



TEAM MEETING

As the players trickled in, there was something different about the atmosphere. It wasn't depressing like the room normally was after a loss.

James and Antonio were also two of the first people there. That was remarkably strange but in a good way.

"Hey, James. Hey, Antonio. Sorry about the mix up in time," said Brandon.

"What do you mean?" asked James.

"Well, you're here early. It's not yet 4:00. You must have thought I said 3:30 or something like that."

"Haha funny, Brandon," said Antonio. "We heard the right time. We're just here early."

"Cool. I'm just messing with you. We'll get started soon,"

"That's fine. We were just a little convicted watching that documentary last night about the Dream Team," said James. "If it was good enough for the best team ever in the history of sports, then maybe we should be a little bit more respectful and start being on time."

"Plus, maybe one day Mr. Frank will be sick, and we'll have a substitute bus driver that actually leaves us behind," added Antonio with a smile.

“I’m not sure a bus driver would leave a player behind but maybe Coach would finally follow through on his threats,” said Brandon.

Almost in unison, James and Antonio repeated the line that Coach Dunn had often said, “My Coach left me behind my senior year of college and so any of you could get left behind also.”

“Regardless though,” said Brandon. “You guys are saying things that are directly related to why Learie and I wanted to have a team meeting today.”

By now, all 12 players had arrived, so Learie opened up the meeting.

“Brandon and I were talking last night on the bus. I’m sure that you all heard that my dad got on Coach pretty hard after the game. That is how the conversation with Brandon started. We’ve been friends for a long time so he could say some things to me that if someone else said them, I’m not sure I would have listened.”

Learie continued, “During our talk, I came to realize that I wasn’t taking responsibility for my actions. I was making way too many excuses. Because I’m a senior, I’ve been getting more and more frustrated about not playing. But this was leading me to act less and less as a senior should act. I realized that I was not being the leader that this team needed whether I was playing or not. I wasn’t setting a good example. I wasn’t taking responsibility for my actions.”

“Learie is right,” said Brandon. “Our night started off rocky with the poor performance in the game and then his dad got up in Coach’s grill. But I think some good came out of it. We might meet with the officials before each game. We might have a ‘C’ next to our name on the roster. Our resume might say ‘Captain’. All those things might be true, but we have to be more positive leaders.

“Sure, Learie has made excuses and not always acted like a captain but we can all do better,” continue Brandon. “We can all take more responsibility for our actions. After all, we have a collective responsibility. We’re responsible to and for each other. Our actions and attitudes affect more than just us. Overall, as your leaders, we

haven't done what we need to do. We have a position, and maybe some status, but we haven't earned it day after day. We need to do a better job of helping this team be the best it can be. Not everything that happens is our fault just because we're captains, but it is our responsibility to find a way to make things better. We're the team captains and we need to do everything we can to make sure that we're getting better and creating the right culture. You guys need us to be better leaders. We may be your captains. We may have a position of leadership, but you need us to actually be good leaders."

The room was silent. Every eye was focused on Brandon and Learie as they spoke. What they were saying was a surprise, but it made sense in a weird way that the players had not previously thought about. As they processed their words, they realized that Learie and Brandon may be right, but the team had confidence they would be the leaders they needed moving forward.

"Hey guys, thanks for sharing," said Jaylen. "I don't know about the rest of the team, but I believe in you and am glad that you are our captains. You guys are leaders, but it makes sense what you are saying. There's always room for improvement. Plus, we probably haven't been very good followers, either. We can all do better."

"I agree with Jaylen," said Matt. "You guys are our captains for a reason. Whether or not you think you've done a good job, doesn't matter right now. All that matters now is that you want to get better and that motivates me. I want to get better, too. If you think you can do better, then we all should feel the same way and want to make ourselves better."

Matt continued with his thought, "What you're saying is interesting, because Chaz and I had a conversation last night, too. We talked about starring in your role. About excelling in a role. When you are excellent in the role you have, everybody on the team benefits. Championship teams are made up of a bunch of stars. Not necessarily people in the spotlight but people excelling in their roles that complement one another. There were some things I hadn't really

thought much about before. Talking with Chaz last night and then hearing you today makes me really want to try to be better and make this team better moving forward.”

“Well aren’t you all just so precious,” said James sarcastically. “Here Antonio and I thought we were the ones trying to turn over a new leaf, start fresh, and begin living right. But, nooooo! You guys have to go and steal our thunder. We thought we’d be the ones looking good since we were late but with this confessional taking place, I just don’t know. Seriously though, this is awesome. By the way, in case you didn’t notice or hear me the first time, Antonio and I were on time today.”

“Actually, you were early,” said Learie with a smirk.

“Okay, yeah, but I didn’t want to go full on brag-mode,” said James. “Anyway, we were early to this meeting because we realized last night that by being late to everything, we were essentially disrespecting all of you. We were saying that we were more important than you guys. We were acting all entitled and everything. We’re sorry and will try to do better in the future. No guarantees that we’ll always be early like today, but we should always be on time from here on out.”

“James is definitely speaking for me about all of this stuff,” echoed Antonio. “But listening to him talk, along with what Matt said and Brandon and Learie said, I think this meeting went a different direction than most of us probably expected after a loss.”

Just as remarkably as James and Antonio showing up early to a meeting, 12 heads seemed to be simultaneously shaking up and down in unanimous agreement.