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# 12.

## AFTERWORD

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*“I am not what I want to be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I am going to be, but thank God, I am not what I used to be.”*

**– Lou Holtz**

*“The culture precedes positive results. Champions behave like champions before they’re champions; they have a winning standard of performance before they are winners.”*

**– Bill Walsh**

Culture is a buzz word today. Your coach might set the vision for the program and guide you in a direction toward fulfilling that vision but it is the players that make that vision happen. Players are the people that shape the culture. If you want a championship culture, then it is up to you. A team’s culture is like an iceberg in that most people only see the tip of an iceberg. They see your team on game day. They see players in interviews. They see them signing autographs. However, the real culture of a team is what goes on in the locker room, in a hotel room on the road, on the bus or back in the dorms. No matter what your role on the team, you can do something positive to affect the culture of your team.

There will be metaphorical fires in the locker room, bus or dorms to put out. You and your teammates will constantly be faced with the choice of whether you will have a fire extinguisher or lighter fluid. Every player on the team either feeds the fire or extinguishes it. There is no such thing as staying neutral. As the examples in this book have shown, you might not be able to do everything, but you can do something. Being a leader is not accidental. Leadership is intentional because it is just influence. Your influence on yourself and others. Each player on the team has to be their

own captain. You must be committed to improving yourself so that you can improve the team.

### **THERE'S A HOLE IN MY SIDEWALK**

Through the stories and illustrations in this book, you have learned that everyone can be a leader because leadership is just influence. We also learned that your choices dictate what kind of influence you'll have. Finally, we learned that you must take full responsibility for your choices.

As you have found in your lives or watching others, sometimes we are our own worst enemy. We don't maximize our potential because we are sabotaging ourselves through our negative influence, less than ideal choices or lack of true responsibility. I am reminded of a story by Portia Nelson entitled *There's a Hole in My Sidewalk*,

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost... I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the same place.  
But, it isn't my fault.  
It still takes me a long time to get out.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in. It's a habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault. I get out immediately.

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.

I walk down another street.

Our decision to be a true person of influence is a continual process. We make positive decisions each day, which lead to good habits which lead to greatness. Success is a choice. What choice will you make today?

You can't do everything, but you can do something. You can influence yourself and influence those closest to you. If you do what's right and influence your closest friends, then they will begin doing what is right. They can then influence other players that they are close to. This ripple effect can have far-reaching effects as you multiply your influence on the team. It is amazing how much can be accomplished on a team when people step up and do the right things.

Little things can add up to big things. Tiny snowflakes can come together to form a snowball or even an avalanche, your small actions can cause an avalanche of change and positive results. Your influence and daily decisions can be like the butterfly effect. Scientists say that the flapping wings of a butterfly can potentially affect the weather in another part of the world because of the change reaction that it sets off. You can be the change agent. You can be the start of a positive change reaction. Lead yourself. Influence others. Change your team.

Throughout this book, you have read many stories that should help you understand how to be a better teammate and leader on your team. Your goal shouldn't be to win the Most Valuable Player award but to be thought of as the best teammate or your team's most valuable leader. Leadership begins with you. You can set the tone for your entire team. If you are a star or captain, then you already have an understanding that you must step up and be a leader. If you have a secondary role, you now know that your role is still important and that you can be your team's most valuable leader.

Your point of view of leadership needs to change if you and your team are to achieve its potential. It reminds me of a story from the world of Track & Field when for thousands and thousands of years, people thought it was physically impossible to run a sub-four-minute mile. It appeared that they were right until May 6, 1954, when a British runner and university

student broke that barrier. Roger Bannister's 3:59.4 astounded the running world. It also opened up the floodgates and gave others the confidence and perspective that it could be done. Less than two months later, another runner, Australian John Landy also broke the four-minute barrier. In total 21 runners bested the 4-minute mark in the 6 years after Bannister did it. Because the best runners' attitudes changed. They began to adopt the mindset and beliefs of their peers.

For as long as anyone can remember, the traditional view of leadership is that the coach, the star or the captain is the leader. While they certainly must fulfill their positional leadership responsibilities, they can't lead a team all by themselves. When your point of view toward leadership changes to the understanding that leadership is really just influence, then you realize that anyone can be a leader because everyone can have influence. Teams don't consistently win if they only have one star that is performing. In the same way that stars need teammates to help them succeed on the court, captains, coaches or star players need a total team effort to succeed in the area of leadership.

The stronger your team's leadership is, the better the chance you have to be successful. Every team has stars and starters but what differentiates most teams is the intangibles. Those that are associated with leadership. Every team needs players leading themselves, holding each other accountable and encouraging one another so that they can be a true team committed to common goals.