

T.E.A.M.



LEADERSHIP

COACHES' MANUAL

“LEARNING TO LIVE & LEAD A LIFE OF **VICTORY**”

T.E.A.M. OWNER INFO

NAME: _____

SPORT: _____

PHONE #: _____

“You are never really playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits, that is real joy.”

– Arthur Ashe

"Champions do not become champions when they win the event, but in the hours, weeks, and months they spend preparing for it."

INTRODUCTION:

My name is Adam Winegarden. I have served as an Assistant Coach, Head Coach, Director of Leadership, and Athletic Director for more than 25 years. Every stop along the way has placed me in a different school, a different community, and a different set of circumstances – and every single one has taught me something. Through those experiences, I have developed one simple conviction: the most important thing we build in any program is not a record. It is a culture. And culture is built one conversation at a time.

T.E.A.M. Leadership is a program built on that conviction. It is directed toward student-athletes of any age, gender, or sport. At its core, this is about creating a oneness on your team – an alignment of expectations, mindset, and player leadership that does not depend on the coaches being in the room. How do we know when a program has achieved that? The answer is simple: when the players are modeling the behaviors and communicating the standards among themselves, without being told.

Whether your team is there yet or not, the response is the same – we have to get better. And the best way to get better is through an intentional plan that creates ownership. People learn through education, example, and experience. This program delivers all three, and gives your team the tools to become genuinely player-led.

As you go through each lesson, take one drop. When a single drop hits still water, it creates a ripple. When one person applies what they learn, it affects everyone around them. When an entire team does it together, that ripple becomes a tidal wave. A team that reaches its goals, improves through every circumstance, and leaves with a rewarding shared experience.

That is the mission of this program – to help you build a legacy and create a cycle of life-long success. We have a genuine opportunity to impact schools, communities, and the generations that come after us. Every player in this program was born to be special. This experience is designed to help them live like it.

Thank you for being a part of this program.

lessonsfromthegoalpost.com

“You Are Born To Be Special”



PURPOSE:

TEAM EXPECTATIONS AND MINDSET

The greatest achieving teams have a direct correlation between expectations and mindset. These teams are known as the "overachievers", they have the "it" factor, they are referred to as being the "special group." These teams will perform at their highest level based on their ability level. They inspire your community by playing with unique hustle, attitude, and teamwork.

They display these characteristics:

- 1) **STUDENT-ATHLETES:** There is a direct correlation between academic accountability and athletic performance. Great teams have responsible and respectful students.
- 2) **COMMITTED TO THE EXTRA:** The best teams are the best at doing the extra.... You can tell a lot about a team by how fast they leave the arena and leave the locker room. The best teams cannot get enough of the work and time together.
- 3) **COACHES CONCERNS:** Are tied to team execution, but never competitive spirit or effort. There is never a doubt that they will be ready to play with relentless effort.
- 4) **STANDARD OF BEHAVIOR:** Was taught by the staff but enforced through social acceptance within the team. Respect was earned by effort and commitment to standards.
- 5) **CREDIBLE LEADERS:** Top 10% are credible performers and teammates.
- 6) **COACHABLE NOT COMPLIANT:** Players apply instruction in front of coaches and away from coaches. There is a behavior change off the field and the players become an extension of the coaching staff.
- 7) **TEAM COHESION:** The team is made up of different friend groups rather than different clicks. They put aside differences and commit to a larger purpose. They have different personalities but are committed to one mindset.
- 8) **CONSISTENT IMPROVEMENT:** They can improve in success and failure. They can adapt in small (bad weather, etc.) to big change (injury, etc.). They respond with a spirit of improvement and toughness in adversity.
- 9) **ALL ARE VALUED:** A hierarchy is needed for decisions and responsibilities... But a hierarchy does not determine respect, caring, or worth of anyone. People feel valued at all levels regardless of their status on the team.
- 10) **HONEST AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE:** It is about getting better... point blank

" A coach is someone who tells you what you don't want to hear, who has you see what you don't want to see, so you can be who you have always known you could be. "

- Tom Landry

T.E.A.M. LEADERSHIP COACHING STRUCTURE

RATIONALE

WE REMEMBER:

10% of what we read

20% of what we hear

30% of what we see

50% of what we see and hear

70% of what we discuss with others

80% of what we personally experience

95% of what we teach others

I have been asked often: how do you know when you have a great culture?

My simple answer is this: when the players are talking like the coaches when we are not around. When it is only the coaches communicating the expectations and standards, we are not there yet. The transformation takes off when players begin speaking the same language with each other – without being prompted, without a coach in the room, because they have made it their own.

When it is just you talking, you are rolling the dice on whether you will have a player-led team. That is exactly why the T.E.A.M. Leadership Program has been so effective. It creates the moments where players have to discuss the program's standards together. When they verbalize the expectations in front of their teammates, ownership begins.

There are many ways to run this program, and you will decide what fits your situation best. What I know from experience is this: it is critical that you get the players talking in front of each other. This is unnatural for most and uncomfortable in the beginning. That discomfort is productive. With every rep, it becomes more natural. And the players who find their voice in these sessions are the ones who use it when it counts.

“Each person holds so much power within themselves that needs to be let out. Sometimes they just need a little nudge, a little direction, a little support, a little coaching, and the greatest things can happen.”

-Pete Carroll

BEST **T.E.A.M.** LEADERSHIP PRESENTATION MODEL

GROUP MANAGEMENT & APPROACH

- If possible, put groups in sizes allow for discussion. If possible, 12-15 people, depending on your situation and number of coaches.
- Lessons should last 20-30 Minutes
- Coach presents key topic & adds their own additional thoughts or presentation. The group then discusses each question. Each member is required to talk and is given feedback. Eventually players can lead the conversation.

THE FOUR-STEP PROCESS

1) READ AND DISCUSS KEY THOUGHT

- Please include personal thoughts, ideas, or experiences.
- Coaches' Guide includes suggestions to help lead discussion.
- This can be coach or player led, depending on situation.
- Any additional instruction, visuals, or correlating videos are encouraged.

2) EVERY MEMBER RESPONDS

- It is key to make them verbalize within their group. This is not optional.
- This will increase and become more comfortable as lessons progress.
- The dialogue will build trust (to share), respect (knowledge of individuals), and ownership (verbalizing core values).

3) GIVE FEEDBACK ON THEIR RESPONSE

- Respond to every player's answer. This helps reinforce that their thoughts are valued and encourages a comfortable sharing environment.

4) CLOSE STRONG

- Suggest taking up Player Manuals until program is complete.
- Revisit their goals at end of program.
- Allow players to keep them at the end.
- Players could have multiple manuals as they go through your program. Will allow them to reflect on how their goals and thought processes change as they mature.

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

- John Wooden

T.E.A.M. LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM

"To Guide Each Player to Live & Lead a Life of Victory"

T.E.A.M. EXPECTATIONS

LESSONS 1-4

- 1) **STUDENT ATHLETE**
Breeding Ground for Habits of Excellence
- 2) **COACHABLE PLAYER**
Follow the Blueprint of Success
- 3) **GREAT TEAMMATE**
The Most Valuable Asset & Experience
- 4) **LARGER PURPOSE**
Commit to the Mission

T.E.A.M. MINDSET

LESSONS 5-8

- 5) **SACRIFICE**
The Greatest do the Most
- 6) **DISCIPLINE**
The Greatest are Consistent
- 7) **TOUGHNESS**
The Greatest Face Adversity
- 8) **RELENTLESS EFFORT**
The Greatest are Elite Competitors

**BONUS SECTION FOR
PLAYER QUESTIONS & REFLECTION**

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." - Chinese Proverb

EXAMPLE PLAYER GOALS

Share this with players before they complete their own goals page.

STUDENT ATHLETE	
ACADEMIC GOALS 1) Improve my math grade. 2) Turn in all my work this year in all classes.	ACTION STEPS 1) Ask the teacher for help if I do not understand the assignment. 2) Do my homework as soon as I get home.
COACHABLE PLAYER	
ATHLETIC GOALS 1) To have an on-field role on the team. 2) To be known as the hardest working player on the team.	ACTION STEPS 1) Accept wherever the coaches put me and have a good attitude about it. 2) Go as hard as I can in everything we do. Never leave any doubt about my effort.
GREAT TEAMMATE	
CHARACTER GOALS 1) I want to get to know more people on my team. 2) To not let my emotions get the best of me and make poor decisions.	ACTION STEPS 1) Talk to 2 people a day I normally do not talk to. 2) Talk to someone or get away from the situation until I can do the right thing.
LARGER PURPOSE	
TEAM GOALS 1) Want us to be a close group that acts like a family every day. 2) Want us to be a team that nobody wants to play.	ACTION STEPS 1) Do not allow negativity in our locker room. Hold people accountable. 2) Be a leader that pushes everybody to play with unmatched effort. I must be the example of this every day.

BEFORE LESSON 1

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

-Nelson Mandela

COACH'S NOTE

This lesson gets the most surface-level answers from older players who feel like they already know what you are going to say. Do not skip past it. Ask them about their specific habits – not in general, but that day. What time did they get to school? Did they turn in the assignment that was due? How did they respond when a teacher corrected them? Make it personal and the conversation changes.

IF THE GROUP GOES QUIET: Ask: “Think about a coach who trusted you completely. What did you do to earn that?” Then flip it: “What would have made them NOT trust you?” The answers point directly back to attendance, assignments, and attitude – without you having to say it.



LESSON 1

STUDENT ATHLETE

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

Players are expected to give their “Best Effort” and compete in all areas of their daily lives. Attendance, Assignments, & Attitude are what you control every day as a student. This is a life skill; you will always have somewhere to be, something to do, and people to deal with. The school day is the breeding ground for habits of excellence. You reinforce great habits every time you show up, do the work, and treat people well. A great day in school helps you have a great day on the athletic field. There is a direct correlation between a responsible student and a trusted athlete.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you prove with attendance, turning in assignments, and having a great attitude?

You are proving that you can be counted on and trusted. This happens with consistent choices to do the right thing in any environment. You are reinforcing this mindset every day in school. Coaches play players they trust.

- 2) What education are you gaining from sports?

Athletics is the greatest way to practice life before you live it. Accountability, responsibilities, relationships, and adversity are unavoidable in life. This will occur at home, at your job, and in the community. Nothing is given and everything is earned, just like in athletics.

- 3) Go to the Player Goal Page and list 2 Academic Goals and an Action Step (what you can do consistently) for each goal.

Players need to write measurable goals and specific, executable action steps. Vague goals produce vague results. Push them toward specificity: not “do better in school” but exactly what they will do, consistently, starting tomorrow.

BEFORE LESSON 2

“My best skill was that I was coachable, I was a sponge and aggressive to learn.”

-Michael Jordan

COACH'S NOTE

The word coachable is one of the most overused and least understood words in athletics. Most players think it means doing what they are told. When you hear that answer, push back. Ask them: “What about when the coach is not watching? When no one would know? When it is inconvenient?” Coachability is a lifestyle, not a performance. The breakthrough comes when a player identifies an area where they take instruction on the field but ignore it in school or at home.

IF A PLAYER SAYS THEY ARE ALREADY COACHABLE: Ask: “Give me one specific example of a time you applied coaching when you did not want to.” If they cannot answer specifically, the lesson is still needed. Specificity is the test of whether it is real.



LESSON 2

COACHABLE PLAYER

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

A willing learner is the primary component to a great learning environment. We must be able to accept team expectations, discipline, and instruction. An athletic program has a blueprint for your success, is a privilege, and must be earned.

Your success and development will greatly depend on your ability to be coachable. A coach's primary purpose is to help you, and the team become its best version. The faster a player can learn a concept, the quicker they can be taught a new concept. Applying a coaches' instruction is the foundation of improvement. Not being coachable is the fastest way to not reach your goals.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How would you define being Coachable?

Being coachable is bigger than doing what you are told to do. This is about a change of behavior, do you apply instruction in front of coaches and away from coaches? Great players take coaching and change their lifestyle.

- 2) How does Coachability make you a Better Player and us a Better Team?

Coaches have the blueprint for your success and are trying to guide you step by step. The path to improvement as an individual and as a team comes from a commitment to the plan.

- 3) Go to the Player Goal Page and list 2 Athletic Goals and an Action Step (what you can do consistently) for each goal.

Players need to write measurable goals and specific, executable action steps. The goal of being "better" is not enough. What does better look like specifically, every single day?

BEFORE LESSON 3

“A player who makes a team great is more valuable than a great player. Losing yourself in the group, for the good of the group, that’s teamwork.” – John Wooden

COACH’S NOTE

This lesson is typically the most emotional for older players who have real relationships in the room. The P.A.T. exercise works best when you do it live in the session – one compliment, out loud, to someone specific. Watch what happens in the room. The players who resist it most are usually the ones who struggle most with this quality in real life. Do not skip past that moment.

IF THE DISCUSSION STAYS SURFACE LEVEL: Ask: “Tell me about a time a teammate did something for you that you never forgot.” Then: “Did they know how much it meant?” That second question opens the conversation about the power of small, intentional acts.



LESSON 3

GREAT TEAMMATE

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

Players will respect, support, and encourage all on the team. Working against a team culture should not be tolerated. The TEAM will be the most valuable experience within any program. People may not always remember how you play, but they will remember how they are treated. Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much. Encouragement, help, time, and accountability are the greatest gifts we can give to others. Teamwork is the fuel that common people use to achieve uncommon results. This will be your greatest legacy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How would you describe a Great Teammate?

Someone that not only treats others with respect but, seeks out ways to serve others on the team. Their presence makes other people better through positive interaction and genuine accountability.

- 2) P.A.T. (Praise A Teammate) is when one compliments, high fives, or recognizes another teammate. Why is this important?

Every time you reach out to a teammate, you are sending the message that it is not about you. That the other person is valued, that you have their back, that you believe in them, & that you can do this together. This must be intentional.

- 3) Go to the Player Goal Page and list 2 Character Goals and an Action Step (what you can do consistently) for each goal.

Players need to write measurable goals and specific, executable action steps. Character goals are the hardest to write specifically. Push them past "be a better teammate" and into exact, concrete behavior.

BEFORE LESSON 4

“I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle... victorious.” -Vince Lombardi

COACH'S NOTE

Lesson 4 is the hardest to get players to take seriously before the season starts. When energy is high, purpose feels abstract. Save your most personal example for this lesson. Tell them your own “why” – not a general statement, but a specific moment when you remembered why you coach. When coaches are vulnerable about their purpose, players become vulnerable about theirs. That vulnerability is exactly what this lesson is looking for.

IF PLAYERS GIVE GENERIC ANSWERS: Ask: “What is one thing about this team that you could not get anywhere else?” Then: “What would you lose if this team was not in your life right now?” The second question connects purpose to something real and present – not theoretical.



LESSON 4

LARGER PURPOSE

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

What drives each person is relevant to that individual. However, when it is just about yourself, most plans will fail. Great teams are comprised of individuals committed to a unified mission. Every player is unique, has value, and is “Born to be Special”. Together we work to create a better version of ourselves and in service of others. A team can have different personalities but must have one mindset. Choose to prepare and compete for a common goal or cause. Heroes are not defined by their individual action but for the cause in which they act.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) What do you enjoy about being on a Team?

These answers may vary but are meant for them to self-actualize that what they gain from being a part of a team is greater than individual goals. Their greatest moments will come from their experience together.

2) What motivates or drives you to do your very best?

These answers will also vary but are meant to connect what motivates them to their larger purpose. What drives us has a direct correlation to our identity. Help them see that clearly.

3) Go to the Player Goal Page and list 2 Team Goals and an Action Step (what you can do consistently) for each goal.

Players need to write measurable goals and specific, executable action steps. Team goals should reflect something the entire group can contribute to – not just individual desires.

MID-PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY CHECK-IN

Use at the start of Lesson 5, or between Lessons 4 and 5

Before moving into the Mindset section, send players back to the goals they set in Lesson 1. Without this step, goals are written once and forgotten. With it, they become a living accountability tool.

STEP 1 – RETURN TO THE GOALS PAGE

Have every player open their manual to the Player Goals page. Give them two minutes of silence to read what they wrote. Do not skip this step. Players need to sit with what they said they would do and honestly assess whether they have done it.

STEP 2 – SELF-ASSESSMENT (Written First)

- Which of your four goals have you made real progress on?
- Which goal have you done the least work on? Be honest.
- What has gotten in the way – a genuine obstacle or a choice?
- What is one specific action you will take this week on your least-progressed goal?

STEP 3 – PARTNER ACCOUNTABILITY

Pair players – not their closest friend. Each person shares one goal they are proud of, one goal they need to work harder on, and one specific commitment for the next two weeks. The slight discomfort of accountability outside their inner circle produces more honest answers.

STEP 4 – GROUP CLOSE

“What is one thing you are going to do differently in the second half of this program that you have not been doing in the first half?” Hear from three to five players. Let the most honest voices set the tone.

COACH'S NOTE

Write a brief note in the margin of two or three player manuals each session. It takes sixty seconds and sends the message that you are paying attention to the individual, not just running a program. When players know you have read their goals and will ask about them, the goals page transforms from a one-time exercise into a real accountability relationship.

THE BRIDGE

From T.E.A.M. Expectations to T.E.A.M. Mindset

Read this to your group before beginning Lesson 5.

In the first four lessons, you established the foundation. Your players have defined what it means to be a student-athlete, a coachable player, a great teammate, and someone committed to a larger purpose. They have set goals, built shared language, and begun the work of genuine ownership.

That was the first half of this program.

The next four lessons go deeper. They are not about what we expect – they are about the internal qualities that make it possible to meet those expectations when it is hard.

When the season gets long, when results do not match effort, when someone is frustrated or struggling – it is not the rules that hold a team together.

It is the mindset.

Sacrifice, Discipline, Toughness, and Relentless Effort are not things we do. They are things we become. Before you begin Lesson 5, ask your group this question and give them time to sit with it:

*“You have told us what kind of team you want to be.
The next four lessons will determine whether you actually become it.”*

Give thirty seconds of silence after that question. Do not fill it. Then begin Lesson 5.

BEFORE LESSON 5

“He who would accomplish little need sacrifice little; he who would achieve much must sacrifice much. He who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.” -James Allen

COACH'S NOTE

Before this lesson, have a specific story ready – a player from your experience, not a famous athlete, who modeled sacrifice and changed something in your program. Describe exactly what they did and exactly what it produced. A real story of sacrifice from someone they might know carries ten times the weight of a definition. If you do not have that story ready before you walk in, this lesson will stay shallow.

IF PLAYERS CONFUSE SACRIFICE WITH OBLIGATION: Ask: “What is something you did for this team that nobody required? That nobody knew about? That nobody thanked you for?” That question separates real sacrifice from compliance and gets to the heart of what this lesson is about.



LESSON 5

SACRIFICE

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

Great players and teams go beyond the normal, they do the extra work to be great. Doing what the team requires is not sacrifice, sacrifice is going beyond what is expected. It is when one gives up something of personal value (time, feelings, resources) for the sake of improvement, service, or team success. Do not be afraid to stand out in the crowd and do the extra. The harder we work makes it harder for us to surrender. The more we invest, the more we protect the investment. Sacrifice is the proof that you have passion to improve. The difference between the good and the great, is their ability to sacrifice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What does Sacrifice mean to you?

Guide them to understand that sacrifice is to go beyond team requirements. The most valuable resource we have is time and we must be willing to use it to improve. This can be in service of others or for personal development.

- 2) What is one way a player can Sacrifice for the Team?

Helping a teammate, doing extra workouts, studying the playbook, cleaning the locker room, etc. This could be a number of player actions. What matters is that it is voluntary and it costs them something personal.

- 3) What is something I need to start or do more of to improve?

Answers will vary but needs to be specific to what each individual needs for personal improvement. They need to self-actualize a personal weakness and verbalize an action to improve.

BEFORE LESSON 6

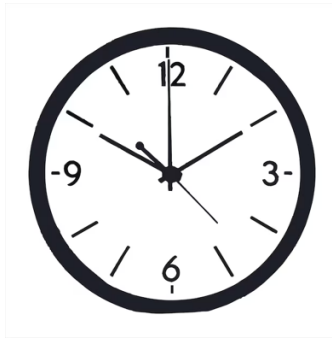
“We Are What We Repeatedly Do. Excellence Therefore, Is Not An Act But A Habit.”

– Aristotle

COACH'S NOTE

The most common mistake with this lesson is keeping the conversation on the field. Push it into private life. What does a disciplined player's morning look like before they get to school? What do they say no to? Discipline is not a game-day quality – it is built in every ordinary moment before game day. If players only associate discipline with athletic performance, this lesson will not transfer into the rest of their lives.

IF PLAYERS STRUGGLE TO CONNECT DISCIPLINE TO DAILY LIFE: Ask: “What is one thing you do every day – not because anyone is checking – that you believe makes you better?” Then: “What is one thing you know you should do consistently that you currently are not doing?” The second question is where the real conversation starts.



LESSON 6

DISCIPLINE

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

Discipline is about CHOICES... NOT FEELINGS. The key to any improvement is consistency in action. If you want to achieve success, then there has to be a commitment to the right process. Disciplined players are where they are supposed to be, doing what they are supposed to do, and when they are supposed to it on a consistent basis. There is always something we should do but don't want to do... The right answer to this problem separates you from the competition. Successful athletics will always require the trust in each person.

Trust is gained through consistent action in every part of a player's life.

Discipline is the highway to becoming a player led team.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) What does Discipline mean to you?

Consistency in being where you are supposed to be, doing what you are supposed to do, and how you are supposed to do it. Disciplined players do not need external motivation to be accountable to their actions.

2) How would you describe a Disciplined Player?

A self-motivated individual that lives with structure, is trustworthy, makes the right choices, and does it consistently.

3) What do you need to do consistently to be your best?

These answers will vary but needs to be centered around their personal choices. That discipline has everything to do with taking intentional action. How much you care is not found in thoughts or ideas, but in what you do.

BEFORE LESSON 7

“Champions are made from something they have deep inside them – a desire, a dream, a vision. They have to have the skill, and the will. But the will must be stronger than the skill.” -Muhammed Ali

COACH'S NOTE

Toughness is the lesson where players are most likely to perform instead of participate. They will give you the tough answer because they want to look tough in front of their teammates. Your job is to get underneath that. Ask them about a specific moment when toughness cost them something – not a moment when it was easy, but when they genuinely wanted to quit and did not. If no one has that story, tell your own.

IF THE DISCUSSION STAYS PHYSICAL: Ask: “Tell me about a moment when you were mentally done – not physically hurt, just mentally done – and you found a way to keep going.” Mental toughness is harder to talk about than physical toughness. The discomfort in the room is productive. Sit in it.



LESSON 7

TOUGHNESS

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

Toughness is the WINNING EDGE... It is built anytime someone does the right thing over feelings, fear, or the easy way. Toughness is a choice and is more mental than physical. This choice is pre-determined and needs to be made before the moment. The choice is to not quit, stay committed, and keep pushing forward. Toughness is a trained skill and will get better or worse. This is a life-skill because adversity is unavoidable. Athletics is the greatest way to practice life before we live it. Successful teams can overcome adversity and difficult situations. Those that can display this quality will surpass others quickly. This is the #1 indicator of highly successful people and will define you as a competitor.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What does Toughness mean to you?

Guide them to understand that toughness is more mental than physical. That all choices to overcome adversity starts with the mind. That the #1 factor in successful people, is the ability to overcome and work hard.

- 2) How does a Player demonstrate Toughness?

Whether great or small, any time a player does the right thing over the feeling to do the opposite. This could be as simple as doing your homework when you do not feel like it, or as intense as battling through physical pain to compete.

- 3) How does a Team demonstrate Toughness?

Tough teams continue to compete at their highest level through changes, adversities, and failures. There is a sense of oneness toward a unified expectation to prepare and compete.

BEFORE LESSON 8

“Continuous effort – not strength or intelligence – is the key to unlocking our potential.” -Winston Churchill

COACH'S NOTE

Before this session, identify the player in your current group who most embodies relentless effort right now – not the most talented, the most relentless. Name them in the session. Describe specifically what you have seen them do. Then ask: “What would this team look like if every person in this room competed that way?” End with the Mirror Test. Ask it by name. Let it sit. Do not rush past it.

IF PLAYERS GIVE GENERAL ANSWERS: Ask: “Give me one specific moment – a drill, a practice, a rep – where you left everything you had on the field.” If they cannot name a specific moment, ask them why. That answer is the real conversation.



LESSON 8

RELENTLESS EFFORT

KEY THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

This is about your “WARRIOR SPIRIT.” Effort has nothing to do with talent, ability, social status, or physical appearance. Effort has everything to do with your will to compete and give your all in everything. This quality should never be questioned as a great competitor. Effort must be a non-negotiable in your team mindset. When a player is relentless, their effort is undeniable. Effort will give an individual and a team its best chance to be successful. Many times, the winner will be the one that simply keeps playing with their best effort. Teams must be able to play with a Warrior Spirit from the beginning to the end of competition. Your best effort is the only way to pass the “Mirror Test.”
Nothing is given, everything is earned.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What does Relentless Effort mean to you?

This description can go a lot of ways, but the bottom line is that relentless effort is undeniable. Those that play with it, separate themselves from the pack. They stick out in every drill, practice, and game. A team that plays with it, goes beyond their ability level.

- 2) Describe someone you know that gives Relentless Effort?

Want to guide them to match or exceed the effort of the person they describe. Verbalizing that they know how to recognize relentless effort. Their answers will vary, but also a way to recognize current or past players on the team.

- 3) What can hold you back from giving Relentless Effort?

Make them verbalize and recognize the hurdles that keep them from being their very best. Talk about choices that will help them get past those mental hurdles. This is where accountability becomes personal.

EXTRA QUESTIONS & SELF-REFLECTION

These questions are available for individual conversations, leadership team discussions, or as supplemental material for any lesson. They are not a list to get through – they are tools to go deeper when the group is ready.

MENTAL TOUGHNESS & MOTIVATION

- Describe a moment when you felt like quitting. What kept you going?
Players need to realize they can overcome the mental battle of giving up. If they can do it one time, they can do it all the time. It becomes a habit and a standard.
- How do you handle performing when you're having an off day, but your team needs you to show up?
We all have days that we are not feeling it... But the great competitor can flip the switch. They have a mental trigger when it is time to compete.
- Why did you start playing your sport, and why do you continue to play?
Important for us all to remember why we started... Players usually lose sight of this, the longer they play. The "Why" should reset your mindset.
- What is the biggest sacrifice you've made to succeed in your sport?
Sacrifice is going beyond what the coach expects... This is an investment... One they should make them proud, and it is the proof they can do more.
- What is your strongest asset, and what is your weakest?
Players need to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses... Build on their strengths and have the humility to improve their weaknesses.

LEADERSHIP & TEAM DYNAMICS

- Tell me about a time when you had to step up as a leader, even if you didn't feel ready.
Leadership takes courage when it is not natural. Speaking up, being the example, or doing the right thing can be hard when you are in the minority. Do it anyway
- Does your motivation come more from self-focus or team focus?
Players are either internally or externally motivated. Either is fine if it brings out their best. However, the best have their own drive and a love for the team.
- How do you deal with, or help, a teammate who is struggling?
They must reflect on how they communicate in these moments. Their tone, messaging, and listening skills are critical. They can be a positive or a negative.

REFLECTIVE & GROWTH-ORIENTED

- What is your proudest achievement as an athlete?

Great moments give us confidence. It is important to remember these times and feel that exhilaration. Confidence can easily get better or worse in sports.

- How do you deal with injuries or setbacks?

Did we answer the bell and face the adversity? These times are disappointing but can be a great life lesson. These moments can help us find our true self.

- What do you believe to be one of your weaknesses, and what are you doing to improve it?

We must have the humility to recognize our weaknesses and the motivation to improve them. It is easy to only work on your strengths. The greats do both.

- What's a piece of advice you'd give your younger self?

We can all look back at our mindset from the past and wish we have done some things different. This should be what you avoid now and pass on to new players.

PRE-GAME & PERFORMANCE PREP

- What does your pre-game routine include to prepare your mind and body?

Great players have a successful routine and are consistent with the process. When performance slips, it is usually because they have slacked in the process.

- What does your "best game" look and feel like?

Visualization is key in great performance. If the first time you have played the game is on gameday... Then you are failing. Visualize the game over and over.

- How do you manage your emotions before and during a game?

Playing with great emotion leads to great performance. However, playing emotional leads to being out of control. It is important to know the difference.

- What can I control in my environment, and what is "noise" I should ignore?

Every athlete faces distractions, and they come in different forms. It is important that they are recognized, blocked out, and focus is on team execution.

- What do others see when I play with confidence?

The best impact those around them and raise their level of play. The vibe you give off in competition is critical to the spirit of the team. Be mindful...

- What is my ideal intensity level, and how can I achieve it?

Great players must realize their personal switch that gets them to a high level. They must recognize this and understand it is critical to their success.

A FINAL WORD

To Every Coach Who Runs This Program

You just gave your players something most of them will not fully understand until years from now.

The conversations they had in these eight lessons – the first time they were asked to be honest about their goals in front of their teammates, the first time someone said something encouraging out loud, the moment a player admitted they had not been giving their best and committed to changing it – those moments do not show up in a box score. But they are exactly the kind of moments that shape a person.

You created those moments. That is not a small thing.

What I have learned in 25 years of this work is that the teams that experience real transformation through this program are almost never the most talented. They are the ones where the coach decided that the conversations mattered as much as the reps. Where the discussion was not something to get through before getting back to work – but was part of the preparation itself. Where every player felt that what they said in that room was heard, valued, and remembered.

That is entirely within your control. The program gives you the structure. Your voice, your stories, your investment in the specific players in that room – that is what gives it life. No curriculum creates culture. Coaches do.

Three Questions Worth Asking Yourself When the Program Is Complete:

1. Which player surprised you most in these sessions? Have you told them what you saw?
2. Which player still has not fully bought in? What is the one conversation you have not had with them yet?
3. What is one thing you will do differently as a leader because of what you heard in these sessions?

The program ends. The work does not. Every player who went through these eight lessons is carrying something – a goal they set, a standard they heard, a commitment they made out loud in front of their team. Your job now is to hold them to it. Not with pressure, but with presence. By remembering what they said. By asking about the goal they wrote down. By noticing when they are living up to it and saying so.

That is the one drop that starts the ripple.

“You were born to be special. Now go help them be it.”

Coach Adam Winegarden

lessonsfromthegoalpost.com

**“YOU WERE BORN TO BE SPECIAL.
NOW GO HELP THEM BE IT.”**