



PARENT CONFRONTATION

Coach Dunn exited the locker room with the stat sheet in his hands. Though the numbers told an ugly story about today's game, he knew that the answers to the team's season-long woes were not contained on that piece of paper.

"Coach, you got a minute?"

It was Learie's dad Greg and he didn't look happy.

"Not really," said Coach Dunn. "Can we set up a time to talk tomorrow afternoon? Let me know what time is good and I can give you a call."

"No, we need to talk now! You're not treating my son very well. You've shown me time and again that you don't care about him and you refuse to give him opportunities even though he is a captain. That actually makes things worse. How can you sit your captain?"

"I appreciate your concern for Learie. I know that he appreciates your support of him and his teammates by attending all of these games, but this isn't the time nor place to talk about this. I'd be glad to ..."

Coach Dunn wasn't able to finish as Learie's dad interrupted him.

"No, this is exactly the time and place. He doesn't need to get lost any deeper in your doghouse. You need to understand how your coaching is affecting him."

It was obvious to Coach Dunn that Learie's dad was getting more and more heated, and he needed to try to defuse the situation.

"We don't have practice tomorrow at all, so that'd be a great time to talk. We'll both probably be less emotional, and we can talk through some things. Let me ask you, what's the thing that you are most frustrated with right now and we'll be sure to address that tomorrow?"

"That's easy. You called for him to go into the game and then pulled him back and made him go sit back down. That was embarrassing!"

"For you or Learie?" asked Coach Dunn.

"It doesn't matter. You just don't treat people that way."

"Well, I'll be glad to talk with you tomorrow about your perception of how I treat Learie. We'll also need to discuss his questionable attitude and lack of responsibility, despite being a captain as you point out. But specifically, in regard to tonight, right before Learie went to the scorer's table, he asked me who I wanted him to guard on defense. I asked him what he meant and Learie said, 'do you want me to guard the man guarding me or someone else?'"

"That's a great question Coach! What's wrong with that? Don't you want your players asking good questions? Don't you want them knowing who they're guarding? Don't you want them to ask questions when they're confused?"

"Yes, I absolutely want them asking good questions but a question that they should already know the answer to is not a GOOD question."

"It seems to me that you were too hard on him. How is Learie supposed to know whether you think a question is a good one or bad one?"

"In the timeout less than two minutes before that, I told the entire team that we were going to play our Blitz Matchup Zone for the rest of the game no matter the situation. Learie was not paying attention at all. I'm pretty sure that he was checking out the crowd or something like that but Learie was definitely not ready to go into the game. I

wasn't going to reward him for not being responsible, especially as a captain."

Just then, Mr. Frank approached the two men.

"Sorry to interrupt fellas, but Coach, the trainer needs to talk with you about Jaylen's leg. I'm sorry about that. I'm sure you fellas can probably catch up tomorrow or the next day."

"Thanks, Mr. Frank," said Coach Dunn

As he turned to head toward the training room, Coach Dunn said, "Greg, please text me and let me know when you want to talk tomorrow."

Once Coach Dunn had walked away, Mr. Frank turned his attention to Learie's dad.

"Hey, Greg. Good to see you. I hope that I didn't interrupt anything too pressing."

"Well, I have been frustrated all year and it kind of came to a head tonight. It's actually probably good that you came when you did," said Learie's dad.

"Why's that, Greg," Mr. Frank asked him.

"I think I might have jumped to conclusions a little too quickly or at least been wrong on one thing. I'm not super happy, but I need some time to think about what Coach said."

"Well, glad to hear it. I know we've been friends for a while, and I know you love Learie, but I also know that you want the team to be successful. Part of that is at least giving the coach a chance to explain things and discuss things with you. I hope you fellas are able to work it out tomorrow. Like I said, good to see you and have a good trip home."

"You too, Frank. Don't drink too many of those energy drinks. You'll have to make way too many pit stops," Greg said with a wink.