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CHAMPIONSHIP PERFORMANCE

■ Special Leadership Issue

This month we feature a series of leadership reports based on an interview with Lieutenant Colonel JC Glick (retired). He is the author of the books “A Light in the Darkness: Leadership Development for the Unknown” and “Meditations of an Army Ranger: A Warrior Philosophy for Everyone.”

JC recently developed the Prodomos Leadership Model, a capacity building system designed to develop people and leaders for the future. After 20 years of active service, his last assignment was leading the Army’s Leadership Development School, Resiliency School, and the military’s only Physical Fitness School.

■ New Book Release

Next month will feature a complete preview of our latest book: “*The Basketball Coach’s Game Plan for Leadership.*” The book will be released sometime after Labor Day.

Inside This Month's Issue

* Develop High Performance Culture.....	2
* Common Thread of Great Organizations.....	3
* Winning Ways.....	3
* Address COVID Leader Challenges.....	4
* Develop Capacity V Top Down Leadership....	4
* Zone in on Your Practice Purpose.....	5
* 3 Keys to Motivate Bench Players.....	6
* Peak Performance Bullets.....	6
* Military Leadership for Athletics,cont.....	7
* Developing Captains and Senior Leaders.....	8

Leadership

Military Leadership for Athletics

How did your experience in the military impact your leadership philosophy? What specific concepts have you been able to transfer to your work with athletic teams that have had the most positive impact on performance?

What’s great about the military and how it ties into sports is that you have this melting pot of people from different backgrounds working toward a shared outcome. Most of the Special Operations people I know have no problem with athletes calling themselves “warriors”, in fact most of us find it quite flattering, and understand the shared characteristics of both the “Athlete warrior” and the “Tactical athlete” (a name we developed in the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School for our Soldiers).

Of course, it’s not life and death, but we both work side by side to accomplish a shared goal and mission focus.

A good coach isn’t always a good leader, just like the best players are not always great coaches (nor are they always good leaders). There are different skills. In the military, we go through specific training to learn to lead in a structured way. We also have an amazing mentorship program where you are able to learn leadership first-hand by those around you.

In the military we wanted to provide our people the freedom to make decisions that were correct for the situation, we wanted to put our people through exercises that didn’t micro manage them, but instead prepared them to take the next step in combat. We did that by putting them in pressure situations where they had to make fast decisions. We would allow them to go through the decision-making

process and adapt to those choices, learning from the good choices and the bad equally. We believe that if you teach them how to think instead of what to think, they will get used to thinking for themselves instead of waiting for someone else to tell them what to do.

Much like the goal of a military leader is to create future military leaders, that not only are as good as they are, but better, I would say that the goal of a head coach is to create more head coaches. You also want your players to be extensions of your coaching on the field, not automatons that just do what you say when you say it, but read, think and act as a coach would. You want them to execute and process situations quickly instead of having to read and react.

How does that look like in real life? You give them guidance and instruction and then prepare them to execute on their own. Questions to ask players to think for themselves include: “**What did you see out there?**”; “**What is the other team doing?**”; “**If they do this again, what do you think we should do?**”. Those questions don’t demonstrate weakness; quite the opposite is true. Those questions demonstrate confidence in you and your players.

I can draw parallels to fighting the enemy overseas. I wanted my team to describe the current status of any given situation they were dealing with at the present moment, and then be able to act correctly without my direct order.

See page 7...

Developing a High Performance Leader Culture

Do you offer the teams you consult with any simple leadership formulas to achieve high performance? Can you describe?

I do have one leadership formula I share with different audiences.

(Hope + Trust) Fear =
Courage > Fear.

Let's say you want to measure resiliency. Ask you players: "Do you feel resilient?" The bottom line is that fear is at the root of when people don't do something. You can't destroy fear. It's a

constant that is always there. Most people's brains operate on a fight or flight mechanism. You want to create courage. You want a mental attitude that is not worrying about what bad might happen. These fears are different for everyone. There could be the fear of not making a mistake, the fear that people don't believe you are giving 100 percent. But do you know what... no one can give 100 percent all the time, that's exhausting.

If athletes want to attain a cycle of greatness, they should try new things in practice. Find out what works and what doesn't. Coaches can and should encourage innovation. Experiment with various ways of doing things. Some will work, some won't. You create courage when you work on things during practice with no fear of looking stupid. There is no one size fits all.

As a coach, you may sometimes not be able to get through to an athlete. Be real and say, "This is my fault as much as yours, but I'm having trouble leading you. I'm not really sure how or what will work with you or inspire you to take the next step in your development. What speaks to you because I can't really figure you out?"

You lay out a five level of leadership model where the highest goals are the success and fulfillment of others. In the route to get to that level, are there tasks or functions that coaches and athletes can perform to make that a reality?

The most important leader concept is people over everything. Leadership is a learned skill. Being a great leader means having intentional curiosity about what is going on with those you lead. This requires interaction and a humble attitude. Put other people's ideas ahead of your own in many cases.

Winning cultures are not always the same, but one thing they all share is that everyone is trying to make their teammates better.

Bill Belichick has that famous line, "Do Your Job." This seems simple, and, I believe, misunderstood to imply – just do what you are supposed to do. However, I'm sure there is a lot more to this than the simple quote when he leads his team. My guess is that there is a list of specific duties required to doing your job – like assisting teammates, making teammates better, identifying issues and helping develop solutions – the list is probably pretty exhaustive. "Do Your Job" may be bumper sticker leadership to those not in the organization, but the context makes a huge difference.

Regardless, one of the player's jobs is to make his or her teammates better. That's what all great organizations do.

Championship Performance

10612 - D Providence Road #262
Charlotte, NC 28277

Phone: (704) 321-9198
FAX: (704) 321-0203
info@championshipperform.com
www.championshipperform.com

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Editor & Publisher: John Sikes Jr.
Administrative Asst.: Kate Lord
Web Development: Wayne Cooper

Regular Contributors:
Brian Cain, M.S.
Rob Gilbert, Ph.D.
Alan Goldberg, Ed.D.
Ken Mannie, Michigan State Univ.

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Common Thread of Great Organizations

For the greatest organizations you have worked with (sports, business, military), are there common strengths they share? What are the most important traits to develop?

The best organizations are not just about wins and losses. They have a purpose driven model that develops people holistically. Bill Walsh wrote a leadership book titled "The Score Takes Care of Itself" which sums up this concept. The athletes feel cared for by the coaching staff and they take care of each other, so they work harder. They are seen first as individuals, then as athletes.

The worst organizations are where players are seen just as numbers and that someone else can take their place. They may have a "man down, next man up" mentality, which they think conveys toughness, but often makes players feel like they are not appreciated.

I've seen teams where injured players are actually ridiculed for getting hurt. Players value deeds over words. Actions always speak louder than what you say to a player.

Example: If a player has a family situation they need to attend to, does the coach encourage them to leave or insist or imply they need to stick around or lose their starting job?

Sometimes, an athlete may want to make the decision to stay with the team, not wanting to let their teammates down, which is admirable. However, there are times when taking care of a personal issue is the right thing to do and when a coach encourages that, he or she is making a leadership decision that says to players, "You matter more to me as a person than a player."

Yes, we want players to have a "We before me" attitude, but as leaders

we may have to help them when they need to focus on something beyond our sport.

Coaches like motivational sayings and team mottoes. Is there a benefit to having these?

It doesn't hurt to have a slogan such as "Play Like a Champion" in the locker room that athletes can touch before taking the field.

However, I caution coaches not to adopt a "bumper sticker" approach to leadership. Having a motivational quote as a leadership philosophy is lazy leadership.

When it comes to motivation, it is all fear based.

For example, take the carrot and stick approach. There is fear involved with both of these. You have the fear of getting punished or the fear of not getting a reward.

Let's breakdown a common motivation slogan – "Tough Guys Don't Quit." What do players understand this to mean? Is the player ever put in a situation where this slogan could be harmful?

The best leadership cultures work together to solve problems. Everyone is involved, coaches, support staff, parents and athletes.

John Sikes, Editor www.championshipperform.com

Winning Ways

■ George Allen on Winning Cultures

Former Washington football coach George Allen once gathered the non-football staff a day after losing a game. Allen, who had a sign on his desk that asked "What are you doing now that's going to help us win?" asked the switchboard operators if they knew why Washington had lost. Allen told them, "Because you didn't answer the phone as good as the Giants." Allen went through a number of workers, telling each one the Giants' employees had performed their tasks better in the weeks leading up to the loss. A week later, Washington beat the Eagles and Allen gathered the employees again. When one worker congratulated Allen on the big win, he replied, "No, congrats to you. You're the reason we beat the Eagles."

■ Details Matter

A former NFL executive would have staff meetings - some featured ice cream if the team had won the previous game. The GM would preach why every job mattered and then would tell the groundskeeper, for example, if the crew slacked off and didn't fix a divot and a starting cornerback got hurt because of it, they would be contributing to the team losing.

The Cleveland Indian baseball club always took pride in the term "mission fit." The General Manager would sit down with interns who broke down tape and walked them through how they fit in the mission of the organization. The best teams have an unending mission that enrolls troops from the ground up.

■ Soccer Player's Jersey Trick

A forward on a European soccer forward was having problems with the opposing defensive players constantly grabbing his jersey in an effort to slow him down.

It got to the point that the player started rubbing olive oil or other slick substances on his jersey to counter the tactic. The amount of fouls against the player was cut down remarkably after he employed the tactic.

Addressing COVID Leadership Challenges

COVID Challenges. This virus has presented sports teams with unprecedented upheaval in routine. Becoming adaptable and staying focused are important traits to have for both coaches and athletes. What advice do you have to improve in these areas?

Crisis situations illustrate the best and worst of leadership. I can imagine coaches who were good at managing players truly struggling this time, and that is because managing people is one thing and leading them is quite another. You manage things: time, money, etc.; you lead people. The best leaders in periods of crisis know their people, and have been in regular personal contact with their players. They are asking them important questions like, “**How can I resource you better?**”, and “**What can I do to help you?**” as opposed to simply asking them about the work they have been doing on their own.

When your people are in isolation, it’s more important than ever to check in to ask, “How are you doing?” as an aside from your sport. It is about leading holistically and seeing the player as the person.

The coach could also ask how the family is doing. You might say, “Are you worried about getting sick? What about your parents or siblings?”

The goal should be to support the athlete where they are and find out what they need. By making more personal contact, you build relationships that grow stronger during difficult times.

I would also encourage athletes to talk more to each other via zoom. For example, they could set aside one hour where a group of five or six players has a social time to discuss whatever is on their minds. Really encourage them to keep track of one another.

Back to an earlier point, coaches usually give answers to players, i.e.: “do this”, “don’t do that”, “this is what you should do”. True leaders really connect by being curious and asking where the athlete see their struggles and what they feel they need to get better. If there is a difference between the perspective of the coach and the perspective of the athlete, it is an opportunity for more detailed discourse.

Examples: One player may say that they are struggling with nutrition, if they are not in a structured environment. Another may need more help designing a training workout from home.

The key to leading effectively, in times of crises or not, is about being more curious with those you lead, and listening to either educate them, resource them, or adapt to their perspective.

Developing Capacity V. Top Down Leadership

Developing capacity versus having a top down culture of obedience. Can you share what a good culture versus a toxic or poor culture looks like? Can you give a few examples of what developing capacity looks like on a sports team? It’s easy to spot a culture that isn’t working for the organization. Coaches enforce a culture of critique that often involves degrading statements toward players or athletes getting punished for the smallest reasons or mistakes.

The model for most coaches is that they will give their athletes solutions to common problems and obstacles they face. You teach them the 3 technique for example, they master it, and then you move on. That’s a known solution to a known problem.

But what if an athlete is in a situation without such an easily solvable problem?

Capacity is the ability to solve a new problem when they don’t have the answer readily available, or the coach there to ask. But you can’t always control variables.

Example: A lacrosse player is playing a 22 offense; they have to figure out how to slide. Instead of the coach telling the players how to slide, he could take a few minutes to get the athlete to walk through how they would solve the problem for himself. A simple question like, “Where do you think the slide should come from?” or “What about the second slide?” When they do that, the athlete owns the solution, not the coach. This builds confidence and leadership capacity.

Example 2: I worked with a pro football team and a wide receiver dropped a ball in practice. The assistant coach told him to place his hands in the proper position. But this is a pro. He already knows how to make proper use of hand position.

Instead, ask the player, “What just happened to cause you to drop this pass?” Usually, they could tell you something like, “I didn’t get my head around fast enough.” Only when the player doesn’t know how to describe what went wrong then you know they need coaching. Otherwise, you are over coaching.

So, let’s say a kid messes up on the field. They come to the bench and the coach will either say, “You’ll get it next time”, which is kind of useless praise. Or they will tell them what they need to do next time in the same situation not to make the mistake again. This is better, but the best thing to do is to ask the player, “What happened? What caused you to make the mistake?” Then they can think though that and internalize a given solution.

Zone in on Your Practice Purpose

Note: The following article is addressed directly to athletes.

Each season is like a whole new performance. No one knows the outcome until the final whistle sounds on the last game of the season. For both individuals and teams to have the best chance for success over the course of the year, they must be zoned in on their purpose. There was a book that has sold multi-millions world wide called "The Purpose Driven Life."

For athletes to have a great season instead of just an ordinary one, they must be purpose driven as well.

Their goals must inspire them with both enthusiasm and determination to do whatever is necessary to achieve them. It should encompass the specific things you want to commit to doing each day to achieve your goals. Athletes must answer the question:

What do I need to do and how do I need to act to prove that I am serious about getting better?

A series of goals will keep you on track in achieving your mission. Theoretically, if you accomplish each goal, your mission will be realized. Your mission includes all those things team members are willing to do to demonstrate how serious they are about improving.

Athletes can ask themselves: "What three or four key things am I willing to commit to doing in practice that will help me compete at a higher level

during actual competition?" Examples include sprinting back on defense every time, always diving for the loose ball when the opportunity comes, guarding tight the player you are defending to the best of your ability every possession. It all starts in practice and then can be carried over to the games. These are concrete behaviors that allows athletes to focus on the process of getting better which in turn brings them closer to their individual and team goals.

The University of Maryland women's lacrosse program is one of the most successful in the country. But instead of worrying about how rivals are getting better, their mission is to raise the bar even higher on from the previous season, previous game and most immediately from the first half of a game to a second.

To do that, they concentrate on what they need today to go execute a plan that demonstrates constant improvement. Their big goal every year is to win the national championship, but they are focused on doing the little things necessary to get that job done.

For example, every single Maryland player is very clear about what she had to do to improve offensively and defensively.

As long as she did this (her personal mission), her level of play consistently improved. This focus excites the players and coaches and as a result, practices were flooded with enthusiasm. The coaching staff made sure that each week's practice incorporated

ways for players to better their previous week's practice sessions. Athletes were excited to see themselves achieve stepping stone goals as they improved their games one piece at a time.

To keep enthusiasm high throughout the year, Maryland asks each athlete to commit to 3 personal goals for each practice. To increase accountability, the staff created a list of these goals with each athlete's name and passed them around for the entire team to read.

The coaching staff personally helps the athletes accountable for choosing specific aspects of their game to focus on.

Their behaviors and actions were recorded on paper and distributed to all team members so everyone knew what was going on. The controlled focus helped the team sustain their enthusiasm. Athletes can use these same techniques to zone in on their purpose.

Excerpted from the book Creative Coaching, by Dr. Jerry Lynch Human Kinetics Publishers www.humankinetics.com

“

(Hope + Trust) Fear = Courage > Fear.

”

JC Glick, Leadership Consultant

3 Keys to Motivate Bench Players

It is a television time out when the camera pans to the network’s commentators on the sideline who have special insights for the fans watching the game at home. The substance of the comments has to do with the conduct of the substitutes on the sidelines. The commentator remarks how uninvolved the players look on the sideline, even though the game is still close. It seems like the subs feel unimportant, frustrated, somehow inferior to the starters.

The other commentator interjects and says how things are different on the other side. Here everyone feels together as if each player is part of the team’s effort and feels able to contribute in some way toward affecting the outcome of the contest. The way it should be with all teams.

Creating a positive role for the substitute athlete is largely a matter of belief systems and context. Two perspectives are important: how substitute athletes view themselves and how their contribution is seen by the team. Positive belief systems foster respect and appreciation among all team members and cultivate the substitute player’s strengths. The intent here is to outline desirable belief systems and to offer practical coaching tips.

Recommendation: Here is what members of the team should be thinking. 1. *Desirable team belief systems:* All members of our team are equally important and valuable. All contributions to our team count.

We need everyone, substitutes and starters. We are here to encourage each other. No one puts anyone down. The efforts of the players who finish the game are as important, sometimes more so, than the players who start.

2. *Desirable beliefs for the substitute player.* “My turn will come. My

efforts are personally rewarding. I make an active contribution, even from the bench. I am mentally ready to play at any time.” This demands a degree of flexibility and rising to a challenge that starting players don’t experience.

3. *Coaching tips.* A) Offer equal time and treatment to all players. Avoid “all athletes are equal but some are more equal than others” thinking. Rotate a portion of the starting lineup each game, even when it is not necessary due to fatigue or injury.

B) De-emphasize the significance of starting. Starting positions offer maximum visibility, but what really counts is how the game ends. Discuss openly what motivates athletes. Shift focus from external to internal motivators.

C) Find things for substitutes to do on the sidelines. Utilize their observational skills to point things out and encourage them to act as record keepers. Turn bench warming into an active process. Reinforce desirable team and individual belief systems. Act as a role model for your athletes. Be generous in praising the contributions of substitutes.

Your task of maintaining a harmonious team united in a common effort is a critical one. People who feel appreciated and have a sense of belonging give more of themselves.

Eugene Gauron, Ed.D.

■ Peak Performance Bullets

■ Right and Wrong Types of Negative Thinking

Though negative thinking is something that should be avoiding as much as possible, it is a normal response to poor play. In fact, some negative thinking is healthy because it means that you care about how you are playing. However, the wrong kind of negative thinking can be very harmful to your performance.

There are two types of negative thinking. The first kind, ‘give up’ negative thinking, is associated with feelings of depression and helplessness. You say things like, “There is nothing I can do to play better” or “No matter how hard I try, I just can’t do it.” Give up negative thinking also causes you to dwell on past performances, focusing on mistakes made and bad results in recent matches. This type of thinking hurts confidence, focus, and motivation. Quite simply, there is never a place for give up negative thinking the mind of the competitive athlete.

The second kind is called fire up negative thinking. ‘Fire up’ negative thinking produces feelings of anger, energy and being psyched up. You say things such as, “I hate playing poorly and I’m going to play better the next game or next point,” or if you just lost you can say, “I am so mad that I am going to work twice as hard in practice this week.”

Here is an example of how to use ‘fire up thinking’ immediately: Let’s say you just got beat off the dribble and let your opponent score an easy lay-up. Instead of sulking and getting ticked off and committing a frustration foul, you can use that emotion and adrenaline to lock down your opponent the very next possession and tell yourself he or she will not get past me now.

The focus of fire up negative thinking is on doing better in the future. As a result, fire up negative thinking can be useful. However, it should not last too long because negative thinking and emotions drain a lot of energy that could be better used in other ways.

Jim Taylor, Ph.D www.drjimtaylor.com

Military Leadership for Athletics, cont.

On the field coaches may ask their athletes to have “situational awareness”, but there is a difference between “situational awareness” and “situational understanding”. Situational awareness is about knowing what is going on around you – situational understanding is knowing what is going on around you, knowing what it means, and knowing what to do about it. This is what we want as leaders.

If they didn’t know what to do in a given situation, what did that mean to them and me? Two questions for both athletes and soldiers: “So what is our situation?” “What do we need to do next?” We wanted them to be adaptive and to solve their own problems.

Defining the culture. Making a culture deliberate. How can sports teams accomplish this? What are the primary roles for the coach and athlete to make this a reality?

Great cultures are built from the people up and then driven from the top down. The team should set the core values in context and the coach should make sure they and their players are living by those values.

It’s important to avoid what I call ‘bumper sticker leadership’. For example, a team may have a statement in the locker room that says, “Work hard every day.” This isn’t well defined and people from different backgrounds and experiences will look at hard work differently. There are competing ideas to what this means. So, it’s crucial to define specific parameters of hard work means to the majority of your team. This context matters so everyone knows how to live by the values they establish.

Also, it’s important to note that some of the players who may offer the most “push back” can also be some of your higher aspiration team leaders. They may have specific ideas on how things should operate, and when you give them a voice in the development of culture, they don’t need to “buy-in”; it is their thoughts so they are “in” already”.

To get more buy in, ask the athletes what they want. Also, ask them how negative actions by themselves or another player, or by you as the leader, impacts the entire team.

Get them to think through how actions have a cause and affect on culture.

Come up with a culture statement. Who are we as an organization? This can be specific and generic at the same time.

Example: With the Rangers, we have something called The Ranger Creed. In this creed there are Ranger values, in context, that are both specific enough to tell you what your actions should be, but generic enough to have multiple applications. A line in the creed states – “Never shall I let a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy.” This could mean carrying our Fallen Rangers over mountainous terrain to ensure they were safe. But it could also mean making sure someone doesn’t have too many drinks and leaves the bar on time. The purpose was to look out for your brothers.

The creed, written in 1974, has its roots from Major Roberts Roger’s Rules of Ranging, written in 1757. Roger’s Rules was the first culture of Rangers. In the rules it stated, “Never lie to another ranger or officer.” Sometimes you may have to lie in a given situation to protect vital information. However, you must always be totally honest with those you work and serve with.

Back to defining what hard work. Does that mean 50 hours in the weight-room? That’s obviously too much. When you ask an athlete what they think hard work looks like, they will most likely tell you (as the coach) what they think you want to hear. The key is to let them know there are no correct/incorrect answers. You can coax out an honest response using humor at times.

The key is to get players to discuss what hard work looks like. Keep in mind, an inner city kid and a kid from the suburbs might have a different ideas of what a particular value looks like, just like people from all over the world see things differently. The goal is to get everyone in your organization to see each value the same and understand how to apply it appropriately depending on the context. Is ‘thinking’ part of hard work? Is ‘looking after your teammates best interest’ hard work? Just get players to use next level thinking to arrive at a common definition. Tell your players, “Hey, it’s ok for us to

have different opinions, but as a team we all need to see it the same way, and we will come to that consensus together.”

The bottom line is that if it’s not unethical, immoral, illegal, or unsafe, you can define your own leader principles. There are many ways to arrive at a common purpose through spirited debate.

From your time as a Ranger, did you do any beneficial team building activities that work well with sports teams? Describe one or two.

With the Rangers, we always worked as part of a team, the smallest being a two-person buddy team. The goal was to force people to problem solve together. The training involved creating shared hardships we had to work through together to solve. We would get a chance to rehearse what we would do together to reach solutions and solve problems.

Example: Let’s say you have a tutor for study hall. Instead of a tutor mentoring the player, make athletes pair up and help each other out academically.

Example 2: Let’s say you have a player, maybe a walk on who really excels at understanding the playbook. Instead of having the coach spend a lot of time on the ten percent of the team who can’t seem to master what they should be doing X and O wise, have that walk on impart their knowledge to others. These guys can be like substitute coaches who can talk through everything they are seeing on the field. You may often find that more talented players can learn from less talented or walk-ons, because they feel more comfortable talking to another player instead of a coach with questions they may have.

Back to the Army. I would often have to test my Soldiers, and in some tasks the first go-round, maybe only 50 percent could pass. I would have those 50 percent teach the other half how to pass the test. When I used this method, it only took half the time for everyone to pass, instead of the full time of teaching them by myself.

John Sikes, Editor www.championshipperform.com

Developing Team Captains and Senior Leaders

If you have a team where underclassmen are the best players, how does that impact the role of senior leaders? Should the best players automatically be elected captains?

The best players are not always the best leaders. If you have your team vote on captains, that could be a problem because the players will often vote 'stars' or who they believe most contributes to wins. The key is to find out as much as you can about all your players, regardless of class. If the coaches decide a younger player is ready for a leadership role, why not put them there?

Key: Can they handle being put in a tough spot? Do you think they are ready to lead - then let them?

If you insist on only seniors being leaders, you must have a program where potential leaders are identified as freshmen and sophomores and start training them, so they are ready to lead as seniors. Tell these players: "We see potential in you. Being selected as a potential future captain doesn't necessarily guarantee you the job as a senior."

So, what does that look like? Find the men and women you think can lead at a later time and have them meet with the current seniors monthly and discuss what the role looks like; find out what they are dealing with and encourage the younger players to ask questions on what being a leader actually involves. Take them through a problem-solving exercise.

Example: Several players are not showing up on time. The coaches want you to address this as senior leaders. How would you handle?

Another good thing to do is find an article or short story and break it down. It could be something about how a professional player leads his team or have the team comment on a story like the *Parable of Sadhu*, which presents an interesting ethical dilemma. Another is *Message*

to Garcia, which expresses the value of individual initiative and conscientiousness at work, but also the importance of providing good guidance as a leader. As its primary example, the essay uses a dramatized version of a daring escapade performed by an American soldier.

Also, TED talks on leadership topics are great to view as a group and then discuss. Ask the aspiring leader to find one to review and summarize the talk in front of the group.

Have you ever seen a leadership program that just didn't work out for whatever reason? What caused the failure?

One of key concepts to remember is that it takes a village to develop a great leadership culture. The leadership programs that don't work ignores this and usually takes a non-holistic approach. You want everyone involved at your program to be on board whether it's academics, nutritionist, faculty tutors and life skills people. Are we all living up to the values we set as an organization? Can we look parents in the eye and say, "We will make your student-athletes a better person and hold them to these ideals? We care about the total person."

It takes a team effort to develop the whole person. We want to do more than just make some of the athletes good captains. We want to prepare them for life.

What are your thoughts on developing leadership qualities - especially for those who may not be natural vocal leaders as some others?

Let's say you have a more quiet leader. This can be an advantage over a more vocal leader who is constantly getting on his or her teammates. They may think they are doing the right thing, but you often get pushback from teammates who don't appreciate getting called out by captains for a perceived lack of effort or mistakes made.

A better way for a captain to approach a teammate is to say something like, "I want to share something I've noticed about your play. You seemed to come up early on some ground balls."

Now the problem may not be laziness, it could be the kid is dealing with a minor injury. It's so important to always be solving the right problem. Be curious as a captain or team leader. What may look 'soft' to you is really something entirely different going on. Empathy is key. Looking at things from the other person's perspective is crucial.

People are complex. They are not robots. Your goal as a captain is to reach them where they are. Take a 'big picture' outlook.

It's better for team leaders to have conversations with their teammates rather than challenging or confronting them.

Showing you care for your teammate is more than just being patient with them. It's about giving them the space to fail and helping them learn from mistakes, rather than you simply trying to point out and fix those mistakes yourself.

Ask your teammate, "How can you execute this better next time so we don't repeat the mistake? You can offer suggestions, but it will build unity and confidence if the teammate can work through the mistake and come up with a solution.

The key is to facilitate the teammate's solution development. You can watch this on display. When an athlete fixes a problem on their own, they will get excited and be more inspired to achieve in the future.

John Sikes, Editor www.championshipperform.com

Please email comments, questions or address changes to:
info@championshipperform.com (We value your feedback)