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LEADING OTHERS

“The final piece in a championship team is leadership. The most attractive type of leadership to me is the student-athlete who is a coach on the field. I want a driving force who won't let standards slip. That's how teams with ordinary talent can win championships. Without leadership, even a team with great talent will struggle to become a champion.”

– Anson Dorrance

“A good leader gets people to follow him because they want to, not because he makes them.”

– Tony Dungy

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

“You won't win consistently without good team leadership. It's just that plain and simple. You've got to have players who are willing to buy into your system, demand the best from themselves and their teammates, and hold their teammates accountable.”

– Pat Summitt

“Only a life lived for others is worth living.”

– Albert Einstein

It is not just enough to lead yourself effectively, you must also have a positive influence on others. John C. Maxwell says “A leader without followers is just someone taking a nice walk.” If you are a captain or an upperclassman, this will be obvious. However, if you are a player that doesn’t have any kind of positional leadership, then this might seem difficult to do. You understand that you have to lead yourself and you are committed to doing what is right. But, lead others? How are you supposed to do that?

Every player has close friends on their team. You might not be good friends with every one of your teammates, but you do have some close friendships. Those are going to be the people that you lead most effectively. We are influenced by people that we like and trust. You might not be able to influence every member of your team but you will be able to lead some of them. Those of the ones that you need to focus the majority of your attention on. Your positive (or negative) influence will be most evident among your circle of friends.

The first step to being a leader is to lead yourself. The next step is to lead others. In particular, those that you are closest to. If you are leading yourself the wrong way, then you will lead your friends the wrong way. You will either be the ringleader of bad choices or you will allow poor choices to be made while you remain quiet and approving of the actions.

Ultimately, you will become like the people that you hang out with the most and they will become like you. The ideal situation is that you and your friends are influencing each other in a positive way. If this is not the case, then the question becomes, who will have the most influence? Even in situations where a group of friends is not all positive influences, there is still some type of influence going on. Either you are influencing your friends positively or they are influencing you in a less than positive manner. You must lead others positively in order to have a chance to create that championship culture on your team that you desire. Granted, you can’t do it by yourself.

You also can’t lead everyone because you won’t have a friendship or a strong connection with everyone on the team. Those you have the strongest connection with are the ones that you will be able to lead most effectively. You might say, “the team won’t listen to me” and you might be right. However, your friends will listen to you. The wonderful thing about that is you just might be starting a chain reaction that ends up with the whole team

listening to you without them even knowing that. It is rare that a group of friends is completely self-contained and doesn't have strong relationships with others. For example, your three closest friends all probably have at least one other person that they are close to that you aren't as close with. This ripple effect is how your influence can eventually influence an entire team.

LARRY FITZGERALD

The wide receiver position in football typically requires a look-at-me attitude and a whole lot of bravado. A lot of people sure looked at the Arizona Cardinals' Larry Fitzgerald but it was not because he sought out the limelight or exhibited brash behavior. Larry Fitzgerald certainly had an aura of look-at-me but it wasn't in the way you would generally think.

He didn't demand the ball, respect or attention by holding press conferences, sub-tweeting his feelings or yelling at people on the sidelines. He let his actions speak louder than his words. He got passes because it helped the team, not because he demanded to be thrown to. His work ethic and positive attitude were well-known.

Josh Weinfuss of ESPN.com wrote a really good article outlining Fitzgerald's work ethic and example. Not only does Fitzgerald lead himself but it rubs off on his teammates according to his coach Bruce Arians,

“You see guys creating foundations and doing things in the community to try to model his, which is tough to model. But more than anything, all our wide receivers block. Everybody practices hard, especially in that room, and that’s what you ask of all your veterans, is to set an example in your room. He’s as good as it gets.”

His teammates have definitely noticed. During J.J. Nelson’s rookie year as a wide receiver for the Arizona Cardinals, he took note of Fitzgerald’s work ethic and it helped shape his outlook on playing in the NFL.

"He's 30-plus and he comes in each and every day to work," Nelson said. "To me, that made me feel like I don't have any excuses. I feel like I should do the same thing."

Arizona Cardinals center A.Q. Shipley echoes much of J.J. Nelson’s sentiments concerning Larry Fitzgerald’s example,

"Just watching him practice, watching him come to work every day, watching him in the training room, he's the consummate pro. It's incredible watching a guy who's played as long as he has in the league going out on a Thursday when we're not in pads, diving for balls, never taking a play off in practice.

Are you a player that others look at and see behavior that they want to model? Larry Fitzgerald had a positive influence on his teammates because of his work ethic and attitude. He doesn’t even have to say a word for teammates to follow him.

JERRY RICE

Jerry Rice is considered the greatest wide receiver in the history of the NFL. In fact, many people would argue that he is the greatest football players ever, period. His work ethic was well-known, which partially enabled him to play at a high level for 20 years even though he wasn’t considered the fastest or the strongest. One of his former coaches, Mike Shanahan,

described his work ethic,

“Every day during the off-season, Jerry would be up a 6:00 AM going through his strenuous stretching drills. He would run seven 5-yard shuttles, which he called “stop and go’s,” and fourteen more 40-yard dashes up and down the field. Then he would line up fluorescent orange cones across the field and weave in and out of each one six times at full speed, working on his acceleration and cutting ability. When he finished with the cones, he would run six more 40-yard dashes, and then 20-yard patterns until he was flat-out exhausted.

Then he would lift weights in as quick a rotation as possible, no resting. Bench presses, seated bench presses, incline bench press, power lifts, dumbbell curls with increasing weights. I get tired just writing about it. It didn’t take me long to understand why every time we got to the fourth quarter of a game, while most of the players were slowing down, Jerry could run as fast he did on the first play of the game.”

Jerry Rice didn’t have the 40-yard dash time and some wondered if he wasn’t faster with pads on than when he was just on a track. In all seriousness, though, having a work ethic like Rice did explains a lot of his success. Certainly, he had talent but relative to some of the other receivers in the league, he didn’t have as much. His work ethic allowed him to be faster and stronger when it mattered. He worked religiously for years so that he could play at a high level for years.

JULIO JONES

In week 4 of the 2016 NFL season, Atlanta Falcons wide receiver Julio Jones became just the 6th player in NFL history to amass 300 yards receiving in a single-game. He would go on to lead the Falcons to the Super Bowl and earn his 4th Pro Bowl appearance in only his sixth season. One of his role models growing up was Jerry Rice. Just like Rice, Julio Jones is known for his unassuming nature, his toughness in playing through

injuries and his incredible work ethic. In an ESPN.com interview, Jones had this to say about his game and that of Rice's,

“You've got to go out there and play the game the way it's supposed to be played. Then you get people to like you and appreciate your work by just going out there and competing every down. Jerry Rice was looked at in that perspective. He went out there and was a hard-working guy. He was going to give it his all. And I'm kind of the same way. I just go out and give my all, no matter what happens. So many people are going to always remember what you do and how you make them feel instead of you telling them this and telling them that. That's why I like to go out and show the work ethic and how I am as a teammate. That's how you become great.”

Julio Jones cares about winning more than stats. This rubs off on his teammates. During the 2016 season, 13 different Atlanta Falcons caught touchdown passes, which was an NFL record. The Falcons were able to have a great season because they were a true team and this couldn't be accomplished if the star player wanted the limelight to himself. Head coach Dan Quinn saw this trait in Jones early on when he first took over the Falcons,

"The thing that people on the outside don't know is what kind of teammate he is and why he's held in such high regard inside this building. It's because of the way he works. He's got this unbelievable work ethic that carries over into everything he does. In meetings, he's locked in. On the field, he's locked in. I think it's a pretty rare guy that has the ability to stay locked in for long periods of time."

HAZING

The National Federation of High School Associations defines hazing as any “humiliating or dangerous activity expected of a student to belong to a group, regardless of their willingness to participate”. Though there have been way too many deaths as a result of “innocent” hazing activities,

physical harm is not the only barometer of whether hazing occurred. Emotional or mental issues resulting from hazing can last for years. Hazing can lead to mistrust, fear, lack of self-confidence, stress, and anxiety. Those are not qualities that you want your teammates to be experiencing if you want to win a championship ring at the end of the year.

Some of the typical hazing activities are head-shaving, piercing, “kidnapping”, deprivation of or consumption of food and drink, tattooing, inappropriate physical touching or behavior, as well as other embarrassing acts. Unfortunately, these hazing activities are justified by saying that “boys will be boys” or “it’s just kids being kids” or “it helps with team bonding and brings us together.” Remember that the definition of hazing includes a humiliating activity.

More than 1.5 million high school students admit that they have experienced some form of hazing in their lifetime. However, the real number is probably much higher because many kids do not admit to being hazed or buy into the lie that it is just team bonding. Successful teams are built and teammates bond when they are aligned toward positive common goals. When activities encourage others, promote the team over the individual, teach positive lessons, build respect for others, promote friendship and create an environment for growth, then you are building a team that can be successful.

Nearly every player will say that they don’t want their coaches or parents to be negative or sarcastic toward them. Players don’t want to be embarrassed by them. Players don’t want to be motivated by fear or punishment. They want to be supported, encouraged, praised and motivated by rewards and hope. Positive motivation is long-term, while motivation because of fear is short-lived. However, those same players that believe in hazing will fall into the same trap and believe that fear, punishment or embarrassment will bond players. This might have a short-term effect but will definitely not work in the best interest of the individuals or the team long-term.

Think about your best friend(s) right now. Most of the time, you became best friends through positive circumstances. You’ve bonded over common interests and getting to know each other. The same is true for a team. Playing cards in a hotel room on the road, sharing jokes on a bus ride, encouraging one another when things are tough can serve to bond a team. You have opportunities all around you to take advantage of that are

positive. In addition to the normal occurrences that can bond a team, there are thousands of ways that a team can bond that are positive and have a proven track record of success. Just a few of these include:

- Mentorship programs (big brothers/big sisters)
- Community Service
- Special nights of hanging out (without hazing or illegal activities)
- Watch a sporting event together (live or on TV)
- Celebrate successes or special occasions
- Organize a camp for young athletes in the community
- Promote a cause
- Design a t-shirt or motto for the year
- Laser tag
- Team retreats
- Engage in team functions outside of the season
- Adopt-A-Team at your school. (Bake cookies, decorate lockers, write notes, etc...)

Here are some myths about hazing according to the National Federation of High School Associations. If you think hazing has anything to do with bonding or friendship, you're caught up in the myths about hazing. At its best, hazing builds resentment between new members and initiates. At its worst, hazing can seriously injure or kill:

Myth: They (newcomers) want to be hazed. **Reality:** No one wants to be abused, humiliated or embarrassed.

Myth: We only haze a little bit. It's really not that bad. **Reality:** That's like saying, "I only steal a little bit. I'm not really a thief."

Myth: If we eliminate hazing, our members will be just like anybody else. **Reality:** A truly well organized, positive program results in initiates who are eager to work for and help the group, and who can better serve as leaders.

Myth: If new members don't respect our principles or us, we haze them until they improve. **Reality:** Hazing a new member makes the situation worse. Just like other forms of victimization, hazing breeds mistrust, apathy, and alienation, not respect.

Myth: Hazing activities are the only methods we have of controlling the new members. **Reality:** There are positive and negative ways to bring people into the fold. "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Accountability should be the same for new members and ongoing members.

Myth: I went through it, so now the new members have to go through it. **Reality:** It only takes one group of "veterans" to break this so-called tradition. The people who founded your group were not hazed. Why treat today's new members differently?

It doesn't matter if you were hazed when you were younger or that it has always been done that way. You might have had to carry the bags as a freshman or were taped to the goal posts in football. You shouldn't have been hazed in the past but nothing can be done about what happened to you now. But you can do something about the present and the future to eliminate the negatives that hazing can bring about.

The old Chinese proverb says that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago but that the second best time to plant a tree is now. What will you do to influence yourself and your teammates positively? How will you help create a championship culture on your team? You might not be able to do everything, but you can do something. What good will you do today?

LEN BIAS

Who is the best basketball player that you've ever seen? Most would say Michael Jordan, LeBron James, Magic Johnson or Wilt Chamberlin. If you have seen ESPN's 30-for-30 entitled "Without Bias" then you would know that there are many that consider Len Bias the best college basketball player

they ever saw. However, we were all left to ask ourselves “what if” when it came to Bias’ professional career. Here is his story as told by Kevin Templeton in the book *To The Hill*,

Jordan was not the best college player I ever saw. Len Bias of Maryland would hold that distinction. Bias was a better college player because he was a better shooter than Jordan, a more dominant rebounder than Jordan, and bigger and stronger than M.J. Len Bias was like Michael Jordan on steroids. He was six-eight and weighed 210 pounds. He was one of the first basketball players to lift weights during the season. (Before this time it was thought by many that lifting weights during the season would throw off your shot.) He could score inside or outside. He was ultracompetitive and an unselfish team player.

He led Maryland to its zenith in basketball honors as the Terps won the ACC Tournament. Bias was an All-American as well as the Atlantic Coast Conference's player of the Year twice. He was the ACC Athlete of the year for all sports in 1986. He had unparalleled athletic ability and size, yet he also had a tremendous knowledge of how to play the game. Bias was as fierce a competitor as you will ever see playing any sport as well.

On June 17, Bias was selected as the second overall pick in the 1986 NBA Draft by the defending NBA champion Boston Celtics. A new shoe company wanted Bias to be the face of their aggressive advertising campaign. They wanted to challenge industry giants Nike and Adidas. The new company was Reebok. Bias agreed to wear Reebok shoes exclusively and film three commercials for Reebok in exchange for \$1.6 million over five years. He also would receive tens of thousands of dollars worth of Reebok shoes and gear from himself as well as his friends and family.

Two days after the draft Bias went out to celebrate with some friends and teammates. His dad told him, "Be careful. Be careful what you do; be careful who you are with." Bias returned to his dorm in Washington Hall at three a.m. A long-time workout partner and friend, Brian Tribble, had some cocaine. He knew Bias didn't use drugs, but he figured Bias might be interested in trying it since they were celebrating. He warned Bias that this cocaine was very pure and very powerful. "I'm a horse, Trib. I can take it."

But Bias couldn't take it; he had a seizure and collapsed around 6:25 a.m. At 6:32, when Tribble made the 9-1-1 call to get an ambulance, Bias was unconscious and not breathing. He was put on a ventilator to breathe for him, but all attempts at restarting his heart failed. He was pronounced dead at Leland Memorial Hospital in Riverdale, Maryland, at 8:55 a.m. The official cause of death was cardiac arrhythmia related to his cocaine use. He was twenty-two years of age.

Two former girlfriends and numerous teammates said they had never known of Bias ever to use drugs at any time. He took a lot of pride in maintaining his strength and conditioning. Three different NBA teams had tested him prior to the draft, and there was no trace of drugs in his system. Keith Gatlin, Bias's friend, and teammate, stated that he had been to Bias's home, had been with him year-round for three years and had taken him to his home in North Carolina, but had never once see Bias use drugs of any kind. Bias had never used drugs prior to June 18.

His family got no money from the Celtics. He never played a game for them. They got no money from Reebok. He never shot a commercial for them. He gave up his future because of a person he thought was his friend.

Nobody had a brighter future than Len Bias. He had unmatched athletic gifts, an amazing work ethic, and the

competitive drive of an assassin. His magnetic personality and humble demeanor would attract endorsement jobs from major corporations like moths to a flame.

But Len Bias had a friend. That friend, Brian Tribble, was a drug dealer who later served ten years in prison for drug trafficking.

Four days after Bias's death, more than eleven thousand people attended his memorial service at Cole Field House, where he had starred for the University of Maryland. His death was a shock to the nation. I still remember where I was when I heard Len Bias had died.

Len Bias lost his life at age twenty-two. I would guess at least \$250 million in future earnings and endorsements were lost. He is not remembered for all the great things he achieved and all the ability he had been blessed with. He is remembered for the dumbest thing he ever did. He made a bad choice, and it cost him his life. Choose friends who will be lifters who encourage you to greater heights. This is crucial because your future might depend on your friends. We will never know what great things Len could have accomplished had he not had a friend named Brian Tribble.

With Templeton's permission, I included this entire portion of his book *To The Hill* because there are so many details and thoughts that go into the downfall of a person. Such a sad tale for a player that might have been the best ever! Bias seemed to have the world in the palm of his hand. But he made a poor choice about who he would hang out with, which then led to another poor choice to be influenced by this so-called friend. Brian Tribble, a drug dealer, would not be considered a leader of the Boston Celtics. However, because of his influence on one player, it changed the course of the Boston Celtics franchise for many years to come.

DARRANT WILLIAMS

Early on the morning of January 1, 2007 after the last game of the season,

some San Francisco 49ers were celebrating at a club. At some point, the celebrating went wrong and an altercation occurred with some gang members. A little while later as the players left the club, they continued the confrontation before getting into a limo to leave. One of the gang members got into an SUV and chased down the limo. He fired his gun into the limo killing Darrent Williams, a 24-year old defensive back and kick returner.

Our coaching staff emphasized having each other's back and helping out a teammate. One year, a player of ours got into a fight in the cafeteria with someone that wasn't on the team. About four other players jumped into the fray. Security was called and the players ended up being suspended by the school. When we talked to them after the altercation, they told us that they were just doing what we had told them to do – have each other's backs. However, they had missed the point. In that situation, a true friend and teammate would help you by getting you out of a potentially dangerous or compromising position. A real teammate would have your back by keeping you from doing something that you would later regret.

In the heat of the moment, the player that was initially involved in the fight may not be thinking straight but her teammates should be. They ended up having to sit out a number of games which negatively affected our chances to win the conference title that year. You can have an influence on your friends that help them. There is no shame in walking away from a situation that will negatively impact your goals and dreams.

By all accounts, Darrent Williams was a well-liked and respected member of the Denver Broncos. In fact, there is the Darrent Williams Memorial Teen Center in Denver that helps the youth. The Broncos even named an award in his honor called the Darrent Williams Good Guy Award. He and his other teammates that fateful night was having fun like so many other players do at night. However, friends have a lot of influence on each other. They can influence each other's choices and decisions. They can also reinforce the current action by not doing anything. Not doing anything is still a choice. One has to wonder how this (or the situation with our players) could have been prevented. Too often, we get caught up in the moment and forget about the bigger picture. Friends have to look out for one another by keeping each other out of compromising positions.

Unfortunately, there are too many stories of athletes that have had their careers and seasons altered because of poor choices when they had so-called friends around them that might have been able to change the

situation if they had used their influence for the better. In some cases, lives were lost because friends co-signed the behavior by actively encouraging it or by not speaking up and exerting their influence on the situation.

DRIVING FAST

We all are probably guilty of doing some crazy things once in a while. These are some things that we do that we really don't give much thought to. Sometimes we do these crazy things with our friends. Most of the time, there are no lasting adverse effects to our poor decisions to do crazy things.

Sometimes though, that water fight indoors turns sour when an athlete slips on the wet floor and gets hurt. Sometimes that innocent prank ends up with a suspension or even a misdemeanor arrest on your record. Other times, having a little fun with friends can lead to much worse than a tarnished reputation.

There is a lot of competition for NBA roster spots, so for anyone to stay in the league for nine years was quite the accomplishment. Bobby Phills was a ferocious defensive player, but it also didn't hurt that he averaged 11.0 points throughout his career and shot 39% from the three-point arc. Not only was he a very good NBA basketball player but everyone seemed to have a different story about how giving and caring the 6'5", 220-pound Charlotte Hornet was.

After practice on January 12, 2000, Phills and long-time friend and teammate, David Wesley raced off in their Porsches. At speeds approaching 100 mph, just less than one mile from the Charlotte Coliseum, in a 45-mph speed zone, Phills lost control and hit another vehicle head-on. He died instantly. Witnesses said that the two friends were racing each other. Wesley was ultimately convicted of reckless driving. Lives were changed. Three children lost a father. A team lost one of its' stars. A friend had to live with those memories and regrets.

It is okay to have fun with friends, but we must always stay grounded and think about what we are doing. We tend to do dangerous or crazy stuff when we are around other friends. This doesn't happen as much when we are alone. How much are we influencing our friends? How much are our friends influencing us? Are we influencing in a safe and positive way?

JOE MONTANA

Good leaders absolutely must provide a good example to those around them. If they are not modeling the appropriate behaviors, then they will never be able to gain the respect of their peers. Not every leader will be a rah-rah leader. Joe Montana was one of the greatest quarterbacks of all-time as he won four Super Bowls with the San Francisco 49ers. He was able to orchestrate 31 fourth-quarter comebacks in his career. Part of being such a successful quarterback was his ability to lead his teammates.

For a guy that was fairly quiet, this would seem difficult to do in a sport like football. However, Montana was able to influence because the guys respected him. In his book, *The Score Takes Care of Itself*, Bill Walsh said this about his star quarterback,

Joe Montana is one of the best examples I have ever seen that proved you don't need to shout, stomp, or strut to be a great leader - just do the job and treat people right.

Joe Montana knew what kind of leadership his team needed. If they needed someone to step up and say something, then he would do it. Regardless, though, he was always leading by example. If you are not leading by example, then you will never be able to positively lead through your words.