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LEADERSHIP DEFINED

*"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across
the waters to create many ripples."*

– Mother Teresa

*"Leadership is not about positions, titles or flowcharts but
about one life influencing another."*

– John C. Maxwell

*"Every individual exerts some influence, either for good or evil,
upon others."*

– Henry Ward Beecher

*"People often call me an overachiever, but I'm not an
overachiever. I'm an overbeliever."*

– Dabo Swinney

*"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your
presence and making sure that this impact lasts in your
absence."*

– Harvard Business School

What are the qualities of a leader? If you are like most people, you will say “respect”, “hard-working”, “responsible”, “trustworthy”, “reliable”, “coachable”, “enthusiastic”, or “encouraging”. None of these words are specific to your role as a star, reserve, upperclassman, freshman or captain. Any player can possess these qualities. They are not exclusive to a captain.

John C. Maxwell has written more than 100 books on leadership. He is considered the foremost expert on leadership. He has had a profound impact on my view of leadership. What has shaped my thinking the most has been his definition of leadership in which he says,

“Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts, but about one life influencing another.”

No matter what your current position is, you have the opportunity to lead because you can influence somebody. Maxwell is also famous for saying that,

“A leader knows the way, shows the way and goes the way.”

Once again, this is not exclusive to captains or upperclassmen. Anyone on a team can be a leader according to these definitions by Maxwell.

LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE

Many people mistakenly think that leadership is a title. Titles may give a person some prestige or artificial power, but true leadership involves the amount of influence that a person has. Maxwell further states that a leader without followers is just a person going for a long walk.

Great leaders are influential. People want to follow great leaders. You don't have to have a title to be influential. People are willing to be led and influenced by others if they feel that the leader can take them where they want to go.

Your team captain, your boss, your political representative may not be a strong leader because they aren't influential. They may have perceived power because of their title but they are lacking in the influence area. They might not have the charisma or the character or the results that people are looking for. They might not connect with others.

What does all of this mean for you? Some of you reading this do not have a title. Some of you may feel that you are not important. However, everyone has the ability to influence someone. You have the ability to make positive choices. You have the ability to be enthusiastic. You have the ability to be trustworthy. Essentially, you have the ability to be a person of character that others believe in.

If you are one of the harder workers on a team and you are successful, that will speak loudly. If you add value to people's lives, they will be indebted to you. If others know that you truly care about them, they will be loyal to you.

The world around us needs strong leadership now more than ever. You may not be THE leader, THE boss or THE captain but you can be a leader. Everyone has a scope of influence. At the very least, you can influence yourself.

THE TEAM WON'T LISTEN TO ME

In one of the Student-Athlete Leadership Team training sessions that I was conducting, a student asked a question that had the rest of the group nodding in agreement and adding their two-cents worth to the conversation.

"How do I get my teammates to listen to me?" There are many variations to this question, but they all come down to student-athletes wanting to influence their teammates in some way. John C. Maxwell, considered by many to be the foremost leadership expert in the world, teaches that leadership is influence.

Sometimes we look at our team and see the negatives. We want everyone to respect us and follow us. This may not always be possible. Don't worry about everyone. Worry about those that you can influence. Any player on a team probably has 2 or 3 close friends on that team. Those are the people that you should focus on leading and influencing. If they are not willing to follow you and do the positive things that you are doing, then you need to analyze why not? There are only two reasons a close friend will not follow you: (1) they don't respect you; (2) you have the wrong close friends.

Leadership is influence. Nothing more, nothing less. However, the absolute first person you influence is yourself. You should be doing the right things. Your character should be strong. If a friend doesn't respect

you enough to follow your example or words, then you need to make yourself more respectable. Be a person worthy of having followers.

If you are worthy of respect, are walking the walk and talking the talk, but your close friends still aren't willing to follow your lead, then you need to analyze who your "close" friends are. If your character is strong and you have the right personality, then why wouldn't your friend want to follow your lead? Be careful of these people. There are two types of people in your life: those that make you better and those that don't.

If you are leading yourself correctly and have the right people around you, then focus on influencing them. What you'll find is that there will now be 3, 4 or 5 people that are influenced in the right way and are doing what is needed for your team to experience success.

Now imagine if one of those friends you influenced has a close friend that you don't have a strong connection with? You can't influence that other person, but your friend can. You helped influence your friend so indirectly you have helped influence this other person.

To influence someone, you must have a strong connection. You can't reach everyone, but you can lead yourself first and then influence those that you have a good relationship with. Through your good influence on a few, then it can possibly multiply to the whole team.

Don't worry about what you can't control. Don't worry about the teammates that you don't have a strong connection with. Worry about leading yourself and influencing those nearest to you.

TWO TYPES OF LEADERS

When I was in high school, I was in Band class, but I didn't enjoy being in the class. My attitude was bad, and my actions reflected that. I was 1st trumpet and my friend was 2nd trumpet. If you are not aware, trumpets are loud and carry much of the melody. Every instrument is crucial, but a trumpet can certainly take center stage.

My friend and I decided to make up a game to alleviate some of our boredom. We came up with a point system, where we accumulated points based on screwing up. For instance, if we messed up and got the teacher to stop and start the song over, then we got so many points. If we got a dirty look, we got so many points. If we were publicly reprimanded, then we got so many points. If we got an eraser thrown at us, we got so many points. You get the picture.

Well, one day I was doing a great job – meaning, I was doing a bad job and screwing up a lot. Finally, the band teacher had enough. He stopped the song and then proceeded to calmly tell me “Jamy, there are two types of people in this world. Those who lead us forward and those who lead us backward, and you lead us backward. NOW GET OUT!”

Boy was I excited! All the previous points I had accumulated that day didn’t matter. I had just gotten kicked out of class. I won the day automatically!

Even though I was young and thought I was cool, that story has stuck with me all these years. My band teacher was right. We are all leaders, but it is just a matter of whether or not we are leading people forward or backward.

We make choices every day as to whether we will use our influence positively or negatively. And make no mistake, we all have influence. I had an influence on the 2nd chair trumpet, which also increased my influence over the entire band, which meant that I had an influence on whether the song sounded good or not.

SENIOR NOT VOTED CAPTAIN

When I became the head coach at a college in the southern part of the country, I decided to have the team vote for captains. There were 22 players (including varsity and junior varsity). Each player would be allowed to cast a vote for the two players that they felt were the best candidates to be the captain that year.

We had a senior that was also the starting point guard. Essentially, she played the position that is generally thought of like the quarterback or the leader on the floor. The point guard runs the offense and is supposed to get everyone into the correct spots. When the votes were tallied, this senior who was the incumbent starting point guard received exactly one vote – her own.

After the results were announced and the captains were set, she came up to me and said, “Coach, if you just let me be captain, then I will be a leader. I will show you what I can do. I will show my teammates what I can do.”

This player did not understand true leadership. She was already a leader but in a negative way. Fortunately, her teammates recognized this. After being in the program for three years, she had already demonstrated

her leadership by failing to influence teammates for the better. She fell into a common trap. She equated positional leadership with influence. If only she could be a captain, then she would have influence. But this player already had influence with at least one or two players and the team had seen how she had squandered that opportunity to help move them forward.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

One person can have such a strong effect on the world such as Martin Luther King, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Michael Jordan, and Mother Teresa. In the same way, one player can have a strong influence on a team. You never know what kind of result your actions can have. You might not be able to do everything, but you can do something. Your something might be just what is needed to begin changing things for the better. Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” There is no telling what can be accomplished when you decide to use your influence in a positive way.

It is like the butterfly effect, which was first theorized by Edwin Lorenz in 1963 to help explain weather patterns and chaos theory. It states that one small change can result in a large change later on. For instance, a tornado in Texas might have been caused by a series of weather events that all started off with a butterfly flapping its’ wings in a Brazilian rain forest. The butterfly didn’t power the tornado. The flapping of its wings was just the beginning of a chain reaction.

One thing happened which leads to another thing happening which leads to another thing happening. If the butterfly hadn’t flapped its’ wings at that exact time, then the weather system might have been different. Here is one such example that Larry Gallegos points out on his Mortgage Cicerone blog. This story highlights a chain reaction of events that changed history,

One day in the countryside of Scotland, a common and poor farmer was toiling in his field when suddenly he heard a cry for help. Startled, he recognized someone was in trouble and the plea was coming from a nearby bog. Immediately he dropped what he was doing and ran to the source of the plea. When he located the voice calling for help, he stumbled upon a terrified boy up to his waist in black muck,

screaming and sinking deeper and deeper into the bog as each minute passed.

The farmer calmly retrieved ropes from nearby, pulled the boy out of the bog and saved his life.

The next day, an elegantly dressed nobleman arrived at the farmer's small and simple home. When the nobleman stepped out of his carriage, he introduced himself as the father of the boy the farmer had saved.

Emotionally, the nobleman thanked the farmer and asked to repay the farmer for saving his son's life. The farmer waved off the offer and informed the nobleman he could not accept payment for doing what was right.

At that moment, the nobleman asked if the farmer had a son in which the farmer replied he did. Subsequently, the nobleman insisted he provide the farmer's son an education on par with that he would provide his own son. Upon leaving the farmer's house, the nobleman told the farmer, "if the lad is anything like his father, he'll no doubt grow to be a man we both will be proud of."

The nobleman's prediction concerning the farmer's son proved to be prophetic.

True to the nobleman's word, the farmer's son attended the best schools in the world and eventually graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London. More importantly, he went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of Penicillin.

Years afterward, the same nobleman's son who was saved from the bog was stricken with pneumonia.

What saved his life this time? Penicillin.

The name of the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill

His son's name? Sir Winston Churchill, the great British Prime Minister who saved England from being taken over by Nazi Germany and Adolph Hitler.

Small things can make a difference. Everything that we do matters. A well-placed smile or much needed encouraging word might brighten someone's day to the extent that they treat someone else better. We can make a difference in the world and on our teams just by being the change agent and starting a chain reaction of positivity.

LESSON OF THE GEESE

When you are looking at having the best team possible and being the best teammate you can be, then it might help to consider some lessons that geese can teach us. Yes, that is right, I said geese! Consider the following items about geese,

As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird behind it. By flying in a V-formation, the whole flock adds 71 percent more flying range than if each bird flew alone. The lesson we can learn is that teammates who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier when they are bringing each other along and using each other's momentum and sharing energy.

When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down. They stay with the goose to help and protect it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out with another formation to catch up with the flock. The lesson for our team is to stick by one another and build each other up. Help each other because we can do more together than by ourselves. We are vulnerable by ourselves.

Whenever a goose falls out of the formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front. The lesson for us is to not try to go it alone. It is easier with teammates.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position. We can learn from this and understand that we can all be leaders at some point. We can all take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership.

The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging and not something that is less than helpful.

This might seem a little silly to look at geese for leadership inspiration, but these are very good points that we can apply to ourselves and our team. I also guarantee you that the next time you hear honking up in the sky and see geese flying by, you'll look at them differently.

CHAUNCEY BILLUPS

How would you handle yourself if people were calling you a failure? How would you react if you were in a situation where you weren't successful? Would you feel that you couldn't lead? Chauncey Billups was the third pick in the 1997 NBA draft. He appeared to be a bust early on in his career. In fact, he was traded five times and dealt with some various injuries.

However, through it all, he kept his focus on being the best he could be and adding value to his teammates. He didn't play the victim card or wallow in self-pity. His career had it all from lottery pick to draft bust to role player to champion with the Detroit Pistons. In an interview with MLive, former NBA player O.J. Mayo said that Billups was the best leader.

“Chauncey Billups, in my mind, is the best leader in our league. Chris Paul is a great point guard. Deron Williams is

great. Rajon Rondo. But Chauncey Billups is by far the No. 1 leader in our league. Just being around him and seeing how he leads on and off the court was a big thing."

In a 2012 *Grantland.com* article, former NBA coach Sam Mitchell said,

"Do you know how hard it is for players to look themselves in the mirror and say, 'It's me and not everybody else' and start changing?" "It's a difficult thing to do. And then when people are calling you a bust and you're the third pick of the draft? And to deal with those labels and to overcome them? It don't happen."

In that same article, Billups reflected on his own growth,

"The thing that saved me was being honest with myself and saying it's not the coach's fault or the team's fault that I'm not playing. I'm just not ready and I have to look in the mirror and ask myself, 'All right, what do I have to do?'"

Billups was a great example of rising up and having a positive influence regardless of his role or situation. His consistent attitude of leadership was stronger than any environment or situation he would face.

UCONN WBB

The UCONN women's basketball team has been one of the greatest sports dynasties since Geno Auriemma took over as the coach in 1985. As of the 2016-17 season, they have won a record 11 NCAA National Championships and have the two longest winning streaks in NCAA Division I women's college basketball history with 111 and another with 91 straight wins. They have been good for a long time.

One of the reasons is that they have developed a culture whereby the players hold each other accountable. They also take ownership of the recruiting process as well. Such sustained success has been nurtured by so many players from the past that bought into the culture and then passed it on to the next generation.

A team's culture is ultimately determined by the players and their actions. UConn players hold themselves and their teammates to a higher standard. They expect more out of themselves. In a 2017 ESPN.com article, Mechelle Voepel explains how UCONN's culture is maintained by the players both past and present.

The Huskies play at a level that seems closer to the WNBA than to college ball. We've lauded the members of the coaching staff a lot, and they deserve it. Auriemma is as good as it gets.

But even he would say that the players should be credited for how they buy into the system and enforce it themselves.

Among the biggest complaints, you'll hear from women's basketball coaches nationwide is that while players are more athletic than ever, fundamentals have slipped. Specifically, shooting and passing on offense, and positioning and discipline on defense.

There's also a familiar gripe that club basketball has eroded not just those fundamentals, but also a general sense of competitiveness: Kids play too many games of no consequence, except to show off their skills.

Yet what are the hallmarks of UConn women's hoops? Great passing. High-percentage shooting. Not fouling on defense. Playing hard no matter what the score or how much time is left.

Auriemma demands these things, but the players do, too, by holding each other accountable. That continues into their professional careers.

At an Olympic team training camp last year at UConn, Bird acknowledged that there were moments when she felt 18 again, trying to prove herself. Never mind that she was on

her way to her fourth gold medal. That sense of obligation to a standard remained. As it will for the current Huskies navigating their way to another milestone.

"You play every game the same way," Samuelson said. "Whether it's our first win, second win, 80th win -- whatever. We keep ourselves going without doubting things. We go into every game being confident."

Could these things be said of you? Do you reinforce the coach's values and philosophies when they are not around? Do you use lighter fluid or a fire extinguisher when faced with locker room fires? Furthermore, do you even try to prevent locker room fires? Are you jealous of others because you want the glory and the playing time or are you more interested in competition, which will take everyone to a higher level? Are you constantly creating a championship culture or one that focuses on individuals and personal agendas? Yes, UCONN might be talented but so are other teams. Their winning margin or differential is based upon their culture. They all buy into the team concept.

GEORGE BOIARDI

Every team has starters and a leading scorer, but most teams don't have players that influence teammates so much that they still celebrate that player and remember him years later. Some of the greatest stars are forgotten about soon after their playing days are finished. George Boiardi was a star player for the Cornell men's lacrosse team. He was also the captain.

More importantly, he was a player whose example on and off the field had a tremendous impact. He made his teammates better. He was the model leader. Unfortunately, on March 17, 2004, with just a couple of minutes remaining in a game, the defenseman threw himself into the path of a lacrosse ball to help out his goalie. The ball hit him in the chest, and he would suffer a fatal injury.

Not only have there been star players and captains that have been long forgotten through the passage of time, sadly there have been athletes that have died while in the prime of their lives. Many of these athletes were remembered for a little while. Very few have ever been remembered as much as George Boiardi.

It was how he lived that has been so lasting in death. In fact, author Jon Gordon wrote a book entitled *Hard Hat* that pays homage to the legacy of George. All the profits from that book go to the George Boiardi Foundation, which was founded by Ian Rosenberg, Dave Coors, and Billy Fort, to raise money for charitable organizations and events that were near and dear to Boiardi.

In addition, shortly before his death, Boiardi started the Big Red Readers program that had Cornell players going to read to local elementary school students. This still goes on today, as does the "21 Run", a 5K charity run organized by the lacrosse team. That is a legacy. That is influence.

Julie Greco wrote an article for Cornell's alumni magazine ten years after Boiardi's death highlighting how much his legacy still lives on. Here are a few of the notable passages that shed light on what true leadership and legacy are all about.

For members of Big Red lacrosse, there is no last name necessary when speaking of "George." His name has become synonymous with hard work, dedication, humility, and selflessness. The team prides itself on winning the midfield battle each game and having an edge in what they refer to as "Boiardi stats" -- the ground balls, the hustle plays, the dirty work on which a game can usually turn. More than anything, the team wants to protect "George's House," something it has done with great regularity, going 64-13 (.831) on Schoellkopf Field since March 17, 2004.

...While the Class of 2007 was the last to have played with Boiardi, his legacy lives on in the locker room, with each freshman class learning about the athlete who wore No. 21 - - through a 21-minute-long video created by his former teammates to inspire future Big Red players.

...One of the players profoundly inspired by Boiardi and the way he lived his life was Tewaaron Trophy winner Rob Pannell '13.

..."When working out, instead of doing 15 or 20 reps, I do

21. Instead of running 15- or 20-second sprints I run 21-second sprints," Pannell says. "Every time I see the number '21,' I think of George Boiardi. 21 is not a number, it is a way of life ... Without 21, Cornell lacrosse is not Cornell lacrosse and I am not who I am. George Boiardi, with the help of the past Cornell lacrosse coaches, players and friends who knew him, shapes the young men that are Cornell lacrosse.

..."According to the record books, I hold the Cornell lacrosse assist record. The real truth is that George Boiardi does. George Boiardi has gotten an assist on every single practice, weight session, film session, goal, assist and win since his freshman year at Cornell."

..."I grew up with George, and I had the privilege of knowing him," Ian Rosenberger (co-founder of the Boiardi Foundation) says, "but to see how his ideals have carried on to guys who never even met him is just amazing to me. To hear guys like Max Seibald '09 and Rob Pannell '13, who never met him but are able to talk about George and really nail him to a tee, is really powerful. It's simply amazing to me to see how George has had a meaningful impact on so many lives."

Are you living a life of significance? Are you making the world a better place? If you left your team tomorrow what would your teammates say about you? What would future players on that team say about you? Would they even know your name? Players come and go. Stars come and go. Captains come and go. People who add value to others and make other people's lives better are remembered. They leave a lasting legacy. That is why we still talk about Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Mother Theresa. People who made a difference in the world. You can do this on your team but not if you feel entitled or believe that certain tasks are below you.

BEN ZOBRIST

When the star-laden Chicago Cubs won the 2016 World Series, they were led by an unlikely hero Ben Zobrist. Nobody would ever have thought that a guy from Olivet Nazarene University, a small NAIA school, would appear in three different World Series with three different teams, let alone be named the World Series MVP in 2016.

In 2015, the Kansas City Royals acquired Zobrist in mid-season and he quickly became a fan favorite with his ability to play multiple positions, his scrappy play, and his upbeat personality. He was a big part of the Royals winning the World Series that year. After the season, the Royals couldn't resign everyone, and Zobrist went to join his former manager, Joe Maddon, with the Chicago Cubs. He had previously played for Maddon with the Tampa Bay Rays. In fact, they went all the way to the World Series in 2008. His reunion with Maddon would be the start of a magical run. The Chicago Cubs had not won a World Series title in 108 years. Zobrist would have a huge part in making that happen. He led the Cubs with 10 hits in the series, while batting .357. His double in the 10th inning drove in the game-winning run. He was named the series MVP.

Bill Chastain of MLB.com put together a story that praised Zobrist's leadership back in 2013 *BEFORE* he had even won his World Championships with the Royals and Cubs,

"If you ask any manager in the league, they'd be like, 'This is a guy I want on my team,'" said manager Joe Maddon. "To be with him daily, you get to see it all and all the little things that he does, and beyond that, all the team things that he does. This guy is all about winning. That's it. That's it. He doesn't care about his batting average. He does only in the sense that if he's not hitting well, that means he's not helping the team. He's all about the team and he's really unique, and I don't even know where we would be without him."

"[Ben is] somebody you really rely on and somebody you almost come to expect to be out there every day and give you everything he has," said teammate Matt Joyce. "He's obviously a leader off the field as well as on. As far as his beliefs and his morals and his values, I think they go a long

way with providing some guidance to the younger guys. He's a great teammate."

An unheralded player with a background that was nothing special made it to the top of his profession because he had the proper team-first attitude. He constantly made himself better as a player and as a person, which made his teams better. He might not have been as talented as some other players, but he worked harder and constantly modeled the right attitude. This led to increased respect from his teammates. Because of this, he was able to better influence his teams to achieve their potential.

CONTAGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

We rarely can control the situation, but we can always control our attitudes. In his book *Winning Every Day*, the former Notre Dame football coach, Lou Holtz, tells the story of the Trappist monk who was allowed to say only two words every three years.

After the first three years, he met with Brother Superior and said, "Bad bed!"

Three years later, he came back to say, "Bad food!"

After three more years of silence, the monk said, "No TV!"

Another three years passed. This time, when the monk met with Brother Superior, he handed him his robes and sandals and announced, "I quit!"

Brother Superior said, "Well don't expect me to try to dissuade you. You've done nothing but complain since you got here!"

It was pretty obvious that the monk didn't add value to his fellow monks or to the atmosphere. We all probably know at least one person in our lives that tend to be like the Trappist monk in the story. Always complaining or grumbling about something. It seems that they are not happy unless they are unhappy.

It would be easy for us to fall into the same trap and complain alongside this person but what does that solve? How does that make things better? Maybe you are like that Trappist monk. Maybe you are struggling with being positive.

In his book, *You Win In The Locker Room First*, author Jon Gordon shares with us research from two different studies. One from the HeartMath Institute and one from Harvard University. They essentially support the notion that your body can physically affect other people up to 10 feet away. Your enthusiasm (or lack thereof) can literally be contagious. This applies to everyone, not just the captains. Each member of the team is contagious and every day you all are either sharing positive or negative energy with each other.

Championship cultures are built with positive contagious energy so it's essential that you share it. When you walk into the locker room, you have a decision to make: Are you going to be a germ or a big dose of vitamin C to your teammates? Will you infuse other people with positive energy or be an energy vampire and suck the life out of them?

If you are surrounded by negativity, then you can make the decision to smile a little more and while using kind words. Instead of being fixated on problems, you can focus on solutions. You have the power to make your surroundings a little more positive today.