lead their peers. This concern is made explicit as student-athletes typically display limited self-awareness, leadership, and interpersonal communication and conflict management skills.

Without much background and understanding coaches are deeply skeptical about player-led team development. Because of this reluctance most advocates of teaching student-athletes to lead, be they coaches or administrators, focus on the very narrow perspective of character-based training.

Today, the educational landscape has changed. Many coaches are investing time and money to increase their capacity to lead. And many schools and universities are developing curricular approaches to developing coaches, athletes, and sport leaders. However, while resources abound, the real challenge is change, individual and organizational.

### **Resistance to Change**

Why is it so hard to lose weight? Why is it so easy to jump to conclusions? It's because of our habits; our patterns of thinking formed over a long period of time. Let's face it, we are creatures of habit. And change isn't easy. Most of us are unwilling to change until we encounter a disorienting dilemma that forces us to change. And even then, desire and motivation to change are seldom enough. So, what if it's necessary for you to change in order to unlock the potential of your student-athletes?

No coach needs convincing that *improvement* and *changes* are necessary constants of building a successful program. As such, it is of vital importance that coaches “manage” the change

process. It is their responsibility to either manage the process by chance, do little planning, or by choice via deliberate planning and demanding execution.

Very briefly, the core problem of resistance to change must be surfaced. The first step the coach must take is to surface his or her attitude towards the idea of players as participants in the leadership processes.

### **Surface Your Attitudes**

Attitudes are important. You may be tempted to think that your attitude is not the problem, or at least justified given the fact that few student-athletes are proven leaders. However, you would be mistaken. Are you willing to change your attitude if necessary? Okay then, ask your student-athletes if you are destroying their desire to lead, or denying their growth and development. If there is a hint that you might be destroying or denying, take it as a sign that you need to surface your assumptions (For example, young people don't know how to lead) and decide if a player-led process is for you.

On the other side of the attitude ledger are the positive attitudes of creating a student-athlete's potential and fostering the realization of one's leadership potential. If you already possess a growth mindset, continue along your current path. My guess is you'll enjoy the journey embedded within the Seven Shifts of Perspective and Responsibility. However, while you may be embedded into your change project, I can guarantee your student-athletes will need you to play a vital role in their transition to leadership roles and responsibilities. That role is to teach and coach for leadership.

#### **FOUR FORCEFUL ATTITUDES**

*I have always been deeply moved by outstanding achievement, especially in the face of adversity, and saddened by wasted potential. –Carol Dweck, author of Mindset*

**Destroying Leadership Potential:** You can quickly kill any confidence a young student-athlete might have by being overly critical or condescending.

**Denying Leadership Potential:** When you restrain and suppress the emerging voice of a team leader you are denying them a growth and learning opportunity.

**Creating Leadership Potential:** To make the transition to a leadership role easier and effective provide opportunities for each player to explore and develop a leadership mindset.

**Realizing Leadership Potential:** When you encourage and build up the student-athlete as a team leader you inspire them to do more.

### **Surface Your Mental Models**

If your goal is significant change, and my guess is it is, you must examine your existing mental models. Thomas Kuhn, the author of the disruptive book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, provided clarity on the change process with his finding that almost every significant breakthrough in science is first a break from tradition. A "paradigm shift" Kuhn pointed out, involves significant change with the old way of thinking. Stephen Covey, author

and educator, fine-tuned the capacity of paradigms when he declared, “If you want small changes, work on your behavior, if you want quantum-leap changes, work on your paradigms.”

Let’s take a closer look at your coaching self in the mirror. Beneath your inescapable good looks and youthful charm churns a hidden portrait of stories, values, assumptions, ideas, and experiences woven into your unique and idiosyncratic mental models. The interplay of your internal models elicit ways you will apprehend your world, as well as comprehend—or make sense of—your socially constructed world. Understanding how you relate to the world around you is the foundation of self-awareness. Further, how you gather information via your mental models and how you process that information can limit, or expand, the way you get things done, and negatively, or positively impact the ways in which you interact with others, and affect your judgment and decision-making.

### **Commit to Change**

Let’s get beyond the superficial rah-rah. Most change initiatives fail. And if player-led teambuilding is a flavor of the month, it too will fail. In the quest to meet the challenges of change, it’s crucial for all participants—players and coaches—to make a total commitment to the change effort. There is no one way to design a player-led team to achieve its goals. Just as every team has its own culture and practices, there are viable alternatives to the way in which you design a player-led team.

A great educator once said, “There is a world of difference between studying what leadership is, and studying how it functions in the real world.” Real-world change, for individuals and teams, is difficult to sustain. It’s estimated that two-thirds of change programs get bogged down and half-way through lose whatever momentum remains. The framework of the Seven Shifts represents a starting point for building a high-performing team; enabling coaches and student-athletes that care deeply to build a new type of team.

## **THE BIG SHIFT: SEVEN SHIFTS OF PERSPECTIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Shift #1: from Order Giver to Opportunity Creator** (Order, see p. 49)

This shift is vital to the other six shifts. It promotes the transformational rule that coaches must first change themselves to change their teams. Here the shift takes the coach from a classic results-driven command and control model to a blend with a relationship-driven model focused on learning and maturing. A cautionary note: The traditional leadership operating system is and has been mostly hierarchical. It’s about a coach *giving* orders and players *taking* orders. But the opportunity creator is different; he or she embraces a shared leadership in which they “teach a team to fish.” This transformational shift identifies and makes each participant’s strength productive.

### **Shift #2: from Seeing Student-Athletes as They are, to What They can Become** (Change, see p. 49)

Experience has taught me that few things help young people grow more than to give them responsibility and to let them know you trust them. This shift is about believing so deeply in your student-athletes that their awareness of your belief in them inspires them to rise to new

heights of individual and team growth. This shift sets the stage for recognizing contributions rather than focusing on shortcomings. When you do this you demonstrate that leadership is a relationship; that by changing your mindset you are able to become the kind of person that others want to follow.

**Shift #3: from Fixed Perspective to Growth Mindset** (Growth & Learning, see p. 49)

Leadership can be taught. And learned! Carol Dweck, Stanford University Professor, has spent her entire career studying human potential. She has found that there are two main mindsets through which we navigate life: growth and fixed. The fixed mindset is seldom open for learning (most ideas are written in stone), whereas the growth mindset allows for failure and stumbling through new experiences in the expectation of learning, growing, and always improving performance. Coaches and players come equipped with either a fixed or growth mindset. However, dedicated to the notion of progress, the growth mindset can and should be nurtured.

**Shift #4: from Self-Preservation to Fostering Horizontal Teamwork** (Relations, see p. 49)

An argument that has raged since the first group of hunters gathered on the Savanna: Is there one best style of leadership? Or is leadership different for different people in different situations? The purpose of this shift is to expand the focus on leadership as a relationship. It is abundantly clear that when a coach fosters a psychologically safe environment, they can create superior teambuilding culture. This shift involves adjusting the status of player to coach; from the traditional arms-length to hands-on. The challenge of shifting to a horizontal relationship is like a fish out of water. As one veteran coach told me, “It’s difficult for us coaches to really serve our players with leadership opportunities because we’re anxious about our own performance.” Another coach said “I know I am the problem, but I don’t know any other way to lead.”

This shift can hit hard as reality intrudes. Coaches are expected to make some *sacrifices*, such as spending valuable time striving to understand and empathize with players. And *serve*—such as asking a player what he or she might need during a team meeting. Here humility becomes a driving force, putting ego in its place.

**Shift #5: from Directive Leadership to Participative** (Governance, see p. 49)

Most coaches initially balk at the idea of shared leadership because they desperately want to cling to total control. The directive style of leadership is built on a unilateral control mindset and has a rich narrative in the history of leadership. Often the hard-nosed heavy-handed coach emerges as a hero only to solidify the cultivation of the directive style of leadership. As one veteran coach told me, “It’s difficult to really serve our players with leadership opportunities because we’re anxious about our own performance.” Another coach said, “I know I am the problem, but I don’t know any other way to lead.”

In sport, as in the military, there is a traditional concept that a chain of command, based on power and authority, is a preferred style for efficient leadership. The chain of command is a hierarchical structure that reinforces “power over” rather than “power with” relationships

highlighted by the status of superiority (strength) over inferiority (weakness). Often those who lack status lack value. While unilateral control is efficient, it is only adequate when it comes to long-term effectiveness. If we are to train student-athletes as leaders, coaches must adjust the relational power gap when it fits with the situation. Leadership is grounded in the fact that it is exercised as a way of *influencing* a course of events, to include follower behaviors and a desired outcome. The emphasis is on influence as the tool of persuasion.

The goal of this shift is to teach the emerging leaders how to interact more positively with others. Directive leadership has its place in the tool belt of the leader. It's just that the player-led leadership invites participants to solve problems, resolve conflicts, mend relationships, and build trust. Using influence, players have a better chance of addressing these issues successfully.

**Shift #6: from Team Captains to Shared Leadership** (Team Framework, see p. 49)

The peer-based shared leadership approach is a relationship-focused method of teaching student-athletes how to lead and how to build a team. It posits that leaders emerge when they are prepared *and* when the opportunity arises. Team leaders are able to see the big picture and willing to focus on interactions between and among all the participants in the environment. Everyone participates (A Leader in Every Locker). For that reason, leadership must be taught. And just as importantly—learned.

Think of it this way: Shared, or collaborative, leadership is like a serious jazz band. Leaders emerge, submerge, and play off of one another. A quote from a member of a team I worked with recently sums it up: "It seemed like whenever we needed someone to lead, somebody did it." No one was forced to make a contribution. Rather, they did so because they knew that it was to the team's benefit as well as their own.

**Shift #7: from Coercion & Compliance to Commitment** (Motivation, see p. 49)

I'm guessing you are very familiar with the leadership tools of the "stick and the carrot." The carrot (a reward) is used as a tool to externally motivate a person. If the player wants the carrot bad enough (usually playing time), the pleasure it might bring, he or she will do whatever is necessary. Coercion is effective when offering something a person wants. And the stick (a threat), well, the stick is used to get compliance. The stick, can and will be used as tool of punishment. If a player wants to avoid the pain of being "hit" with the stick, they'll comply with the leader's request. Use of threat and punishment to effect behavioral change can work in the short-term; the coach gets the behavior he or she wants. But the coach that overuses the carrot *and* stick finds themselves with very few student-athletes wanting a much of anything to do with them. Can you say rebel?

Deep changes, the kind necessary for the Big Shift, are difficult, if not impossible to achieve through coercion. Effective coaches learn to deal with the whole person in order to gain their commitment. Let me share with you organizational development expert Dick Beckhard's wisdom: "People do not resist change; they resist being changed." Add to this, psychology professor and author of *Why We Do What We Do*, Edward Deci's game-changing idea: "Instead

of asking, “How can I motivate People? We should be asking, how can I create the conditions within which people will motivate themselves?” There you have it, profound changes in how to change the way student-athletes think, what they believe, and how they see and act in the world, are more likely to be open for change as a means of motivation by commitment.

So there you go. You now have seven teambuilding and leadership shifts to work on. Be deliberate and intense.

## **CONCLUSION**

So much has changed in the years since I launched The Academy for Sport Leadership. And I’m not talking about sports. Take as “Exhibit A,” the growth of Amazon—now the largest retailer on earth. Amazon’s growth has pushed them in front of Wal-Mart. The significance is that the consumer, via Amazon, has become the hunter. Juxtapose this with Wal-Mart, where the customer is the hunted. Now that’s a Big Shift!

What else has changed? Take a glance into the modern workplace. More organizations than ever before expect leadership from their workers.

Review the mission and vision statements of your neighborhood school. You’ll find reference to the school teaching student’s Twenty-First Century leadership. Society is shifting to a new stage of development, with leadership front and center.

Your student-athletes are, literally, products of their environment. This means they’ve grown up in a world in which choice is paramount and leadership is an expectation. Visit a third grade classroom and you’ll see how these elements are sprouting. Every school today is student-centered.

My hope is that coaches will be concerned enough to ask the vital question, “and so what?” Questions are often the starting point. Questions make things happen. Change is the theme of this article. Primarily because, you, me, and the next guy, need clarity of direction, sharper focus, and executable learning opportunities in order to maximize and embed sustainable change in the team role of leader.

Player-led teambuilding sounds like a grandiose idea. Maybe it is. But it does look to me like it’s here to stay. My goal with this article is to push you to think beyond the conventional wisdom. We know intuitively that we need to shift our thinking from unilateral control to shared leadership—a shift that will have a transformative impact on you and your team. The essence of a player-led effort is to expand the potential of all participants in your program.

No matter the level of play, teamwork and player leadership have to be a teambuilding imperative—a core part of a team’s collective purpose. If players and coaches successfully drive team development they’ll establish a teamwork culture that enables student-athletes to learn and successfully apply leadership principles.

# Coaching for Leadership

## Developing a Leader in Every Locker

### Pregame Warm-up

#### WARNING!

##### What you are about to read may:

- Seem contrary to a lot of what you learned from your experience as a student-athlete.
- Turn out to be at odds with the way most teams are run.
- Challenge the basic premises of leadership; particularly that leaders are born with “the right stuff.”
- Be disturbing because it might raise issues with some of your deepest beliefs and most cherished assumptions.

#### Myth Busting

##### Assumption: Leaders are Born, not Made

It is difficult to disprove assumptions because they are, by definition, things that do not require proof; rather they are to be taken for granted. My first job with this guidebook is to show that the *leaders are born* assumption is nothing more than that: a flawed assumption grounded in the “science” of yesteryear. My second task is to convince you that it is an unwarranted assumption, one that neglects the talent and potentials in all student-athletes. My third job is to give you something to put in its place. What I will offer you is a viewpoint (and program) more powerful than the one it replaces—a new way of creating an environment in which every student-athlete has an opportunity to learn how to lead one’s self, lead others, and lead with others. A new answer to the basic question of “if leaders are made how do we make them?”

## Coaching in a Changing World

The clever political scientist, Robert Presthus, affirms we now live in an “organizational society.” The world in which we work, walk, talk, laugh, cry, enjoy, and destroy is one in which institutions—schools, hospitals, churches, businesses, and government—hold sway over society’s resources. Our collective resources—human, financial, land, tools and intellectual—determine how institutions are organized, how they perform, and the results they achieve. The rapidly changing world we live in means that the days when the use of an organization’s vital resources were seldom challenged are long gone. How organizations, such as schools and universities use their resources, will, going forward, be a under careful scrutiny.

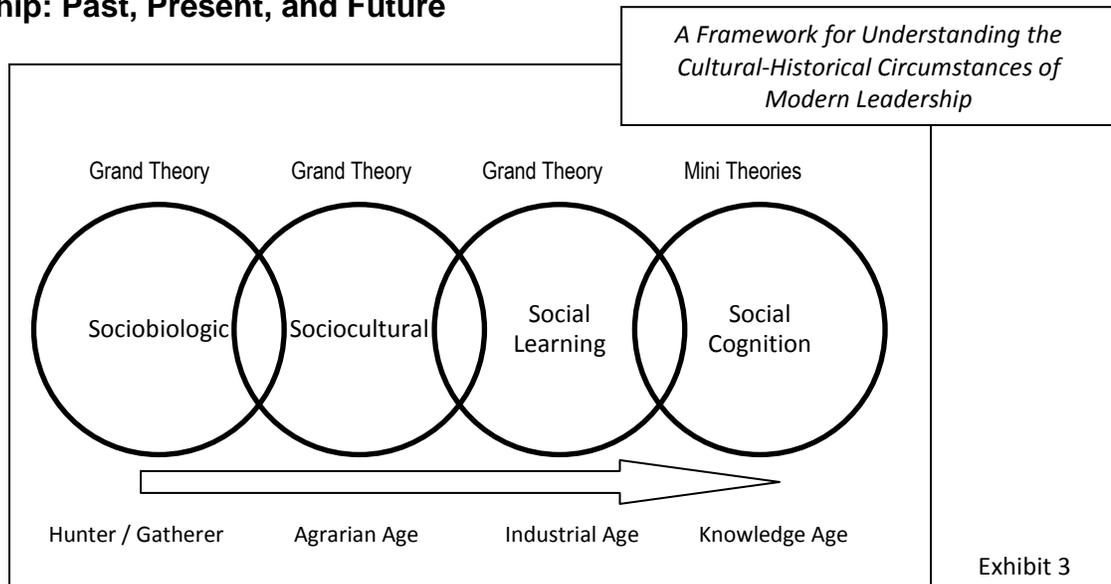
Organizations do not exist for their own sake. They exist to serve; to produce results for a community, a group, or an individual. A university, a school, or a hospital exists for a purpose that is outside of the organization. It’s important to keep in mind that social sector (not-for-profit) organizations exist to make a positive difference in the lives of people and in society. Therefore we need to be concerned with how our precious and limited resources are allocated and that we know the organization’s mission and why it exists.

Social sector organizations are entities of society and therefore entrusted to contribute to society at the macro, organizational, and individual levels. Given the sheer volume of resources consumed by social sector organizations, it’s imperative that we ensure they perform and deliver the results expected. Performance and results are achieved by complex processes requiring both management and leadership. These two organizing structures—management and leadership—matter to the growth and change of any social sector organization.

The overall objective and duty of any organization is called the mission—the reason for an organization’s existence. As you continue through this guidebook, pay particular attention to the question posed on page 35, the “First Half.” This is the vital question any coach should answer prior to coaching any team. Once you realize your team is a social entity deliberately designed to benefit society, you’ll clearly see the deeper value in *Coaching for Leadership* and the idea of a leader in every locker. In this guidebook I argue for an approach to coaching student-athletics as student-development activity that fosters broad-based development of human talent and potentials. Remember, not-for-profit resources are scarce!

In setting forth any practice of leadership, it is important that we understand how leadership has evolved as a vital component to organizational *design* and organizational *direction*. On the next page is a framework showing the interconnectedness of a historical-cultural perspective on leadership and organizations. The goal in presenting the historical-cultural aspects of leadership is to illuminate the evolution of leadership from the hunter-gatherer setting dominated by the “Alpha Male”, to the familial passing down of ownership of land to the oldest son, to the industrial age view of man as “hired hands,” to the thoughtful approach to human potential. The links between these four frameworks provide deep insight into the tensions in what we see and what we know and what we do as leaders *and as leadership educators*. Let’s take a quick tour of history. We need to know where we’ve been to clearly see where we are.

## Leadership: Past, Present, and Future



### The Sociobiological Leadership Perspective (Grand Theory)

It's safe to say that the first form of leadership, the organizing of hunter-gatherers, had as its organizing model the very animals they sought to kill for survival. Hunting parties witnessed in the wilderness *alpha males* leading the pack. Our ancestors were an audience to birds of a feather flocking together, fish schooling and of course the first female on a throne—the Queen Bee. As a first mover in the chain of leadership, sociobiology still inserts itself into modern day leadership. Think of the analogies—the animal kingdom, a herd mentality, pecking order, dog-eat-dog, and of course the big fish eat the little fish. As one commentator said, “Dominance hierarchies are older than the trees.”

### The Sociocultural Leadership Perspective (Grand Theory)

Anthropologists and sociologists inform us on the sociocultural factors that guided social groups and the larger society. From the savannahs to the farm, we see a movement of agrarian organizations emerging. Patterns of social order are assigned and ascribed; the king and his kingdom in Europe, and the caste system in India. Hierarchical systems surface and are embedded as a dominating force in organizations. It mattered where and to whom you were born. For example, the oldest son was next in line to take over the family farm. This was an answer to the line of succession for property holders. A central legacy of the sociocultural perspective is its emphasis on norms, traditions, and the enforcement of expected behaviors. People with authority over others tended to be self-centered and unconcerned with what others needed and acted as if the written and unwritten rules others were expected to follow didn't apply to them.

### The Social Learning Leadership Perspective (Grand Theory)

Throughout history human beings have engaged in the process of learning to enhance the capacity of individuals and groups to produce an outcome. As the movement from hunter-gatherer shifted to an agrarian world which then shifted to an industrial society, man has felt the need to construct a singular framework to guide the organizing of society and life's activities. The first dominant paradigm shift took place when Francis Bacon published his *Novum Organum* in 1620. Bacon's opus

challenged the Greek (yes Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) view of the world. Bacon essentially laid the groundwork for Isaac Newton and the mechanical world view. The Greek's, fascinated by the "what" of the world, spent their time contemplating the nature of the world. Bacon and Newton triggered a change to a mathematical view—the science of learning and a commitment to the "how" of things. The scientific method inspired a mechanical world view.

I have on my desk a "Newton's Cradle." You know, the playful little mechanism with suspended steel balls equally spaced apart. You pull one back and let it go and you are witnessing Newton's law: "A body at rest remains at rest and a body in motion remains in uniform motion in a straight line unless acted upon by an external force." Thus the mechanical world view ushered in the machine age. Keep in mind that Newton's world view was that of a world of pulleys and levers and wheels; subjecting all of nature to the laws of mathematics. The goal of this paradigm is precision, speed, and accuracy. We see the full effect of this world view downstream when the industrial age tears down man and views him simply as an extension of the tool. According to Fredrick Taylor man was to be hired for his hands, not his head.

The industrial age exploited labor (just a cog in the wheel), organizations rarely concerned with the well-being of the worker. The social learning perspective of the mechanical world finds its way into the domain of psychology with behavioral learning theory's approach of operant conditioning (carrot and stick) dominating the practice up until the 1950s. Behaviorism fit nicely as an expression of the mechanical world view concerning itself with the external objective world—not the internal subjective world of the individual. The likes of Maslow, Rogers, and other human relations advocates did some heavy lifting helping organizations become more humane.

### **The Social Cognition Perspective (Mini-Theories)**

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim has shown that the development of organizational societies is accompanied by a disintegration of traditional patterns of social order, as common ideals, beliefs, and values give way to more fragmented ones based on the occupational structures of the new society. A result of such fragmentation is that we now have mini-theories that provide explanatory power and utility to the many aspects of personal agency.

Today we find ourselves looking at life through the lens of social cognitive theory, which contends that learning, motivation and performance are determined by a person's way of thinking, feeling, and the elements embedded in each unique situation one encounters. As Bandura (1997) suggests, "people analyze the situations that confront them, consider alternative courses of action, judge their abilities to carry them out successfully, and estimate the results the actions are likely to produce." The new reality is to understand motivation and achievement through the process of the person interacting with the environment—the environment sometimes being the prevailing influence on behavior, other times disposition steers one's behavior. Contemporary research suggests the historical relics, the three "grand" theories, need to give way to the social cognition perspective emphasizing the interdependency of cognitive, affective, and contextual factors that collectively influence behavior. **As leadership inexorably becomes the domain of many, rather than the few, how it is enacted in the sport environment will redesign the student-athlete experience.**

## Setting the Stage

*The driving question: Is the capacity for leadership thinking that leads to leadership behavior a gift reserved for a small minority or can it be consciously and intentionally developed?*

High school and college coaches are quick to suggest that student-athletes learn “life skills” from participation in team sports. Developing individual competencies, such as time management, discipline, perseverance, and learning to work hard are fairly easy to affirm. It’s the teambuilding and leadership skills—undertakings requiring more sophisticated and complex abilities—that are somewhat difficult to confirm. Learning to work with one’s teammates does not guarantee that one has learned to work well with the others in different contexts with different purposes. Neither is being a “team captain” necessarily correlated with one’s leadership abilities to produce effective outcomes in the long-term.

You might be wondering why I’m singling out leadership and teambuilding skills. Well, it’s because I’m holding the traditional model of team leadership accountable for lackluster short and long-term results. To begin with, the conventional team captain model is grounded in the twentieth-century top-down command and control paradigm. This stifling structure too often serves as a barrier to effective peer leadership while robbing the rest of a team’s student-athletes of the opportunity to gain valuable leadership experience themselves. It might be helpful to learn how the traditional team captain model inhibits the growth of team leadership at the expense of getting every team member to explore their unique talents and potentials—which includes leading.

**As it turns out, the “scripts” and “stereotypes” ingrained in the traditional team captain model are often ineffective in the short-term and strikingly limited in the long-run.** There is an enormous gap between the perception of the role of team captain and the reality of mostly underwhelming performance. In principle, the framework of the traditional team captain model discourages those *not* selected as a leader from taking any type of leadership actions. In practice, it creates an environment in which followers are socialized to be “good soldiers,” quickly habituated to comply with the wishes of those in formal leadership roles. It’s important to note that all too frequently team captains are all too often dependent on a coach to tell them what to do. Also, make no mistake: traditional notions of leadership, which include the customary figure at the top of a hierarchy, are proving to be increasingly of limited use with today’s expectations for the total student-athlete experience.

The age of the entrenched establishment and the long-closed world of leadership has passed. The practice and process of followership is undergoing a disruptive transformation. The who, the why, and the when of leadership is, for the most part, now an endeavor begging for the development of leadership capacity of everyone in an organization. **Caught up in our own preconceptions, it turns out, our notion of the archetypal team captain as the primary way to enact peer-to-peer leadership is short-sighted.** Moreover, it may be fairly said that leadership via a team captain in sport has been over-rated and likely more ineffective than effective.

In this guidebook I confront the team captain model. I do so because every act of leadership follows from one's assumptions, generalizations, and hypotheses concerning human nature and human behavior. Yet, rarely do we question these conditions as applied in the team captain approach. This is problematic in that it simply encourages rewarding those that "fit" a coach's schema. For example, repeatedly the extrovert is preferred simply because he or she is highly "visible." However, more often than not, this sets up what I call the *leadership illusion*; a belief that because the captain possesses this or that quality they will succeed as a leader.

Today, leadership educators and high-performing organizations are increasingly using a very different model of leadership; a model that fosters emergent, situational, and peer-based leadership grounded in learning-in-action. A great deal of evidence indicates that successful **team leadership**, the Academy for Sport Leadership way, **has more to do with designing the environment than the disposition and personality of a team captain or two**. When you elect or assign two or three captains to lead, you leave much of the leadership and learning to chance. A leadership ecology in which only a few lead is sure to miss most of the real leadership opportunities, to say nothing of the high-impact role of followers and followership.

**The question that needs to be asked is: Are student-athletics teaching twenty-first century leadership skills?** Are student-athletes better prepared to assume leadership and team building roles in professional organizations than their non-athletic counterpart? There is little research to support the notion that student-athletes are better prepared than the ordinary student for the modern economy.

Therefore, there is a pressing need for a more effective way of developing a leadership mindset and leader competencies. In this book I'll introduce you to an advanced model that transforms passive followers into proactive leaders. The state-of-the-art model of a leader in every locker promotes empowerment and adaptability as a means of interpersonal relationships. I have found through rigorous program development that a *Leader in Every Locker* is a compelling way to achieve breakthrough levels of leadership development while preparing each student-athlete for future leadership opportunities in the modern economy.

## **Making the Case for Teaching EVERY Student-Athlete How to Lead**

In approaching this topic it is tempting to dismiss the reality that all student-athletes can learn to lead. However, a fundamental principle in learning is that students interpret a situation or event dependent upon their life construct. And a leadership process can be constructed.

All coaches must resolve a small set of questions about how to order their program; the most important being how to balance the needs of the individual with those of the team. Each individual player brings his or her own set of aspirations, internalization of beliefs, values and attitudes, motivations, and emotions. All of these must be attended to in order to ensure an individual's well-being. But on the other hand, a team perspective too must be satisfied as the team needs players to align with the team's purpose and direction, integrate differences,

develop a mission, and establish the priorities of the team. Disregarding the self-interest of the individual is not advised, though subverting team norms for the sake of the individual is bound to affect team harmony. Yet, challenging individuals to submit themselves to the team and its mission is a primary driver in a student wanting to become an athlete. Needless to say, it turns out, however, that a leader in every locker is up to the task, able to offer a solution to both individualistic needs and team needs.

The *leader in every locker* approach is organized around the radical conviction that every student-athlete can learn to contribute to the development of the team at a deeper and more meaningful level. To do this requires deliberateness. It requires from coaches a relentless focus on the growth in relational and aspirational capabilities of every student-athlete. Likewise, student-athletes must be willing to learn to lead by contributing more than they think possible. So for both, the coaches and the players, the radical conviction to growth-oriented principles must be woven into the fabric of the day-to-day routines of team life.

*The thinking behind **A Leader in Every Locker** begins with the assumption that every student-athlete is able to learn a leadership framework, use leadership tools, engage in leadership processes, and develop a capacity for leading. The premise is to promote an egalitarian—unbiased—ethos that compels the coach to provide educational opportunities to every member of the team. This is not to suggest that all learners are equal in their capacity to lead and team build, nor equal in motivation for learning and performance. It's about giving leadership opportunities to every student-athlete and seeding their future as leaders.*

We talk all the time about the benefits of students participating in athletics. Yet, if you look downstream in time, the place where athletes become working adults, you just might see a disturbing disconnect between what we perceive student-athletics to be providing participants and the actual outcomes.

Why is this? Well, it seems to me that by narrowing the leadership selection process to the traditional two or three team captains, only a select few players will be learning to lead. There's a problem with this practice. The reliance on the few formal leaders deprives the others of the opportunities and responsibilities that come with leadership. Thus most student-athletes stay stuck in a passive mindset and don't actively seek leadership experience.

A guiding principle to keep in mind when you are creating a leader in every locker culture is to keep appealing to a higher level of thinking *and* relating. In most teams coaches are trying to get players to "do their job," nothing more or less. In a culture of ownership, coaches deliberately design roles and responsibilities to build a high-performing team culture.

Let me close my case for a leader in every locker by suggesting the biggest barrier to establishing a leader in every locker is you. You are so competent at coaching, the tactics and techniques, and are so familiar with the team captain model that doing things another way is bound to meet with skepticism. At first, committing to a leader in every locker may feel unnatural. **For the first time in years, you are probably going to feel inept and vulnerable, less confident, and guilty about taking time away from the things you are used to doing.** Stay the course and you and your student-athletes will be richly rewarded.

## Reality and Resistance

Please feel free to critique and analyze my thinking; the ideas, theories, models, frameworks, and advice I present in this guidebook on *Coaching for Leadership*. My guess is you'll agree and connect with some of the ideas and conclusions, yet forcefully disagree with others. Hey, the hard truth is that it's not easy to change others—and maybe I'm wrong. The status quo is always vigorously resistant to alteration. I am realistic. I operate under the premise that coaches (and scientists too!) tend to reject data inconsistent with their current ideologies and that old conceptions do not easily die. So, please invest time in figuring out why you agree or disagree. I invite you to step back and seriously challenge the conventional (inherited) thinking on leadership development of student-athletes.

Let me get started by exposing a few typical myths and half truths of leadership:

- Leaders are born, not made
- Leaders have the “right stuff.”
- Leaders are charismatic.

Ideas can change the world. They do so by changing hearts, minds, and behavior. **The idea of a leader in every locker is a revolutionary suggestion for team sports.** The default setting of deploying a few team captains is a model that no longer fits with the values and beliefs necessary to maximize human potential. By using the hierarchical framework of team captain it can be extraordinarily difficult to tie together a tight social network—your team. The goal is not to denigrate team captaincy, but rather to shine light on what's on the other side. The ecosystem that is a team is a social network of interconnectivity that is always seeking to adapt and adopt appropriate norms and behaviors.

**Before I go on, let me point out that around 90% of coaches believe they are better than average.** Think about that for a moment. This “illusory of superiority” effect hides the reality that many, if not most, coaches are in dire need of a reality check. Ok, moving onward.

Transformational learning, the kind that results when *Coaching for Leadership*, involves a deep, structural shift in thought, feelings, and action by both the coach and the student-athlete. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alter the coach and the student-athlete's way of being in the world. Such a shift involves self-awareness and a sense of leadership as a skill set that can be learned—by the student-athlete—and honed by the coach.

### **A Co-Creating Approach to Teambuilding**

Co-creating implies working with student-athletes to build a high-performing team. It means involving the players in the relational team building process in a deep and deliberate manner. This may mean asking for and using input about direction, goal setting, role definition and player relations from your players. The purpose is to build durable and enduring relationships that will continue to enhance team building. Think of each relationship as a partnership, a deep commitment to serving one-another.

## Connecting the Dots Excerpt from a Question & Answer Session with Dr. Cory Dobbs

**Q:** Why do you find it necessary to add the role of Leadership Educator to the practice of coaching? Aren't coaches already modeling leadership for their student-athletes?

**A:** Let me explain by telling you a story. I recently met with a "brand" name coach and his staff to discuss leadership education. The coach is highly recognized as a top coach in his field. I opened our conversation by asking him "Are you a world-class coach?" He looked at me with an unassuming grin. So I said "The world certainly sees you as a world-class coach." His staff chuckled but agreed. "So let's check that box," I said. "And," I declared, "would you agree that coaching is teaching?" He and his staff vigorously shook their heads to imply a definitive "yes."

"Now," I continued, "are you a world-class leader?" Again, he looked at me with a humble smile. I asked his staff for a thumbs up or thumbs down vote of agreement. All thumbs were pointed upward. "Check that box too" I announced.

"Okay," I said as I headed towards my home territory. "Are you a world-class leadership educator?" The grin on his face slipped into a look of bewilderment. "Well," I said cunningly, "if you're a world-class coach and a world-class leader shouldn't you be a world-class leadership educator?" Puzzled and perplexed, the brand name world-class coach didn't quite know how to respond. I continued, "**How do you go about developing team leaders**—or in my world team leadership?" After uttering something he asked me to explain to him just what leadership education is and how one goes about becoming a leadership educator.

A leadership educator is no different than, let's say, a professor of management—someone who teaches management. A leadership educator teaches leadership. However, this role seems a little strange for many coaches. Few engage in a planned program and curriculum with the deliberate intention to build team leaders. Rather, most simply leave it to the seemingly natural growth of the individual. Oh, let's not forget that a rigorous development program can be time consuming and emotionally demanding. To *Coach for Leadership* implies a willingness to invest what is necessary to create an environment that helps student-athletes become high-quality contributors.

"Coach," I said, "we can't check that box, now can we?" I then began to teach: "The role of leadership educator requires a different mindset, skill set and involves very different actions from the one's you've been practicing for a lifetime." The coach quickly acknowledged that a huge gap exists between what he and his coaches are currently doing and what they could do to develop team leaders. He then asked if I would work with him and his staff to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities to be high-performing leadership educators.

**Q: A leader in every locker sounds a lot like “Everyone gets a trophy.”**

**A:** First, there’s a big difference between welfare and well-being. When everyone gets a trophy it’s often like a government handout—it’s freely given, no strings attached (and just as likely not to have been well-thought through as it does have extraordinary potential as a long-term positive of participation if done right). However, when a coach is concerned for the *total* well-being of her student-athletes, she is delighted to have everyone on the team **maximize the experience**; which includes learning how to lead.

In a recent workshop a coach asked me if the idea of a leader in every locker is like a trophy for everyone. I held back, but then I injected my research and organizational framework into my response. I let the coach know emphatically, it’s just the opposite. I had to first help the coach see beyond her flawed mental model of *leaders are born*, the driving factor behind such thinking.

The notion of a born leader appeals to our belief in intelligence, charisma, and other personal traits as attributes necessary for leadership. **Most of us have been taught since childhood, at least implicitly, that we are either a leader or a follower—mostly followers as we can only have one class president.** This plays on an almost universal theme that some people must be given the role of telling us what to do; it fits with our sensibilities that we are better off by granting some people power and agency.

To be sure, my experience—countless number of workshops plus working alongside coaches—is that in most cases coaches are cynics when it comes to the idea that everyone has the ability to lead (though anticipating the critique of this claim I’m compelled to ensure I don’t imply all are equally motivated to learn to lead). For those of us who do not want to simply dismiss people as not capable of learning to lead—especially those who’ve had few role models in their lives—the concept of leadership development is a significant step forward.

The idea that leaders are extraordinary people with special gifts is an assumption many coaches have embedded in their minds—baked into the cake. Most coaches operate from a paradigm—a set of assumptions about how the world works—that makes it difficult to understand why the virtues of a leader in every locker far exceed the verifiable inefficiencies of the team captain model.

What I’m advocating is this: when a coach assumes the role of leadership educator, it is to teach leadership to all his or her student-athletes. Why in the world would you *not* want to teach leadership to all of your players? And why in the world would you *not* want your players to develop a leadership mindset and act like a leader?

Beginning with the end in mind, when you deploy a leadership learning system you are creating a learning organization. When coaches honor the need to personalize learning

for each student-athlete, they then create a dynamic learning environment in which everyone is learning in action and by reflection.

However, if a coach doesn't think it's worth his or her time, then it's likely they are acting from what Stanford professor Carol Dweck calls a "fixed mindset." A coach acting from this perspective will do little to coach for leadership. The fixed mindset places little value in teaching leadership. After all, a coach will reason, either an athlete is a "natural" leader gifted with the "right stuff" or they're not. This thinking suggests only a few athletes on any team are capable of leading. Such thinking makes no sense.

**Leadership is not an all-or-nothing ability, something you either have or don't have.**

As a type of social interaction, leadership can be developed when student-athletes *and* coaches put in effort, time, and practice. However, without a defined leadership training program young people, including your star players, are very likely to feel a sense of uneasiness when leading peers.

The reality is the student-athlete (and the coach too!) has to work hard to learn how to lead, to develop a set of skills and competencies that will serve as a foundation for lifelong learning of leadership and team building. Leadership can be learned, indeed it must be learned. The key is that it must be practiced in order to facilitate the growth and development of the student-athlete. Without practice, which requires time, effort, and energy, all you have is a potential leader.

Finally, in my book on the next generation of team building, *Coaching for Leadership*, I make clear that most student-athletes are raised in sport to simply follow the lead of the coach; thereby making the participant a passive recipient of leadership. After years of going along to get along the young athlete develops the habit of passive followership. This is one of the biggest challenges of change we face as leadership educators.

Should everyone get a trophy? Probably not (save for another day the issue of participation and achievement).

Should everyone get an opportunity to learn about leadership and explore how to lead? Yes! And to do so requires great effort on the part of the student-athlete. The athlete is not given anything but opportunity. Are all leaders equal? No! Everyone has a different starting line, but all student-athletes can learn to lead at some level.

**Q: In your workshops you urge, quite forcefully I might add, coaches to rethink their thinking?**

**A:** I do this because every act of coaching rests on assumptions, generalizations, and get this—hypotheses. That is, the coach's mindset determines to a great extent how he operates. It is very unlikely that a coach will change his or her ways of coaching until they look in the mirror and consider who they are and what they believe and why they

believe what they believe. When a coach peels away the layers and recognize how deeply held beliefs and attitudes—such as only a few athletes are capable of leading—he or she can design a culture that maximizes the experience for everyone.

In fact, sophisticated studies in the area of neuroscience are now showing that peer-to-peer interactions—the kind I’ve built into the *Teamwork Intelligence* program—lead to quicker solutions of higher quality than when the individual is left to fend for himself or herself in a problem scenario. This new research also suggests that high anxiety levels inhibit new learning, and few student-athlete tasks are more anxiety provoking than peer leadership. This is why I say it is crucial to have a leader in every locker and that it’s necessary to “practice” leadership just as you practice your offense or defense.

It’s a shame that many coaches are intimidated by the idea that embedded within every player is a potential leader. There is great suspicion of how things will work if everyone is potentially a leader. A common concern about a leader in every locker came up one day when I was talking with a group of coaches. **“How can you ask us to have all our student-athletes lead?” one coach said to me. “Isn’t that opening Pandora’s Box?”** Recall that when Pandora’s Box was opened all the troubles of humanity flew out. To create a leader in every locker would be the unthinkable. A leader in every locker would undermine the vary fabric that holds our society together. Is this how some coaches imagine what might happen should everyone be given the opportunity to learn to lead?

I understand the concern. Most coaches really have no reference point to relate the practice of teaching everyone leadership (after all, high schools and universities are often the most rigid institutions when it comes to change). But when coaches and players learn, for example, the *5 Steps of Agile Team Leadership*, the *8 Roles of Teamwork*, and *The Coach as a Leadership Educator* it all begins to make sense. Something else we advocate for is utilizing a specialized vocabulary—such as the 5 steps language. The *Coaching Mindset*, a simple but effective model, includes specialized terminology and unique constructs. *Coaching for Leadership* is an enticing concept, but the ultimate test is whether or not you teach others to be leaders and build a culture that can sustain teaching at all levels.

The gap between the traditional team captain model and the reality that everyone can learn to lead at some level suggests the need for a change program. The hierarchical model places unnatural constraints on student-athlete desiring to learn team building and leadership. Yet if you sink your teeth into the *Leader in Every Locker* approach you’ll find all students are able to gain a sufficient grasp of leadership and team building principles, concepts, and skills, so why not nurture a leadership mindset in your students. It’s going to take awhile, but over time you will discover new things about how it all works together to the advantage of the program and your players.

# Coaching for Leadership

## How to Develop a Leader in Every Locker

1st Half

### WHAT IS OUR MISSION?

#### Fundamental Questions

Why do we exist? We exist to \_\_\_\_\_. (Remember, education is a public good!)

What do we value?

What are our internal results? External results (those results that are “outside” of the team, the season, to be realized downstream)?

It seems so simple at first glance; a team exists to win. However, the world, from the viewpoint of the win-lose orientation, is full of forces that ultimately can destroy the reasons a scholastic sport team should exist. The chasm between what scholastic sports ought to be and what they are is frighteningly wide. Think Sparta and Athens.

The fundamental questions above are a necessary starting point. **The basic proposition of *A Leader in Every Locker* is that human development should be the organizing purpose for student-athletics.** In various research projects I’ve conducted, I’ve received responses to these questions that, you might say, are all over the map—often in opposition to the developmental needs of the student-athlete.

The practice of *A Leader in Every Locker* gives you a compelling reason to reflect on how your underlying assumptions may block you from seeing reality as it is. The fundamental questions and the various exercises in this guidebook will ask you to challenge your own theories and models of the world. My hope is you develop and test new mental models, such as the idea that intrinsic motivation is more effective than “carrot-and-stick” motivation. Your mental models, for better or worse, determine the reasoning and attitudes underlying your actions.

Practically everyone who has played organized sports has been exposed to the fundamental roles of leadership and followership. Coaches lead and players follow. At the entry level coaches teach the basics of the sport while the inexperienced player devotedly conforms to the “expert” instruction. Consequently, the young athlete learns to focus his or her behavior on the role of following—doing what the coach says. Getting along by going along is one of life’s—and sport’s—earliest lessons. Over time, most willing young participants learn and grow comfortable with the safety and simplicity of this role. As we will see, the mental habit and extensive experience of *not* leading is internalized as part of the athlete identity.

**From the moment we are born we turn to those in authority to provide comfort, safety, and to help us make sense of the world around us.** Growth and development for the youngster involves taking into consideration the expectations, needs, and desires of others—particularly those of authority figures in one’s life. We expect families to pass on core values, to teach a sense of responsibility, model an appropriate work ethic, and so forth. Likewise, traditionally schools act as a primary socializing agent geared toward compliant behavior that forces the child to act within the constraints of the institutions operations.

So it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the young athlete looks for comfort and safety in a coach. The athlete depends on the coach to provide direction, protection, and order. The athlete reciprocates by assuming the role of a good follower, working hard to please the coach. This may seem to be little more than an issue of maturity. It is, however, much more than that. Too much challenge can be overwhelming, but too much support creates a static comfort zone. From a developmental perspective, as the young athlete becomes capable of more complex and nuanced relationships, the coach-player relationship can foster a deeper development.

Today, most leadership scholars would likely agree that young athletes learn far less about transformational leadership and far more about transactional management. Much of the student-athlete experience is composed of coach-led activities in a technical and task system in which the vital decisions are made by the adult coach. The primary decision the athlete must make is simply to follow the coach. In terms of leadership, the athlete observes and assimilates this leader-follower relationship almost naturally, finding his or her rewards in such things as praise, promise, and playing time.

An accepted claim made by many coaches and sports commentators is that student-athletics offers the participant a set of life skills. As we will see, leadership and team building, skills that always involve others, tend to be more challenging for the student athlete to learn. While sports certainly provide a platform for experiencing leadership, it is careless to assume that most athletes learn to lead just by being part of a team.

**How many coaches have a curriculum for developing team leaders?** Why not more? If leadership is a vital quality of championship teams why should it not be taught explicitly? There might be several answers to this question, but only one that is perhaps a best explanation: the tradition trap. Leadership has never really been taught explicitly in sports. Rather, the lessons are best thought to be implicit and experiential, therefore are taught by informal means—the

proverbial “teachable moment.” Do moments emerge? Yes. Is it enough? No way! And how many coaches include every player in the leadership development process? Research and practice suggest far too few. So the tradition trap continues, accepting experience and values based on the past. The traditional captain model has never really been challenged. But the world is changing.

In this book I will introduce you to a systematic approach that you may, at first, reject. Yes, I can hear the sound of your palm smacking your forehead. Admit your deep skepticism. But once you step forward and experiment with the new model you’ll never go back to the “old way” of doing leadership. I will help get you out of the tradition trap.

## **What Got You Here Won’t Get You There**

A decade of research into “team leadership” suggests that **coaching for leadership behavior is a holistic cluster of actions that are not meant to be practiced in a piecemeal manner.** This is a guidebook designed to provide you a deep look at a breakthrough approach to revising team building through team leadership. Yes, I’ve been a coach so I do have a feel for the profession. However, by engaging deeply in research and practice—balancing practical applications with theory—for more than a decade, I’ve concluded that a paradigm shift is imperative to change the ways in which “we” view leadership and team building. This guidebook is my way of challenging you to see the world differently, to test your taken-for-granted assumptions, and to recognize that you can’t get “there” until you know what it takes to get “there.”

I am not interested in the traditional captain model of leadership. Granting only a couple of players, those you might see as “high potentials,” the opportunity to lead reveals passive thinking; simply conforming to the inherited folklore of the “chosen ones.” In reality, most of us have been misled—by politics, media, and history—to believe that leaders are extraordinary people endowed with special gifts; we are told to ignore situational determinants and overlook the fact that leadership skills can be developed. All this makes it too easy to fall hostage to the heroic perception of a leader as someone possessing the “right stuff.”

Further, the myth of the team captain model ignores the potential power of the Pygmalion Effect; the view that a coach’s expectations of a student-athlete can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Self-fulfilling prophecies, a term coined by sociologist Robert Merton, are predictions or expectations that, irrespective of typical cause-effect relationship, come true. Study after study reveals expectations can and do influence the performance of individuals. It turns out that how we treat the development of our student-athletes is essential to how they progress as leaders.

Let me provide you a winning alternative to the default team captain model. I prefer to be in the “ice skates” business. Leadership development is like skating on ice. It’s difficult and full of opportunities to slip and fall. But try this on for size. If you were to take your team (in tennis shoes) and line the players up at one end of a frozen pond and have them race to the other side, you will have a winner, others close behind, and some will cross the finish line just as the

winner has finished eating his lunch. There will be a “natural” athletic order to their capacity for running across the pond. Add ice skates (tools) and the story changes. Everyone will go faster than before, and if you want—farther too. Training and coaching will also factor into making a difference. That’s why **I am more interested in designing tools to train team leaders.**

Deep down, it’s one thing to say you value leadership from your players; it’s another thing to give them extensive opportunities to lead by designing a developmental culture. If you had to choose, which would it be? Would you want a very successful season in terms of wins with a player or two along the way learning how to lead at a very elementary level, or a season where every player experiences deep leadership growth and development while winning half your games? Thankfully this doesn’t have to be an *either or* question, but it does require you to reflect deeply on what you’re doing as a coach. Hence the dilemma: how does a coach modify his or her coaching orientation to affect the leadership experience of their student-athletes?

**You cannot set out on this journey if you’re not willing to make yourself vulnerable.** To *Coach for Leadership* you’ll need to examine long-held habits of thought and action. We all know a coach or two that has gotten carried away with their press clippings and fallen under the spell of their own hubris. To avoid this happening to you, engage the core challenge of careful self-assessment. Success comes by you having the confidence and humility to give up the need to always be out front; letting go of your old identity and the need to control everything.

Like the student-athlete, you must be open-minded and growth-oriented to take this journey. The fear of learning, counter intuitively, is endemic in our culture. The prominent psychologist Carl Rogers advised that for most of us, **“any significant learning involves a certain amount of pain, either pain connected to the learning itself or distress connected with giving up certain previous learnings.”** Given the evidence of our human experience, it’s obvious people will go to great lengths to avoid suffering the pain of change.

I have met many coaches who say they want to grow, only to discover that when it comes to changing those norms, beliefs, or ideas that they’ve unconsciously accepted, they’re petrified. Growth and development require risk. The title of this section is *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*, the “there” is a leader in every locker. This means going beyond a “good leader” to “good leadership.” To do this requires that you reshape the forest, if you will.

## **The Way Things Were**

The common experience finds the athlete assuming the role of follower, for the most part, uninvolved in leadership matters. Early in organized playing experience the typical student-athlete *adopts*, or *adapts*, to a view of the coach as the authority figure—someone with all the answers and therefore not to be questioned. As the athlete grows she may be asked to perform an array of simple leadership responsibilities, perhaps given the title of team captain, yet, never really feel like she’s an influential leader. This is partly the result of the subordination of individual interests to the interests of the coach—with the coach’s interest

taken at face value to be in the best interests of everyone on the team. But it is also partly a result of learned passiveness. **Many athletes today grow up never making a substantive decision related to leadership and team building.** Rather, they've grown comfortable with someone else making all the decisions all of the time.

To adapt to the coach's demands the student-athlete learns to please the coach by doing what she is told to do. This order-giver order-taker experience initiates a relational distance by imposing interactional boundaries between coach and player. Thus the player, unless prodded, feels uncomfortable doing leadership. They simply expect the coach to do all the leading. Children come to follow adults fairly easily. Following is promoted through a vast system of socialization practices beginning at birth with parents protecting and directing the growth of their child. Further, as soon as a child is enrolled in a formal class they are exposed to a structured hierarchy and socialized to follow the dictates, directions, and orders of the supervising adult. Thus, children begin to develop their identity based in part on their leader-follower experiences. Even the most open minded among us will in the end create dependence and compliance that the child will have to at some point—unlearn if they are to mature.

Much of early role learning is expressed in free play. Children play such roles as teacher, cop, and fire fighter in a way that demonstrates an existing mental model of power distance and relational distance between the authority figure and the follower. During the course of “assuming” the role of the leader in make-believe play children simulate stereotypes (leader active/follower passive) of leaders and followers. In the role of leader the child may feel a sense of power able to shape desired outcome during the experience of play. When cast as a follower the child experiences less power, perhaps powerless, and often assumes a passive role waiting to be told what to do. Such role play then serves to socialize the child to leader and follower *rules and roles*, and certainly holds the potential for constructing a mental model of a power-based relationship between leading and following.

As you can see, the deck may seem to be stacked when it comes to developing leaders that take initiative and are proactive. It's not. Strangely, most student-athletes do care about the long-term outcomes of their participation. Given the chance to learn to lead, most will gladly enroll. So, if it's your sole goal to *take the hill*—your only goal is to win games—without considering the long-term consequences for your student-athletes, you are doing great harm not just to “them,” but to all of “us.”

## **The End of Yesterday**

*“I'm not used to supposing. I'm just a working man. My boss does the supposing . . .”*

This quote is a line from the classic movie *12 Angry Men*. During the opening dialogue among jury members, each feeling out their place and role in the deliberation of the fate of a young man's life, a blue-collar working man makes this declaration of powerlessness. The implication is that all the power—at least that of “supposing” rests in the hands of the superior, the elite. Just a movie? Hardly.

It's been the rule for over a century in team sports to install a hierarchical leadership structure. This is accomplished by appointing a couple of players as team captains (as well as modeled by the hierarchy of the coaching staff). Surely everybody knows that on any sports team only a few players are able to really perform peer leadership. This is the team captain axiom, the basic axiom of traditional team leadership.

An axiom, of course, is a truth so self-evident it doesn't need to be proved. After all, everybody knows an axiom is accurate and correct. So then, it's indisputable that you need a pecking order in order to get things done.

Not too fast. **Things are not what they always seem to be on the surface.** The bad news is that too often our intuitive ways of thinking about the world are wrong. Yes, axioms can be wrong. The good news, however, is that it's possible to set them right.

What's self-evident, what's obvious, what everybody knows, has deep roots and of course isn't in need of change. Yet, paradoxically, that which is self-evident hides something –covers over what might be a deeper truth. Axioms, by their nature, are anti-learning. Nobody ever questions an axiom. Nobody ever discusses an axiom (save for a few propeller heads). It's just taken as a given. And nobody ever talks about the possible counterproductive consequences of what everybody knows. The fish, after all, never questions the water he lives in.

Then, all of a sudden, someone comes along with a breakthrough idea and turns the old axiom upside down. **The taken-for-granted truth, it turns out, wasn't really the truth after all.** "The world is flat," was the truth people lived by for thousands of years. Then, along comes Nicolas Copernicus who proves the old axiom to be wrong.

Twenty years ago, to choose a different model of team leadership was unthinkable. In elaborating on the end of two decades as a premier athlete Kobe Bryant had much to say when asked the question, if he could go back in time and offer advice to himself as a rookie, what would he say? His response: "It's hard to tell somebody -- a player at that age -- to understand compassion and empathy, but that would be my advice."

Why of all things would Bryant endorse caring, compassion, and empathy? "Well," Bryant continued, "because that's the biggest thing about being a leader, I think, and winning a championship is understanding how to put yourself in other people's shoes." "That's really the most important thing. It's not necessarily the individual skill you possess. It's about understanding others and what they may be going through. And then, in turn, when you understand that, you can communicate with them a little bit better and bring out the best in them. **Bringing out the best in people isn't passing them the ball and giving them open shots. It's about how to connect with them, how to communicate with them so that they can navigate through whatever issues they may be facing. That's a very, very hard thing to do.**"

I did not follow Kobe Bryant's career and I seldom look to professional athletes for deep insights and understanding on leadership, but it appears that, late in his career, he displayed the wisdom and maturity of a devoted leader. Bryant's words fit hand-in-glove with today's call for a more heartfelt—relational—approach to coaching and leading. So what's the way forward in this brave new world?

Don't worry. While you've been trapped in the axiom of team captaincy, I've been turning over rocks to find a better way of designing a high-performing team, its culture, and of course, leadership. I'm not done yet. It might be another decade or so before I'm finished. But this guidebook is a start.

## **So, What is Leadership?**

There has been a long running debate in scholarly circles about whether people learn to lead from their experiences or if leadership is something a person is born with. Today, however, most academics agree that leadership is best considered as a set of skills and qualities that can be learned and developed along within a wide-range of personal styles. **It's widely agreed that all people have the potential to develop leadership skills.** I point this out because it is also clear that leadership is viewed and valued differently by various fields, disciplines, and cultures.

So then, what is leadership? This is the big question that every person, group, team, organization, community and society seeks to answer. Our American culture, which of course includes a heavy dose of sporting influence, exalts the lone ranger, the hero, the charismatic leader. We see this in the election and glorifying of politicians, the deifying of business tycoons, and the adoration and idolization of great coaches and athletes. This notion falls in line with the traditional ideas of leadership—that it is the make-up of the leader that makes all the difference. Individual determinism has been and will continue to be an easy and favored explanation of things. But traits such as self-confidence, intelligence, and a can-do attitude—favored qualities of a leader—do not always predict the effectiveness of a leader.

However permeable the traditional mental model of leadership seems, it does not provide a path to sustainable effectiveness as it leaves out the detail and nuance of the context in which a leader takes action. It also ignores the fact that it tends to reduce followers to passive participants; resulting in deliberate apathy and often conscious withdrawal from the leadership provided by one's peer. Careful examination of this aspect of team captaincy suggests it may promote the discounting or dismissing of the potential of all members of the team to learn and perform in a leadership role.

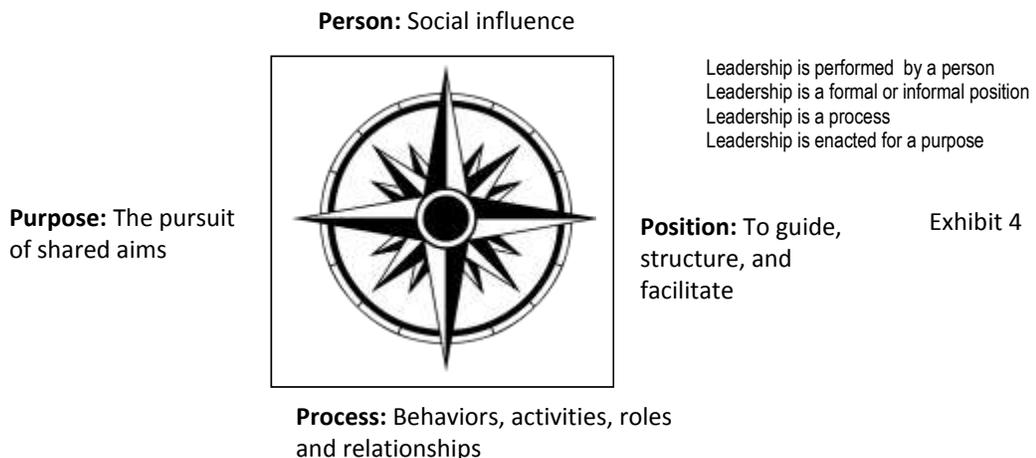
Both the context and followers are foundational to leadership and are central to the Academy for Sport Leadership's search for a new conceptualization of team leadership. The leader in every locker approach to team leadership is no doubt a paradigm shift. Paradigms, as you know, are the common patterns and ways of looking at things in order to make sense out of them. Leadership has long been presented as an elusive phenomenon available to only a select few. It is my contention, however, that **understanding the relational nature of leadership and**

**followership opens a team up to an immensely practical and dramatically richer form of team member involvement.**

The basic foundation of any leadership process is relational. As leadership expert Margaret Wheatley notes, “None of us exists independent of our relationships with others.” At the core, it is a relationship which comes into existence because of some sense of commitment by people to a common purpose. Thus, the ASL framework for answering the question “What is leadership?” begins by grounding it in the following core assumptions:

1. **Conventional views of leadership are changing.** Leadership is not limited to a chosen few; it is an educational component of participation in student-athletics and must contribute to the growth and development of all athletes. A leader in every locker embraces the potential of all student-athletes to take on leadership roles now and in the future.
2. **Leadership is a relational process.** That is, leadership is a socially constructed phenomenon consisting of student-athletes working together to accomplish something.
3. **Team leadership is distributed.** Leadership is not the sole responsibility of the coach, coaching staff, or selected team captains. The best team leadership results from the actions and activities of those best positioned to provide leadership contingent on the context.
4. **Leadership is a process to create change.** Leadership is about making things happen; transforming people and programs. Effective leadership accelerates change. Change is necessary for growth, development, and improvement in performance.
5. **Leadership growth and development is personal.** There is no time frame related to progressing through stages of development. It’s also recognized that all potential leaders begin at a different starting point. Leaders grow and develop through deliberate practice, informal practice, roles, reflection, and the observation of role models.
6. **Leadership is a process that involves followership.** All coaches and student-athletes participating in a leader in every locker understand and embrace both roles—leading and following. Followership implies a relationship to the leader, but does not imply one that places the follower in a less important position.
7. **Leadership develops over time.** There is no one way to lead. The practice of leadership involves the continual practice of finding the best way to lead with the particular capabilities that the student-athlete possesses at a specific time, while constantly working to improve and expand those capabilities.

### AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK OF TEAM-CENTERED LEADERSHIP



Embedded within the seven assumptions above are the four P's of team leadership. The framework highlights the integration of the four key domains of leadership. The framework answers the question *What is Leadership?* Team-centered leadership is a position, it is a process, and it is performed by a person for a team-enhancing purpose.

Too often leadership is narrowly defined exclusively as a person. Conceptually this leads us back to a focus on the leader, her traits and disposition. But leadership is more than the idiosyncratic actions taken by a chosen person. It is a process. A process is simply a coordinated way of doing things. Can student-athletes, including those that don't possess the so-called necessary traits, learn a process for doing leadership things? Of course they can. Leadership is also a position. In The Academy for Sport Leadership's way of doing things we suggest giving each student-athlete a "role" to on-board them into the leadership team building development process. You'll see this later when I introduce you to the *8 Roles of Teamwork* (see p.106). A leader's words and deeds provide purpose, a compelling vision of the future. Effective team leadership answers, for all team members, the questions, "why am I doing this?"

The Four P's, like the compass that they form, are only a tool for answering the question "What is leadership." Each student-athlete (and coach too) brings his or her own unique values, skills, experiences, and personality to the leader role; and each student-athlete has his or her own personal way of making change happen. The compass is a simple model that represents the key domains of an effective leadership development program.

## **A Focus on the Coaching Process**

For ages, people have debated if leaders are made or born. To cast your vote for one side or the other is to invite disagreement—though, clearly, in this book I do cast my vote for the *made* side. However, beyond the debate I have found that one thing is certain: with quality opportunities people can acquire and improve leadership skills, abilities, and competencies.

In his influential book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell's research on success turns up some very surprising insights—at least surprising to those willing to listen and learn. As he closes his book Gladwell succinctly summarizes his findings: "Everything we have learned in *Outliers* says that success follows a predictable course. It is not the brightest who succeed...Nor is it simply the sum of the decisions and efforts we make on our own behalf. It is, rather, a gift. Outliers are those who have been given opportunities—and who have the strength and presence of mind to seize them."

**Coaching process refers to *how* the coach gets things done, rather than *what* is done.** The way a coach approaches the work of building the team, for the most part, is an indication of certain basic managerial and leadership assumptions he or she has regarding human potential in the student-athletic setting. Here I define the two primary coaching processes as a *followership orientation* in which the coach seeks order by establishing the coach as leader and players as followers with little involvement and input into the leadership system. The other approach is a

*leadership orientation* in which the coach empowers players to participate and learn to lead in a team setting. The orientation of a coach, the cognitive goggles they use to understand the world, influences the action strategies they deploy and the reasoning processes they use to make sense of the world in which they are leading.

What makes a leader? Opportunity. How did you learn to lead? Opportunity. Therefore, give your student-athletes opportunities to learn to lead. As Francis Hesselbein said, “The leader’s job, after all, is not to provide energy but to release it from others.”

So, you have two choices:

1. Leadership is a matter of traits and qualities; either you do or don’t possess them. Leadership is determined by genes with which you were born. You can no more change your leadership capacity than you can change your height. Or...
2. Leadership requires a set of skills that can be improved by training, by practice and through learning how to do it better.

Please take a moment and think about the type of leadership education it takes for developing student-athletes into team leaders.

## **OH CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!**

### **ACADEMY FOR SPORT LEADERSHIP RESEARCH**

#### **Purpose:**

The main objective of this study was to investigate student-athletes' experience of the role of team captain. In prior research I found the number of team captains on a varsity athletic team to be most likely two or three student-athletes. The previous study also revealed that the captains are generally chosen by the coach, though closely followed by selection by teammates.

#### **Methods**

Focus groups were used to obtain students' opinion and experiences regarding participation on a varsity athletic team as a team captain. Sixty (60) students were selected from a data base consisting of 200 student-athletes with each student-athlete assigned to one of ten groups (ten groups with six participants). A focus group design was used to investigate the student-athlete's view of the role of peer leader and the experience of being a team captain. The focus group process involved organized discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of leadership and team captaincy. To analyze the data the method used to code and categories focus group data were adapted from approaches to qualitative data analysis.

The student-athletes were arranged in ten groups of six students (no participants were coupled with team captains from the same team). To open up dialogue—the goal being student-athlete interaction—the moderator used ten open-ended questions that were related to their team captain experience. The following topics were used to stimulate discussion.

1. How do you feel about being a team captain?
2. How do you feel about leadership?

3. How do you feel about being a team captain?
4. How do you feel about leadership?
5. Is there anything about the role of team captain that caused you to feel anxious about it?
6. Would you like to talk about those leadership experiences which you found most anxiety producing?
7. Which leadership experiences did you find enjoyable?
8. What was the best thing that happened to you as a leader?
9. What was the worst thing that happened to you as a leader?
10. What did the other team captains worry about regarding the peer leadership experiences?
11. How do you think the team captain experience can be improved?
12. What is your expectation for you of future leadership experiences?

## Results

The data from this study was very thick, intense, and very insightful. Four prominent themes emerged.

**1. Lack of Preparation:** From the student-athletes' point of view, "initial anxiety," proved to be a real threat causing an emotional state of uneasiness with the role of team captain. The participants overwhelmingly acknowledged feeling a sense of inner turmoil when enacting their first few leadership actions. For many, they never got over the fear of rejection that might occur if a teammate dismissed an action (verbal or visual) performed by the student-athlete as a team captain. Almost all of the participants expressed that at times they "dreaded" having to lead.

*One of the student-athletes expressed: "I was elated at my selection as a team captain. I was quickly deflated when I made my first attempt to lead."*

**2. Lack of Feedback:** From the student-athlete's point of view they felt "worry" and were often frustrated by the lack of feedback. Most participants noted that feedback by coaches was minimal, often out of synch with the timing of need, and felt like "something" was wrong because no one, player or coach, offered valuable feedback. They felt like they were on an island, and the only person they could (and would) relate the fear with were the other team captains.

*One of the student-athletes expressed: "All I want to know is am I being effective."*

**3. Lack of Competency:** Fear of failure and making mistakes concerning peer leadership was expressed by most of the student-athletes. Because of this fear, many overlooked leadership opportunities preferring to stay on the "safe ground."

*One of the student-athlete's expressed: "The year before I looked up to the team captain, but when I was placed in the role I felt like a fraud. I never really knew if I was making a difference as a leader."*

**4. Lack of Confidence:** While almost all participants shared a sense of self-confidence as an athlete, the opposite was true of the role of team captain. A healthy portion of the participants never overcame the sense of "self-doubt." Rather, they continued to lead with the expectation of confidence being discovered along the way.

*One of the student-athletes expressed: "I think I lacked self confidence because I had unrealistic expectations of the role. I was more concerned with my teammates' opinions than my ability."*

## Conclusion

The result of this study showed that student-athletes were not satisfied with the outcomes of their role as team captain. They experienced fear, uneasiness, and inner turmoil for most of the time they were team captains—as it related to the role of team captain. Many participants never really felt competent as a result of lack of preparation for the role. Many of the participants were glad to have the opportunity to "reflect" on their experiences with others. The reflection proved to be a trigger to learn more and take more risks in future leadership.

## It's How You Think, Not What You Know

Leadership educator John Gardner, author of the seminal book *On Leadership*, said, “All too often, on the long road up, young leaders become ‘servants of what is’ rather than ‘shapers of what might be.’ In the long process of learning how the system works, they are rewarded within the intricate structure of the existing rule. By the time they reach the top, they are very likely to be trained prisoners of the structure.” The structure Gardner refers to is the powerful scripts, stories and long-held assumptions that tie-down the thinker from thinking differently.

All coaches operate on the basis of assumptions, beliefs, values, attitudes and mental models. The approaches they use to think about leadership and team building are affirmed in a framework which, for the most part, determines viewpoints and perspectives.

Over the past twenty years of embedding myself into the research and practice of leadership development, I’ve developed a framework to help understand the different views and ways coaches think about and interpret their world. My experience has been that most coaching behaviors are due to fundamental differences in the way coaches think. I title the framework M1 (Model 1) and M2 (Model 2) because this reminds us that our thinking determines our actions. This implies the need to understand that we all possess mental models; but as models, M1 and M2 are simply representative of one’s reality. They are not reality. This framework shows how and why coaches think differently, how this impacts the student-athlete developmental process and how difference in thinking shapes the process of teambuilding.

The two differing ways of thinking are what I term a *Followership Orientation* (M1) and a *Leadership Orientation* (M2). First, think of orientation like orienteering—navigating movement from point to point. Orientation provides direction. Let me be clear here: elements of both orientations are employed by most coaches. However, it is hard to overstate the implications that cascade from this one fact: The way of you think determines what you do.

The dual operating system is not two silos—just two superstructures. The key point is that such a distinct lens shapes a coach’s view of human potential and performance. Yet, for the most part, many coaches are inattentive to how their distinct orientation affects how they coach and how they perceive the world around them. Rather, they simply take how they think and act for granted and continue to pursue practices that may no longer work.

The two orientations should not be viewed from a competitive view. One is not necessarily better than the other. It’s just that the preferred orientation determines how coaches organize their coaching activities. For starters, the *nature* of a **Followership Orientation** suggests an autocratic perspective that leadership is primarily the domain of the coach. This orientation:

- Limits accountability. (“I’m not accountable to you. I’m accountable to the coach. Who are you to hold me accountable?”)

- Decreases the chances that a student-athlete will take risks necessary to lead. (*Team members are reluctant to put others on the spot, to call them out on detrimental behavior. Apathy prevails because the environment for leadership does not exist.*)
- Lessens the likelihood that student-athletes will see themselves as a part of the problem-solving process. (*“Coach will take care of it. She always does.”*)
- Minimizes the role and identity of athlete as a leader. (*“My job as a team captain is to make sure everyone works hard.”*)
- Is coach-centered, autocratic control preferred. (*“I don’t need you teaching her how to do the drill correctly. That’s my responsibility,” says the coach.*)
- Coach desires capacity to predict future consequences of actions. / Presupposes a fixed emotional distance from players. (*“It’s hard for me to make a call if I care too much” says the coach.*)

The *nurturing* of a **Leadership Orientation** describes a coach with an empowering style as a leadership educator, seeking to develop human potential and amplifying individual growth by giving developmental opportunities. This orientation:

- Enhances active response in the student-athlete. (*“I can’t let that go, if we don’t take care of it now it’ll grow into a bigger problem.”*)
- Is athlete-centered, increases leadership accountability. (*“This is our team, we are accountable to each other.”*)
- Is Democratic in nurture. (*“What do you think?”*)
- Promotes growth experiences by designing opportunities into the program. (*Having a purpose increases intentionality and persistence.*)
- Acknowledges that players expect some degree of input. (*“I am in charge of my future and know what’s in my best interest.”*)
- Accepts the human potential perspective as a long-term goal. (*Fosters broad-based growth and development of human talent and potential.*)

**It’s critical for coaches to understand their predisposition and reflexive responses to teamwork challenges.** How do you prefer to teach and learn? Is your personal bent more about you finding a solution or the team together searching for a collective understanding of a conflict? To excel as a leadership educator you must be aware of which orientation—mental model—drives your thinking. Reconfiguring your thinking is difficult, but at times necessary. This is a major challenge for anyone desiring to maximize his or her coaching abilities. Thus, the challenge is to meet what F. Scott Fitzgerald called “the test of a first-rate intelligence is to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

To summarize, each orientation establishes, more or less, a systematic set of ideas for making sense of your world. **In short, the following four functions construct a mindset.** The functions of orientation are: **(1) coordination**, provides direction; **(2) explanatory**, provides a cognitive framework; **(3) evaluative**, a legitimate way to administer judgment and determine priorities; and **(4) programmatic**, a way to construct processes that solve problems and yield team behaviors. It is inappropriate to suggest that these four functions explain everything about how coaches think and act, but they provide support in most cases.

## The World within You: Uncovering Mental Models

Let's take a close look at your coaching self in the mirror. Beneath your inescapable good looks and youthful charm churns a hidden portrait of beliefs, values, assumptions, observations, and personal experiences. Understanding how you relate to the world around you is the foundation of self-awareness. **How you gather information from the world around you and how you process that information can limit the way you get things done, interact with others, and make decisions.** Because this book is grounded in *Coaching for Leadership* and the practice of training up leaders, I want you to know my goal is to guide you (consider me your Sherpa) toward expanding your awareness, interest, and ability in leadership and leadership development. The truth is, **we can all benefit greatly by regularly examining and testing our mental models—and revising them if it turns out that they have outlived their usefulness.**

Although we like to think of ourselves as being reasonable, we often make negative attributions regarding others' abilities while holding our views with a high degree of confidence. Indeed, in the privacy of our own minds we hold our positions with a high degree of certainty, leaving no room for the discovery of error. The problem is, we tend to dismiss that, in many ways, our thinking is driven by a concern for self-interest and self-protection. We cling to our mental models out of fear of the unknown. Complicating matters is the fact that we rarely take the opportunity to slow things down long enough to reflect deeply on what we are doing and why.

The following exercise (pages 49-50) is designed to enhance your ability to recognize and acknowledge aspects vital to your coaching methodology and approach to building your team. Leadership requires relational understanding; this exercise can help you better understand your approach to how you think and how you act in relationships. The mental models (what I refer to as M1 and M2) allow you to examine closely, in detail and depth, many of the processes by which you think, feel, and behave. You can think of each model as a very special lens that gives you the capacity to understand your values, assumptions and actions with greater clarity.

**Think about this: How does your mind experience, interpret, and reflect a unique and seemingly coherent world? How are these processes affected by the two distinct models?** The mental models approach allows you to dig deep to scrutinize your inner landscape. **Table one on page 49** might just reveal a glimpse of an inner you you didn't expect. You'll find situations where Model 1 tells you X and Model 2 tells you Y. This is a good thing. You are a complex person with a mosaic of perceptions and beliefs. In the end, you will glance again in the mirror and tell yourself, "I've got some good news and I've got some bad news."

**Table 1** highlights the central elements of the two predominant coaching paradigms. The Seven Domains represent the various organizing dimensions (**an operating system**) that make up the team context. A context is the routines of "every day" life. The core activities of team building flow out of the context which becomes rigid over time. It is by the "mental model" orientation that a coach decides what to do and *what not to do*. Each orientation is based on a set of core values, a preferred way of thinking and acting, along with a preferred mode of learning and established relational patterns of interpersonal interactions. Every coach is strongly influenced by his or her mental models about how the world works. The two compellingly different models lead to divergent approaches to discovering "truth" within the coaching profession. Both orientations elicit a different blend of a leader's three primary tools—power, influence, and authority. **Change requires that the coach audit ones own behavior and examine the effects of their actions (See Executive Activity: Self-Awareness).** Thoughtfully study your coaching self using Model 1 and 2 as tools for exploration.



**Table 1: THE BUILDING BLOCKS BOX: Orientation and Team Building Implications**

<b>MASTER PROGRAM</b> Organizing and Managing the Domains of Team Leadership	<b>Model I</b> <b>FOLLOWERSHIP ORIENTATION</b> Leader-Centric / Ego-Centric Process-Driven Mechanistic / External Forces	<b>Model II</b> <b>LEADERSHIP ORIENTATION</b> Leadership-Centric / Eco-Centric People-Driven Humanistic / Internal Forces
<b>Governance</b> The core of your approach to leadership is found in the way you exercise power, use authority, and exert influence; to control or to liberate, or both!	Inclination for Autocratic (directive) style. Power over others. Biased to favor technical expertise—transactional management. Dominant mode of interaction is order-giver order-taker. Unilateral, directive style. <i>“Coaches coach, players play.”</i>	Willing and able to use Democratic (participative) style. Power with others. Adept at administering coaching support—transformative nurturance. Synergistic, collaborative style.
<b>Order</b> The intrapersonal and interpersonal way of organizing the context.	Seeks certainty. Practices control to modify behaviors. Difficult time giving up authority. Reluctant to empower others. Adheres to command and control.	Embraces cooperation and accepts ambiguity. Strong interest in teaching for the long-term. Is not primarily concerned with always having full authority. Social context supports pro-activity.
<b>Relations</b> The role of leader-follower interactions. Does the coach create, in the mind of the athlete, an external locus of control, or an internal locus—empowerment?	Traditional / Hierarchical. Coach should be out in front. Status driven. Power in form of athlete dependence on coach. Concerned with how things get done. <i>“Coaches coach, players play.”</i>	Servant Leader. Sensitive to serving others. Mission driven. Responsive to the needs of others and the environment. Concerned with what events and decisions mean to all involved.
<b>Change and Improvement</b> Flexibility or inflexibility? Do you empower your student-athletes? Do you demonstrate the need to have others do what you want, or the capacity to collaborate via trust/respect?	<u>Unilateral control.</u> Achieves his/her goals through coaxing and authority. Drives development through personal directives. Focus is on task performance. Feels more effective telling or demanding. Seeks efficiency. Team captains either “sink or swim.”	<u>Mutual learning.</u> Has the courage to listen and learn from others (including student-athletes!). Works hard to understand others’ perspective. Focus on people. Willing and able to ask or persuade. Functions well in turbulent environments.
<b>Role Framework</b> The internal dynamics of tasks, people, and relationships. Basic values, attitudes, and personality (style) to enact (role)s.	Tribe: hierarchy with strong kinship ties. Coach as patriarch or matriarch. Presumes relational ties of brotherhood/sisterhood. Majority of role interactions are “scripted.”	Human resource: design experiences with and for student-athlete growth and development. Able to blend interpersonal familiarity and task interactions. Identity development is a focal point.
<b>Motivation</b> Activated by your assumption: The student-athlete does / does not really want to assume responsibility and accountability.	“Working on” (doing to) student-athlete. Get them to do things by coercion or manipulation. Short-term perspective. Control resources. Over use of “carrot and stick” motivation.	“Working with” (doing with) student-athlete. Get them to want to do things. Long-term outlook. Provide resources. Integrates self-correction and self-generation into team player activities.
<b>Growth and Learning</b> Nature and scope of what is worth learning. What priorities are conducive to the learning process?	Authority-based thinking—habit and routine driven. Exercises authority by controlling what is to be learned and when. Uses obligation as necessary. Maintains emotional distance. Transactional ethos. Seeks to control the environment.	Reflective thinking—learning by action and reflection. Devotes energy to designing authentic learning space for student-athletes. Supports autonomy. Strives for emotional connection. Transformational ethos. Seeks to learn from the environment.

## The Building Blocks Box

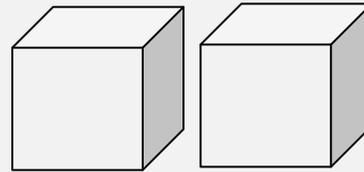
### THE FOUR STAGES OF DISCOVERING A COACHING FOR LEADERSHIP MINDSET

**Stage 1: Contents of the Mind: Learning the Models (M1 & M2)** (Class Conversation)

- a. Establish the two orientations
- b. Sketch out the Core Pillars (concepts, stories, theories, ideas, frameworks, paradigms, skills)
- c. Define how the model works (logic and research)

**Stage 2: Looking inside the Box: Examining the Models** (Breakout Session)

- a. Look across (breadth)
  - a. What are the similarities? Differences?
  - b. What are the points of tension? Core values?
- b. Look within (depth)
  - a. What assumptions underlie each model?
  - b. What cause-effect relationships can you see?
- c. Look outside (context)
  - a. How do environmental factors affect the models?
  - b. Describe a scenario in which each model is most effective.



**Stage 3: Adaptive Challenges: Investigating the Social Reality** (Breakout Session)

- a. What are the relational benefits of Model 1 & Model 2
- b. What are the relational drawbacks of Model 1 & Model 2

	Relational benefits of Model 1 / Relational drawbacks of Model 1	Relational benefits of Model 2 / Relational drawbacks of Model 2
For the players individually		
For the coaches		
For the team		

**Stage 4: Unraveling the Mystery: Exploring the Possibilities** (Class Conversation)

- a. What are the team building advantages of Model 1 & Model 2
- b. What are the team building limitations of Model 1 & Model 2

	Team building advantages of Model 1 / team building limitations of Model 1	Team building advantages of Model 2 / team building limitations of Model 2
For the players individually		
For the coaches		
For the team		

## Getting Organized

Carol Dweck, a distinguished Stanford professor, has drawn a distinction between two very different mindsets that determine one's achievement focus—a performance orientation or a learning orientation. Dweck's research has revolutionized how we think about mindsets and how we approach organizing efforts to reach our goals. When children believe that their intelligence is a fixed quantity, she found, they tend to become easily discouraged by strenuous and challenging school assignments and give up quickly. Children who sense that their intelligence is malleable, conversely, see challenging problems as a way to improve and grow. With the learning and growth mindset, Dweck suggests, the student is more likely to spend time on a challenging problem. And those with a performance orientation are quick to quit a challenging problem fearing embarrassment. Dweck has found this to be true for adults too.

These different orientations toward learning and leadership produce different approaches to setting goals and implementing plans. The two mindsets discovered by Dweck align with the two models I've identified as Model 1 and Model 2 in Table 1 on the previous page. Most coaches show a clear affinity for one or the other. Let me be clear: Model 1 and Model 2 are terms used to represent a set of assumptions that strongly influence how a coach makes decisions and how they follow through on their choices.

For the most part, the coach with a *Followership Orientation* is more inclined to focus his or her organization of team activities with a performance orientation—a fixed mindset. I find this validated in the statement many coaches make; “We didn't have good team leadership this season. Our team captains let us down.” Such a statement is a product of the “sink or swim” mental model of a fixed mindset. Team captains are simply expected to know how to lead. On the other hand, the coach with a *Leadership Orientation, coaching for leadership*, will organize team activities and opportunities in a manner that will grow team leaders and team leadership.

Every coach has the same organizing dimensions available for designing a team. The team building dimensions fall into three types: structure, control, and resources. Coaches utilize structure in formal and informal ways to provide a framework for building a team. Practices are highly structured to produce desired outcomes. Players play defined roles that structure their contributions to the team. Structure interacts with control. Coaches control who plays and in what situations they play. Structure and control are affected by resources—time being a primary resource. *Table 1 (page 49)* utilizes seven common organizational team building characteristics (Governance, Order, Relations, Change, Role Framework, Motivation, and Growth and Learning) to illuminate the two different mindsets that shape the culture, performance, and effectiveness of a team.

What difference does recognizing the idiosyncrasies of a leadership and followership oriented coaching mindset make? Let's start at the bottom line. The essence of a leadership orientation tends to produce deeper commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction. Your success as a coach depends on your core beliefs about your student-athletes and how to organize your team. In short, the leadership orientation is capable of producing a healthier team culture. However, an

intentional “order-giver order-taker” orientation is a very useful stance at the right times. If you’re being wheeled in for surgery, a task-oriented surgeon is likely to quickly establish order and focus in the operating room. That’s comforting!

**TIME OUT:** Here’s where the rubber meets the road. Invest forty-five minutes to develop a Personal Leadership Sketch using this worksheet to reflect, think through and examine your mindset. This is a necessity if you want to effectively facilitate the development of A Leader in Every Locker™. Clarifying the values, beliefs, and priorities that orient your coaching is a healthy endeavor. Excellence requires you to make a stark and honest self-assessment of your ideological commitments, even if it’s painful.

**Coaching Exercise: 2 Personal Leadership Sketch**

It’s crucial that **you** identify your system of thinking through the process of self-discovery. There is no paper and pencil test. The goal is simply to increase your awareness and sensitivity to your mental models and coaching behaviors. The world simply cannot be made sense of unless you have a mental model to begin with. In this learning reflection exercise you will describe your preferred mindset, one that affects how you think and how your thoughts drive your coaching behavior.

Review Table 1 on page 49. For each of the *Seven Factors* (Governance, Order...etc.) identify the features that are:

Most Like Me

Example: Order / Model 1

Somewhat Like Me

Example: Growth and Learning / Model 2

Less Like Me

Least Like Me

As you review the elements of your *Personal Sketch*, identify some personal stories that capture how your perspective, as per description in above exercise, was shaped:

**STORY**

**LEADERSHIP THEME**  
(Identify a theme that best characterizes your story.)

---

---

---

---

---

## The Road Less Traveled

For most of us, examining our thinking and reasoning is extraordinarily challenging. For example, most people believe they are open-minded and able to perform an honest self evaluation. Yet, anyone who has ever done a 360-degree assessment has experienced the *self-observer gap phenomenon*. That is, the gap between one's own perception and the reality of the raters. The lack of self-awareness is self-limiting and exposes the discrepancy between how we see ourselves and how others we impact see us. Carrying out a rigorous self evaluation turns out to be a difficult task for most of us. So it should come as no surprise that we avoid the uncertainty of change. Rather, we creatively find ways to justify our desire for the status-quo.

**What we do well, however, is explain our actions through our logic and personal reasoning.**

What this leads to is this: every coach crafts an *espoused theory*, a theory of action used as a reasoning process to construe a narrative of one's behavior. And then there is the *theory in use*. Often a coach's behavior, their theory in use, is contradictory to their espoused theory. Yes, a coach might say one thing and do another. Put simply, coaches are often unaware of the counterproductive nature of their own actions and the conflict between their espoused theory and their theory in use.

It is the case then that many coaches truly believe in the values and assumptions of a leadership orientation, yet practice a followership orientation and show little awareness that they are doing so. Organizational expert Chris Argyris, says this is a natural human phenomenon. After all change threatens the investment you've already made in the status quo. The more you have invested in your current system, the more you'll resist change. All the more reason to really check under the hood and "see" which orientation is really driving your leadership actions.

But what does all this mean? For starters, when a coach builds her program from either the followership or leadership orientation she does so by drawing on her personal constructions of the factors of human potential. That is, her perception of behavior and motivation along with her "working theories" synthesize into a narrative from which she envisions her program unfolding. The dichotomy between her operational mindset and desired mindset is likely to only be noticed when, and if, she discovers the discrepancies between what she says and what she does. The orientation serves as a navigational tool—her map and compass—for building her team. It determines how she will handle planning, organizing, and controlling the processes of building the team.

**The thoughts, ideas, and observations in the pages ahead advocate a next generation of methods and practices for coaches interested in the growth and development of student-athletes.** A leader in every locker is not for everyone. However, all over the world today, in every sector, leadership is evolving and expanding. Leadership used to be for a limited few. Today it's very likely that your student-athletes will have many leadership experiences and opportunities across the expanse of their lives. Think about it; how rewarding is it for you to help install a foundation for their leadership success today and tomorrow.

## Examining Your Practices, Structures, and Processes

It's healthy to examine our deepest held beliefs about people and the nature of motivation. However, we must face the fact that some of our cherished beliefs may be wrong, that our intellectual immune system, while comforting, leaves us vulnerable to poor decision-making. Asking ourselves to be open shifts our focus from controlling our environment (M1) to learning from it (M2), and helps us understand how we can grow and develop as a coach, leader, and teacher. Look in the mirror and consider what you believe; peel away the layers of a lifetime of social reinforcement. What do you see? What assumptions do you have that lead you to relate and interact in sub-optimal ways with your student-athletes? Let me encourage you to "consider the opposite" of some of your desired practices.

Take a deeper look:

- Is your way of thinking about leadership established upon a limited understanding of human behavior? Be honest, how rigorous is your pursuit of knowledge of human behavior? How deep is your study of human potential?
- Are there certain ideas or beliefs that you cling to so strongly that you will force new information to fit your existing mental models—if at all?
- Are you threatened when someone brings to your attention a mistake in thinking?
- Are you hostile towards others that disagree with you?

Okay, time to examine your approach to coaching.

- Pick a coaching practice that you now use (such as appointing two team captains). Determine the purpose of this practice.
- What potential problems might emerge from this practice?
- What is the underlying assumption(s) that originally led you to begin this practice?
- What are the potential unintended consequences of this practice?
- Explore for a moment; how might this practice undermine some other practices or processes?

Leadership is a psychosocial experience. For the most part, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of leaders and followers are highly influenced by the context and situational factors.

How about this: engage your coaching staff in the following discussion question:

- Think about an experience you have had that challenged the way you think (your mental model, schema, or cognitive filing system). What was the situation? How did you react? What logical process did you employ to make sense of your reaction?

### **MIND YOUR MINDSET: It's How You Think, Not What You Know**

The versatile coach exhibits the following characteristics:

- They are open-minded, reflective, and intellectually curious.
- They acknowledge what they do not know.
- They gather information from a wide range of resources
- They enjoy pondering a range of diverse views, and they update their assumptions as facts change.

**TIME OUT:** Take a moment to complete this exercise. Carefully consider your experience this past season and mine for lessons that are as good as gold.

**Coaching Exercise: Learning from Leadership Lessons**

Every year a new team brings you an opportunity to learn more about yourself and leadership, and the opportunity to teach leadership lessons and to learn some too. Take a few minutes to consider the lessons you learned and the lessons you taught this past season.

EXPERIENCE (Describe who, what, why, where, when.)	LEADERSHIP LESSONS I LEARNED
1.	
2.	
3.	

EXPERIENCE (Describe who, what, why, where, when.)	LEADERSHIP LESSONS I TAUGHT
1.	
2.	
3.	

In the spirit of authentic introspection, take as much time as you need to chew on the following ideas.

<p><b>Implicit Theories of Leadership Development</b></p> <p><i>Be honest with yourself as you answer the following questions as being true or false about you.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The kind of leader someone is, is something basic about them, and it cannot be changed very much.</li> <li>2. Leaders can do things differently, but the important part of who they are as leaders cannot really be changed.</li> <li>3. Everyone is a certain kind of leader, and there is not much that they can do to really change that.</li> <li>4. Leaders cannot really change their deepest attributes.</li> </ol>
--

*Routines, often entrenched by success, can become an anchor. All coaches have sets of ideas and practices they consider necessary for success. Yet, routine, or habits if you will, can cause inertia and complacency decreasing the coach's ability to sense, see, and respond in a new and possibly more effective way.*

## The Challenge of Change

Throughout most of history leadership has been a process carried out primarily, to put it charitably, by a privileged few. The path to leadership was to own land (power) which provided status. Social station, not skill, ruled the day. However, the world has changed; it's no longer flat. Many "truisms" once thought to be true are considered folly today.

Hopefully by engaging in the previous exercise you noticed some areas of inconsistency between what you say and what you do. Yes, the world has changed, but for the most part our methods for understanding leadership have not. We keep relying on familiar techniques when coaching. For example, the idea of a leader in every locker seemingly violates common sense, and so most coaches stick to the comfort of deploying two or three team captains.

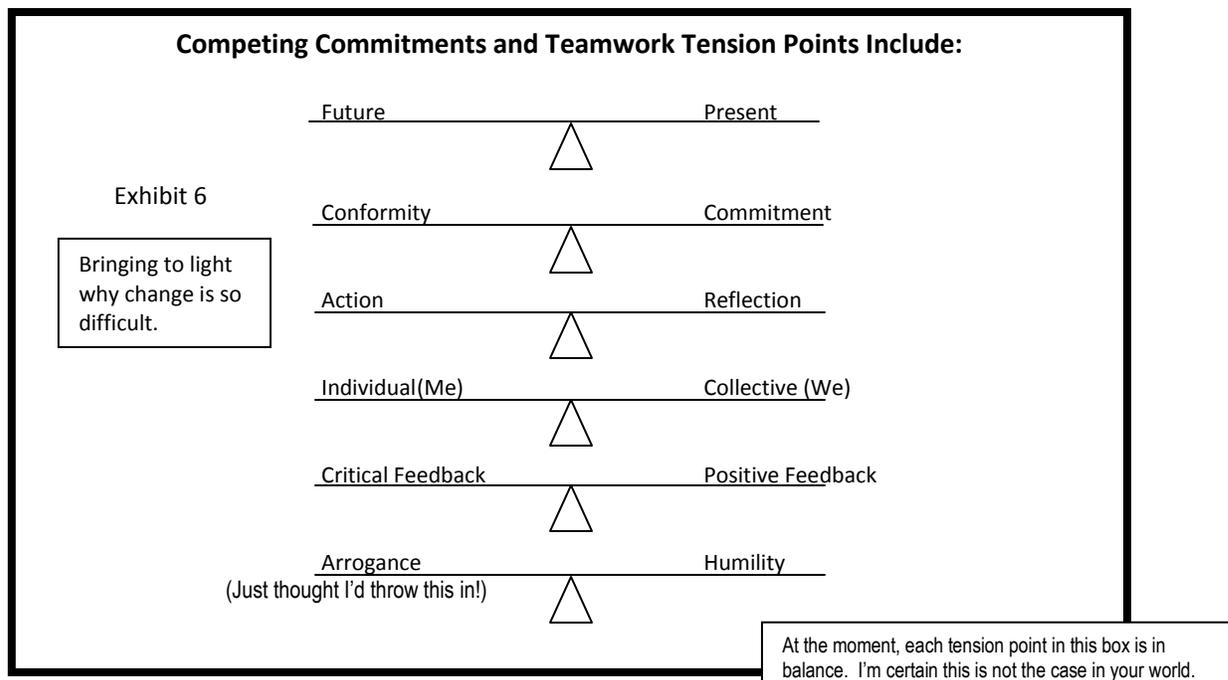
**Coaches can easily become prisoners of their own assumptions.** If a coach is willing to look, he or she will often find that they are simply going along with the traditional way of doing things without even realizing it. It's always difficult to change, but coaches have to forget many of their "conditioned" ideas in order to be open to new ones.

Becoming aware of assumptions and perceptions and understanding how they influence emotions and actions is the first step toward the ability to shift mental models and see the world in new ways. Coaches can, in fact, break free from outdated mental models. This is accomplished when the coach is willing and able to continually review their own beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions and recognize that what worked yesterday may not work today.

So why don't we just change our mental models? For most people turning one's worldview inside out is intimidating, risky work. We form our assumptions about how the world works early in life—largely unexamined—and they in turn shape us. It takes courage and patience to alter deeply entrenched assumptions and attitudes. **It is no easy task to change a mindset or habits that one has held and reinforced over many years.**

As history has shown, the ability to look at situations from different viewpoints is quite difficult. Consider the fact that before 1543, people believed that the sun and all the planets revolved around the earth—a geocentric worldview. This seemed obvious; all you had to do was look skyward. But in 1543, Copernicus changed all that by proposing, and proving, that the sun is actually the center of the universe—that we live in a heliocentric system. Of course, this radical change in perspective was met with great resistance.

To elaborate this point, **when someone challenges our thinking, we strongly resist.** Further, our resistance increases when the challenge forces us to reconsider not just *what* we think, but also *how* we think. Overturning a paradigm requires noticing what you think and do. Perhaps this is what R.D. Laing meant when he said, "The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds." My hope is that this book serves as a guide helping you notice what you previously failed to notice.



We already know the central tensions and issues that confront a sports team. The resolution of a team's central concerns will determine the ultimate success of the team. Here are a few more Tension Points:

Risk / Stability	Narrow/Wide Perspective
Success / Failure	Assertion / Observation
Ambiguity / Certainty	

## Tension & Tolerance: Uncovering the Hidden Forces of Competing Commitments

The essence of coaching is to lift the capacity of a team—to enhance the collective capabilities of a diverse group of individuals. To do so requires a focus on the decisions the head coach and her staff make daily; those decisions that impact for the long term and well as in the short term, the individual as well as the team. The reality is that decisions matter greatly and as such, the more effective coach generally makes more effective decisions. But the most effective decisions can only be derived at when the process of tension is involved. The best decisions grow out of the clash of divergent opinions, assumptions, and viewpoints. The premier decision makers understand that **effective decisions emerge when the decision making process includes serious consideration for the competing alternatives.** And the habit of considering competing alternatives is often a source of great tension. Conflict is uncomfortable, threatening one's self image, and thus, often avoided by most coaches.

In building an athletic program every coach must decide what they will do, how they will do it, and in what time horizon. In doing so, they also define what they are *not* going to do. Creating a successful program that produces a high-performing team involves tackling a wide variety of tensions—structural dualities if you will. Coaches must deal with tensions every day. Tensions are dualities such as individual well-being vs. team progress, flexibility vs. efficiency,

competition vs. cooperation, control vs. ambiguity, hierarchy vs. democracy, and short-term perspective vs. long-term outlook (just add to those in Exhibit 6). Tensions arise out of two related psychosocial elements that are connected, but seemingly contradictory.

Tensions cause *friction*; psychological stress, anxiety, and emotional stress often triggering negative thoughts and behavior. Tensions are natural; every decision you make has a present consequence and a future consequence. This is a structural tension. Your resolution involves trying to gain traction on a desired state of things moving forward from the actual state of things. The resolution of a tension today sets in motion thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that will be enacted today, but also affect tomorrow. Thus, tension causes friction (breaking down) or traction (movement forward), revealing the hidden forces of coaching.

So let me state the obvious: a coach's ability to coach successfully is contingent upon various behavioral factors; their own and their players. Motivation and intention aren't enough. All coach-player interactions are charged with the meshing of transactional events (technical actions) with transformational episodes (adaptive actions). The tension created by any interaction can and frequently does lead to unintended consequences. Further, the negative tension experienced by the student-athlete through a coach-player interaction is often suppressed because they don't have an appropriate channel through which to vent. Moreover, it can be extremely difficult to ferret out the truth invariably hidden within the results of the coach's actions. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing in advance how a choice of competing demands will turn out. This is why a decision that looks like the right choice today can also have negative unintended consequences down the road.

## Leadership, Culture, and the Self: Egosystems and Ecosystems

*"We coaches do seem to be enamored with our own reflections."* –Anonymous (by choice)

For the sake of clarity here's my operational definition of culture in the team sport setting:

***Sport team culture is the ecosystem of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social processes that influence and engage student-athletes aspirations, motivation, emotions, connection, and performance.***

Few people like to deal with the 800lb gorilla in the room. It's necessary, so here goes. Coaches tend to have big egos. Well, most people are fundamentally self-interested, so it's not that I'm disclosing something you didn't already know.

In the field of coaching, ego is always a factor. I was once an assistant coach for a head coach voted as conference coach of the year. The vote was 10-0 (a ten team conference) in his favor. He felt the need to vote for himself. Why? Because self-promotion and self-protection are two human frailties we all possess, he was simply covering all the bases. That's how the ego works.

As used here, **ego is an interpersonal psychodynamic that influences a person's social experiences and relationships.** For our purpose, the development of a leader in every locker, it's necessary to explore how the coach's ego impacts the culture (ecosystem) of the team. In team sports **the ecosystem is the complex set of interdependent relationships between coaches, players, and other key personnel that determines the quality of all team member interactions.** However, because the coach's way of seeing things has such special weight, it is imperative that we examine how ego driven actions (usually of self-promotion or self-protection) by the coach affect the actions and attitudes of the players and thereby the team's culture. And additionally, student-athletes have a "built-in" sense of dependence on the coach, heightening the consequences of coach-player relationships on the team's ecosystem.

By and large, the psychological literature on the ego suggests that it is a psychic process of distinguishing one's self from the others around him or her. In the opinion of cognitive scientist Otto Sharmer, an egosystem tends to focus on the well-being of oneself, while an ecosystem emphasizes an awareness of and desire for the well-being of the whole. The egosystem prefers controlling an environment to ensure one's needs and wants are met in that environment; whereas the ecosystem prefers authentic integration not just of oneself, but other stakeholders and the collective interests of the ecosystem in which activities take place.

**Most social scientists assume that people fundamentally focus on themselves, that they do what they perceive to be advantageous to their self-interests.** To the extent that this is perceived to be accurate in the "real" world, it's unsurprising then that this view pervades research. Most of what we know about leadership and relationship is that people, for the most part, focus on self-enhancement and self-protection of their ego, constantly seeking validation and affirmation while always protecting one's self from real or perceived attacks.

If you and I were to spend a day following around a rock star, a business titan, or a star athlete, we would doubtless encounter some subtler, often indirect, determinants of his or her behavior. In particular, we would detect the compelling influence exerted by significant and insignificant others on these "celebrated" members of society. We would witness a steady diet of adulation from others towards the "special" person. Over time such patterns of attention shape the person's ego. An interaction effect grows out of the flattering behavior, between the audience and the star.

Coaches, for the most part, are treated as special people. The consequence of such behavior and expectations is that ego becomes an ingredient in both a coach's success and failure. But as an 800lb gorilla it's rarely explicitly explored by the coach and his or her staff and players. Rather, the coach's ego, especially one tied up in a unilateral control mindset (see Model 1), no matter how counterproductive, is unfortunately almost never an item for discussion.

So let's agree, we all have an ego and it can *and does* shape our attitudes and behaviors. Coaches with gargantuan egos typically have a blinder-like fixation on the immediate results with little regard for the long-term costs of how they achieve these results. The "take-the-hill" approach is always costly—physically, emotionally, and relationally.

It's no secret, teams perform at their very best when a high-level of commitment is given to sacrifice and cooperation. However, this is a real challenge because an intense focus on personal well-being is seemingly a human default behavior. We know that lawyers make more money when they slow the process down. A surgeon makes more money when he or she operates. A real estate agent makes a larger commission when they sell you the more expensive house. The mechanic digs deep into your engine looking to find something wrong with your car. And the stock broker doesn't have your best interest at heart when he or she encourages you to buy and sell at a frantic pace driving up commissions. Every profession is given to participants acting mostly with self-interest.

Recently, Tom Coughlin stepped down as the head coach of the New York Giants. During his time with the Giants the team won two Super Bowls. Coughlin was the first coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars and built them into a consistent playoff team. Coughlin was a very successful coach. He was known for running a tight ship and possessing a leadership style best described as a drill sergeant. Coughlin was demanding, often without expressing care and concern toward his players. This approach almost cost him his job in 2006, just prior to winning his first Super Bowl. The territorial inclinations of most coaches close them off from authentic and insightful feedback, limiting the chance of recognizing areas in need of change. The Giants had been underperforming for some time under Coughlin. John Mara, owner of the Giants was growing concerned that Coughlin's approach was not a match for the needs and wants of the players—the ultimate performers.

ESPN writer, Ian O'Conner describes the catalyst of change for Coughlin:

*Everything changed, of course, after Coughlin was nearly fired following the 2006 season. John Mara (owner of the Giants) told him he needed to take something off his fastball, that he had to ease up with the players and the news media, and Coughlin agreed. The coach told Mara he wanted to establish a leadership council of veterans to bridge the divide between his office and the locker room. "If I could do cartwheels," Mara said, "I would've done one that day." There were assists along the way. Coughlin's wife, Judy, and children implored him to show his private self in public settings. Charles Way, a former Giants fullback serving as director of player development, told Coughlin that many players didn't have father figures and that they needed to see him in that context. "Right now, they feel it's us against them," Way told him, "that you don't care about me, that I'm just a piece of meat to you, just a number to you. And if you want them to play for you, given the way you are, you have to show them that you care about them, which I know you do. But you have to show them that."*

Michael Strahan, a Hall of Fame defensive end for the Giants, once declared such dislike for an unempathetic Coughlin that he vowed that he'd never play for the man. However, once Coughlin chose to change and focused effort on the needs and motivations of the players, he renewed a relationship with Strahan based on how much he cared for him. This inspired Strahan to acknowledging he'd never play for any other coach. Coughlin repaired player-coach relationships by acting with compassion and authentically caring about the well-being of the team's members.

**We've heard it all our lives: people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.** Showing how much you care takes a tremendous amount of humility, it means you aren't always right nor do you always have the best way of doing things.

The great Green Bay Packer quarterback Bart Starr, after taking a verbal beating from the great yeller Vince Lombardi, requested a man-to-man meeting with the authoritative coach. He told, not requested but demanded, Lombardi never talk to him again in front of the team in such a belittling manner. Starr felt that such demeaning of him in front of his teammates would, over time, erode his teammates' confidence in him. Lombardi, as the legend goes, never again bellowed at Starr in front of his teammates.

And then there's Bob Knight. The University of Indiana Men's Basketball program held a reunion for the 1976 team, voted the best college basketball team of all time. Knight, the coach of that team, received numerous pleas from ex-players and team members to attend the event. However, his ego, still burning from being fired by the University, wouldn't allow him to give of himself to the others (the greater good) that desperately wanted him to be a part of the celebration. But the allure of self-justification was too enticing as Knight clings to his being the "victim" of an irresponsible university president. Bob Knight's absence was, well, about him. After all, an 800lb gorilla always wants to be the dominant influence in the environment.

Back when Lombardi and Knight were barking orders coaches were expected to be task-masters. The organizing theory of the day rested on thinking of a team as a machine, something that can be designed, measured, and controlled, with coaches backed by power and authority with little to no oversight. And this worked well—in the past.

Today, to be successful, the thoughtful coach deploys heavy doses of empathy and understanding and recognizes the need to behave responsibly. Hence, the sustained success of any leadership development program rests on the willingness and ability of the coach to submerge his or her ego into a healthy and functional ecosystem.

Thoughtful coaches don't shelter themselves from critique and change. They are able to rise above the self-deception of self-evaluation and self-justification. **Self-knowledge is a slippery process that produces a daunting product. It's difficult to obtain others' truths about you, and very painful when attained.** Thoughtful coaches get results because they work hard to lose their ego within the team's ecosystem. The coach with highly developed human skills is aware of his or her attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs and how they are a vital part of everything he or she does. Such a coach works to create an atmosphere of security in which student-athletes feel free to participate in team building and leadership.

*"I remain convinced to this day that compassion like that—sincerely caring for your players and maintaining an active interest in their lives, concerns, and motivations—is one of the most important qualities a coach can have" - John Wooden*

## CASE IN POINT

### **Walking the Talk: How Self-Reflection Can Make You a Better Coach**

In 1953 New Zealand mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary and his Nepalese Sherpa Tenzing Norgay reached the summit of Mount Everest—the first to do so. Conquering Everest was and is one of man’s greatest challenges. The grinding mental, emotional, and physical aspects of the climb along with intellectual problem-solving are the heart of the challenge.

In 1996, Rob Hall and Scott Fischer led a commercial expedition team attempting to climb Everest. Hall and Fischer were considered expert climbers, both having scaled the summit of Everest. The two highly talented climbers were hired by a motley crew of inexperienced hikers who made the trek to Nepal to attempt the climb under the guidance of the esteemed Hall and Fischer.

Jon Krakauer, a journalist, was a member of the climbers joining Hall’s team. As it turned out, Krakauer ended up chronicling a tragic expedition in which five people lost their lives, including Hall and Fischer.

The two leaders, very experienced and somewhat arrogant, “rightfully” behaved authoritatively. Both Hall and Fischer issued and demanded adherence to their rules for a safe and successful climb. Krakauer recorded a self-confident Hall reminding his team “I will tolerate no dissension up there. My word will be absolute law, beyond appeal.”

One team member recalled, “Rob had lectured us repeatedly about the importance of having a predetermined turnaround time on summit day...and abiding by it no matter how close we were to the top.”

Knowing the descent from the summit to be perilous, the leaders invoked a two o’clock rule. The Sherpa’s, guides and clients all understood that if a climber had not reached the top by two o’clock in the afternoon of “summit day” they were to obey the order and turn around and abandon their bid for the summit. Yet Hall and Fischer would go on to ignore the safe-guard and not retreat down the slopes upon the clock hitting two.

Fischer kept climbing, though exhausted and suffering tremendously, touching the top at 3:45. He continued to climb, every step perilous to his declining health, though he would never let any of his team to do so under similar conditions.

Krakauer’s book of the expedition, *Into Thin Air*, exposes the autocratic nature of Hall’s leadership. Hall had a pecking order and no one was to question his decisions. As Krakauer recorded, “Passivity on the part of the clients had thus been encouraged throughout the expedition.” And the Sherpas and guides too were afraid of Hall’s rebuke, unsure of the consequences of displeasing him.

The Idiosyncratic knowledge and unique skills of Hall and Fisher were not enough to overcome the blizzard they encountered on their way back to Camp IV. Having scaled Everest they were in grave trouble.

The vulnerabilities inherent in self-reflection lead us to develop mechanisms to bypass or minimize the embarrassment or threat that we might experience when we scrutinize our thoughts, feelings, and actions. My sense is that both Hall and Fischer never really had to answer to anybody but themselves, believing self-reflection to be something for the other guy. After all, why do you need to question your assumptions and behaviors if you're successful? And the more successful, the less likely you are to self-reflect. Bragging of their conquests and boasting about their track records led them to believe they were above their own rules—those were for the novice.

I've seen it time and time again, coaches that dismiss the practice of self-reflection tend to create cultures that turn out to have unintended and unpredicted side effects that degrade the environment. These coaches fail to recognize or respond to value conflicts, often violating their own standards. It is striking that many coaches choose to overlook the practice of self-reflection.

Thankfully what you do is not a matter of life and death. However, deep inside your coaching bubble you might just find walking your talk difficult at times. Contrary to the popular thought that all coaches are grounded in reality, it ain't always so. Like Hall and Fischer we all have times we simply ignore our rules.

Here's where the rubber meets the road: the following seven questions require you to turn off the noise for fifteen minutes daily and sink your mind into your walk and your talk for the day. If you are serious about self improvement, just like you ask your student-athletes to be serious about improvement, then adopt this process as a daily routine. Learning to lead ourselves, just like leading others, is a truly a life-time project—our own Mt. Everest. My guess is that after a solid month of performing this after action reflection you'll seamlessly work your way into doing reflection-in-action. Remember, reflection is all about growth and development—yours and your players.

### **Daily Self-Reflection Questions**

What did I say I would do today that I didn't do?

What did I do today that will affect team cohesion? (positive and / or negative)

How did I relate to the players today?

What did I do today that is not something I'm proud of doing?

How did I lead the players today? Coaches?

How did I follow the players today? Coaches?

## Adaptive Intelligence: Becoming a Versatile Coach

The four frames of the coaching mindset (see chart p.66) make up a **multi-dimensional model of coaching that, when understood and used effectively, strengthens a coach's ability to harness, align, and leverage the totality of their knowledge and skills.** It also serves as a tool for the self-study of one's coaching behavior and its effect on players, both individually and collectively. The challenge for the coach is to better understand how a "state of mind" influences coaching actions. First, it's necessary to acknowledge that the way a coach responds to a situation is strongly influenced by what a coach believes; how he or she perceives the world through their own unique filters that pull together memories, feelings, skills, behaviors, and assumptions into a cohesive whole.

The open-minded coach is one that is willing and able to look at her own assumptions and ideas objectively and identify and understand their shortcomings. Without a deep understanding of human development, what it is, how it affects growth and how it might be constraining the motivation, performance, and potential of one's self, coaches are likely to struggle creating a culture conducive for developing team leaders. The framing of a set of coaching actions will help to identify the effectiveness or ineffectiveness, the optimization or sub optimization, of a coaching mindset. Underlying this sometimes murky process and practice is the move away from an either/or perspective to **a situational and contextual model** that contains elements of each of the dimensions of the four frames of a coaching mindset. No one dimension is inherently better than another; it's the situation that should determine the optimal frame; this is leadership. Think of it as *The Four Minds of a Coach*.

Each mind is essentially a practice of mind, and a state of mind, composed of assumptions set in motion by priming—or triggering—effects, that lead the coach to react in a consistent way according to the needs of the situations. If you play golf, for example, and are heading out for a relaxing game with your coaching staff, it's likely you'll wear your favorite shorts, a golf shirt, and you'll clean your shoes and clubs prior to entering the club house. My guess is your state of mind preparing for the golf outing is much different than your state of mind entering a game with your rival school. As you walk to the first tee, memories are activated and your state of mind changes ever so slightly again. The cues embedded in the situation and the context, have triggered a whole set of stories, thoughts, feelings, and expected behaviors.

To provide some focus let's name and frame the way in which a particular mind-set operates. **The practice of coaching consists of four frames: power, engineering, empowerment, and development—a name for each helps to identify and describe with more accuracy the coaching mindset.** The process of "framing" works in two ways. The first is that a frame is like a window into the world. It is way of making sense of the world; we use it to interpret and interact with our world. The second is that a frame is like the lens on a microscope, the more you fine tune it the more detail you can see. Each lens brings the world into a clearer focus. The framing perspective of four mindsets results from the two competing master programs M1 and M2 introduced earlier (see [Table 1 on page 49](#)).

So, we have four sets of the coaching mind, four ways in which a coach might interpret and deal with the environment. The *deliberate or spontaneous* emergence of a mindset acts as a default system of ingrained behaviors and habitual responses based on a cognitive framework and rule systems generally used to make sense of life experiences.

Consider the differences between a coaching mindset of “working on” a student-athlete or “working with” the player. Similar as those two statements seem, there is actually a profound difference between them. “Working on” suggests a hidden motive in a transactional process while “working with” acknowledges the student-athletes active involvement in the project.

Most coaches are predisposed to favor one of the four frames. They act from a preferred frame based on what they implicitly believe to be the best course to achieve desired outcomes. This may not be the most potent way of coaching. Think of the four food groups we choose from for our diet. The four frames are similar in that they offer a decision architecture that covers the entire domain of coaching. The four frames can help you overcome the limitations of your current operating system by giving you greater range and versatility in developing your team leaders.

As you learn to apply all four frames, you will develop a greater appreciation and deeper understanding of human behavior to include leadership and followership. Each frame is an important way of seeing and “doing” coaching; each has distinct strengths, distinct limitations, and specific applications. Successful coaching should comprise fostering an environment in which actions align with situational needs, in which the corresponding coaching frame is used to guide the coach’s mindset.

I propose a learning-oriented coaching practice called “**Leadershift.**” This is the ability of a coach to engage in multiframe thinking using the four mindsets of coaching. Leadershift is about enhancing a coach’s capacity for versatility. The versatile leader is able to adjust their behavior, deftly applying the right approach to the right degree, for the circumstances at hand.

A change in mindset and behavior does not occur automatically. I think most coaches would suggest that they in fact move seamlessly through the four mindsets. In my experience, eight times out of ten coaches are somewhat unaware of how dominant their master program is and the contribution it makes to shaping the culture of the team. **Skilled coaches, however, know not only how to identify the context they’re in, but also how to change their behavior to match. Truly wise coaches tailor their approach to fit with the circumstances they face.**

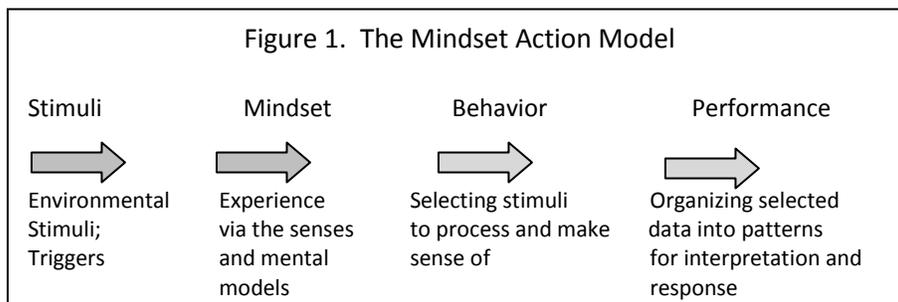


Exhibit 8

<b>MINDSET</b>	<b>A Framework for Teambuilding</b> How to Influence, Motivate, and Lead Your Team
<b>The Power Mindset</b> <b>Demanding and Commanding</b>	<i>Priming Concepts:</i> command & control <i>Function:</i> to foster competitive goal attainment <i>Foundational goal:</i> achievement <i>Leader engages followers</i> in power relationship by use of authority structure /enforcing rank <i>Impact on climate:</i> the exercise of leadership is likely to promote conformity <i>How it builds team leadership:</i> control, order, and prescription <i>Learning:</i> rewarding correct behavior and extinguishing incorrect behavior <i>Player Development:</i> transactional management <i>Interpersonal style:</i> impersonal
<b>The Engineering Mindset</b> <b>Coaching and Teaching</b>	<i>Priming Concepts:</i> activating systems and processes <i>Function:</i> to foster task mastery and strategic intent <i>Foundational goal:</i> improving task and tactic knowledge and performance <i>Leader engages followers</i> in authority (expert power) relationship by seeking certainty and skill enhancement <i>Impact on climate:</i> the exercise of leadership is likely to promote efficiency <i>How it builds team leadership:</i> team tasks & team composition <i>Learning:</i> teaching rules & procedures <i>Player Development:</i> task management <i>Interpersonal style:</i> somewhat impersonal
<b>The Empowerment Mindset</b> <b>Delegating and Expanding</b>	<i>Priming Concepts:</i> shaping team dynamics (cohesion) & team efficacy <i>Function:</i> to foster cooperation <i>Foundational goal:</i> developing social relations <i>Leader engages followers</i> in influence relationship by helping players build unity <i>Impact on climate:</i> the exercise of leadership is likely to promote cooperation <i>How it builds team leadership:</i> team cohesion & team motivation <i>Learning:</i> players understand he or she has the authority and responsibility to lead; committing to the success of the team is something worth striving for <i>Player Development:</i> team management <i>Interpersonal style:</i> somewhat personal
<b>The Developmental Mindset</b> <b>Supporting and Growing</b>	<i>Priming Concepts:</i> promoting growth and development (identity, competence, & purpose) <i>Function:</i> to foster maturation and student development (physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially) <i>Foundational goal:</i> self-development <i>Leader engages followers</i> in influence relationship by modeling, reinforcing, and providing feedback, rewards, and social support <i>Impact on climate:</i> the exercise of leadership is likely to promote a robust learning environment <i>How it builds team leadership:</i> individual growth & conflict management <i>Player Development:</i> talent and identity management <i>Learning:</i> intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, autonomy and interdependence <i>Interpersonal style:</i> personal

*\*The versatile leader is able to adjust their behavior, deftly applying the right approach to the right degree, for the circumstances at hand. **Understanding how to meld the different mindsets will help you manage your team—and yourself—better.***

## The Four Minds of a Coach

Leadership is not rank, privileges, or titles. It is responsibility. Any person who has seriously studied leadership has found that it is not a “natural” quality. Leaders are shaped gradually; making time, place, and experience vitally important elements in the development of a leader.

Teaching and learning the art and science of leadership happens both formally—a defined leadership training program or a qualified mentor—and informally through experience—learning via spontaneous incidents and events. Leadership can be learned, and as Peter Drucker said, “indeed it must be learned.” For most coaches, learning is accomplished as an informal process, the accumulation of “teachable moments.” However, this process does tend to leave quite a bit of the “curriculum” on the table.

To close this gap I propose an experiential model I’ve created and call Adaptive Intelligence. **Adaptive Intelligence is “adaptive” in the sense that it is responsive to problem and context and encourages the coach to master and deploy multiple modes—mindsets—of coaching.** In order for Adaptive Intelligence to be successful, two levels of learning must be addressed: action and reflection.

Learning is a difficult and challenging process; it will produce deep insight and understanding only if action is complemented with reflection. Reflective thinking involves evaluation of assumptions, interpretations, and heuristics involved in the challenges and opportunities of organizational actions. The activity of deep reflection does not excite many coaches. Most coaches are “doers,” they are action-oriented. Any action that does not produce immediate, tangible results is often viewed with a certain degree of suspicion. The practice of deep reflection is generally not in the make-up of most coaches. Yet, deep reflection is necessary if one is to say that a coach has Adaptive Intelligence.

To engage Adaptive Intelligence the coach must be willing to take actions; but to learn from action the coach will need to practice reflection to achieve proper perspective on what is learned in action. And learning by reflection includes reflecting on actions not taken too. The results from inaction are every bit as important as information from actions. The Adaptive Intelligence framework is designed to capture learning as it unfolds over time and to link it with performance improvement.

### THERE HAS TO BE A BETTER WAY

Coaching, as a profession, takes place in a social system—a community of human beings. Such systems are like living organisms, which evolve and adapt, rather than a mechanistic model which encourages coaches to see student-athletes as machines, not people. When players are treated as replaceable parts, as objects to control, are taught to be compliant, their tank of motivation will be expended at some time during the season. Unlike chess, the moving parts of a team sport come fully equipped with hearts and minds, thoughts and emotions. **The art of coaching includes the ability to learn to recognize the ramifications and trade-offs of the actions one chooses.** It is the ability to diagnose what happens in their social system that

separates the outstanding coaches from the mediocre. You simply can't lead effectively without knowing the (social) system you are navigating.

As you put together your team, adaptive intelligence will open up your team's transformation with less time and effort. Adaptive Intelligence focuses on what actions and activities coaches need to undertake in the current context to engage their student-athletes and advance their team's motivation, not focusing on changing who the coach is. A coach that primarily acts from a Power Mindset will be hard-pressed to change how he sees the coaching world. But he can do so, in a more instinctive manner by simply learning how to recognize when to "switch" to a mindset that matches the team's needs at that moment in time.

You don't have to be interested in, or skilled at all four dimensions of the interpersonal aspects of coaching. Most coaches aren't. You do, however, need to know where you stand on each, so you can either build up the areas where you are weak or make sure you have coaches who can help when you need it.

### **NOTES FROM THE FIELD**

I walked into the auxiliary gym on a crisp Saturday in November, the kind of cool that lets you know it's basketball season. The practice space was filled with plenty of baskets surrounding a spacious full-court. I arrived a few minutes early, as is my habit. A few minutes later two assistant coaches walked in, shook my hand and welcomed me to their practice. A few more minutes went by and the head coach arrived. The players were milling around, some in the training room, a few stretching, and a handful doing ball handling drills. While the head count in the gym was over twenty people, it was surprisingly quiet. Other than the "hello" issued to me by the assistants, not a word was uttered.

On a cue from the assistant coach, the players and coaching staff huddled up. Everyone knew the opening routine. A weave, a fast-break drill, and a zig-zag sprint. The lead assistant oversaw the warm-up.

Another huddle. The head coach issued a command. The players scattered to their designated spots and the next drill began the moment the second assistant passed the ball to the point guard. And so it went. For two hours. Quiet. Silence. Intense focus.

The practice was an engineering marvel. Very efficient. And that is the paradox. While on the one hand, the efficiency guaranteed a desired level of output. On the other hand, conversation and relations were engineered out of the practice session.

My role as a researcher (I went on to observe more practices and team functions) allowed me to dig into the consequences of the Engineering Frame used by the head coach. The first thing I noticed was that the transactional task-cohesion was a positive outcome of this frame of coaching. The players were, for the most part, in the right place at the right time, both offensively and defensively. The emphasis on engineering the offensive and defensive systems was obvious. However, relational cohesion was absent. Cohesion is of two kinds, task cohesion

such as the running of an offense, and relational cohesion, the social and psychological meshing of the players.

Using my detective skills honed by more than a decade of research and practice, I dug in and explored the experience and perspectives of the players. Most of the players had shallow relationships with one another. Only four of the thirteen said they had a best friend on the team—essentially two cliques. Two new players felt isolated from the coach and had yet to integrate completely with the team. They felt socially awkward and found the culture to be transactional, other players to be distant, and team building to be something spoken of, but they experienced little action towards encouraging, challenging, and helping one another.

**The head coach, trained in designing mechanical systems and efficient processes, proved to be inept when it comes to coaching from the Empowerment and Developmental Mindsets.**

The coach's teams consistently finished above five-hundred, but could not get over the proverbial hump of one-and-done in the playoffs. Oh they caught a wave one season, and there ever after the coach believed he could be a contender doing what he was doing.

The coach was fired immediately after the season. My assumption is that without the willingness and ability to integrate the Empowerment and Developmental Mindsets the coach will continue to be trapped by his own behavior. He'll get another coaching job, perform above five hundred, but is unlikely to get much traction on a deep play-off run—the standard of a successful coach.

Several weeks later I traveled to a high-tech practice gym to watch, observe, and study another coach and her program. Invited by the head coach to provide feedback, I brought my notebook—a yellow legal pad—and set up shop on the balcony overlooking the courts.

The practice started with intensity and emotion. The previous night the team had lost its best player to a knee injury. A returning all-conference performer, the team was determined to overcome the loss of a key element to the team's success. Prior to practice the star player stopped in, hobbling on crutches, to let everyone know "I'm alright."

The head coach stood by my side for the first twenty minutes of practice letting her assistant's run the show. The team took a time-out and the head coach swiftly scaled the stairs and was on the floor ready to coach.

The drills were run to perfection. As a former coach this always gives me the chills. But unlike ever before, I had a flashback. Was this coach another leader prone to an Engineering Mindset? Well that question was answered over the next hour. Yes! Precision, precision, precision. However, the players were not denied the opportunity to interact with one another. In fact, it was encouraged. An Engineering Mindset tempered with an appreciation for relationships. I thought that I had her categorized.

Then it happened. A drill went awry and the coach went full-throttle into a Power Mindset. She stopped all activity and disrupted the practice with shouting, belittling, and threats. This went on for the remainder of the session, including the practice-ending team meeting.

I showed up the next day and from the very first minute of practice the coach was demanding and commanding, operating from her carefully crafted Power Mindset. When I investigated the experiences and perspectives of these young athletes, they were almost in complete unison that they couldn't trust the coach. They suggested she suffered from a Jekyll and Hide syndrome. Not knowing who you were going to get made for good pre-practice chit-chat. They admitted, that at times they would "tank" a practice just to get things over with quickly, allowing them to get as far away from the coach as possible.

Now, if you're like most coaches, you might see this incident as a judgment on the players and flawed character. But dig deeper and you find the conditions for the bad behavior (Why do good people do bad things?) caused by the conditions created by the coach. The coach, in complete denial, maintained her behavior was not a part of the problem. She was blind to the players' suspicion of her motives and the disconnection that took place when she over-powered them. After spending a good amount of time studying this team it was clear that the head coach blended the Power Mindset with the Engineering Mindset. However, the Power Mindset as it was deployed served as a source of deviance and destruction.

Let me point out that the Engineering and Power Mindsets are what I consider to be characteristic of a "hard archetype," while the Empowerment and Developmental Mindsets are expressions of a "soft archetype." The hard-soft model is particularly relevant to team sports. During my research over the past decade I've encountered coaches primarily coaching from the hard paradigm. I'm comfortable invoking the 80/20 rule; that is that 80% of coaching is from the hard paradigm; but as it turns out the soft stuff is harder to do. Can you say opportunity?

## **PUTTING THE FOUR MINDS TO WORK**

These four mindsets—Power, Engineering, Empowerment, and Developmental—are at the heart of adaptive intelligence and coaching influence. A coach without the capability to shift mindsets can certainly be highly influential, but his or her influence tends to be either short term if the primary focus is the "hard paradigm" mindset, or somewhere down the river of life if stuck in the "soft paradigm" mindset. To be clear, there's no perfect mix of the four mindsets and behaviors. But, because coaching has multiple contexts, understanding *The Four Minds of a Coach* and knowing when to deploy the right mindset within the right context will add great value to a coach's repertoire.

Most coaches won't be able to order themselves to snap instantly into a more adaptive mindset, one that better fits the situation. But the capacity for self-reflection suggests that they can cultivate a way of thinking that gradually leads to quicker recognition of situational needs. And the more a coach practices the four minds thinking, the more they will feel competent and confident in coaching areas that were previously a serious weakness.

### Coaching Exercise: 3 Exploring the Four Minds of a Coach (“Try the Process”)

#### Purpose

1. To provide you an opportunity to engage in a personal assessment for the purpose of self-discovery—revealing of your deepest values and assumptions and inherent motivations.
2. To help you understand how your mental models drive your thoughts and behaviors.
3. To better understand the positive and negative consequences of your coaching modalities.

Directions: Write your answers to the following questions.

Which of the **Four Minds of a Coach** best describes how you perceive yourself as a coach? Briefly explain why you chose this frame. Note: resist the temptation to say “it depends.” We’ll get to that in a moment.

How would you explain this mindset to your coaching colleagues? Parents of your players? Administrators? Former players? Your family?

How do you think your players perceive you in terms of the Four Minds? Briefly describe why?

In what situations do you think it is best to use each frame as a coaching model? Briefly describe. For extra points identify five (5) coaching concepts and describe how you respond to each within the four mindsets. For example, “Mistake.” Describe your attitude and behavior toward mistakes in each mindset. Notice anything interesting?

- a. The Power Frame
- b. The Engineering Frame
- c. The Empowerment Frame
- d. The Developmental Frame

Based on *The Four Minds of a Coach*, what do you need to work on in terms of your own capacities as a coach? Choose a transformational goal, one that would make a big difference and truly want to achieve.

Ask yourself: What is the single most powerful change you could make to improve your coaching.

Ask yourself: What’s the thing you do, or don’t do, that is most likely to get in the way of you attaining your goal?

Next, specify what behaviors are necessary to achieve this goal. Take stock of the things you do instead of the behaviors that could create positive change.

**TIME OUT:** It’s time now to start designing your *Leader in Every Locker* program. Begin to identify components for planning a leadership development project. Using a simple system framework you are providing the input that will be processed producing a desired output.

**Coaching Exercise: 4 DESIGNING YOUR CORE CHANGE PROJECT**

Take a moment to identify some ways in which you might begin designing a formal leadership development system. Think of the development, implementation, and analysis as a Core Project for you and your team this upcoming season. I provide you a jump-start. Keep going.

	Ways to increase leadership development of your student-athletes
Relationship Building System	Have players adopt one of the Dobbs' 8 Roles 5 Steps of Agile Team Leadership
Communication System	Everyone develops a voice Round table (the circle)
Motivation System	Align then assign leadership and team building roles Active and engaged in all aspects of leadership
Team Leadership System	Emergent , situational, peer-based, distributed 5 Steps of Agile Team Leadership
Learning System	Intentional learning in classroom, Case Study Growth mindset

**PREPARING TO TEACH OUR TEAM**

What I Will Do

By When

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

**Opening Moves**

Now that you have a better understanding of the two primary leadership orientations, let's turn our attention briefly to leadership education. **To generate a psychologically safe learning**

**environment coaches need to balance guidance and autonomy** (see Table Two below). Taken together these two dimensions determine the give-and-take between the coach and player relationship. Your role as a leadership educator is composed of both a directive and a supportive dimension, and both are applied in any given situation. Directive behaviors clarify and help the student-athlete accomplish goals by giving direction, methods of evaluation, and leadership roles. Supportive behavior helps the student-athlete feel comfortable about themselves, their teammates, and the situation in which they are taking leadership actions.

A coach has a great deal to do with the motivation and development of the student-athlete. Coaches can foster a climate in which student-athletes will thrive as learners and leaders, or they can stifle growth by withholding from the athlete learning and developmental opportunities. *What* coaches do and *how* they go about it matters.

**Table 2** highlights the leadership dimensions of guidance and autonomy as related to the growth of the student-athlete. The coach that builds a supportive climate creates a psychologically safe space for student-athletes to “practice” leading. Likewise, the supportive coach is an active participant in the development process collaborating with each individual to design and execute individualized plans. The caring coach activates a teaching role in guiding a player in a way that is unique to his or her growth; not every player will experience an environment in the same way.

**Table Two: Two-Dimensional Model of Coach as Leadership Educator**

Active	<p><b>Directive</b> Transactional Contingent</p>	<p><b>Participative</b> Collaborative Supportive Climate</p>	Exhibit 10
<b>GUIDANCE</b>	<p><b>Laissez Faire</b> Neglect Inactive</p>	<p><b>Permissive</b> Choice Competence</p>	
Inactive	Low	<b>AUTONOMY</b>	High

### Leadership Across Contexts

Why do some team cultures inspire energy and commitment, instilling loyalty and persistence, while others create individualism, in-fighting, diminish participant effort and tarnish the value

of teamwork? Do some coaches have access to a magical elixir for creating a high-impact context, while others haven't a clue? I doubt it. So what's going on?

The conventional view of student-athlete leadership is that of a strong preference for appointing or electing team captains. The Academy for Sport Leadership's research on the selection of team captains reveals that close to eighty-percent of all captains are viewed by their teammates as extroverts. So, it's basically the case that team leadership starts with extroversion, and also linked closely to playing ability. Likewise, our research shows that well over eighty-percent of all team captains are starters. The very idea of a team captain being a starting player is somewhat of a sacred cow. Thanks to this mythos, we find that players near the end of the bench are least likely to provide any type of leadership. Also, according to the players, team captains are expected to motivate and inspire teammates, with their doing so mostly by acting as a model of what to do. In other words, the defining criteria for choosing a team captain has more to do with one's disposition—internal characteristics that reside within the individual—than fit together with the external context and the needs of the situation.

It turns out that social forces profoundly influence attitudes and behaviors; more so than most people are willing and able to acknowledge. **The forces of a social setting hold immense power to shape who we are, at the moment in time as well as over time.** This leads to the perspective that *where you are shapes who you are*, which flies in the face of accepted thinking, that dispositions and traits alone are the drivers of one's actions and attitudes. For example, the social psychological construct of the *bystander effect* illuminates how good people are influenced by the context to do nothing in a situation begging for personal action. Despite such evidence, however, most coaches staunchly believe that the best predictor of one's behavior is found in a person's traits, disposition, and character.

The central premise of this guidebook is that many of the leadership practices of sports teams will in fact backfire because of the errant assumptions of just who can lead. Jeff Janssen, author of the widely used *Team Captain's Leadership Manual*, has been, for some time, advocating for the use of team captain's; thus perpetuating the idea that only a select few are able to and should be team leaders. However, a *Leader in Every Locker* approach to team leadership seeks to tap into the capacities we all have but that are ignored and overlooked by the more conventional method of one or two leaders.

What's more, **student-athletes are highly sensitive to the social forces embedded within an event, a situation, a context, and a team's culture.** Yet, too often coaches underestimate the impact of situational aspects—the context, the culture, and the circumstances—that evoke and guide a player's behavior. They infer that one's disposition is the primary reason for a player's (or group of players) actions rather than it being situationally produced behavior. After all, it's much easier to attribute an individual's behavior to his or her personality than explore the complex social situational determinants of one's attitude and consequently his or her actions.

Furthermore, when we encounter a social situation, most of us seamlessly adjust who we are to accommodate the social setting, to fit into the context. That is, we adapt to the environment.

Such transitions are, for the most part smooth and seldom explicitly reflected upon. Not long ago I was admitted to a hospital for a surgical procedure. From the moment I walked in the door to check in I unconsciously acted like a patient. I played the role of a patient when the nurse was prepping me, willingly taking orders from someone I only met minutes ago. This is why leaders of great organizations declare that culture trumps all. The constant dynamic interplay between players and coaches holds great sway over the performance capability of a team. When I speak of culture I'm referring to the influence of the many micro-actions taking place in the context which gives the setting potency to control our behavior in the moment.

Social psychologists tell us that too often we inflate the importance of such things as one's personality traits and dispositions as a convenient way of explaining the behavior of others. When we do this, we fail to recognize and account for the importance of situational factors (immediate and enduring); the effect of inattention to behaviors based on context or situation is that it often leads to relational stress. The point I want to make here is that understanding the context—*situationism* rather than the personal attributes of *dispositionalism*—provides insights into the potent forces *evoking or stifling* a player's behavior.

For instance, in my observational research I have found that the players on the practice field closest in proximity to the coach are more likely to "mimic" the coach than those off in the distance. For example, if a coach is encouraging her team with positive words those players nearest to her will feed off of her attitude and mimic her offering encouragement too. And if the coach is reprimanding a player, those closest to the coach are more likely to express disapproval to the offending teammate than those furthest from the event. All this is done outside the consciousness of those involved, but triggered by the situation. As you can see, the subtle nuance of the situation serves as a compelling force for producing this behavior.

Add to this the factor that many coaches I've studied limit the ways in which they "describe" reality. Too often coaches don't account for the various ways in which a situation can be viewed—tending to attribute more to the person(s) than exploring the influence of the setting and context. "We didn't rebound well last night," says the head coach reading the game stats sheet. Her assistants all shake their head in agreement. However, maybe the other team shot really well making rebounds a casualty on the stats sheet. Certainly this is a simple situation, but **coaches, like journalists, have the power of creating a narrative they determine to be reality**. Moreover, coaches often discount how their interpretations are shaped by an already constructed mental schema of a player, solely attributing behavior to disposition or personality. "He's too passive, that's why he won't challenge his teammates," comments the coach, attributing the player's behavior to his personality rather than the broader context in which the behavior takes place. Perhaps the "passive" player fears retribution from her teammates.

Simple truths are often the hardest to come to. The simple truth here concerns the power and subtlety of situational influences on behavior. **Every day we overlook the tremendous power of situations in our lives**. Too often we fail to notice the impact of external influences on our actions and behaviors.

## **An Athlete-Centered Advantage**

Key to addressing this mentality is to put athlete learning in the forefront and create an athlete-centered focus to building an athletic program. The coach committed to *Coaching for Leadership* structures learning opportunities that are created for the purpose of personal growth and development as well as team cohesion and team performance. The athlete-centered coach accepts the responsibility of teaching high-level leadership.

**A good starting point is to peel back the layers of deception embedded in the question of nature or nurture—are leaders born or made?** A coach with a *leader is born* approach to leader development possesses the view that psychological differences in student-athletes result from biological predispositions. Therefore, they typically approach leader development as a peripheral part of their program. The born construct to leader development is primarily centered on the followership orientation; this orientation finds the coach looking at people in terms of their relatively fixed and stable traits.

On the other hand, the coach with a *leader is made* mental model is comfortable with the leadership orientation. They truly believe all student-athletes can learn to lead, not that all are equal in their capabilities, but that some will master the development of a leadership mind set and skill set while others may take some time to achieve competency. The coach employing a leadership orientation is more sensitive to the psychosocial aspects of the student-athlete experience; whereas the coach with a followership orientation generally strives for technical proficiency and successful deployment of player skills and game tactics.

The differentiation of the leadership orientation and followership orientation explains why coaches attend to different aspects of the student-athlete experience. An athlete-centered approach to coaching promotes the athletes' needs, wants, and desires through such elements as empowerment, leadership, learning, and yes, coaching. It is a long-term approach toward healthy growth and development of the whole person.

## **The Changing Nature of Team Leadership**

The peer-based team leadership approach is a relationship-focused method of educating student-athletes to the practice of team leadership. It posits that leaders emerge when they are prepared *and* when the opportunity arises; are able to see the big picture and willing to focus on interactions between and among all the participants in the environment. Everyone participates. For that reason, leadership must be taught. And just as importantly—learned.

**Think of it this way: peer-based leadership is like a serious jazz band. Leaders emerge, submerge, and play off of one another.** A quote from a member of a team I worked with recently sums it up: "It seemed like whenever we needed someone to lead, somebody did it." No one was forced to make a contribution. Rather, they did so because they knew that it was to the team's benefit as well as their own.

To understand this new approach we must first account for the four major relationships of every student-athlete. These are parent-child, teacher-student, coach-athlete, and teammate-teammate. In the first three relationships the student-athlete is in a “one-down” position; each of these relationships is founded on the presumption that the one-up participant operates with a belief of “I know what is right for you.” And no doubt the individual in the one-up position does know more, but it gets in the way psychologically of a more vibrant relationship. The boundaries of a one-up relationship are real and often daunting. However, the teammate-to-teammate relationship has, on balance, fewer interpersonal barriers, and this is by and large what creates the commitment for one another seen in the sisterhood ethic or a warrior ethos.

It is precisely the “one-across” relationship framework that this peer-based approach seeks to leverage. The operational premise is that teammates can say to each other, “You are my peer. You are my equal.” Genuine relationships occur between equals from the positive and authentic intent of each team member to hold each other accountable. Cohesion is found in the quality of relationships, and a one-across relationship holds greater potential than one established by power and position placing one in an up and the other in a down position.

**Traditional Leadership vs. Peer-Based Emergent Leadership**

Exhibit 11

<b>From Traditional “Team Captain” ...</b>	<b>...To Peer-Based Team Leadership</b>
<b>Traits</b> Personal qualities that match role “script”	<b>Process</b> Leader emerges based on needs of current situation. Process focused on relationships
<b>Limited Capacity</b> A few captains with limited capabilities	<b>Interdependent Interaction</b> Self-organizing (inclusive) of overlapping roles to match changing needs and environments
<b>Transactional (technical reactivity)</b> Monitor /Episode-based action (mostly reactive) Task focused	<b>Transformational (social sensitivity)</b> Relationship-based action (healthy balance of proactive and reactive thoughts and behavior)
<b>Providing</b> Making sure others are taken care of	<b>Empowering</b> Places every student-athlete at the center of what is happening
<b>Fixed Mindset</b> Learn as you go / Do it yourself / <i>Sink or swim</i>	<b>Growth Mindset</b> Deliberate training / Create a development plan
<b>Few Leaders</b> Leaders have the “right stuff” Others indifferent to becoming a leader	<b>Everyone a Leader</b> Everyone can develop knowledge, skills, abilities. Others take initiative to learn to lead
<b>Followers</b> Reactive, removed, restrained	<b>Participants</b> Active, engaged, intentional

Rare is it when a coach goes “all in” on building positive and powerful interpersonal relationships necessary for a peer-based team leadership environment. I know many coaches will disagree with me, but once you compare what you do with what you can do you’ll notice a spacious gap.

Coaching for leadership is inherently paradoxical, in that it’s comprised of contradictory elements—which are true. The paradox of coaching for leadership is that a balancing must

occur between leadership and followership and the expectation that everyone is a leader. Because coaching for leadership is so paradoxical, many coaches simply choose to stay the course with traditional modes of leadership.

### **West Point Leadership Lessons**

**3 Questions with Dr. Joe LeBoeuf** The following is an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Dr. LeBoeuf. As a former soldier (U.S. Army) myself, I am a fan of the West Point Way of leadership. Dr. Leboeuf, Ph.D. teaches at Duke University in the Fuqua School of Business. A graduate of West Point, Dr. Leboeuf teaches courses on leadership development and organizational culture. Dr. LeBoeuf's expertise focuses on leadership education, leader development and organizational culture. LeBoeuf, a retired Colonel, is a lead educator/consultant on a 9 month study of the leader and character development system at the United States Air Force Academy; assessment of current process with recommendations for change grounded in emerging leadership and character development concepts and theories.

#### **1. What is the essence of the "West Point Way"?**

The heart and soul of the West Point Way is building leaders of courage and character willing to walk the "high moral ridge" in service to the nation. These leaders will place their personal interests, and if necessary their lives, secondary in the service of others, whenever and wherever our National Command Authority dictates. This character and leader development process is the foundation of the 4-year Military Academy experience, and frames and guides the behavior of all members of the leadership, faculty and staff. It is the core guiding principle.

#### **2. Can all student-athletes learn to lead?**

Absolutely, students can learn to lead. It is the premise upon which the Service Academies build their programs. It is clear that one can learn the knowledge, skills and behaviors that are associated with effective leadership. The foundation of this learning is the crafting of crucible experiences that move the learners outside of their comfort zone and create the conditions for effective leadership learning and leader development.

#### **3. What one or two military leader development activities do you feel are most relevant to student-athletics?**

The essence and power of leadership in the military is in the collective — the team; the willingness to place the needs of others, and the team ahead of the self. The US military is the best at building effective teams. Intense developmental experiences like US Army Ranger and Sapper School, the Navy SEAL training program, and the Marine Corps Force Recon are the finest team building experiences in the world. Participants learn to put others before self, and learn the power of collective activity to accomplish difficult tasks that simply cannot be done by folks working alone. The military services do this the best. We have applied Army team building activities here at Duke with the men's and women's basketball, soccer and lacrosse programs contributing to great success, to include two national championships in the last 2 years.

# Coaching for Leadership

## How to Develop a Leader in Every Locker

### *Half-Time*

#### A Time for Reflection

Are you a talented coach on the rise? Do you want to be an “A-Level” coach? Are you interested in becoming an elite leader? Too many coaches cruise through life on old assumptions and unquestioned rules of thumb. Think deeply about these three questions before moving on.

Instead of assuming leaders are born with the “right stuff” to lead, I start with the assertion that leadership is a talent. If that talent is to be advanced the coach needs a context that supports development, get the experiences they need to cultivate their leadership ability, and they must possess the inner drive to master learning to lead.

Let me make another claim: talented people want to be challenged, not coddled. As a coach to coaches I know this to be true. And as a coach I’m sure you will agree success isn’t something you simply hope happens. It is high achievement accomplished by consistent, deliberate, and intense preparation and commitment to a goal with a daily plan of action based on choices *you* make.

In your version of reality you may have “high potential” stamped on your forehead and be successful in your own mind. All this may be true, but don’t be deluded. Odds are you’re nowhere near where you want to go and who you want to be.

If you really want to stand out, lift your performance to its peak, break into the small circle of elite performers, then accept that life *is not* a do-it-yourself project. If you surround yourself with winners—or are fortunate enough to have a skilled and caring mentor in your corner—you are likely on a winning path toward the success you covet. We all need people who help us look at situations from a different perspective.

Today, top athletes, actors, musicians and corporate leaders have begun to use performance coaches to help them reach their potential. They’ve chosen coaching as a way to shorten their path to sustained success. What they know is that good coaching will get them where they want to go, help them achieve what they want to achieve, and transform them into who they want to be. *As you move forward with this reflection, simply pretend you have a coach.*

### **Reality Bites**

Here’s your first bite of reality. As determined as you are, you might never get to where you want to go. You ask; why is this?

The answer: blind spots. All coaches have blind spots. Yes, everyone has blind spots, but this is about you. If it hasn’t happened already, the day will come when you will need to confront the outmoded and unchallenged mental models that leave you “frozen in time.” Simply said, change is always necessary for growth and if you desire to be the best you can be, at some time during your career you’ll need to dig deep and challenge some deeply held assumptions.

I know how badly you want to be good—no great! So it’s important for me to let you know that blind spots are real *and* really capable of derailing your efforts to reach your potential.

**You’ve spent most of your life committed to a particular way of thinking, doing, and being, and that’s a good thing; and a bad thing.** It guarantees blind spots. Don’t checkout yet. Let me be clear about this: it is *never* easy to bring about a mindset change. But that’s not enough. Another bite of reality is that it’s more difficult to replace a simple way of thinking with a more complex way; which of course, is likely necessary to become an elite coach.

So, what is a blind spot? A blind spot is a deficiency that other people see but we don't. The crazy thing is, because a blind spot is not known to us, we simply don't know what we're doing wrong and what we can do to get better outcomes. We have no idea how a certain coaching behavior of ours is coming across to our stakeholders—players, parents, coaches, and administrators—but it is. A blind spot is an outer reality. That is, it exists outside of us, yet inside of others.

There are various sorts of blind spots that can lead to ineffective coaching to some degree or another, but one particular form holds many coaches back from great success. That is, a behavioral blind spot. **A behavioral blind spot is the unproductive or destructive behavior that undermines or erodes interpersonal influence and the building of durable and enduring relationships.**

To ease into the idea of blind spots think of it as something similar to the inability to see others we encounter when driving a vehicle. Several years ago while driving a large truck I bumped up against a car in the other lane, hidden in my blind spot, without knowing it. The car sped up to get alongside me. I spotted a crazy man pumping his arms and screaming at me. I pulled over and, sure enough, unbeknownst to me I had sideswiped the driver-side door of the crazy guy's car. Yes, I failed to use the tool built for reducing blind spots—the mirror.

Getting a grip on reality requires a heavy dose of reality. Here's a start: Deep changes in how people think, what they believe, and how they see the world are difficult to achieve. Experts will tell you such change is downright impossible to bring about through compliance. You've got to want to change.

### **The Edge of Reality**

Self-awareness has limits. The challenge of self-awareness is that what others think of our behavior takes place outside of our awareness. The built in constraint is that self-awareness only reveals what we can see as what we can know, not what we can't see and not know. We are essentially disconnected from the effects of our behavior; we are blind to the internal reality of the other. All this makes it difficult to know there's a need to change our behavior. I think this is what author and psychologist R.D. Laing meant when he said, *"The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change; until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds."*

Because people don't know blinds spots exist, they aren't searching to understand how others' experience them. Consequently, if someone tries to bring a blind spot to one's attention, it's likely to be brushed off. The message will be disregarded and discarded. Let's be clear, if someone told you that you are behaving in a way that is having a negative impact on others, your initial reaction will be to take a defensive posture.

Our ability to confront ourselves is crucial to creating clarity of self-understanding, and initiating the tackling of the truth of our blind spots. Our willingness to venture out of our comfort zone and see things from others' perspectives is vital to achieving peak performance. This takes courage but offers great rewards.

Reality demands change. The biggest threat, the most resistant barrier, to personal change is you. Please do not take this to mean that you're not motivated or talented. You wouldn't be where you are, in position to get to the peak of your mountain, if that were the case. It's just that desire and motivation aren't enough. The reality is that the ability to initiate and persist with deep change is often exasperatingly elusive for most of us. Grasp that reality!

Yet, as the world maddeningly changes, so must we. The greatest power we have is the ability to envision our own fate and to take action to change ourselves. However, the unavoidable question is *can you do it by yourself?*

### **Reality Check**

Like the rest of the world—government, medicine, education, and business— sports has relied on the doctrine of scientific management: the theory that any task process can be broken down to its component parts and then reassembled in an efficient “scientific” manner. That sort of thinking, a mechanistic view of management, fostered assembly lines and military hierarchies. And it's fostered a social preference in which building relationships is not as important as task accomplishment—winning trumps all.

Today, we still have many assembly lines (such as schools) and hierarchies are still a favored organizational structure. However, more frequently these industrial age artifacts are adapting to and changing how the individual, the organization, and society interrelate. Change invariably reveals blind spots, and blind spots are deep and difficult impediments to growth.

Let me step onto thin ice. Every coach utilizes “constructive yelling” (my quotes) under the theory that if a player can't survive a spirited “talking to,” the opponent will kill her. This idea may work, sometimes. And other times it might not. Rather, it's simply a taken-for-granted coaching behavior, a “coaching style,” a way of “motivating” athletes. But until we have the courage to explore such coaching behaviors from a variety of frameworks—certainly to include the athlete's perspective—we might just be feeding a blind spot.

Here's how it happens. A team is a human community. It is a living system, like a plant. All teams are made up of people. And people are emotional. When engaged emotionally people easily lose perspective. Because people are emotional and lose perspective things are not always as they seem. In a nut shell, to lead effectively involves the need to recognize and acknowledge the importance of dealing with both one's own feelings and emotions and those of the others in an interaction.

Now, stay with me. Every relationship involves reciprocal relational dynamics such as trust or distrust, respect or disrespect, liking or disliking, and dominance or autonomy. Consequently,

these dynamics either reinforce relational growth processes or introduce limiting forces that impede the development of a durable relationship.

Here's a reality check. Without recognizing how certain behaviors negatively impact others, you won't be able to change your unproductive and destructive behaviors. Most of us fall into this trap, thinking we are always acting in the best interests of the student-athletes. That's just not true. Unfortunately, we continue unaware of the negative impact our behaviors create.

**The causal chain is clear: the fastest way to ignite the erosion of cohesion and morale is to deny that a behavioral blind spot exists, or to ignore it.**

Discipline and determination are necessary, but it is the discovery of behavioral blind spots that is essential to unlocking your coaching potential. The better you know your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes—the better you know where you've been, where you want to go and what it will take to get you there—the better you can set your goals and craft a plan to get there. However, if you have a faulty behavioral blind spot you are destined to limit your growth and development into the great coach you want to become.

### **Confronting Reality**

**Change does not scare great leaders. It excites them.** Gregg Popovich has guided the excellence that is the San Antonio Spurs. "Pop" has led the Spurs to five NBA Championships and more than 1000 wins across two decades. Popovich is a great strategist to be sure, but his genius lies in his ability to teach, to learn, and to guide the growth of his team—every year. "The measure of who we are is how we react to something that doesn't go our way," he said. "There are always things you can do better."

It sometimes takes a while to accept reality, but sooner or later we have to deal with its implications. Replacing the old ways with new does not happen by the touch of a button. **It requires deep convictions, enormous upheavals, a vision of what can be, and pig-headed perseverance even when the pain seems unbearable.** The process of transformation requires personal commitment and the willingness to persevere. It begins with the recognition that change is necessary.

A behavioral blind spot is usually the result of faulty reasoning processes. Reasoning, after all, is the process people use to move from what they know to what they do—from thought to action. The simple fact is most people are stuck in traditional thinking, settled into status quo, and resting in a comfort zone that discourages risk.

In 2016, the Chicago Cubs, the loveable losers, finally won the World Series after 108 years of futility. General Manager, Theo Epstein who also over saw the Boston Red Sox championship of 2004, explained the Cubs game plan for confronting reality. **"We will always spend more than half the time talking about the person rather than the player...** We would ask our scouts to provide three detailed examples of how these young players faced adversity on the field and responded to it, and three examples of how they faced adversity off the field. Because baseball is built on failure. The old expression is that even the best hitter fails seven out of ten times."

Epstein exploited a blind spot, faulty reasoning, shared by most of the other Major League teams.

For you to be the very best, you cannot allow yourself to become complacent in your comfort zone. You need to constantly be reaching for improvement—and that means failing. To fulfill your potential, you need to move out of your comfort zone and into a learning zone. It may be difficult, but think of it this way: your comfort zone is an enemy to your potential.

### **A Growing Reality**

Let's consider a parable rooted in biology. It's rumored that Microsoft and other leading companies use the "Lily Pad Problem," when interviewing candidates for a job. This parable shows how in certain environments we fail to see what's going on until a tipping point is reached. We are often unreceptive (unwilling, shall I say!) to the consequences of day-to-day happenings, until one day we are "shocked" at what seemingly emerged all at once. We simply failed to notice that actions really do have consequences.

In a small Kentucky pond one summer a floating lily pad doubles in size every day until it covers the entire surface. The day before the lily leaf totally engulfs the pond, the water is only half covered, and the day before that only a quarter of the pond is covered. The day before that, only an eighth of the Kentucky pond was covered by the lily leaf. For the better part of the summer the growth of the lily is barely noticed. It is only in the final week of the growth cycle that people notice the "sudden" appearance of the lily leaf. By then, it is far past the tipping point.

Think about the growing reality next time you dismiss a problem, deny an issue exists, or push back when someone brings you their unflattering reality. Problems left unattended will, like the lily leaf, continue to grow. Left unchecked, they will spread and takeover your current reality. What you once saw as a distraction can quickly become a disruption.

### **An Alternate Reality**

Walk into any team's practice and the thing you naturally do is observe what the team is doing and listen to what the coaches are saying. But what you're missing is what they don't do and what they do not say. It seems strange that we should be interested in what we don't see. Yet, like a winery at the right time, this information is ripe for understanding an alternate reality.

There is nothing simple about determining what's missing, but the reality is what's not being done and what's not being said, contribute to the team's reality in ways we may never know. Accordingly, learn to observe by watching what people don't do, and listening to what they don't say.

## Seeing Reality

### FOUR PARTS OF OUR SOCIO-PYSCHOLOICAL SELF



**The Johari Window Model**

Exhibit 12

The Johari window, created by Joe Luft and Harry Ingham, provides a useful model for explaining a blind spot. We each enter every relationship with an “Open Area”—the topics that we are willing to talk about. With strangers it’s “Where are you from?” With friends we haven’t seen in a while it’s the obligatory “How have you been?” Or with a neighbor you might open with, “How about this weather!” We all have learned that this type of talk is appropriate and meets the soft needs of the situation. As we get to know people, the open area widens as we take on talking about common likes, dislikes, and in team sports deeper conversation emerges when players and coaches begin discussing specifics of practices and games.

As relationships develop and depth and intensity emerge, we reveal more about ourselves, but we still hold back—hide—some of the pieces of who we are, what we think, and what we want. This holding back is represented on the Johari Window as the “Known to self,” but “Not known to others.”

And then, there is the area that has the potential to become a serious liability; the blind spot. It’s like an iceberg in the ocean. Above the water you see only the tip, but what lies below is much larger, much more powerful, and much more destructive. Essentially, the blind spot is that portion of the iceberg below the water line. We can’t see it and have no idea of its magnitude. This, of course, is an impairment with the potential to cause great damage.

Another problem with reality is, as a head coach (If you’re an assistant are you guilty of this?), you will get filtered feedback. **Unless you work hard to gain access to the truth, players and coaches will tell you what they think you want to hear, shielding you from what you need to hear.** And by others selectively modifying reality, you’re left to deal with a gap between reality

and perceived reality. However, rather than place blame on your staff and players, ask yourself why they are compelled to do so.

There is nothing unnatural about a blind spot. As I mentioned earlier, we all have them. The problem rests with our inability to see the blind spot or our unwillingness to deal with it. For most of us, seeing is believing. Open the Johari Window and take a deep look into your blind spots.

### **A Flawed Reality**

Two years after landing the head coaching position he so badly desired, Coach Jones (not his real name) was quietly fired. The administrative staff realized they'd made a mistake hiring Jones. They weren't quite sure why he didn't work out. They did their homework. Well, enough to consider him a solution to their coaching needs at the time. However, what they couldn't see is what did him in. After spending a month analyzing Jones, here are the flaws I uncovered:

- Is overly demanding
- Doesn't listen to coaches and players
- Is intolerant of dissent
- Takes the credit for success
- Blames others for mistakes
- Is untrustworthy—doesn't do what he says he'll do
- Is aloof—seen as arrogant
- Has a dictatorial style
- Is abrasive

It's fairly obvious, after the fact, that Coach Jones has some serious flaws related to interpersonal interactions (he is comfortable with a transactional style of conversation) and relationship building. Nowhere in his flaws will you find a glitch in his knowledge of the sport. He has a great command of the X's and O's. But he has some serious team building flaws.

The two primary blind spots that emerged are: 1) his need to be right in all situations, and 2) avoiding accountability to his players and staff. Coach Jones' "I know" attitude produced such flaws as taking credit for success and his unwillingness to listen. The desire to avoid accountability (to the stakeholders) produced his blaming of others and his dictatorial leadership style and abrasive attitude toward relationship building created cool relationships between him and his staff and players.

The prognosis for Coach Jones is not good. If he fails to discover his fatal flaws his coaching career will never recover. As a prominent coach told me, "We're pretty good at directing our players to change, but not so great at changing ourselves."

### **Defending Reality**

You do what you say you will do. And you say you'll do what you say you'll do. But too often

you don't do what you say you will do, but will defend to the death that you did do what you said you will do.

Coach Jones believed he had an open mind, that he listened to his staff and players, and that his "open door policy" was evidence of these "facts." Yet, out of fear, the players did not feel safe to be open with him. They demonstrated a low level of trust toward their coach who penalized team members for challenging his prevailing wisdom. The players quickly learned not to visit him during his office hours. His leadership style and behavior permeated the staff meetings. When someone's view contradicted his he quickly shot it down. Over time, the assistant coaches came to not feel comfortable expressing dissenting views. As for listening to others, well...he always had his head buried in his cell phone or laptop or was looking this way or that way or brushing the speaker off by telling them "let's hold this for later." Later, of course, never came.

Coach Jones is guilty of saying one thing and doing another. Yet if you ask him, to this day: "Coach are you open-minded, willing to listen others, and if someone's idea is worthy of testing out would you be willing to give it a try?" "Of course," he would say with ease. It's tough to face the reality of our behavior. And it's hard to hear what we don't want to hear.

Here's how Coach Jones defended his reality:

- I understand the situation; those who see it differently do not.
- I am right; those who disagree are wrong.
- I have pure motives. I'm doing what's in the best interests of the team; those who disagree have questionable motives.
- My feelings and behaviors are justified.

Coach Jones never came out and said these things. He doesn't have to. It's how he acts that reveals how he thinks. **Psychologists say that the "denial response" comes from the need to maintain a positive self-image.** Jones is not likely to engage in critical self-reflection and update his assumptions about relationship building. Like many coaches, Coach Jones is stuck in his set patterns, and will not risk the switching costs of rethinking his leadership thinking.

**Stated simply, we are all prone to defending our reality.** We say one thing, yet do another. We advocate for certain values and beliefs, yet in action we often violate those same values and beliefs. For example, many coaches I've worked with will tell you they don't coach by use of behavioral modification—the practice of taking things away as form of punishment for an undesired behavior. Usually the domain of child rearing, behavioral modification is a strategy to produce a desired behavior using *external* reinforcers to shape behavior. If the proposition is "Do this and you'll get that," people will focus more on "that," the reward, and less on "this," the path to "that."

The bottom line remains that manipulation under any name erodes trust and is detrimental to relationship building. In most situations the outcome is compliance, not commitment.

And compliance breeds resentment. At some point, it should become obvious to the caregiver—parent, teacher, coach—that the use of reasoning is a much better long-term solution. It’s a vital part of the process of growth and development. Yet, in sports at advanced high school and collegiate levels you’ll still find the carrot-and-stick method in use.

The point here is that we often espouse a way of thinking and acting, but behave differently. What basketball coach hasn’t sat a player down on the bench with the idea of the benching (taking away playing time) teaching him to not make the same mistake again. When you ask the coach if it’s better to manipulate athletes’ behavior by using punishment (such as reduced playing time) for a wrong doing they’ll suggest they don’t. But catch them in action during a game and that’s just what they do—“have a seat next to me!”

Now, I’m not judging such coaching methods as good or bad, just simply making the case that this may be a violation of one’s advocated values. **When push comes to shove, a coach’s preoccupation with task accomplishment overrides the well-being of the players.** Although this action gets the desired short-term results, it brings to the surface people’s natural resistance to question the way they think.

Quick question: are you trying to “defend” the benching mentioned in the paragraph above. Don’t worry; my guess is most readers are in the boat with you (that means I presuppose you did some mental calculation to justify the temporary benching). It’s so tough not to try to defend our actions when we deal with mixed motives (long-term value vs. short-term results). Yes, defense does win championships. But it can lose you your coaching position. Defensive reasoning is ultimately self-serving. It promotes protection of one’s self, and, this is important, it is anti-learning. How can you be open to learning when you’re busy protecting yourself and defending your actions, stop, reflect, and consider what the thinking is that lies behind your behavior.

### A Model of Reality

To provide some structure to understanding reality, a model is helpful, if not necessary. The model we use at The Academy for Sport Leadership is shaped by a framework that involves the operation of psychological processes (Mindset), along with the social and contextual factors (Action/Experience).

MINDSET +	SKILL SET +	ACTION/ENVIRONMENT	=	OUTCOME
thoughts, feelings, values, priorities, perceptions, theories, memories & models	building relationships guiding with influence accelerating change shaping common purpose focus intentional behavior	behaviors & situational stimuli / social forces hindering and compelling		results and relationships task outcomes & relational outcomes
				Exhibit 13
<b>The Academy for Sport Leadership’s Deep Change Model 1</b>				

As the model illustrates, how we think drives how we act as the primary process of change in behavior. Simply put, change happens, for the most part, from the inside-out (transforming by learning / critical self-reflection), yet it can and does happen from the outside-in (transforming by doing / experiences and experimentation). The ASL Deep Change Model 1, demonstrates that both processes work when it comes to growth and development. However, as discussed earlier, because we are reasoning beings, it is our reasoning processes that we use for the most part to move from what we know to what we do.

## Changing Reality

Coaches are action-oriented. They have a distinct bias for action. They are doers, not thinkers (in the academic sense). A prized praise of a coach is “he gets things done!” Coaches live life in the trenches, doing battle to grow and strengthen their team. But does this mean all coaches have a growth mindset?

Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset: A New Psychology of Success* states, “A growth mindset isn’t just about effort. Perhaps the most common misconception is simply equating the growth mindset with effort.” Dweck has studied mindsets for over 30 years, drawing a distinction between a growth-mindset and a fixed mindset. I’ll trust you’ll do some homework on her research findings.

A recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* revealed a staggering reality on change. The researchers concluded that only 10 percent of the population has a learning mindset. These are individuals who seek out deep learning as opposed to superficial and simple learning. They respect the process of learning. This suggests that the other 90 percent of the population is not actively searching out new learning, unlikely to engage in transformational learning.

Mindset is reality. **Our five senses allow us to perceive the outside world, but it is our mind that brings us into our inner reality.** Our ability to think, to reflect on our experiences, make assumptions and to draw conclusions is not reactive, but very active in determining our mindset. However, once we build a mindset how open are we to changing our mindset? Recall the favored statement: You can’t teach old dogs new tricks.

So, do you have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset? Would you be willing to challenge and change a cherished belief? How often do you critically self-reflect on your mindset? Do you have a bias for action? If so, how do you blend this bias with the process of reflection?

Let’s take another look into the case of Coach Jones (of the Flawed Reality). Coach Jones clearly wasn’t aware that his own operating system—his mindset—was contributing to the problems that led to his firing. His beliefs, values, and perceptions of leadership, that those in leadership positions have the “right stuff,” led him to see it as solely his job to hold coaches and players accountable, that the buck stops with him. And so, over time, players, coaches, and others associated with the program grew tired of his demeaning and disrespectful behavior—behavior Coach Jones felt justified in performing. **Unwilling or unable to attend to his internal mental world is a sign of a lack of self-awareness and it’s going to sabotage Jones’ career.**

Likewise, another program I consulted to had a self-inflicted problem of player accountability. The head coach, let's call him Coach Smith (not his real name), much like Coach Jones, had a flawed way of thinking about player responsibility and accountability. The coach advocated that player-to-player accountability was a cherished value in his program. Yet, the very idea of personal accountability was breached by a mindless "industry practice." That of the age-old practice of making sure students attended class by checking on them. To ensure that STUDENT-athletes attend class many college teams send support staff members to check to make sure the players are in class. The support staff member, you know the drill, opens the door, spots the athlete(s), and marks them present. If you know the game, let me ask you to challenge the mindset that produced this practice.

Here's the reality of the cat-and-mouse game. Rather than placing the burden on the players to hold each other accountable, which was the espoused value according to Coach Smith, Smith and his staff were simply informing and reinforcing to the players that "*you're not to be trusted*". The implicit message is student-athletes prefer *not* to accept the responsibility of holding teammates accountable.

Where do you go from here? Like it or not, the coach has signaled to the student-athlete that he is not to be trusted to be his brother's keeper. He's invoked a norm of reliance on the coaching staff to hold players accountable. As a result, team members were reluctant to hold peers accountable, partly because, as students they had little experience doing so. Once "checked in," the student-athlete could, and would, check out of the class with no repercussion. The very idea of player-to-player accountability was simply viewed as a game by the student-athletes.

Coach Smith, like every coach, wanted to take advantage of the potential synergy of his players holding themselves accountable to one another. Instead, they were afraid to hold their peers accountable because they were concerned about putting others on the spot and, in turn being challenged by their peers. Peer-to-peer leadership was undermined early in the team's development by the message sent through the class check process.

The coach's desire to create a culture of accountability was undercut by a blind spot. Once we were able to identify the blind spot as a mental model of "power over" rather than "power with" we were able to shift the coaching mindset and do away with the industry practice.

Mindset is not a theory. Sustaining any profound change requires a fundamental shift in thinking. Our mindset determines the world we encounter; our thoughts, feelings, and actions emerge because of the uniqueness of our "master program." Elite coaches change how they lead, coach, and behave only by changing who they are, how they think, and how they act. Put simply, how you think and how you act become reflexive routines. This makes change a challenging real-life problem. **Any coach who wants to excel will have to learn to reflect critically on their own behavior, identify how they contribute to the team's problems, and then change how they act.**

## Ethics and Leadership

The following is an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Dr. Ann Tenbrunsel, an associate professor at Notre Dame, and Dr. Max Bazerman of the Harvard Business School—experts on ethics and organizational leadership. The interview took place shortly after the release of their best-selling book, *Blind Spots: Why We Fail to Do What's Right and What to Do about It*.

When confronted with an ethical dilemma, most of us like to think we would stand up for our principles. But we are not as ethical as we think we are. In *Blind Spots*, leading business ethicists Max Bazerman and Ann Tenbrunsel examine the ways we overestimate our ability to do what is right and how we act unethically without meaning to. From the collapse of Enron and corruption in the tobacco industry, to sales of the defective Ford Pinto and the downfall of Bernard Madoff, the authors investigate the nature of ethical failures in the business world and beyond, and illustrate how we can become more ethical, bridging the gap between who we are and who we want to be.

### **1. Recently, a well-respected high level football coach resigned as a result of his failure to properly handle an NCAA violation committed by one or more of his players. How does the process of ethical fading apply to coaches?**

We know from our research that when decisions are made in environments that are heavily sanctioned ethical fading is much more likely to happen. In one study, individuals were asked to make a decision involving ethical implications. Half of those participating were in a “no sanction” condition – they were told there would not be any monitoring or sanctions of the behavior. In some sense, the decision to do what was right was up to them. The other half were in a “sanction” condition in which they were told that there would be monitoring and sanctions of the decisions. We found that 55% who made the decision in the no sanction environment saw the decision as an ethical one whereas only 20% saw it as an ethical decision in the sanction environment. How you see the decision is important because it is related to an ethical choice: of those that saw it is an ethical decision, 94% behaved ethically; of those who did not see it as an ethical decision, only 44% behaved ethically.

We have seen the athletic environment increasingly characterized by regulation and the accompanying monitoring and sanctioning of decisions that comes with that. This in turn leads to more ethical fading, meaning that decision makers in this environment are less likely to ask the question “What is the right thing to do?” and instead focus on “What is the probability I will get caught and what is the cost and how does that compare to the benefits I will see from not-complying?”. In this type of environment, whether or not a decision is ethical or right is not considered; rather, there is a cost-benefit calculation which determines whether it makes sense to comply or defy the NCAA rules. If it too costly to defy, compliance results but if the benefit is large enough, compliance goes out the window.

It is also quite likely that motivated blindness played a part in the coach’s decisions. Motivated blindness describes the tendency for individuals to not notice the behavior of others when it is in their best interest to not notice. In the steroid scandal in Major League Baseball, there were many people—the commissioner, the owner, coaches, the player’s union—who should have noticed the rapid changes in the players and the sudden onset of record-breaking performances. Why didn’t they see what now seems obvious? They didn’t notice because of the benefits they received by not noticing. Steroid use increased power, power led to more home runs, home runs boosted attendance and attendance meant more money for all involved. These benefits blinded those involved to the problems they preferred not to see.

Similarly, the coach was most likely motivated to not see the NCAA violations committed by his players because it was in his best interest not to see them. By not seeing them, he didn't have to sanction his players, his players were happier, and life in the Athletic Department was much smoother. This motivated blindness was driven in part by the larger environment in which he was rewarded. The coach was rewarded for winning games, not prosecuting his players. He responded well to those rewards.

## **2. Why is an adoring public able to quickly forget such wrongs?**

The fans are able to forget these transgressions for the same reason they are committed – motivated blindness. Loyal fans don't want to know or contemplate anything but positive attributes about their team. We know from research that our brain codes the information that is advantageous to us and doesn't code information that is disadvantageous to us. For example, if you ask married couples what percent of the chores they do, both spouses will say they each do about 75% of the chores, which can't be true. Each one of them remembers what chores they do (cook, laundry, yard work, transport children) but doesn't code what their spouse does. Similarly, fans code what is advantageous to them – the statistics that support their love of the team, the charities their player support, the negative behavior of players on opposing teams—but don't code what is disadvantageous to them—the NCAA violations, a coach who bends the rules, the negative behavior of a favorite player.

## **3. How might an insider help a coach identify an ethical blind spot?**

It is not clear that it should be an "insider" who helps the coach identify ethical blind spots. Insiders fall prey to motivated blindness just like fans, owners, and athletic directors do. An outsider who is not motivated by the standings of the team or a close relationship with the coach is probably in the best position to see the ethical traps that can bring a coach to disgrace. Framing decisions as ethical decisions, "what is the ethical implications of this decision?" or "what is the right thing to do" will help reduce ethical fading. The reward system for the coach also needs to be closely examined. If the coach is only compensated (monetarily or otherwise) for a team's performance and the way in which that performance is ignored, it is a safe to predict that the coach will focus on team performance and use any tactics to get there. Those responsible for structuring and implementing the reward system have to take responsibility for the outcomes of that reward system and for their own motivated blindness. This is not to say that the coaches are not responsible for their unethical decisions for ultimately they are and they must be held accountable for those decisions. But if effort is also directed toward understanding the psychology behind bad decisions—including ethical fading and motivated blindness—and the way in which the environment actually encourages them, teams can avoid the tarnish that comes with unexamined unethicality.

# Coaching for Leadership

How to Develop a Leader in Every Locker

2<sup>nd</sup> Half

## WHAT IS OUR PLAN?

### **Fundamental Questions**

What goals do we want to pursue?

Where do we start?

How should we go about building commitment, promoting loyalty, and ensuring well-being and satisfaction?

## **So, What's Your Working Theory?**

Of all the questions raised about leadership, the fundamental question of born vs. made might be the most important. I say this because of the need to unearth the way you think about yourself and other selves in relation to leading and following. The goal is to find out how you have constructed your perspective of student development and if it meets with an approach to coaching that benefits all participants.

Ask yourself, for example, whether you organize and operate your program with a leadership orientation or a followership orientation. The orientation that best fits your mental model of how to build a team, run a successful program, and contribute to the growth and development of your student-athletes is in some way, shape, or form a result of the way you answer the fundamental question of born vs. made.

Most coaches take a trait approach when assigning leadership responsibility to a team captain. In one elaborate study two-thirds of all coaches selected the team leaders based on personal traits or qualities. Working with coaches it has become clear that this approach essentially amounts to a “fixed” way of thinking which aligns most closely with the belief that leaders are born. The assumption is that either a player has the necessary leadership traits, or doesn't. This way of looking at the world is most likely to lead to a followership orientation, the idea that only a select few have the “right stuff” to lead. In other words, this view of the world is deterministic. It fails horribly, however, to recognize the various roles and responsibilities of leadership in general, and the potential for all student-athletes to learn, grow, and mature into a leadership role.

The challenge is to reflect critically on your reality, to learn to see the patterns, connections, and interrelationships of actions and behaviors and recognize how context driven your student-athletes are. That is, how much they are shaped by the expectations of the social setting. If you dig deeply you'll see how strong the context and situational forces acting on the student-athlete are that the presumption of leadership traits as the best way to “identify” high potential leaders might just fade into the background.

Albert Einstein informed us, “How we think determines what we measure.” Perhaps this is what McGregor (1961) had in mind when he said, “Much of behavior...is not a consequence of human nature; it is a consequence of the way we organize, of the way we manage people.” Our mindset—our core beliefs, values and assumptions—determines our priorities, our practices, our procedures, what we expect from our players, and the way we interact with them. Our past thoughts, observations, and experiences serve as the foundation for the way we lead others. Once we're comfortable with these practices and the systems we build we perpetuate them, and we tend not to challenge them. To do so would require that we rethink our thinking. So, what's your working theory on leadership and team building?

# “Who am I to...”

## Why Student-Athletes Don’t Lead

One of the deepest needs within people is belonging. If you’re a coach you belong to the coaching “fraternity” or “sorority.” And it feels good to belong. These are your people, your friends, colleagues and confidants. They think much like you do which makes it easy to be around one another. There are coaching and administrator associations that hold annual events that you love to attend to be around others just like you. Belonging is natural.

Your student-athletes—team captains or team leaders—want to belong too. They seek an inner congruence for order, harmony, and peace with their teammates. They too want the team to be like a fraternity or sorority. They want to belong. So when it comes time to lead, the typical team captain or team leader is afraid to do something that seems incongruent with their values and beliefs. Their first thought is “Who am I to tell her she needs to stop doing that.” They feel a real mental conflict.

Dr. Leon Festinger, a researcher and professor at Stanford University, coined the term “cognitive dissonance” to explain this mental conflict that the team player feels. Cognitive means the mind, the way we think. Dissonance means conflict. Cognitive dissonance literally means to have a mental conflict.

According to Festinger, and subsequently many other researchers, when an individual experiences cognitive dissonance they quickly search for a way to reduce the incongruence causing the dissonance. The person with the conflict is motivated to reduce the inner turmoil in some manner. For example, the thirty-five-year-old factory worker who smokes a pack a day on his breaks knows (doesn’t everyone?) that smoking is bad for you. So, to reduce the psychological tension he adopts the position, “My aunt lived to one-hundred and she smoked a pack a day so it must not be that bad for you.” This cognitive maneuver reduces the internal tension caused by his actions—smoking—and his knowledge of facts—smoking is bad for you but it can’t be that bad if my aunt could smoke and live to one hundred.

Why is it that student-athletes fear leadership roles and responsibilities? Simply put, when a student-athlete is asked to perform a peer-to-peer leadership action, it is, by default, inconsistent with his or her existing values, beliefs, and perceived skills. This causes a conflict—dissonance—that inhibits the likelihood of the peer leader taking action. The internal dialogue of “*Who am I to do this?*” will generally rule the day.

How then can you change the outcome of bystanding and inaction? Practice, practice, practice. Just as you practice your offensive and defensive systems, you must practice your leadership system in a way that encourages players to gain a voice—and to overcome the perceived threat when a *taking a risk* to provide constructive feedback. Silence, after all, is much easier than speaking up.

To change internal beliefs is a challenge. It takes time and commitment. Is it complicated? Yes, of course! But if you don’t make a deliberate effort to address the issue of cognitive dissonance, your team is vulnerable to the costs that come with the lack of internal team leadership. Spend time creating a team culture that encourages the following behaviors:

- asking questions;
- sharing perspectives;
- sharing information;
- seeking help;
- experimenting with difficult conversations
- talking about mistakes; and
- seeking constructive (which includes negative) feedback

**Building a Culture of Action Creates  
a Learning Culture**

*Learning + Doing = Making Mistakes*

## Learning from Experience

The importance and centrality of experience as a foundation for student-athlete learning is not in question. Focusing on the learner's experience is an integral part of the teaching-learning process. Every sport team provides a learning laboratory in which learning is an active process with learners constantly trying to understand and make sense of their experiences. The aim of the concept of ***Coaching for Leadership*** is to develop self-aware learners who have the capacity to use knowledge for taking the appropriate action at the opportune time.

To achieve competency at any skill a student-athlete needs to understand it both conceptually and behaviorally. Leadership development takes patience, practice, and hands-on experience as well as intense interpersonal exploration. Development occurs when the student-athlete uses the skill often enough so that it becomes integrated into his or her regular behaviors. Skill development also involves assimilating feedback on how well he or she is performing the skill and gaining awareness of the results of leadership actions. Feedback loops are vital for gaining accuracy in self-awareness.

The standard approach to leader development is generally that of a younger player observing a veteran player and waiting her or his time, generally the next season. This process assumes that learning to lead is a gradual cumulative process attainable by observation. Certainly this approach does produce some learning. Things such as social norms and- cultural expectations are what most players learn in this process. But this generally does not lead to building of leadership competence and self-confidence. Action learning is necessary.

Given that we expect leaders to learn from experience, you and your staff play a crucial role in this process. In order to create an effective learning environment it's important to acknowledge that we tend to underestimate the impact of situational determinants and to overestimate the importance of the leader's personal factors. But behavior is shaped by situational and contextual variables as well as by one's personality and learning styles.

The following passage from the Center for Creative Leadership's *Handbook of Leadership Development* summarizes the complexity of leadership development and the learning process. If you look closely, this episode might mirror a conversation with one of your team leaders.

### **The Manager and the Sage**

"Is experience the best teacher?" the bright young manager asked the sage. "Can I develop as a leader from experience?"

"Some people have said that experience is the best teacher," replied the sage. "But some experiences don't teach."

"So experience is not the best teacher?"

"Not exactly that," said the sage. "It is just that not every experience offers important

leadership lessons.” “So, where do I learn? What experiences are helpful to me?”

“It is the experiences that challenge you that are developmental,” the sage responded, “the experiences that stretch you, that force you to develop new abilities if you are going to survive and succeed.”

“Oh, I get it,” said the manager. “When I am really pushed to my limits by an experience, I will learn. Is that it?”

“Not exactly,” the sage said. “Challenge is important. Our limits need to be tested. But even when we are challenged we don’t necessarily learn.”

“So,” the manager said, looking a bit puzzled, “you mean that I can have the right kind of challenging experiences and still not learn?”

“That’s right,” the sage responded. “You only grow from challenging experiences when you have the ability to learn from them. Not everyone does. As T.S. Eliot once reminded us, ‘some people have the experience and miss the meaning.’ There are some people who learn hand over fist from challenging experiences. Others learn little, if anything. Growth is not automatic.”

### **Experience Can Be a Lousy Teacher**

Most people, and certainly a great many coaches, simply take it on faith that “experience is the best teacher.” Indeed, if you reflect on your past, you will no doubt find a wide-range of experiences that have provided you a wealth of knowledge and insight. Despite the fact that exposure to new experiences offers an opportunity for learning, experience alone is rarely the best teacher. It is the cognitive processes of making sense of an experience *after* the experience has occurred that promotes a deeper learning. Psychologists call this process cognitive reappraisal. Let’s take a brief look at how student-athletes may learn little from their leadership experiences.

Learning to lead is difficult because it is cognitively and emotionally demanding. Let’s put aside the “rule of thumb” that experience is a great teacher. Researchers find that learning from experience is not as simple as just participating in an experience. We tend to think that all a student has to do is be exposed to or take part in an experience and they’ll grasp the breadth and depth of the potential meaning embedded in that particular experience. Not so. It may be helpful to think like a coach. You watch game film to dissect your performance and learn about what went right, what went wrong, areas to improve and so forth. That’s how you should approach teaching leadership to student-athletes.

In the beginning stages of learning to lead many student-athletes are only capable of learning simple, or surface level, lessons from an incident or event. Without a solid foundation of the concepts of leadership a deeper and more refined perspective is unlikely.

If an event arises that is new to the team leader, something he or she has never observed or been a part of, their lack of skill and sophistication of understanding will place them an inferior

position to understand and address the complex set of issues that emerge. Learning is especially difficult when a team leader finds himself in a situation he considers potentially embarrassing or psychologically threatening. In many instances anxiety in potential learning situations can limit, and often prevent, a team leader from learning anything of lasting value.

So, as you can see, while your team leaders are going to be faced with a wide-range of experiences, it is necessary to find ways to help them identify and learn from the right lessons. If all you do is suggest to your leaders to “figure it out,” you’re setting them up for hardship. Without providing proper preparation and training you are placing the student-athlete in a psychologically threatening position. Often from which they will seek only to cope, and not learn the valuable lessons embedded in the experience.

I’ve seen many team leaders who do not know what they are supposed to learn. These student-athletes will just put in their time as a leader and basically experience limited development. They won’t demand much from themselves because they’re not sure what is necessary and helpful to learn. Consequently, the team leader gleans little from his or her leadership experience.

None of this should imply that experience cannot teach student-athletes. To the contrary, this is to remind you that experience needs to be used wisely as a part of a complete leadership development program. Think feedback, feedback, feedback.

Experience alone does not guarantee that learning will take place. It is the guided voyage, which includes and involves heavy doses of reflection, undertaken by the student-athlete and the coach that produces a dynamic learning experience. Your role as a facilitator of leadership learning will ensure that your team leaders are exposed to the right experiences for acquiring new skills and abilities. And learn the right lessons from the experiences that emerge.

### **Learning How to Learn from Experience: Experience as “Raw Material”**

Experiential learning is an effective method for teaching leadership. Over the course of an entire season you and your players will encounter a wide-range of leadership experiences which make up the “raw material” of the learning process. Unfortunately just being involved in a learning event does not promise or promote learning. The key to experiential learning is that individuals and the team transform raw experience into insight and a transformed student-athlete.

Learning from experience is something many of us take for granted. However, leadership growth and development requires learning how to learn from experience. Experiential learning is an active process in the sense that learners—in your case student-athletes learning to lead and team build—are continually trying to understand and make sense of their experiences. The process of learning is generally accomplished by the learner reconstructing their experiences to align more closely with their existing mental models and categories for understanding their world. In effect, they are linking new experiences to previous experience. However, with a

limited reservoir (breadth and depth) of experience, the student-athlete is limited in his initial ability to learn from an experience.

Learning from experience involves balancing new learning with nurturing of the knowledge, skills, behaviors and attitudes one already possesses. Often times learning from experience is very difficult because inherent to the process of learning is the need for making what is familiar strange. That is, unlearning old ideas or one's already developed habit of mind requires the learner to abandon "scripts" that are failing and to acquire new scripts. This part of learning can be aided greatly by your guidance.

A key to experiential learning is teaching student-athletes to engage in productive reflection of leadership experiences and challenging what was learned during the activity or event. Enhanced understanding comes from reflection on one's experience. Most people aren't skilled in performing critical self-reflection. It takes time and experience to do a valid reflection. Your guidance is of great value, providing helpful observation, examination, and perspective.

To become a competent and skilled leader, your team leaders need to have the opportunities to practice leadership skills, get feedback, and integrate the skills into his or her behavioral repertoire. You'll do well to create a feedback intense environment guiding the student-athlete in learning from self-reflection.

The broader purpose, the goal, of leadership education is to help the student-athlete develop a foundation for realizing their potential as a leader. That is, to recognize what it takes to learn to lead and how to foster personal leadership growth.

As a leadership educator you'll need to recognize the difference between your immediate goals as a coach and the longer term goals of the student-athlete (say ten years down the road). That is, you must come to understand the difference between a performance orientation mindset and a learning orientation mindset. The performance oriented coach has a sole focus on winning and losing, viewing learning to lead as an unnecessary frill. A coach with a learning orientation, however, will deliberately teach life skills and leadership, yet with a balanced approach of teaching to win and achieve.

## **Intentional Learning from Experience**

### **The Drum Beat of Learning**

Several years ago, after seeing Phil Collins in concert, I decided I wanted to learn to play the drums. Having never played an instrument, I wasn't sure how to go about this new fascination. So I did what I always do, I jumped in head first immersing myself in a new set of challenges.

The path to learning to play the drums is pretty straight forward. Buy a set of drums, sign up for some lessons, get some sticks, and learn the basic drills. And practice, practice, practice.

Every surface you encounter becomes a drum. Tap here, tap-tap-tap there. Over time you become better. Maybe even good enough to perform for an audience.

This is how we learn to play sports. We learn through repetition of drills designed to develop skills. In fact, we learn many things this way. Baking, painting, driving a car all require a learning process that involves the use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic aspects to attain a certain level of proficiency. To learn to play the drums I used the process of seeing, hearing, and touching the drums to develop enough skill to play Collins signature song *In the Air Tonight*. Then I did the smart thing. I stopped and invested my time in something else.

Learning to become a leader is a bit different. The starting point may be the same—a strong desire to learn a new set of skills with a desire to produce intended outcomes. However, different spheres of knowledge are used to develop one’s capacity to lead. One of the chief distinctions between learning to play the drums, or any sport, and learning to lead is found in the learning process itself. Leadership development is a process through which learners become aware of a leadership mindset and develop the appropriate skill set necessary to lead in a certain context.

### **Developing Effective Team Leaders**

John Dewey, an influential American education philosopher advocated that learning is primarily accomplished through direct experience, or experimentation and practice, along with critical reflection on one’s actions. Ask any lawyer and she’ll tell you that she learned more about law on her first case than she did in most of her classes. This happens because the actual experience, experimentation or practice, triggers a context ripe in lessons to be learned. However, to learn at a deep level the learner must engage in an intentional process of making sense of their experience.

Effective leaders use learning techniques that enhance their contextual intelligence thereby facilitating learning, growth and change. The process of becoming an effective learner in the sport setting involves the skillful use of reflection to gather and organize, and the practice of critical reflection to configure the raw material and make sense of it in a way that is relevant and useful.

Highly motivated and committed team leaders don’t take learning for granted. That is, they prefer to engage in formal learning rather than limiting learning to a less rigorous and limited learning process known as informal learning. Informal learning is comprised of an intuitive and incidental approach, while formal learning encompasses a blend of retrospective and prospective approaches to learning. Informal and incidental learning are, by nature, not highly structured and rarely involve self-reflection. Because informal learning is unstructured it is more of a reactive process of learning. A proactive approach uses both the retrospective and prospective approaches to ensure formal learning by mining for depth of informal learning events.

### **Intentional Learning: Investment of the “Self” in Learning**

Learning is a highly complex matter comprised of cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral dimensions. Natural learning events—experience—have an impact on the learners’ self-concept, self-esteem, and their sense of identity. Learning is concerned with the acquisition or alteration of knowledge, beliefs, habits, and attitudes. The concept of change is inherent in the concept of learning. When someone learns they make both *personal* and *social* adjustments. A change in attitudes and behavior implies that learning is taking place or has taken place. When learning creates a change in disposition or capabilities it can be said to have had an effect on the learner.

The coach’s leadership is often a major influence on the student-athletes way of thinking about self, teammates, coaches, and the team environment. Since learning is a change in attitude, behavior or performance that occurs as a direct result of experience, it is imperative that the coach actively plan how he or she will engage the student-athlete in the learning process. The most effective way to build and enhance learning capabilities is through two intentional experiential learning approaches—the retrospective and prospective approaches.

**A Retrospective Approach** involves learning from experience by looking back over what happened and reaching valid and accurate conclusions about it. Through this approach leaders learn to engage in reflective practices and those who use this approach, over time, become increasingly skilled at reflecting on their experience and analyzing it to identify the learning points and lessons.

The Retrospective Approach has three steps:

1. You have an experience.
2. You review the experience to identify learning points (e.g., what worked, what did
3. You reach conclusion about the experience and what the experience has taught you.

**A Prospective Approach** involves all the retrospective elements but includes an additional dimension. Whereas retrospective concentrates on reviewing what happened after an experience, the prospective approach includes planning to learn before an experience. This approach has the advantage of helping people to prepare to learn and to learn the most from anything that a particular situation may offer. People who use this approach expect to learn from everything.

The Prospective Approach has four steps:

1. You develop a plan to learn something.
2. You implement the plan having an experience in which you are consciously learning.
3. You review what occurred as a result of implementing the plan.
4. You reach conclusions about what worked and why, and what did not work and why. Then you circle back to the first step above.

As a result of a retrospective and prospective approach to learning team leaders are able to:

- Generate knowledge and insight

- Develop self-direction capabilities
- Perceive a need to know or do something
- Lift their confidence for taking action
- Increase their capacity to understand others
- Sustain a high level of motivation
- Release their leadership potential

Recall the earlier reference to the informal learning practices known as intuitive and incidental learning. Much of what has been the traditional route for preparation of the student-athlete for a role as team leader has been that of an informal process based on intuitive and incidental learning. To appreciate the processes of retrospective and prospective learning let's take a quick look at three common games that involve learning.

The first game many children learn to play is tic-tac-toe. The game is picked up easily and within a game or two the strategy of play becomes intuitive. Once bored with this game children move on to the game of checkers.

Checkers presents a slightly more complex learning environment. With an increase in number of playing pieces and possible moves the learner finds himself thinking at a different level than during tic-tac-toe. However, the game is still relatively simple and the learning becomes largely incidental—that is when you forget to cover a square or jump your opponent you feel the sting of sloppy thinking and seek to not let that happen again.

Now, we move to the game of chess. Here the learner encounters a huge jump in the number of variables involved in play of the game. The beginning player quickly learns that to be competitive in this game he or she will need to master retrospective and prospective learning. That is, careful reflection on one's moves and one's opponent's moves is necessary to playing the game effectively. And the master chess players are so skilled they are able to utilize the prospective approach by planning ahead three or four moves and using those moves to "learn" how their opponent thinks as well as a strategy for winning.

Effective team leaders increase their ability to learn by reflecting on their experiences, and by planning to learn before an experience occurs. Experiences—events and incidents—are often ill-structured which can make it difficult for the participant to extract meaning making and discover leadership lessons. Because retrospective and prospective learning are structured the student-athlete is able to learn more effectively. The deliberate nature of the retrospective and prospective approaches to learning act to slow down the learning process allowing participants to ask questions, think, explore viewpoints, listen, share opinions and gain insight.

Today's challenging world demands better leaders. This requires better leadership development strategies and earlier hands-on-training. The opportunities provided by the athletic experience hold great promise for the practice of leadership development. Deliberate learning is an essential for transformational leadership, preparing the student-athlete to take

on a more prominent role during their playing career and setting the stage for becoming a dynamic leader in all they do.

## **Creating a Psychologically Safe Learning Environment**

It didn't dawn on me that there might be anxieties and risk involved in team learning, until I put a few work teams at a *Fortune 100* company under a microscope. To say the very least, what I observed was a wide-range of defensive and protective processes which ultimately closed off the team's members from learning. Instead these behaviors created a variety of dysfunctions ultimately anchoring the team's collective efforts in the harbor of mediocrity.

As a result of this work I decided to take a closer look at how student-athletes learn in a team setting, and in particular how the context influences the perceived risk involved in learning to lead one's teammates. Upon closer inspection it became obvious that many of the risks involved in team learning in the corporate world are mirrored in the athletic world. Likewise, learning to lead in a team environment is risky business.

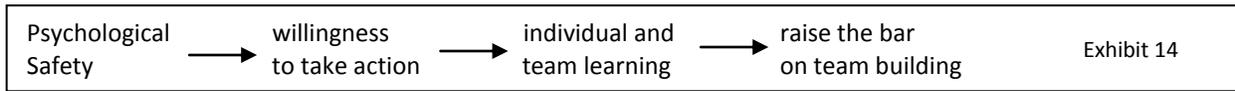
So, how do you get student-athletes to learn together? There are no simple answers. However, knowing that the context greatly affects learning is a step in the right direction if you're serious about your players learning how to lead.

**Leadership Development and Psychological Safety** When a student-athlete takes on a leadership role it's important to understand that he or she will learn primarily through trial and error (which is why I firmly believe in deliberate practice—scrimmage—as a way to reduce perceived risks). If a student is learning physical geography he or she will learn in private with no one else aware of his or her mistakes. However, learning to lead in a team setting requires learning by trial and error in interpersonal interactions. Learning this way is certainly not learning in private and the consequences of actions always involve one's teammates. Therefore, team leaders perceive risk in appearing ignorant and or incompetent in front of their peers. To do this they **must believe they won't be punished** for the actions they take.

Because most student-athletes have little experience at leading, which includes making mistakes in front of teammates, such fears as embarrassment and rejection are always present. And many student-athletes are reluctant to take actions or to speak up or speak out for fear that their actions may be held against them by teammates. To neutralize such fears it's in your best interest to create a psychologically safe environment.

Let's start with what I mean by psychological safety. It is a shared belief by all team members that the team is an environment where everyone has a sense of confidence that others will not embarrass, disrespect, disregard, or punish someone for taking action or speaking up or speaking out. All members understand that a supportive learning environment is necessary to build a psychologically safe team context.

The central idea is that a psychologically safe team environment will produce higher performing team learning and team leadership. Expressed as a formula it looks like this:



At the heart of the growth of a team leader is the leader as a learner, the learning process, and the context which together form the cornerstone of leadership development. Always keep in mind that the team leader is engaging in learning a new mind-set as well as a new skill-set. That is, the student-athlete as a team leader is undergoing a tremendous transformation and that is why creating a psychologically safe environment is necessary.

### The Learning Environment

Years ago during a seminar the late Peter Drucker asked an elite group of executives, “How many of you have deadwood in your organization?” referring to those employees that had retired on the job. The hands of every one of the high-profile CEOs shot skyward. He then asked, “Were they that way when you brought them into your organization?” The implication was obvious, if they were then the leader was at fault for hiring them, and if they weren’t then something inside the organization “caused” the employee to basically give up on improving and become organizational deadwood. The point is that the context has a much more profound effect on how people behave than most leaders realize. The question, then, is what can you do to create a psychologically safe environment for team leaders learning to lead? The first step is to understand your team environment as it is and how it interacts with the internal achievement drive of your team leaders. To do this, use the model below.

		Achievement Drive		
		Low	High	
Psychological Safety	High	<b>Comfort Zone</b> Does not want to challenge teammates—go along to get along.	<b>Learning Zone</b> Highly certain their teammates will listen, observe, and change when necessary.	<i>Teams are emotional incubators. Every social interaction creates emotion.</i>
	Low	<b>Apathy Zone</b> Self-centered and simply expect teammates to do things on their own.	<b>Anxiety Zone</b> Does not know what to do and what to expect if they take leadership actions.	
				Exhibit 15

Hopefully the matrix above can provide a window into your current team context and how it is affecting the development of your team leaders. Psychological safety is an important component of creating an effective learning space for you and your team. The purpose of this brief article is to provide an introduction into the practice of developing a team leader’s capacity to lead through the process of team learning. When you involve all members of the team in the learning of leadership you’re more likely to create an effective learning environment.

Let me issue a quick reminder that leadership is a social influence process in which team leaders work to motivate or persuade teammates to achieve specific individual and team goals. As such, the norms, beliefs, and values that emerge from team member interactions will create the social structure and social processes that will either enhance or inhibit team learning. Your goal as the chief architect of the environment should be to create a psychologically safe learning zone. Ultimately, you have more to do with a team member's learning to lead—or not learning—than you probably thought you do. If you're not growing team leaders, then it's likely the problem is not the seed, it's the soil.

## **Setting the Scene**

Several years ago the College Board, an organization with the specified mission of helping student's achieve a successful transition from high school to college, surveyed close to a million high school seniors on the topic of leadership. The results were revealing; a full 70 percent of the in-coming college freshman claimed to possess "above average" leadership skills. Equally as important, only 2 percent believed they were "below average." If you don't find this interesting please let me know. While confidence is one thing, reality is another.

And so it might be worth asking: Do student-athletes claim to possess leadership capabilities at the same rate as the normal population? After a full decade of working with student-athletes at a wide-range of colleges and high schools, my research reveals a different story. When student-athletes are presented with a formal model of leadership, one that is designed to guide their transition into leadership roles and responsibilities, they readily admit to feelings of incompetence and insecurity—certainly lacking in the hubris of the typical young adult. All of a sudden, over 80 percent of student-athletes rate themselves as "below average;" a stunning reversal from the findings of the College Board.

Based on my experience working with coaches and teams during the past ten years or so, I've come to the inescapable conclusion: leadership is a mindset and set of skills that are attainable for all. Now consider that researchers in a variety of fields, including sport psychology have repeatedly found that positive results are obtained when a formal system of development is used. It's tempting to think that maybe time and maturity are the only things necessary for becoming a leader, but there is growing evidence that leadership skills are accessible for all.

## **Leadership and Role Play**

In the midst of a raging war, a British plane evacuating a group of schoolboys is shot down over a deserted tropical island. The boys find themselves stranded on the island without adult supervision—a controlling force that had thus far governed their lives. The boys, ranging from ages six to twelve quickly adapt to their new situation by reenacting the adult roles they'd seen their entire lives. They follow the life scripts that they know best as they attempt to survive their uncivilized, unsupervised, isolated environment until rescued.

Two of the boys, Ralph and Piggy, come upon a shell on the beach. Piggy discovers the shell can act like a horn and uses it to summon the other boys. Once assembled, the boys set about electing a leader and devising a way to be rescued. Like the only world they've known, they vie for the role of leader. They boys choose Ralph as their leader, and Ralph appoints another boy, Jack, to be in charge of the boys who will hunt food for the entire group.

In *Lord of the Flies* we see how easily children reproduce leadership in the guise of an authority figure; how "natural" it is to vie for position. This practice often results in short-term success, but long-term failure. Status and role are two of the most highly studied social psychological concepts. Status is related to a position, one that is determined by social comparison. A person's status is that which he is in relation to other people, while a role is that which people do in pursuit of goals in a group setting. In a team setting roles are often negotiated among members through the processes of role awareness, role taking, and role playing. The concept of role playing is a fundamental organizing strategy. Roles hold great potential for designing team interactions in the same way that a script organizes a play.

## Getting Started

A role is an assortment of responsibilities and expectations embedded in a formal or informal social position. Within the **8 Roles of Teamwork** every student-athlete will find aspects that are more closely aligned with their disposition and preferences. They will find a consequential role (see chart below) in which they feel comfortable to walk and talk the part. The athlete will find this role to be in alignment with who they are and thus easily engage the role, meshing with teammates playing their different, but supporting roles. Once an athlete masters their initial role, they'll seek another role allowing them to enlarge their contributions to the team.

4 Dimensions of Teamwork Performance	4 Activity Roles	4 Adaptive Roles
Physical	Grinder	Enforcer
Intellectual	Teacher	Advisor
Emotional	Energizer	Resonator
Social	Helper	Connector

Exhibit 16

*Each of these roles comes with different expectations and responsibilities.*

**The 8 Roles provide members a secure sense of their place on the team.** Student-athletes reap the benefits of *autonomy and belonging* when grounded in a team-based role. In fact, role play grants every player a non-threatening entry into the formal leadership development process. The practice of role play reveals that each role consists of a flow of activities to enact, one way or another, while social norms will develop around how these functions are carried out. Because roles aren't simply job descriptions on paper, they encourage experimentation.

## **Making the Team: The 8 Roles of Teamwork**

A role is a mixture of responsibilities and expectations either informally or formally designed. A role is intended to clarify a set of expectations and an arrangement of interdependent behaviors. Somewhere in **The 8 Roles of Teamwork** each player will find aspects closely aligned with their disposition and personal preferences. Roles stimulate internal motivation by investing the athlete with direction and intensity of thoughts, feelings, and outcomes.

Here's a short introduction you can use to get your players started on building a high-performing team:

“Search for a small role in which you feel comfortable walking and talking the part. This role should be in alignment with who you are. Select a social role you can easily engage in while meshing with others playing their different, but supporting roles.”

The Academy for Sport Leadership's teamwork system promotes a learning-centered culture based on commitment and collaboration. The most important effect in the early phases of team development is learning how to assemble the eight roles and clarify expectations. Once the eight roles are mobilized and student-athletes are performing deliberate acts of leadership you will have effectively built a leadership system for this particular team. The leadership system at its most basic level is there to guide student-athletes to build trust, respect, and commitment with each other, inspiring one another to take the initiative to do the right thing.

## **Constraint or Catalyst? Both!**

Team sports provide student-athletes with a social system in which to learn about the nature and nurture of relationship building and the practice of team building. In a team setting social norms will emerge, serving the team in a way that it might best flourish, or if ignored—flounder. Norms are expectations about appropriate behavior. They help guide the enactment of pertinent behavior in a given situation. In some situations norms serve to constrain behavior. For example, the norm of only one person talking at a time promotes the behavior of waiting for one's turn to speak. In other situations norms serve as a catalyst. That is, they serve as a social incentive to live to the expectations of other team members. For example, the team norm of giving everyone an opportunity to speak produces a sense of inclusion and equality. Finally, and perhaps most important for our purposes, norms provide both a way of curbing undesired behaviors and encouraging preferred actions.

As most of have observed, norms are powerful forces. In the team context norms guide relationships. The fact is, most player relationships on teams, as in life, are taken for granted. Most people, student-athletes included, simplify their relations by determining whom to relate with by a simple test of “click or clash.” When they clash, they toss the relationship aside; too much emotional work. When a relationship clicks, they'll do little to upset the “clicking.” That is, like most of us, athletes will go along to get along most of the time.

## Align or Assign? Both!

Roles that align with the student-athlete's personality can be easily assimilated as a natural first step. What I've observed over the years is that players gradually align their role behaviors until they match with their desired input and the standards expected by teammates. This social tuning process is like a jazz band improvising, players spontaneously aligning their actions with those of their teammates.

The starting point for implementing **The 8 Roles of Teamwork** is to have each player immerse himself/herself in understanding the *activities and values* of each role. Then have them identify which role they find to be most natural for them to play at this time—the one most closely aligned with their personality. Once the player masters the aligned role they then can move on to another role that may be assigned by the coach or the other players.

Most student-athletes quickly identify with one of the roles, easily acknowledging their inner landscape and its accompanying outer performance. Along with this strategy, have all team members share their favored role with one another and watch how they comment "that's you!" further validating their selected role. When the student-athlete is in alignment with a desired role they will willingly assume initiative in this area and do so with a sense of self-confidence.

## Practicing a Role

A role refers to a pattern of expected behaviors. Roles can be deliberately developed or informally shaped. When playing a role, individuals are expected to do certain things because of the inherent responsibilities of the role. A role should be oriented toward accomplishing either a task or building and strengthening relations with team members. Problems can arise from the inability to meet the expectations of the role, or exhibiting differing expectations. Role demands can induce pressure and stress, both good and bad.

**Rehearsing a Role** A great Hollywood movie or an excellent Broadway play is the result of everyone playing their part. The better a part is performed, the better the contribution to the movie or play.

Here's a quick, simple, but effective way to get your players to grasp the magnitude of a role. Split your team into small groups of three. Provide each group one of the following scenarios: 1) A farm during a draught. 2) Children in a sandbox. 3) Castaway's on an deserted island. 4) A SEAL team preparing for an attack. 5) A janitor with a winning lottery ticket

Give each group 10 minutes to create a 5-minute play in which they will act out in front of the entire team. **Debrief** after the presentations. Discuss and explore the roles each member played, supporting role, leading role, improvisation, rehearsal, and connecting with the audience. Draw parallels to "playing" *The 8 Roles of Teamwork*.

### Broadening Perspective

In the evocative movie *Dead Poets Society* (see the "Carpe Diem" scene at [YouTube](#)) a naturally curious teacher, Mr. Keating, encourages his students to climb on their desks in order to look at the class-room from a new perspective. It indeed looks different from up there.

## Shared Leadership Accountability

The Eight Roles of Teamwork approach **empowers** and **emboldens** team members to recognize that they are part of a collective team mindset based on leadership that redefines the relationship between themselves and the coaching staff. They also need to see that team leadership issues are not solely the responsibility of the team's coaches, and that team leadership can come from everyone on the team. They need to see that the eight roles of teamwork approach invites all team members to identify what their strengths are (use the Teamwork Intelligence Tool *Diagnosing the Eight Roles of Your Team Players*) and what areas they want to develop, so they can give each other encouragement, support, and feedback.

At the heart of team accountability is the practice of a leader in every locker. Every team member is **responsible for** leadership actions and is **accountable to** the team. It follows that all team players should be given a role with related responsibilities. The best course of action is to identify a role and then play it, giving and receiving feedback. The notion of feeding back information to one's peers is tough, so it takes a tremendous amount of mental toughness to address team issues. No one says sharing accountability for team leadership is easy.

## Social Identity: Power of the Persona

Every student-athlete has a self-image, an image that includes the identifying factor that "I am an athlete." In addition, belonging to a team is an important source of pride and self-esteem. Each role is given a persona in order to give it identity and in order that it may embed in the mind as something of value. The nature of playing a role within the team structure gives the player a sense of a social identity—a **persona**—such as, "I am a resonator" which is anchored in a cluster of actions a player enjoys doing and is a vital part of how they see themselves. A persona, played by a self-styled role, is central to a player's way of seeing and way of being.

No one's personality can be *completely* described in 8 role-based personas—we're all extraordinary complex beings. But the personas' do provide an accurate indicator of where a player has potential leadership strengths, as well as highlighting areas of weakness too. Given the choice, most student-athletes are willing to devote great amounts of social energy to interacting with teammates and will, if the environment encourages it, experiment with leadership actions; actions that align with their perceived persona. One's identity is a powerful force for thinking and acting like a leader. Have your student-athletes use flow chart below to find a role that fits their self-image and current skill set.

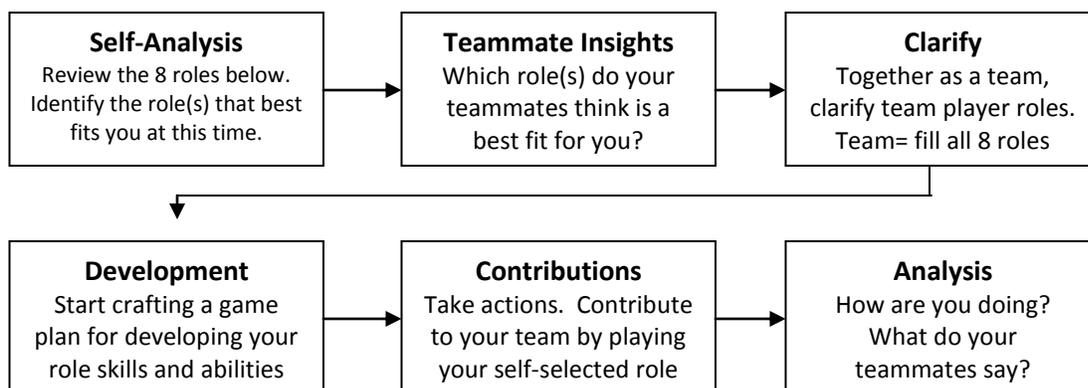


Exhibit 17

### Team Player Role Set

Every role requires certain recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior. Every role player knows what drive them, how they think, and how they prefer building relationships.

**Team Player Mindset**  
The core values and assumptions that shape thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

**Physical Domain**  
This team player influences teammates by combination of respect for skills and abilities, and commitment to taking action to demonstrate, teach, & enforce team norms, values, and priorities.

**Grinder: Activity Role**

- Highly focused energy
- Grit under adversity
- Fearless competitor/antagonist
- Strives to impact team using physical capabilities
- Leverages time on task
- Values resilience and tenacity
- Inner drive to maintain physical intensity
- Thrives on task mastery

- Displays the drive and courage to overcome obstacles
- Models resilience and perseverance
- Passionate competitor
- Challenges self and others
- Sets clear performance standards
- Compels teammates to keep going

**Enforcer: Adaptive Role**

- Committed to team values
- Strives to reach higher levels of team performance
- Follows norms and rules
- Boldness in enforcing norms
- Values accountability
- Seeks to influence via directness
- Walks the talk
- Enjoys guiding people
- Willing to delay gratification

- Points out the positive and negative aspects of teamwork development
- Generates commitment / accountability to team norms and values (face-to-face)
- Is confident, genuine, and appropriately assertive
- Willing and able to stretch teammates' comfort zones
- Keeps team (members) headed toward stated goals
- Able to influence teammates to do the right thing

**The 8 Roles of Teamwork**  
Identify which role(s) fits your personality and you are willing and able to perform as a team player.

**Activity and Adaptive Roles**  
Activity = results-oriented  
Adaptive = relationship-focused

**Intellectual Domain**  
This team player's influence comes from the ability to think, learn, and reflect and the ability to apply and transfer what has been learned. Possess a learning mindset and seeks ways learning fulfills individual and team potential.

**Teacher: Activity Role**

- Enjoys teaching and learning process
- Succeeds when others learn
- Practical and constructive
- Values wisdom and resourcefulness
- Curious mindset
- Appreciates testing of ideas
- Pragmatic
- Organized

- Uses reflection as a process for helping others learn
- Connects team through sharing knowledge; gives suggestions
- Calls for discussion / team meeting when necessary
- Effective teaching technical/tactical sport skills
- Provides regular feedback to teammates on teamwork issues
- Encourages all team members to build a positive performance culture (teaches team culture)

**Advisor: Adaptive Role**

- Self-aware—more mature
- Self-Confident expressing ideas and opinions
- Driven by helping others
- Values thoughtfulness and perspective
- Ethos of informed choice
- Informative support
- Diplomatic

- Provides personal and practical advice
- Listens carefully and provides useful suggestions
- Contributes accurate and timely feedback
- Provides informational support: sharing helpful information and direction
- Diligently builds a climate of trust
- Gives feedback responsibly

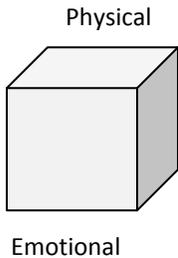
### Team Player Mindset

The core values and mental models that shape thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

### Team Player Role Set

Every role requires certain recurring patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior. Every role player knows what drive them, how they think, and how they prefer building relationships.

**Emotional Domain**  
 This team player's influence comes from the ability to remain levelheaded under pressure and fatigue, and to convey the emotions they want teammates to display. High in energy, enthusiasm, and sociability.



**Social Domain**  
 This team player's influence comes from sensitivity to individual differences and the relational process. Teammates respect the social leader for their humility and focus on doing the right thing for others and the team.

#### Energizer: Activity Role

- Self-initiation; responsive to emotional climate
- Scans the environment to deliberately create excitement
- Adept at triggering emotion in others
- Values assertiveness and energy
- Thrives on expending emotional energy
- Spontaneous

- Maintains emotional balance and a positive perspective
- Provides emotional spark / stimulates team when energy wanes
- Encourages others through words and actions
- Display emotional self-control; able to deploy appropriate amount of emotion for particular situation
- Refocuses others when necessary
- Triggers unity and enthusiasm

#### Resonator: Adaptive Role

- Getting along with others
- Approachable
- Inspired by relationships
- Influence comes from his/her personal characteristics that teammates value and want to emulate
- Values authenticity
- Emotionally stable

- Interacts easily with others; relieves tension
- Enjoys interacting regularly and working others through difficult moments
- Understands how to relate and motivate others
- Enables teammates to off-load emotions
- Able to take others' feelings into consideration when interacting
- Looks for ways to support and encourage others

#### Helper: Activity Role

- Driven by selflessness
- Thrives on being resourceful
- Empathic concern
- Conscientious and appreciative
- Heart for serving others
- Values empathy
- Loyal
- Reliable

- Always there for others
- Works to win hearts and minds
- Provides authentic friendship
- Cares about others; shows solidarity
- Makes extensive investment in other's well-being; accepts others' perspective
- Supports others; raises other's self-esteem
- Instrumental support: provides tangible resources (such as providing a ride to practice)

#### Connector: Adaptive Role

- Driven to shape common purpose
- Values collaboration and unity (diplomatic)
- Motivated to support teammates via trust & respect
- Thrives on building relations
- Situational Interest
- Empathic

- Brings people together
- Connects team members to each other
- Builds right relationships with and among others
- Actively engages with others in supportive manner
- Deals with conflict productively; provides mediation and direction
- Fosters cooperation
- Breaks down barriers between teammates
- Provides reassurance of belonging

## Putting it All Together: A Leader in Every Locker™

One of the most inviting aspects of *A Leader in Every Locker* is the changes it induces in a team's design. When coaches embrace a leader in every locker they are compelled to rethink their investment—time, energy, and focus—in developing the capabilities of each and every one of their student-athletes. The coach will also need to pay close attention to the team's structures and processes—ways team members interact with each other. When a coach and player establish a role that a player will play, the role is a structure that determines behavior.

The *Leader in Every Locker* approach is based on who team leaders want to be, who they *are* (their innate traits and characteristics), and what they *do* (the kinds of skills which they exhibit in carrying out a leadership action). As used here, a skill implies an ability which can be developed through practice. When team members enact leadership responsibilities they become a powerful part of the team norms.

The recognition of roles as fundamental structures of everyday life is important for the goal of a developing a leader in every locker. Each of us plays a variety of roles, both within social systems and within our cognitive system. One might awake as a father, smile at his wife as a husband, go to work as a teacher, field a phone call as a brother, and stop and help someone as a neighbor. Each role affects not only behavior but also attitudes. In other words, roles provide a broad set of responsibilities that encompass much of who we are and what we do.

The *8 Roles of Teamwork* generates social sensitivity using peer-based leadership, where the diversity of each player's talents and abilities is recognized and taken advantage of within each of the eight roles. The student-athletes' participation in these roles does not reduce everyone to sameness, for in each peer-based role there will not be equal talents, or equal outcomes, or even equal opportunities, but there will be equal status with an openness that invites each team member to find their own level and degree of contribution.

Perhaps Coach Gary Gaines (played by Billy Bob Thornton) said it best in the movie *Friday Night Lights*. The story, set in the small town of Odessa, Texas, is a place where the townspeople obsess over the team and live and die by their victories. Odessa is losing to their arch rival at half-time of the last game of the season. Coach Gaines chooses this moment to appeal to each player's personal leadership journey. To paraphrase what he tells them during that moment: "All year long I have told you to be perfect, and now let me tell you what I meant. We all must come to know what we are each capable of and what is possible. If we achieve the difference between our capabilities and what is possible, then we are perfect, and you can all go out there and be perfect in your own way...that's what matters. Be perfect." Each student-athlete has the ability to achieve their own sense of perfection, both as a player and as a leader.

Team chemistry is built on player-to-player interaction. The every-day ordinary social interaction among team members has a subtle, yet powerful, impact on relationships. The following values and priorities are vital to creating a culture and climate that encourages deep human interaction.

- Embrace participation
- Influence and Initiative
- Abundance-based mindset
- Autonomy and Self-organizing
- Community: responsibility & accountability
- Trust and cooperation

*The 8 Roles of Teamwork* gives the players a way to look at team dynamics and improve them. The Academy for Sport Leadership's *5 Steps to Agile Team Leadership* shows players how to get better results in relationships by cooperating interdependently and that they can depend on one another for mutual success. The precision in the language of *The 5 Steps* (see below) helps clarify the different leadership actions one can take. This differs from the typical exhortation of "step up" which is very confusing because of its use as an umbrella term. By knowing what step is needed in a given situation players are better positioned to create win-win interactions, to persist in finding win-win ways of interacting, which ultimately is the only way to build durable and enduring relationships.

#### **THE FIVE TEAMWORK MOVES OF GEESE** (Match these up with *The Five Steps* on page 110)

**1. When geese fly together, each goose provides additional lift and reduces air resistance for the goose flying behind it.**

Consequently, by flying together in a v-formation, scientists estimate that the whole flock can fly about 70% farther with the same amount of energy than if each goose flew alone. Geese have discovered that they can reach their destination more quickly and with less energy expended when they fly together in formation. When people work together harmoniously on teams, sharing common values and a common destination, they all arrive at the destination quicker and easier, because they are lifted up by the energy and enthusiasm of one another.

**2. When a goose drops out of the v-formation it quickly discovers that it requires a great deal more effort and energy to fly.**

Consequently, that goose will quickly return to the formation to take advantage of the lifting power that comes from flying together. Sometimes people playing on teams will drop out of the group and try to accomplish goals on their own. However, like the geese, they usually discover that they miss the synergy and energy that comes when they are an active part of a cohesive team moving toward their destination, and want to return to the group.

**3. Geese rotate leadership.** The goose flying in the front of the formation expends the most energy because it is the first to break up the flow of air. This move provides additional lift for all of the geese who follow behind the leader. Consequently, when the lead goose gets tired, it drops out of the front position and moves to the rear of the formation, where the resistance is lightest, and another goose moves to the leadership position. This rotation of position happens many times in the course of the long journey to warmer climates. When a team is functioning well, various members of the team may take the leadership role for a while because of a particular expertise or experience. Consequently, on good teams, everyone has the opportunity to serve as a leader as well as a follower.

**4. Geese honk at each other.** They also frequently make loud honking sounds as they fly together. Scientists speculate that this honking is their way of communicating with each other during their long flight. Similarly, when working on teams, it is exceedingly important for each team member to communicate regularly with all the other team members. Teams frequently fall apart because of the lack of adequate communication among the various members of the team. Perhaps human teams can learn from flying flocks of geese that constant communication among members is exceedingly important in moving effectively towards a common destination.

**5. Geese help each other.** Scientists also discovered that when one goose becomes ill, is shot or injured, and drops out of the formation, two other geese will fall out of formation and remain with the weakened goose. They will stay with and protect the injured goose from predators until it is able to fly again or dies. Likewise, human teams work best when they do more than just work together, but care for the well being of each other. \*Source: [www.lenwilson.us](http://www.lenwilson.us)

## ASL's 5 STEPS OF AGILE TEAM LEADERSHIP

### Emergent Leadership

If we can agree to examine leadership as a process, then at the core of this process we must examine how relationships are built between leaders and followers, how situations determine who leads and who follows, and explore the interplay of leadership thinking and leadership actions.

Exhibit 20

Leadership Position	Leadership Actions Build Up / Break Down	Notes
<p>Step In</p> 	<p><b>-Step into your leadership role</b> <i>You're either IN or you're OUT</i></p> <p>*Stepping out happens when you willingly choose to physically and / or emotionally disengage from the team *Stepping out takes place when you adopt a victim mentality, blaming others for your failures</p>	<p>Don't walk around a problem Don't walk away from a problem</p> <p>No matter what your status, role, or giftedness, you are called to be a leader at some level.</p>
<p>Step Forward</p>	<p>-Step forward and prevent problems - Step forward and initiate solutions -Step forward and be available -Step forward and look out for your teammates</p>	<p>Developmental readiness is based on your willingness to lead at the moment &amp; ability to perform the necessary skill or competency. Willingness = "Is it worth it?" Ability = "Can I do it?"</p>
<p>Step Up</p>	<p>-Step up when a dilemma occurs -Step up when a value, principle or code has been violated -Step up when you make a mistake -Step up and evaluate: state your observation and opinion</p>	<p>It is your character that is crucial to leading others. With it, others follow. Without it, you fail.</p>
<p>Step Aside</p>	<p>-Step aside and give your teammate(s) space to lead -Step aside when you know you need to follow and learn -Step aside and listen -Step aside and observe</p>	<p>Situations determine who leads and who follows. All of us are given a mandate to teach and influence others.</p>
<p>Step Back</p>	<p>-Step back and reflect -Step back (with others) when a lesson needs to be learned -Step back when you need clarity -Step back and listen -Step back and build a game plan</p>	<p>In the formation of relationships, a major failing is a lack of clarity in what is expected from each team member. Clarify what "we" expect from our relationships.</p>

## **The Integrative Effect**

When you activate *A Leader in Every Locker* approach to team leadership, you foster an integrative effect. Integration is simply linking different elements together ( such as the 8 Roles and the 5 Steps) to make a well-functioning whole. A single action, such as a well-placed comment spoken at the right time by a team member, can set in motion a series of positive actions and reactions from one's teammates. The tiny nuances of an interaction can increase positive outcomes, strengthening the connection of one teammate to another. When teammates communicate, support, and empathize with each other positive outcomes happen. That's because healthy relationships are the result of playing well the roles of leadership.

The 8 roles of team leadership are designed to shape a high-performing behavioral infrastructure by providing a guiding structure for contributions. Let's get a little more specific about what it looks like when bringing together the "movement" of a leader in every locker. *The Five Steps of Agile Team Leadership* explain how each student-athlete figure out when to step in, step forward, to step back, step up, and step aside. By including everyone in the weaving together of the team you not only optimize each player's contributions, you essentially redefine the possibilities of leadership for each and every participant—now and in their future.

When you have a leader in every locker everyone is more intentional and thoughtful, players truly care to build a culture that inspires commitment and performance. High-performing cultures can't be left to chance, you must create tools and systems that shape and maintain them. The structure of the 8 Roles and the 5 Steps gives you and your players the tools and methods to transform the your student-athletes and a language to galvanize your team.

## **Leadership Personas: The Power of Identity to Get Student-Athletes to Think and Act Like a Leader**

When Steven Brown was asked if he could be a team leader he wasn't quite sure how to respond. You see, Steven wasn't sure he was a leader. Most of his life revolved around simply following the dictates of his coaches (teachers and parents too). He certainly aspired to be a leader, but wasn't quite sure how to think or act like a leader. Oh sure, over the year's he'd observed players called team captains pretend to be leaders. For the most part these individuals carried out requests from the coaches. In his mind Steven never really thought of these teammates as leaders, just figureheads.

Like most student-athletes Steven had a very narrow definition of what leadership entails. And, like most young athletes, he'd never really considered the importance of peer leadership. Rather, he simply did what his coaches told him to do. This made life simple.

However, this apathy neglects the fostering of a broad-based progression of desired competencies. Education has as its mission, after all, the development of a person's talents and potentials as well as a role in helping one construct his or her own unique identity. At the

Academy for Sport Leadership our basic proposition is that human development should be the organizing purpose for education. In earlier eras, the primary role of education was “socialization.” Today, we need more sophisticated workers for a very complex world. In *A Leader in Every Locker* I argue that leadership is a competency that has largely been ignored in student-athletics. This proposition, that student-athletes are by-and-large not formally taught how to lead self, others, and with others, is based on a decade of research and practice. This is not to say that student-athletes haven’t been or aren’t exposed to or observation of leadership behavior on a regular basis, it’s just that for most student-athletes formal leadership development is not a part of the actual practice of sports participation.

The ASL model of leadership development is grounded in this simple formula:

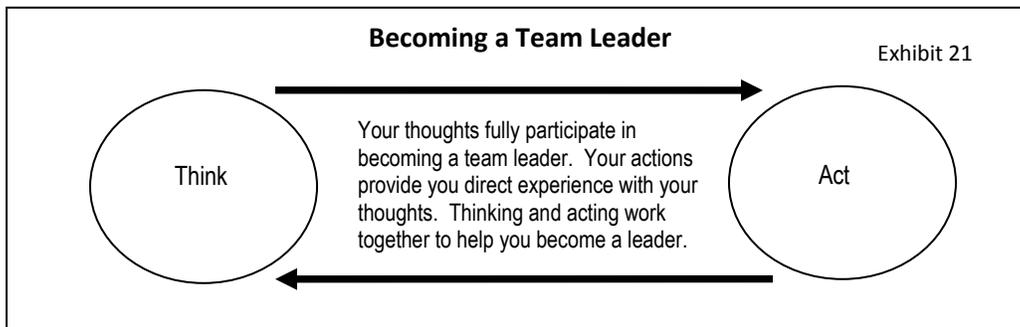
*Mindset + Skill Set + Actions ( situational) = output (quantitative results) and outcomes (qualitative results)*

The mindset is the cognitive and emotional center of every student-athlete. The mindset contains stories, concepts, theories, beliefs, and attitudes that are used to perceive the world and to guide one’s sense-making process. It is generally accepted that thoughts drive actions. The conclusion is that a leadership mindset can and must be learned. This makes it accessible to all student-athletes.

The skill set in The Academy for Sport Leadership’s framework is best thought of as sets of skills. The five forces of building right relationships, guiding with influence, accelerating change, shaping common purpose, and focusing intentional behavior comprise the skill set necessary to lead effectively in student-athletics. Each of these sets of skills requires the willingness and ability to speak, listen, learn, relate, reason, make judgments, observations and draw conclusions. These too can be learned. And like the leadership mindset, the skill sets are accessible to all student-athletes.

Leadership is about taking action—physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Actions are generally the result of the mindset—that is a student-athlete “sees” something in a particular situation that requires action and therefore takes action. Leadership for student-athletes, peer leadership, is episodic. This means that, for the most part, daily life is to a large degree managed. But when a leadership moment emerges, it becomes an episode in which the prepared leader might make a reasoned observation and draw a conclusion on what actions to take. The conclusion is that all student-athletes can be prepared to take actions, and like the world of work the actions can be exercised by those in the best position to act. For example, a nurse takes leadership action to ensure a safe operating environment while the surgeon takes leadership action regarding certain specifics of the surgical procedure.

The Academy for Sport Leadership’s leadership development formula, then, demonstrates the reality that leadership is a talent involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral qualities. These qualities are accessible to all student-athletes.



All this isn't to suggest that "teaching" or learning leadership is easy. Rather, it is a very challenging. Recognizing the need to provide assistance in the leader development process I developed *The 8 Roles of Teamwork* (see pp.106/107). In social psychology it is well established that social identity is a primary force in behavior. How one sees one's self matters. Tremendously.

*Dobbs' 8 Roles of Teamwork* takes as its starting point the idea that leadership identity is a process of "becoming" rather than solely as a mode of "being." The 8 Roles can be thought of as persona's, each providing a conceptual lens from which the student-athlete is able to act from a sense of competence and familiarity—"I see myself in this persona." **Each role is given a persona in order to give it identity and in order that it may embed in the mind as something of value.** The 8 personas provide a framework for teamwork development, thus going from the "being" a student-athlete to "becoming" a team leader through the process of internal reflection. The personas describe major highways for journeying toward individuation—the discovery and refinement of one's unique way of becoming a player and team leader.

The 8 personas are found in the two, complementary but vastly different, roles (adaptive and activity oriented) embedded within each teamwork domain. Each archetype describes how players relate to the world, perceive their team environment, make judgments, and ways they prefer to make decisions. One student-athlete might feel comfortable as a connector, always active in finding ways to help her teammates build better relationships. Another team member might see more of herself in the persona of an enforcer, enjoying the role of reinforcing the team's norms and expectations.

Teamwork Domain	Activity Role Personas	Adaptive Role Personas
Physical	Grinder	Enforcer
Intellectual	Teacher	Advisor
Emotional	Energizer	Resonator
Social	Helper	Connector

No one's personality can be *completely* described in 8 role-based personas—we're all extraordinary complex beings. But the personas' do provide an accurate indicator of where a player has potential leadership strengths, as well as highlighting areas of weakness too. Given the choice, most student-athletes are willing to devote great amounts of social energy to interacting with teammates and will, if the environment encourages it, experiment with leadership actions; actions that align with their perceived persona. One's identity is a powerful force for thinking, feeling, and acting like a leader—see study profiled on the following page.

## WHAT YOU THINK IS WHAT YOU DO

### ACADEMY FOR SPORT LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

**Problem:** The need to identify how student-athletes conceptualize leadership.

**Research Question:** How do the ways in which high school student-athletes conceptualize leadership shape their participation in leadership of the team?

**Data Collection:** Four focus group sessions of ten student-athletes per group were conducted at individual school (four schools) sites. Participants were selected randomly by school athletic director. Participants were all “senior-to-be” and had three years of sport participation. Groups watched a 15-minute series of video cuts of sport team practices (clips from various sports). The video was used as a tool for “priming the pump,” directing participant’s minds to sport leadership. After viewing the clips, each participant completed a concept map with the simple instruction of “Leadership is....” Concept maps are graphical tools for organizing and representing knowledge. They include concepts, usually enclosed in circles or boxes of some type, and relationships between concepts indicated by a connecting line linking two concepts. While creating the concept map each participant was instructed to create a hierarchy of concepts—most important to least important.

**Data Analysis:** Concept maps were coded and analyzed using six common themes: responsibilities, traits, abilities, skills, behaviors, relationships. Using the concept maps and the participant rankings of the concepts the researcher created a brief profile of each participant’s conceptualization developing a personalized task assessment tool. Post season surveys using the individual’s concept profile were given to respective participant coaches. The participant’s coach rated the participant on the six dimensions citing: SE (strong evidence), LE (limited evidence), NS (not seen), and OE (opposing evidence).

**Results:** After comparing individual concept map with coach evaluation the data indicate a moderate connection between participant conceptualization and leadership behavior. However, the results show that the majority of participants were consistent; the actions and behaviors they did exhibit with strong evidence were those concepts at the top of their hierarchy of concepts (such as “effective leaders show they care about their teammates”). Data also indicate—via concept maps—limited breadth and depth of knowledge of leadership.

**Discussion:** The study participants were not given leadership training and sport team environments varied tremendously. The culture of the team, the role of the player, and the leadership opportunities are difficult to tease out of the results. However, the limited breadth and depth of knowledge of leadership illuminates a tremendous opportunity for coaches. Further research is needed to better understand how an increase in knowledge will effect leadership behavior. Also necessary is a better understanding of how taking actions and behaving like a leader can expand the student-athletes’ concepts of leadership.

## Teamwork Intelligence: How to Build a Potent Team Culture

*“A team is not just a collection of individuals. When everyone clicks into place, a team is truly a community, a tightly knit fellowship.”*

Many coaches are expert tacticians, strategists, and teachers of techniques. Yet many, if not most, struggle when it comes to building a high performance culture. I mean high-performing team culture; a growth culture that stretches every member of the team. Think Seal Team Six. The elite fighting force, the team that captured Osama Bin Laden. Sure, your team may master

an offense or a defense, but it's a fact that most teams don't reach an elite level of teamwork. To do so requires a deliberate and intense effort to build a dynamic high performance culture. It is a team's culture that is at the heart of building a high-performance team.

**The central presumption of *A Leader in Every Locker* is that no coach can truly increase a player's internal motivation; they can only set up the conditions which encourage and support a student-athlete's motivation.** The coach committed to *Teamwork Intelligence* understands it's all about condition. It is, however, at least initially, the coach's responsibility to put into place the necessary conditions to promote and foster the desired teamwork behavior

As a researcher I've studied hundreds of teams and can only conclude few teams, won-loss records aside, ever achieving an elite level. Study after study of elite teams, like Seal Team Six, continue to reveal it's not solely the personnel, but rather the psychosocial factors—such as those that lead to team cohesion—that drive motivation, learning, and the high performance necessary to achieve an elite level.

Take a moment and re-read the quote above. I've purposefully left off the name of the well-known author. I did so out of respect for his work, but I do find this quote to be lacking in terms of action-ability. Most coaches and players unknowingly live by a “click or clash” framework of relationship building. That is, some people just click together while others clash with one another. And it's rarely explicit, but very implicit—teammates prefer to go along to get along. Not in elite teams. Relationships and paying attention to the team environment are fundamental to creating a high performance culture.

A team is a system; a network of interdependent components that work together to try to accomplish the aim of the system architects. This differs from the most basic level of a team as simply a collection of players with talents that need meshing. When team relationships become more strategic, teamwork becomes the center piece of the team achieving its growth potential. The team building experience is, quite simply, an exercise in relationship building. Relationships impact every culture. Think of the process of team building as the unfolding of a social system; every interpersonal interaction is essential to developing greater task effectiveness.

The goal of building *teamwork intelligence* as a core team competence is the same as building intelligence in any topic as an individual competence—to increase understanding and insight that leads to better actions and make a positive contribution to the team. As an architect of team design you can magnify the power of the individuals and the collective team many times over by building teamwork intelligence as a team competence, orchestrating the growth and development of the team and each team member.

The Teamwork Intelligence approach is a disciplined way of thinking about and building a high-performing culture; it involves practicing teamwork as both a system and a set of processes that promote a motivating environment. This invites us to explore the context in which teamwork occurs; the positive culture created by the coaches and players. Team building results from a

shared unity of purpose determined by individual and team values, a clear vision of what the team is striving to achieve, interpersonal relations, complementary and synergistic roles and how individuals and the team handle individual and collective successes and failures.

Teamwork intelligence delves into the complexity of team work as a process and as a way to understand the person (both players and coaches) embedded within a system.

To think about teamwork as a system, we need to consider the *inputs*, such as training for teamwork intelligence, the *process*, which we can describe as the system and the context in which the players and coaches interact, and the *outcomes*, which are the levels of motivation, performance, and well-being of players and coaches. To leverage the process of teamwork intelligence I have designed five building blocks that must be operationalized: (1) the four dimensions of team building and the associated eight roles of teamwork; (2) the three levels of a team player; (3) the three layers of a team player; (4) the five core concerns of every team member, and (5) the five forces of performance-enhancing relationships. By optimizing these five components—the teamwork intelligence system—we are able to enhance each individual’s vital force and, in turn, the collective force of the team.

## **So, What is Teamwork Intelligence?**

The traditional approach to team leadership and the team building process is and has been to produce desirable outcomes. The primary objective has been to improve the team’s execution of tasks. Most coaches agree that to improve the team they must improve the tasks it performs. However, it is clear that today more coaches—perhaps looking for a competitive edge—are suggesting that improving interpersonal relationships is equal to task improvement in order to create a high-performing team. So, to improve team leadership and team building is to improve the team. This reasoning suggests the following:

1. There are skills and abilities that make a high-performing team.
2. These skills and abilities can be used to improve a team.
3. Teams that perform at a high level have a high level of commitment to these elements.

Teamwork Intelligence is the purposeful and intentional relational process of team members together raising one another to higher levels of motivation, collaboration, compassion, and performance. It’s deceptively simple: in order to build a high-performing team culture you have to create the conditions for team members to commit and unify—to coalesce into a single unit. Such oneness is not inevitable; it must be forged methodically and deliberately.

Learning to lead, to build a team, and to do so at high level of performance requires focus, planning, and reflection. **Teamwork Intelligence is a learning process, a method, a system of understanding delivered in a set of activities.** Yes, a team can master Teamwork Intelligence. But the coach and players must be committed to the system of learning and practice.

## Why is Teamwork Intelligence the Smart Thing to Do?

**Teamwork Intelligence involves two essential elements: team building knowledge and a right attitude.** The nature of team building involves reasoning and emotions—knowledge must be coupled with the right attitude. A student-athlete can have the right attitude, the willingness, to build with teammates a high performing team. But without the knowledge of team building the student-athlete will lack the ability to contribute fully to the team’s performance. And the student-athlete with the knowledge necessary for building a team, but possessing a flawed attitude, will impair the team building process.

A significant aspect of teamwork intelligence demands knowing the expectations one should have of one’s teammates. One of the most significant expectations is that of high-level accountability with every player investing herself in the highly variable processes of building a team. Through expectations and collective achievements, identification, loyalty, and trust are built. The goal and expected outcome is the realization of the team’s full potential.

Teamwork Intelligence generates higher levels of autonomy, extra effort, commitment, performance, and satisfaction. High performance is what the student-athlete wants to do, not because it brings personal glory, but because they feel a sense of extreme ownership of the team. The extreme owner is *all in* as a team player and willingly goes *all out* for the team.

I’ve seen enough to validate the claim that knowing what to do can lead to higher levels of doing. However, I’ve also observed far too frequently a high degree of learned helplessness. Student-athletes have, for the most part, grown up in a sport system in which they prefer to wait for the coach to take corrective action, to “instill” motive and values, and basically avoid taking responsibility for the building of the team. This is why elite teams are emphatic about deliberately building a team and insistent on teamwork intelligence.

Teamwork Intelligence provides a framework for seeing the interrelationships of the processes of a teamwork system. Teamwork Intelligence provides a set of principles and includes a set of specific tools and techniques (such as role clarification provided by The Eight Roles of Teamwork) for building a high-performance team. Investing in the development of relationships will pay off. Okay, so are you willing to invest time, energy, and resources into developing a high performance team culture? If so, get started as soon as possible.

### **Extreme Ownership**

There’s an old parable about two guys laying bricks for the construction of a wall. One of the young guys is going through the motions. Brick-by-brick he methodically labors to spread the mortar and insert the brick in its designated place. The supervisor walks by and asks him what he’s doing. He replies, “I’m laying bricks.” The other guy is performing the same actions—brick-by-brick, but with energy and enthusiasm. The supervisor asks him “what are you doing?” He replies joyfully, “I’m building a cathedral.”

Ask your student-athletes what they’re doing when they do the same drills day after day. Hopefully most, or all, reply, “I’m building a cohesive and high-performing team.” This is the goal of Teamwork Intelligence.

## **Teamwork Intelligence Continued: Smart Teams Attack the Knowing-Doing Gap**

People are always fascinated by successful coaches. The moment a coach wins a championship he or she is in demand as a speaker (“Tell us how you did it.”). And for those at the highest levels a book deal emerges quickly to allow the coach a longer format to detail his or her unique talents (“Tell us more about how you did it.”). It’s likely your book shelf is loaded up with biographies and books that chronicle “what successful coaches do.” Such information certainly can be very helpful. But learning by reading and learning by attending a speech will only get you so far. Add to this the growth of university-based graduate degree programs for coaches and you’re on your path to success. Just add water and stir. *Not so fast.*

Like you, I’ve read a ton of books on and by coaches. And I’ve not only done the graduate degree path, I’ve spent time as a professor teaching graduate level leadership and organizational behavior at respected universities. But by itself, information cannot make us do anything. It goes into our brain where it is processed and then we decide what to do. While I’m certainly in favor of learning by reading, writing, speaking, and listening, it is the process of doing that ignites the intelligence of a team.

Coaches are forever investing in personal and team improvement through reading books and attending speeches at conferences, and likely a heavy dose of YouTube videos. However, while increasing in knowledge, it is the practice of “doing” that offers deep insight and understanding. For many of us, there is a huge gap between knowing what to do and doing what we know we need to do.

I’ve *studied* teams for more than a decade and have seen the knowing-doing gap everywhere I’ve gone. Let me be clear: I’m not talking about the task side of development; rather, the human side of team building. Two goals of every team are *high-commitment* and *high-performance*. Teams work hard, daily, investing blood, sweat, and tears in developing sport specific skills and team offensive and defensive systems—this is the high-performance side of the team equation. However, where coaches and programs fail is on the human side of things—the high-commitment teaming process of relationships, values, and common purpose.

Learning is a difficult and delicate process in and of itself. So how do you determine if you are closing the knowing-doing gap? You do so with an unrelenting focus on action, results, and relationships. If you are growing healthy interpersonal interactions and accelerating change and improvement in individual and team skills and abilities, you’re probably doing a good job of closing the gap. Are you and your team learning in action and on reflection of action? If so, you’re likely closing the knowing-doing gap.

## **Team Play: The Four Dimensions of Team Performance**

Every team is a combination of four features, dimensions to be more specific. The topography of every team environment consists of the physical aspects, intellectual components, emotional dynamics, and social forces. Together these dimensions shape the team’s environment,

influence the interactions of team members, and impact the team's results. It's important to note that no two teams are ever alike. Never! The four dimensions, while remaining constant, are driven by the complex interdependent dynamics of the interpersonal relationships and each player's commitment to learning and performance.

**The Physical Dimension** The physical dimension of teamwork combines the capabilities to perform the technical tasks of a sport, the physical fitness elements, and the self-discipline to provide energy, enthusiasm, and encouragement to members of the team. The second component of this dimension is the willingness and ability to challenge team violations or lack of adherence to the team's norms.

**Intellectual Dimension** This dimension requires you to dedicate time to learning the intricacies of your sport, relationships with your teammates, and the systems and processes that design your team. The intellectual dimension is involves making decisions and teaching the culture.

**Emotional Dimension** The emotionally intelligent student-athlete is aware of how his or her emotions affect their teammates as well as their own attitudes and behaviors. Emotionally intelligent team players understand how emotions and moods—both positive and negative— affect team building and team performance.

**Social Dimension** The social dimension of teamwork requires you to work hard to build relationships with and among all team members. The cohesion of the team is an important factor driving all high-performing teams. The socially intelligent team member is constantly searching for ways to foster positive relationships with teammates and is willing to step in and help others build relationships too. The teammate with superior social skills finds ways to engage teammates providing a sense of connection and belonging.

Bill Russell, legendary Boston Celtic, always talked about how the Celtic's were a team of specialists whose performance depended on one another's individual excellence and how well they worked together. Sometimes their togetherness created a feeling of magic. He is talking about alignment, where a team functions as a whole unit, rather than as individuals working at cross purposes. **When a team is aligned, its physical, intellectual, emotional and social energies are focused and harmonized.** Alignment is a result of each team member learning and playing his or her role, melding personal interests into the interests of the team.

## **Inside the Team: Presence and Participation**

***The 8 Roles of Teamwork*** is explicitly designed to encourage and enable leadership and team building participation by every student-athlete on a team. The framework is a starting point. Every player should be able to identify at least one role that seems a natural fit behaviorally and aligns with their social identity.

Just as a team with team captains has to learn to work together, so too does the team committed to everyone learning to lead. However, the challenges are quite different; who participates, how often, when and to what effect, are some of the unknowns in the early stages of a leader in every locker program. Some leadership disparity between student-athletes is normal; introverts are likely to participate differently than extraverts and newbies will probably be low participants until they get their feet wet and feel comfortable participating. Some people are simply more talkative and relational by nurture. Uneven participation should be expected. Nonetheless, participation by all team members is built into the system.

Participation in the early phases of implementing a *Leader in Every Locker* program is often a function of status (starter, star), experience (senior), competence (further along the leader development curve), and to some degree personal style (extravert). Some players may speak very little, yet capture the attention of their teammates when they do speak. Others may talk frequently but go unheard. If you hold team meetings in the classroom where a student-athlete sits matters in his or her level of participation, as too does assignment of lockers in the locker room.

Of course, your goal is participation by all team members. In assessing participation patterns within the team, you and your team may find the following audit questions useful:

1. Who are the high participators? Why? To what effect? Who are the low participators? Why? To what effect?
2. Who talks to whom in the locker room? Classroom? Are cliques forming?
3. Which student-athletes are listened to when they speak? Why? Which student-athletes tend to not have a voice? Why? Is the team losing valuable inputs because a player is not being heard?
4. How are low participators treated? Is their participation taken by teammates to mean disinterest or disagreement?
5. Are the interaction patterns positively impacting the team? How? Are they impacting the team in a negative manner? Why?
6. Are there any shifts in participation since the last audit? (You and your players should use this set of audit questions at least every other week.)
7. Are there any shifts in influence? If so, whose influence is shifting (up or down). Why?
8. Are there any rivalries emerging within the team? Are there struggles among team members?
9. Does the team tend to spend time reflecting together on their progress as team?
10. Are team members overly competitive with each other? Are team members overly nice or polite to each other? Are only positive feelings expressed? Do team members agree with each other too readily? What happens when teammates disagree?

A coaching colleague said it best: *“We want the players to want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. When players recognize this, they work hard to contribute to the team. When the player says, ‘I know I need to do my part for this team to do well’ and ‘I truly care about my teammates,’ it’s a completely different level of motivation. And that will trump everything else.”*

## The Dance of Change: Commitment and Effort

The transforming fire of role play is noticeable in the commitment and effort by student-athletes, and likewise coaches too. The following five elements of personal disposition actively influence the degree to which a student-athlete develops positive expectations for performing their leadership role.

1. **Self-Efficacy.** Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). Student-athletes are confident that they can succeed in a leadership role when they have the skills, tools, and opportunities to succeed. Inner doubts lead to apathy and procrastination.
2. **Response Efficacy.** Response efficacy is having the belief that the individual is expected to do the right thing—respond with the right action. This is a vital element for success in peer leadership.
3. **Outcome Efficacy.** This is the belief that one's efforts will lead to the desired outcomes. In general, the peer leader is more likely to take action when he or she is assured that they will not experience negative repercussions for taking action with positive intent.
4. **Self-Esteem.** Student-athletes need to know that they are valued by teammates and coaches. The nature of athletics can and does often lead to alienation when some student-athletes don't feel they are contributing to the team.
5. **Belonging.** Relationships matter. If cliques run the show, then others may feel marginalized. When an in-group out-group dynamic emerges, the "us" vs. "them" mental model will quickly destroy any team.

Years ago MIT professor Edward Lorenz coined the term "The Butterfly Effect." You've likely heard that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can set in motion escalating weather processes that lead to a tornado in Kansas. **The butterfly effect suggests that a small change, at one point in time, can accumulate and lead to larger changes later on.** And these changes in turn trigger still bigger changes. So, let's assume that when a team member takes action that the results ripple outward affecting the team in many positive ways.

## Motivate for Development

How do you motivate young people to assume leadership roles and responsibilities? Maybe the place to begin examining this complex process is by exploring two key questions all athletes ask themselves when confronted with the tasks of leading. The driving force for motivation can be found in an individual's internal answers to these two vital questions: *"Is it worth it?"* and *"Can I do it?"*

The first question addresses the psychological force of willingness. Your team leaders will ask such questions of as, *“Is it worth exerting energy, effort, and focus?” Will I want to persevere when a teammate dislikes me because of my taking a leadership action?*

The second question deals with the student-athlete’s ability to perform the tasks necessary to achieve a desired end result. Your team leaders will ask themselves, *“Do I have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully perform in the role of leader?” “Can I influence my teammates?”*

How a student-athlete answers these two vital questions should provide you insight into their willingness to lead and the confidence in their abilities. Individuals certainly differ in their basic motivational drive. However, you can trace much of an individual’s intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward performing as a leader to the way they internally (psychologically) answer these two questions.

What matters to each student-athlete will differ. Thus, it's important to uncover the individual's motive hierarchy which tends to be the pervasive influence on his or her behavior. When you recognize how willingness and ability factor into a person's behavior you'll better understand how to create an environment in which the emerging leader feels supported, respected and is more likely to enact positive leadership behaviors.

According to Douglas McGregor, one of the most influential leadership thinkers of the past century, if you hope to gain someone's commitment and loyalty you need to address the motives of that person. McGregor wrote,

*All human behavior is directed toward the satisfaction of needs. From birth to death, the individual is engaged in a constant attempt to satisfy his varied, complex, and sometimes conflicting needs. Any given behavior is a resolution of forces arising in part within him and in part in the environmental situation.*

Understanding how much influence the environment has on developing team leaders is crucial. Ideally, your team environment is one in which learning and development are encouraged and *deliberately* planned.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership**

Leadership is one of the most examined aspects of human behavior in the social sciences. The likely explanation is that human behavior is so often group behavior that it requires leadership in order produce a coordinated performance—to advance the group. But it’s also likely that the study of leadership is important because it is a universal activity that always involves timeless questions about individual and collective behavior. On a practical level, the complex nature of our world begs for understanding how social forces such as tradition, values, and norms can bring about purpose-driven action, change, and transformation.

Here's the thing about leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If you think it's all about one leader, a single voice in the room, you're on a fast track to mediocrity. Richard Hackman, the late Harvard professor, introduced into contemporary leadership lexicon the concept of "leader attribution error." Like the social psychological concept of the fundamental attribution error, the leadership attribution error is based on our tendency to underestimate the influence of followers while overestimating the influence of a single leader.

This perceptual distortion leads people to attribute far too much of a team's success to a specific leader. The side effect of this deception is that it distorts how we see the work and effort of the followers—almost as if they have nothing to do with a leader succeeding.

**A case in point:** recently the University of Connecticut Women's basketball team won its tenth NCAA National Championship. Each of these championships has happened with Geno Auriemma as the coach—the primary leader if you will. Auriemma's web site (a partnership with UConn) immediately posted the headline "Behind Every Great Team is a Great Leader." Is Auriemma a great leader? I have little doubt that he is, but that's really not the point.

Here's Hackman again: "When we think about a great team the image we conjure up almost always includes a great leader." Hackman, you might say, predicted Auriemma's claim. That said, it's pretty easy to predict this since much of our history has been focused on a leader-centric dynamic as manifested in the "Great Man" theory. Auriemma's position that he's the great leader behind all of the championship teams fits Hackman's notion of the leadership attribution error. This phenomenon arises because we just can't stop ourselves from attributing the bulk of success to the leader. **The powerful and pervasive influence of the leadership attribution error will ensure that leaders receive more than their fair share of a team's success.** It is, after all, much easier to account for things this way.

Of course, I know neither Auriemma nor his players, but, on the surface, this provides an example of what the leadership attribution error looks like. The point here is that **we see things not as they are, but as we are conditioned to see them.** And we've been conditioned to see leadership through the narrative of the heroic leader.

### **Success Belongs to Everyone Willing to Work for It**

Since the word hero (substitute "great" if you think it a better fit) is considered a compliment of the highest regard, you'd think it would be used sparingly. However, in leadership it's used quite frequently. Our tendency is to see success through the prism of the solo "head" leader. One consequence of this bias is that the main leader's perspective over shadows all others. For example, during the Fall of 2001 New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani's popularity was at a low point. A poll taken earlier in the year showed that only 32 percent of New Yorkers approved of his work as mayor. Then terrorists struck the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. In the aftermath of this horrific incident, Giuliani became a hero.

A little over a week after the towers fell an article in the *New York Times* read: "He moves about the stricken city like a god. People want to be in his presence. They want to touch him. The

want to praise him...He is not only respected, but revered. And not only revered, but loved.” In a time of great crisis this poorly performing leader catapulted up the popularity charts. Giuliani went on to enjoy success on the speaking circuit sharing his views of leadership.

The problem with attributing to Giuliani much of the success for the relief effort in the aftermath is that it overlooked leadership—and for that matter outstanding followership—from other key players: the firefighters, police officers, Federal assistance, and all the volunteers. Yes, some of the players were honored publicly, but it was Giuliani who the public praised and lifted up as a singular hero.

The narrative of success seems to require a heroic leader, usually at the expense of the followers. Indeed, author and leadership consultant Jeffrey Nielsen considers this to be inevitable:

*“Whenever we think in terms of ‘leadership,’ we create a dichotomy: (1) leaders, a select and privileged few, and (2) followers, the vast majority. There follows the implicit judgment that leaders are somehow superior to followers.”*

Back to UConn. I will stake my claim that the players and other coaches on Auriemma’s staff were important—every bit as important as Auriemma in winning the championship. Further, I am claiming that many, if not all, of the players took leadership actions throughout the course of the season that determined the team’s day-to-day accomplishments as well as its season-ending success. By isolating on Auriemma, however, we diminish the contributions of the assigned followers (again, many emerged when necessary to provide leadership), downplaying the importance of their motivation and behavior, at least in the narrative of Auriemma as the great leader.

### **The Exceptional Leadership Educator**

*Keep a close personal player relationship, but keep their respect. Be sincerely interested in their personal problems and easy to approach. –John Wooden*

Peyton Manning’s first season in the NFL was ugly. His statistics weren’t anything to write about and the team finished 3-13. So what process did he take to become an exceptional quarterback?

If you are serious about teaching leadership and desire to impact the lives of young people, this is one fact you need to tackle. And the sooner the better. If it takes a person X number of hours to be an average teacher, then, it will take that same person two times the number of hours to be a good teacher, and three times the number of hours to be an excellent teacher. (see K. Anders Ericsson and his 10,000 hour rule of deliberate practice for achieving excellence!)

It’s time to face reality. If you have a genuine desire to teach leadership and to do so with excellence you must be willing to invest significant time, energy, and resources. If you are reading this book looking to find a quick solution or easy “tricks”, my advice is simple: Close the book and walk away.

## **Taking the Long View**

We live in a society that has become increasingly short-sighted. Today, a lack of vision permeates the life of most Americans and seemingly all young people (and perhaps it always has). Pot shot. Not really. Ask your student-athletes to tell you how much time they've spent thinking about their lives ten or fifteen years from now.

We talk all the time about influencing the lives of our student-athletes. Yet rarely do we examine how effective we are in instilling life lessons. Sure, some players return a couple of years later to thank us for teaching them a thing or two. But how effective are we at implanting wisdom that will shape one's life down the road. Simply put, in certain respects we hardly ever see the long-term effects we have on our student-athletes.

I've run into many ex-athletes in the corporate world. Sadly, in far too many cases I'm not able to tell the difference between the ex-athlete and the non-athlete at the next desk.

How much time, focus, and energy are you willing to devote to improving your ability to teach leadership? What do you believe is important in teaching leadership and what do you want to accomplish with your leadership education program? It might be helpful for you to jot down your thoughts related to these two driving questions.

How effective you are as a leadership educator can determine the success your players have as leaders. Three key beliefs that underlie positive leadership will guide you in building a solid foundation for teaching and learning of leadership. They are:

1. The belief that the results your leaders produce will exceed expectations. Trying to put boundaries around learning outcomes will simply handcuff your leaders. Expect to be surprised today—and tomorrow.
2. The belief that the focus should be on the positive assets and strengths of the individual student-athlete. Your job is largely that of helping the leader make his or her strength(s) productive.
3. The belief that most people can become leaders and simply need nurturing. Yes this is about the nature vs. nurture debate. However, for our purposes, this belief aligns closely with Carol Dweck's (growth mindset vs. fixed mindset) fundamental idea of a learning orientation leading to positive growth and development. (*Nurture works!*)

## **The Human Side of Change**

The successful 21<sup>st</sup> Century leader is not the iron-fisted autocrat of yesteryear, pushing an agenda of "my way or the highway." Rather, they notice what needs to be done to help others—leaders *and* followers—accomplish their goals. Then they do it.

In contrast to the "revolutionary" idea that leadership is predicated on followership, is the 20<sup>th</sup> Century mindset in which the leader as commander took charge and sought as much power and control as "he" could get. In this system followers were expendable parts expected to "toe the

line,” to follow orders, to do what the leader said. Leadership was often confined to a transactional quid pro quo framework. If you’re younger than thirty you might not recognize this impersonal domineering leadership figure.

**In today’s *decreasingly* hierarchical and *increasingly* collaborative organizational environment, how the leader and follower relate to one another matters.** High-performing leaders and followers create a culture of collaboration—an environment where people want to connect their hearts and minds. Heartfelt leadership cultivates acceptance and appreciation. In the end, what compelling leadership is about is getting people to want to do things rather than coercing them to do things. When leaders and followers believe in each other, they behave in ways that build healthy relationships where respect and integrity are forged.

Okay, perhaps I’ve over extended myself. The new model of leadership, like all monumental changes, has been slowly adopted by old-school leaders and stagnant organizations. The reality is that the old way of leading is still very much alive and in play. Unenlightened leaders certainly wield power and muscle the same way their forefathers did in the previous centuries. But it is a different world today.

Twentieth-century leadership revolved around the organization as an economic unit with structures and controls. The object of the twentieth-century firm was to leverage financial capital. And they did this quite effectively (by 20<sup>th</sup> century standards) through pyramids of hierarchies with people performing rigidly narrow tasks with clear guidelines. The hierarchical organization was (and still is) hyper-sensitive to controlling everything—money, resources, and yes, people. In spite of its growing ineffectiveness, this type of leadership behavior still resides in many organizations.

The twenty-first century model of the firm is no longer based solely on financial capital, instead it is now highly focused on human capital. Human capital is the main asset of the modern organization. It is, in part, established in the social activities that make an organization a human community. Microsoft believes its greatest asset to be the collective intellectual resources of its employees. Apple’s heroic figure Steve Jobs declared that the best thing he ever built was not a technical product such as the iPod, iPhone, or iPad, but rather his leadership team. Yes, that’s right. The best thing this iconic figure said he ever built was a team. It doesn’t get more human than that!

### **Rethinking Leadership Development**

*“At the bottom of the Oakland experiment was a willingness to rethink baseball: how it is managed, how it is played, who is best suited to play it, and why.”-Michael Lewis, Moneyball*

*“Almost every significant breakthrough in science is first a break with tradition, old ways of thinking, or old paradigms.” -Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

Michael Lewis’ best-selling book and the blockbuster movie it spawned, tell a story of change. Not your typical sports story of change. Rather, this was a case of transformational change in the form of an organization constructing and executing a real “paradigm shift.” Lewis

chronicles the introduction and use of data and analysis for decision-making in an industry that, while rich in data, largely ignored it while favoring subjective opinion.

If you've been speed-reading up to now, stop and pause for a moment and re-read the two quotes above.

My purpose here is not to point out that baseball's old guard got it all wrong. They didn't. My goal is to highlight the willingness of a baseball executive, Billy Beane, to rethink the vital elements of player effectiveness and his eagerness to link up with other divergent thinkers.

As a result of this new way of thinking Beane changed the way the Oakland A's built its baseball team. It is the leading edge approach to thinking that I applaud. Beane took a bold risk taking on the old guard and rethinking how to evaluate players. It was his willingness to "rethink" the way that the baseball industry did things that set in motion the change process of data analytics.

**Transformation starts with people thinking differently. You have a choice.** You can challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions that buttress your current mindset of a Team Captain approach to leadership development of student-athletes. Yes, I know it's likely you have two or three team captains; our research reveals that roughly 80% of all programs fit this mold. Ask yourself why you rely on a small number of players to provide team leadership. Is it possible that you might have uncritically accepted the team captain model simply because it's what you were exposed to in your playing experience?

Changing how you see the purpose of your team might change the way you see leadership development of student-athletes. If you, as asked above, are willing to move from the default major of an "Athletic" discipline to "Education" as your major, you might find yourself rethinking how you go about developing leaders. The question is: are you willing to rethink what you do and what value results from your current thoughts and actions?

#### ReThinking Leadership Development: Our Agenda

Exhibit 22

- ✦ **ReExamine:** unthinking behavior rooted in traditions and the intellectual shackles of historical leadership
- ✦ **ReFormulate:** research questions and teambuilding ideas; triangulating data, practicing for development
- ✦ **ReModel:** current practices by changing frameworks, uncovering new empirical realities, building new and appropriate models
- ✦ **ReVise:** a perspective of leadership, tapping teamwork intelligence, the spirit, the commitment, and the tremendous potential of each individual student-athlete
- ✦ **ReDesign:** the limiting team captain practice and inferior team building processes
- ✦ **ReSource:** student-athletes and coaches by providing accessible principles, tools, practices, and powerful ideas
- ✦ **ReDiscover:** how to develop the next generation of leaders amidst the changing nature of leadership

## A CHANGE OF HEART

### A TEAMWORK INTELLIGENCE CASE STUDY / An Academy for Sport Leadership Research Project

**Background:** The Madison High Girls Volleyball team is a perennial contender for the state tournament. However, the team had never reached the championship round of their state tournament. They'd lost their first-round game three years in a row. With a desire to "get over the hump" and win a playoff game the team decided to invest heavily in "building a team environment that could shape their ability to compete at the highest level."

**Purpose of the study:** Many of the most admired and successful volleyball teams are generally more cohesive than the unsuccessful and least admired programs. The teams that sustain success understand that the best way to motivate players is not through rewards or threats, but by inspiring one another to find ways to enjoy the challenges of achieving team and individual potential while doing so with purpose (often found in the goal to "win the conference" or to "be a family"). The admired teams are those consumed with playing to enjoy the experience.

**Units of Analysis:** Because *The 8 Roles of Teamwork* is an organizing scheme and force of personal agency it was identified as the primary unit of analysis. This research examined how low levels and high levels of personal agency (the tendency to see one's actions as a positive contributing factor leading to future associated behaviors) emerges from playing a "role" in a team setting. It is expected that playing a role—that is, taking action within a role—is a way of building an adaptive and relational culture. The study utilized formative and summative evaluations using The Academy for Sport Leadership's *10 Elements of Team Culture* for analysis of team growth, development, and cohesion.

**Outcome:** For decades, researchers have proven that an organization's culture often determines its level of success. Culture, many organizational experts exhort, drives performance. Many coaches fall prey to a myopic focus on task excellence at the expense of interpersonal relationships and team member well-being. Prior research has revealed that a single-minded focus on task/tactical performance can cripple interpersonal relationships and create a negative culture that often results in sub-optimal performance by individuals and the team collectively.

In this study, the initial test of the team's cohesion revealed a "pseudo team" in the early stages of development. An apathetic behavior toward "limiting or stopping" individuals' violations of team norms and expectations created a false sense of harmony. Further evidence of this was found in the ratings of teammates on The Academy for Sport Leadership's *Rate Your Teammate scale*.

The team chose to undergo a "heart transplant" with individual members following through on commitments to making contributions in their self-selected role (each player activated a persona from *The 8 Roles of Teamwork*). Every player recognized and capitalized on the opportunity to experiment with ways to improve their performance as a teammate acting in their chosen role. Additionally, the introduction of The Academy for Sport Leadership's *Teamwork Debriefing* process stimulated the quantity and quality of "team conversation" and had a much broader positive impact on relationship building.

The "new and positive" environment the players created and experienced became more meaningful and enjoyable daily, and the team's attention to its culture was sustained throughout the season. Practices were more productive and scores improved dramatically as evidenced in formative and summative evaluations on the Teamwork Intelligence tool *The 10 Elements of Team Culture*. The team was a #1 seed in its bracket and played for the state championship. While the Madison High team did not win the championship, the team was pleased with their journey and felt the team reached its potential.

## Building a Better World

Let me see if I can get your change program started by introducing you to leadership in the world's most noted company thus far in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Meet Google. Yes, Google. You see, Google is at the vanguard of organizational health and wealth. They care how people feel and how much meaning they derive from their work. Google's mission is much larger than algorithms. They care about changing the world. Google, you might say, is the model organization for the modern economy. If you don't believe me, Google it!

Google's, Laszlow Bock, a senior member of the human resource staff, the arm of the company that searches for and hires talent, says that Google uses four criteria in the hiring process. Bock's criteria are:

- General Cognitive Ability
- Leadership
- Googleyness
- Role-related Knowledge

Bock declares that Google doesn't want a leader that says, "I'm in charge." Rather, Google looks for leaders that know when to step forward and lead *and* when to step aside and relinquish leadership to someone more qualified for a certain aspect of a project. This works in the modern organization because no one person has the capacity to understand all the technical and human complexities contained within a sophisticated organization.

Like many other organizations today, Google recognizes leadership as a priority in hiring and developing talent. It's harder to get hired by Google than it is to get into Harvard. And one of the primary competencies that will get you hired is leadership capacity.

Okay, so what's the purpose of pointing out that Google gets leadership? I'm going to go out on a limb here. Ninety-eight percent of all your student-athletes will one day be working in a modern-day organization. It is with this certainty that I ask you: What are you doing to prepare them to succeed in today's volatile and complex world of work?

If you're using the Traditional Captain model you might be inhibiting the ability of your student-athletes to succeed in the years to come. That's because, the Traditional Captain Model, while it worked well in the past, limits the growth and development of the student-athlete by today's employment standards. The hierarchical nature of this model does not match up with the growing emphasis on peer-based leadership. Again, in organizations today, everyone needs to be a leader. Gone are the days when the "select" few led, and followers "knew their place" and just blindly followed orders.

Leaders everywhere are more vulnerable to forces beyond their control. The leader-centric model, like the Berlin Wall, has crumbled and followers have become bolder and more assertive (can you say "empowered"). Followers may still be subordinate, but they are more important to success than ever before.

## The Two Major Leadership Frameworks

Exhibit 23

### Traditional Team Captain Model (Rank-Based) VS. Team Leadership Model (Peer-Based)

Starts from a position that leadership is exclusive; leaders possess the “right stuff”	Starts from a position of leadership as inclusive; everyone is invited to lead self, others, and with others to create individual and team well-being
Fixed mindset; leadership can be learned to some extent, but mostly a unique genetic endowment	Growth mindset; basic and advanced qualities and skills can be cultivated
Scarcity mindset	Abundance mindset
Grounded in leadership as a “power” position	Grounded in leadership as an “influence” position
Hierarchical command and control over others	Peer-based influence as a source of strength
Performance oriented	Participant- oriented
Leader accountable to coaching staff; invested in pleasing coaches	Leader acts from deep sense of responsibility and accountability to others
Leadership learning “passed” down to future leaders	Individualized leadership development
Followers are recipients of an act of leadership	Followers are central to any act of leadership
Leader-centric (focus on person)	Leadership-Centric (focus on process and context)

Players feed off each other. I’m not revealing a silver bullet, but I am reminding you of this maxim. Indeed, athletes draw heavily on the feelings and emotions of one another. And these emotions and feelings affect the way they think and act together.

Years ago the Butterfly Effect (sensitive dependence on initial conditions) was discovered as a key concept in chaos theory. Researchers found that, **“if a butterfly flaps its wings in China it can lead to a cascade of causes that result in a tornado in Kansas.”** The butterfly effect explains how small changes in initial conditions produce enormous, though sometimes distant, effects. Initial conditions such as a trigger of energy (positive or negative) by a single player can lead to the altering of the collective mood of the team.

Like the butterfly effect, by engaging the hearts and minds of each of your student-athletes, you can unleash unknowable possibilities. Small changes in input can produce huge changes in output—little causes can have big effects. A small comment can turn a bad attitude into a joyous celebration. Change a locker assignment and you change who players talk to after practice. A shift in the way a player talks to a teammate impacts the relationship. Imagine all the possible ways the peer effect will energizes, orients, and engages the talents of every student-athlete.

## Are You Ready to Establish a Leader in Every Locker?

So why should you take the journey to build a leader in every locker? It's a lot of work and demands great personal courage. You will encounter frustration and failure along the way. But, the alternative is worse—you will not only miss out on the opportunity to witness the growth, and I mean the tremendous intellectual and emotional growth of your students. You'll also have failed to set in motion within your players their development of twenty-first century leadership skills and abilities.

However, to take the journey gives you the opportunity to look back on your coaching career with a powerful sense of satisfaction and pride, because you will have a coaching legacy. You will be a coaching legend in the eyes of former players. They will discover, albeit at times later in life, that your contributions to their life have made a vital difference in who they are.

In their best-selling book, *The Leadership Challenge*, authors James Kouzes and Barry Posner set forth a fundamental ingredient of all leadership endeavors—that of modeling the way. The authors contend that “Your value as a leader is determined not only by your guiding beliefs but also by your ability to act on them....To be a leader, you have to Model the Way for others by demonstrating intense commitment to your beliefs with each and every action.”

Team leadership is not an easy role for many young student-athletes. Peer leadership is often an uncomfortable challenge. The desire to be liked has been the downfall of many *adult* leaders. So don't gloss over the fact that a student-athlete will often be driven by their need to be liked by teammates. Expect the first hurdle for your emerging team leaders to be overcoming the need to be liked. Young leaders will also have to overcome emotional issues such as the internal conflict that might occur because of their desire for acceptance. As a leader they will at times need to take actions that temporarily separate them from their teammates—the followers. This is but one example of some of the inherent difficulties in peer leadership.

As a coach, you present a compelling model that young athletes will intensely observe. They are constantly seeking cues on how they should lead (wanting to please you) and informing them how to act in a given situation. Team leaders will imitate many of your behaviors and attitudes. They will, for example, watch what you do and then imitate or adapt what you do. The less experienced the team leader the more likely they'll study you closely to help them figure out “how” you want them to lead. When faced with inconsistencies between what you say and what you do, the young and developing team leader will tend to give greater reliance on what you do.

Your status as a model increases the necessity of having a healthy interpersonal relationship with all your players, but the relationship with team leaders will generally be a little more involved as you assume the role of leadership mentor. Mentors are role models. As a mentor your impact will come from more than just what you tell your team leaders, they will assimilate and emulate many of your behavioral traits and copy many of your values and attitudes.

A healthy relationship and a positive approach to teaching leadership will shape your team leaders. How you model leadership and mentor leaders will go a long way in helping a young and emerging leader understand leaders and leadership.

## **Leadership by Design**

With all the time, money, and energy poured into student-athletics, why are we not getting a better (educational) return for our investment? The solution isn't to kick the Traditional Captain approach up a notch; the key is to reexamine the way leaders are developed in student-athletics.

For the past decade The Academy for Sport Leadership has been developing a leadership-centric model for student-athletics. Our goal has been to explore and explain the *leadership-centric* perspective. Our research has led me to conclude that the *leader-centric* practice simply reinforces and perpetuates the twentieth century elitist rank-based hierarchical model and is suboptimal in producing a leadership mindset and leadership skill set that will serve the student today.

If you want improvement and a better future, you have to start working on it immediately. What you want to do today is something that's better than what you did yesterday. What you need to do is create an environment where your players are encouraged to be more, to do more.

Through research and program development I've concluded that sport programs that embrace a system of Team Leadership, that is a leadership-centric practice, will produce better short-term results as well as long-term outcomes, both for the team and for the students-athletes. As an educator you know how important it is to convince students that being a leader is not something that happens later. Student-athletes must lead now.

# Coaching for Leadership

How to Develop a Leader in Every Locker

## Postgame Gut Check

*There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy, and civilization throughout the world—one thing, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love.*

*-Stephen M.R. Covey*

**Do you know what that one thing is that changes everything?**

## **Do Your Players Trust You?**

I'm often asked about the issue of trust and team building. Usually the questions focus on players trusting one another, or the coaching staff trusting players. By contrast, I infrequently field questions about players trusting a coach or the coaching staff. Rarely does a coach ask "Do my players trust me?" However, in today's environment it's imperative for coaches aspiring to impact and influence student-athletes to understand and develop trusting relationships with their athletes.

### **Defining Trust**

In general, trust refers to an individual's confidence in the reliability of another person. Trust is built on the belief that I can count on you to do what you say; I can depend on you. If you say one thing and do another, you're not going to build trust. In fact, you'll be chipping away at your credibility in the eyes of your players.

At the heart of trust are shared values that support the purpose and goals of the team and are deeply embedded, and everyone—including the coaching staff—is held accountable to them, even in seemingly small everyday decisions and actions. Dr. Jerry Lynch says coaches should "Always ask the question *How can I establish trust in this situation?* And let the answer guide your actions and behaviors" (Lynch, 2001).

Trust can be seen as the result of interpersonal interactions and seems to fit nicely into two different phases. In the beginning phase of a relationship trust is earned. When lost it has to be re-earned. However, over time coaches that act with integrity and demonstrate care for their players build a reservoir of trust leading players to simply assume trust; they don't require the coach to re-earn it. And when a coach develops a reputation built on integrity, players will begin the relationship with the assumption of his or her trustworthiness.

### **Feeling Unwelcome**

Having had bad experiences some student-athletes come to assume coaches are a difficult, self-serving species that cannot be trusted. Generally this is the result of an experience that includes a coach using an unhealthy dose of threats and punishments, while not keeping promises and commitments. As this negative belief grows stronger it becomes difficult for the athlete to see coaches as trustworthy.

The student-athlete isn't simply being irrational. Actually, from their way of seeing things this is quite rational. It's based on their experience. The coach(es) that came before you abused their trust, related to them with little dignity.

The absence of positive, trusting relationships can undermine any team activity, so fostering trust is one of the most important responsibilities of a leader. The relationship between team cohesion and trust is evident in commitment, camaraderie, energy, rapport, we-feelings, and esprit de corp. Simply stated, as a leader your words and actions are likely going to be modeled

by your players. If you're not trustworthy it's going to be difficult for you to create team trust.

### **Leadership and Trust**

There are many skills to coaching and leading a team. One of the most important is the ability to communicate effectively. Communication serves four vital functions for coaching. Through communication you have the capacity to control the athlete's behavior ("do this, don't do that"), foster motivation, express your emotions, and transmit information. The reality is healthy communication with your players is important to building a cohesive, trusting team.

To put it another way: being a great coach is less about what you know and more about what you're like.

Good leadership starts with knowing how to build trust with individuals. It grows from the seemingly small acts or gestures, such as complimenting a player for a nice play and a willingness to take time to find out how a team member is feeling. Sometimes, just showing authentic appreciation for the time an athlete commits to the program or taking a few seconds to say "job well done" is all it takes to win loyalty and inspire athletes to greater efforts

The best leaders go further. They learn to create an environment rich in trust. They know when and how to foster trust by strengthening both personal relationships and the team's capacity to shape their future together. The best leaders model the way by demonstrating honesty and reliability and make an enduring commitment to helping student-athletes reach their potential. These leaders recognize that loyalty and trust don't just happen because everyone is on the same "team." They treat leadership as above all a relationship—with trust the cornerstone.

### **The Coach's Voice: How Your Players Learn to Trust You**

Here's a quick exercise to demonstrate how different perspectives arise simply from one's view of things. Put your hand above your head and point your index finger toward the ceiling and begin tracing a circle in a clockwise direction. Keep your finger moving, tracing clockwise while lowering your pointed—and circling—finger to chest level. Look down on your circling finger. Which direction is your finger going now? It's now going *counterclockwise*.

A coaching relationship is always asymmetrical—with the coach possessing a greater amount of power and authority. This asymmetry factors into every interaction with your players. All student-athletes have a way of seeing the world based on background, experience, culture, and personality. The exercise above demonstrates how easily a difference in a perspective can make something you say or do into something you never would have imagined. Something you felt you did and was based on honesty and integrity can be easily dismissed as dishonest by a skeptical player. That's why it's necessary for you to deliberately work to ensure trust develops in your relationships with your players.

The way you communicate has a great effect on an athlete's emotions, perceptions, and

motivation. What you say and how you say it plays a central part in individual and team behavior. Therefore, it's useful to have a way to monitor your communication styles and how they affect your players individually and as a team.

### Setting the Tone

It's my observation that coaches typically convey information and emotion in one of four forms, thereby setting the tone for building credibility and inspiring trust. Tone matters. It shapes the way your players acquire, process, store, and use the information or emotion you are transmitting. The four tones are:

- positive tone with a focus on individual
- positive tone with a focus on team
- negative tone with a focus on individual
- negative tone with a focus on team

Several years ago I was visiting with a coach immediately after completing a season in which, as he said, "everything that could go wrong, did go wrong." It turns out that the team was blessed with more talent than he'd had in his previous five seasons. Expectations were high for a deep run into the playoffs.

The team finished in the bottom of its conference. With careful and genuine self-reflection he came to understand and accept that he failed to foster trust within the team. As it turned out, he blamed his players for losing. Early in the season with a close loss to a rival he began constructing a pattern of a negative tone toward the players and the team.

With each loss he amplified this negative tone. Through critical self-reflection he realized he had abused his trust and lost credibility because he did not treat his players with the dignity they expected.

#### Some Examples of Negative Tone

The following are some indicators of a negative tone that can be traced to the dismantling of credibility, or the inability to build trust. Without a foundation of trust your relationships will be unfulfilling.

- *Name calling*
- *Excessive criticizing*
- *Threatening*
- *Catastrophizing*
- *Unrealistic expectations*
- *Inappropriate scapegoating*
- *Destructive use of punishments*
- *Uni-directional conversations*
- *Pessimistic view of player(s) effort and or talent*

Exhibit 24

Please don't hear that you should never use a negative tone. That's not the case. However, it's just a reminder that excessive use of a negative tone may at some point damage credibility and begin to destroy trust (see the four dimensions of trust below). Responsible leaders take responsibility for what they say and how they say it holding themselves accountable to those they are speaking to.

## **A More Meaningful Way of Understanding Trust**

Do your players trust you? Are you sure? How about if I provide you a more sophisticated way of viewing your answer to this vital question, will your answer still be the same?

Social psychologists conceptualize interpersonal trust as having primarily two dimensions, cognitive and affective. I've added two more –purposive and procedural—to provide a stronger lens from which to view trust in a sports team environment. There is, of course, overlap between these four elements of trust. All, however, offer you a more accurate way of evaluating your own trustworthiness. The connection between trust and success is undeniable. If you increase your insight into how your words, actions, programs, and processes affect your players, you can gain, build, and preserve trust in every area of your coaching practice.

### **Cognitive Trust**

Cognitive trust is knowledge-driven. It emerges from one's knowledge of the situation and expressed by alignment of a coach's words and actions. This allows a player to predict whether or not a coach is to be trusted in certain situations. Cognitive assessments arise primarily from one's experience with the coach or a coaching staff. Information and insights from one's teammates can also be a source of knowledge.

When a student-athlete has developed his or her perspective related to the trustworthiness of the coach, they then make decisions and take actions based on their assumptions. Satisfaction or dissatisfaction of interactions can lead to increasing or decreasing one's trust in his or her coach. Trust-building is truly a critical leadership competency. Student-athletes today expect their coaches to be concerned for their welfare. They are constantly looking for evidence to validate your trustworthiness and credibility.

### **Affective Trust**

This is the emotion-driven element of trust that can create either great depth of relationship, or shallow transactional interactions. Affective trust arises from one's feelings generated by the level of care and concern demonstrated by the coach. The sentiment of such emotional trust is characterized by one's feelings of security/insecurity and the perceived commitment of the coach to the interpersonal relationship.

A coach with a reputation for acting with honor and integrity receives assumed trust with the player(s) expecting the continuation of this pattern with all current and future team members. If your players like you they are more likely to trust you. The essence of affective trust is based on emotion, and this certainly includes liking.

### **Procedural Trust**

This is the process-driven component to leadership trust. To achieve objectives every team has a wide range of systems or procedures—ways of doing things. Your offensive/defensive style and philosophy are bounded by procedures. Coaches are seemingly always “selling” their system and looking for “buy in” by the student-athlete.

Your practices and game travel are guided by procedures. Players will evaluate these procedures. They want to be able to trust that such things as team rules and procedures are appropriate and not obstacles to meeting their personal and team objectives.

Leta Andrews, the winningest coach in high school girls basketball is a no-nonsense coach who requests that her players say "yes, ma'am" and "no, ma'am" and gets on them if she thinks they're too distracted with boyfriends. An old-school leader, Andrews employs a commanding military style with her practices and sometimes requires the team run laps and shoot free throws after losing a game.

Her student-athletes embrace her procedures and trust that the way she does things will produce fruit in their lives—today and tomorrow. "It's the respect that you have for her, so you want to live up to her expectations," said Lilley VanderZee, a player on Andrew's 2010 squad when she broke the national record for coaching victories.

### **Purposive Trust**

This is the mission-driven component. Shared values and shared goals, as they relate to the growth and development of the student-athlete, form the foundation of purposive trust. This type of trust refers to your actions having or serving a purpose that benefits all today and tomorrow. If those actions are self-serving, that is they are likely to benefit only you in the long run, then you're likely to have a difficult time gaining the loyalty of an individual or the team. Your players want to and need to trust in your intentions.

### **Summing Up**

Trust among team members is critical if a team is to grow into a high-performing unit. However, it is equally as important that a team's players trust its coaches. Trust takes time to develop and is always subject to breaking down. And because trust can break down, the wise coach and the great leader is always looking for ways to maintain or deepen the reservoir of trust.

If you sense that your players may not have a high level of trust in you and your staff, try reflecting on the tone of your communication and assessing your performance on the four dimensions of trust. And if you wonder if any of this really makes a difference, ask a former player.

#### **CASE IN POINT**

##### **Can I Trust You? How the Head Coach–Assistant Coach Relationship Can Kill a Season?**

Have you ever considered the consequences of a poor relationship between the head coach and assistant coaches? How about poor relations between assistant coaches? No doubt you've experienced inferior relationships at one time or another during your coaching career. So what's the big deal?

Let me use a competitive focus to take a deeper look into the role of communication in a team setting. To do this let me introduce you to what's called, One-up, One-down, and One-across communication. One-up communication occurs when one of the conversational participants seeks

to take control of the conversation. One-down communication is giving up control, either deliberately or by habit. And one-across communication is trying to keep the conversation going without participants taking or giving up control. A one-across relationship seeks a sense of equality between those involved in the communication event.

As a result, relational dynamics are affected in part by the naturally arising of unequal power. When people wield power they have the ability to unilaterally control a relationship. People with authority over others tend to become more self-centered, focused on their own needs and wants, and less mindful of others needs, wants, and actions. Power and authority can, and often do, lead the individual to act as if written and unwritten rules don't apply to them. When power and authority define a relationship, such a relationship can quickly become very dysfunctional leading to miscommunication.

### **Situations Shape Behavior**

Setting: The following text is taken from the conversation between the pilot and co-pilot minutes before their airliner crashed into the Potomac River after take-off from National Airport in Washington D.C. Here's the exchange as was recorded by the plane's "black box."

Co-Pilot: *Let's check those tops [wings] again since we've been sitting awhile.*

Captain: *No, I think we get to go in a minute.*

Co-pilot: [Referring to an instrument reading] *That doesn't seem right, does it? Uh, that's not right.*

Captain: *Yes, it is...*

Co-pilot: *Oh, maybe it is.* [Sound of plain straining to gain altitude]

Co-pilot: *Larry, we're going down!*

Captain: *I know it!* [Sound of impact that killed the captain, co-pilot, and 67 passengers.]

Stay with me for a moment. Replace Co-pilot with Assistant Coach, and Captain with Head Coach. A little eerie isn't it. A bit too harsh? Maybe, but this dynamic happens all the time in head coach / assistant coach relationships. You can call it "natural" if you want. The head coach hired the assistant, and therefore can fire the assistant. Head coaches receive high levels of visibility, assistants don't. Head coaches are expected to have the "right" answers and are taken to task by external stakeholders when they're "wrong." But make no mistake, the one-up one-down structure of conversation is potentially at play in any superior-subordinate relationship.

The kind of conversation between the captain and the co-pilot takes place in offices, board rooms, homes, and of course locker rooms. The possibility of a seemingly harmless power play derived from a "one-up" position is always present in any conversation. The leader or person with status, rank, or expertise can flex their muscle at any time. The "one-down" posture, as evidenced in the co-pilot's acquiescing his position is normal in a culture where the one-up one-down structure of communication is the norm.

Conversation is a core process in all that we do. Think of it this way: conversation is the operating system—the software that manages our relationship with one another. My challenge to you is for you to perform an honest appraisal of your head coach-assistant coach relationship. Think about it. What's recorded in your coaching black box? Make the invisible visible. Find ways to ensure your coach-to-coach dialogue is productive and not destructive to your mission.

**Overview** The Academy for Sport Leadership is a leading educational leadership training firm that uses sound educational principles, research, and learning theories to create leadership resources. The academy has developed a coherent leadership development framework and programs covering the cognitive, emotional, social, and situational dimensions of learning, thus addressing the dimensions necessary for healthy development and growth of student-athletes.

The Academy for Sport Leadership's underlying convictions are as follows: 1) the most important lessons of leadership are learned in real-life situations, 2) team leaders develop best through active practice, structured reflection, and informative feedback, 3) learning to lead is an on-going process in which guidance from a mentor, coach, or colleague helps facilitate learning and growth, and 4) leadership lessons learned in sport should transcend the game and assist student-athletes in developing the capacity to lead in today's changing environment.

<b>Year Founded</b>	<b>Headquarters</b>
2007	Peoria, AZ

### **Mission**

*Our mission is to enhance the quality of the student-athlete experience by providing exceptional learning resources for coaches, athletic administrators, and competitive student-athletes.*

## **About the Author**

Dr. Cory Dobbs is a national expert on sport leadership and the founder of The Academy for Sport Leadership. A teacher, speaker, consultant, and writer, Dr. Dobbs has established The Academy for Sport Leadership as a leader in curriculum and program development for developing student-athletes into team leaders and team builders.

A former basketball coach, Dr. Dobbs basketball coaching background includes experience at the NCAA Division II, NJCAA, and high school levels of competition. While coaching he researched and developed the transformative *Becoming a Team Leader* program for student-athletes. The Academy for Sport Leadership's model for development is a road-tested results-driven framework for helping student-athletes learn how to lead and for coaches learning to coach for leadership.

Dr. Dobbs has worked with professional, collegiate, and high school athletes and coaches teaching leadership as a part of the sports experience. He teaches workshops, seminars, and consults with a wide-range of professional organizations and teams. Dr. Dobbs taught in the graduate colleges of business and education at **Northern Arizona University**, Sport Management and Leadership at **Ohio University**, and the Jerry Colangelo College of Business at **Grand Canyon University**. He is the author of *Exploring Conversational Learning*, *Becoming a Team Leader: A Workbook for the Student-Athlete*, *Release Your Team's Potential*, *Coaching for Leadership*, *Team Leadership: A Curriculum Guidebook for Creating a Leadership Development Program for Student-Athletes*, and the *Teamwork Intelligence workbook and facilitator's guide*.

### **Contact Information:**

To contact the author please email him at [cory@sportleadership.com](mailto:cory@sportleadership.com)

Be sure to visit [www.sportleadership.com](http://www.sportleadership.com) for updates.

The **Academy for Sport Leadership** offers bulk purchasing discounts.

This book is complemented by ***Coaching for Leadership Field Books—Teamwork Intelligence: A Workbook for the Student-Athlete*** and ***Teamwork Intelligence: A Facilitator's Guide***. These resources are tools for building a high-performing team culture. If you're looking to Coach for Leadership and create a leadership development system, consider these two field books.

[www.sportleadership.com](http://www.sportleadership.com)