



## WHITEBOARD

---

The meeting had started in a surprising way and the co-captains were determined to take advantage of the positive vibe they were getting from the rest of their team.

“Wow, I didn’t expect this when we called this meeting,” said Learie. “I really just wanted to apologize for being a bad leader and making excuses all the time. Brandon and I were wanting to let you know that we were going to do better, but it sounds like some of you also had productive conversations last night. If you guys don’t mind, let’s take a few more minutes and talk about these things. We can even act like Coach and write some stuff on the white board so we can visualize it a little better.”

Brandon took his cue from Learie, picked up the dry erase marker, and approached the white board.

“Like Learie and I said, we want to be more than captains. We want to be positive leaders. As we talked about, we need to take more responsibility. Specifically, we need to stop making excuses. We could all stand to do better in this area at times, so I’m going to write down ‘Lose the excuses’.”

After writing down ‘Lose the excuses’, Brandon continued. “Matt and Chaz, you guys talked about starring and excelling in your roles.

What if I put ‘Excel in your role’, does that sum up your conversation last night?”

“Yeah, that works,” said Matt.

“And our dynamic duo of promptness and punctuality have finally seen the light and admitted that our time matters as well,” joked Brandon.

“Why don’t you just write down ‘Always be on time’ and stop busting our chops,” suggested Antonio.

“Deal,” said Brandon. “So, we wrote three things up here. Anyone have anything to add?”

“Well, as long as it’s confessional time,” joked Drew. “I’d like to point out that our fearless leader up there with the dry erase marker made me feel guilty when we were stopped in traffic forever after the game.”

“It was only like 15 minutes and if you felt guilty, it’s because you had a guilty conscience already as opposed to it being something I said,” replied Brandon.

“Anyway, for those of you that didn’t hear,” continued Drew. “He said that my attitude was like a flat tire and I wouldn’t get very far if I didn’t fix it. I realized that I haven’t been displaying the best attitude. I guess I can be grumpy and that doesn’t spread enthusiasm or positivity. In fact, it can be quite contagious, like a sickness or something.”

“Yeah, we don’t want you to be a germ,” said Brandon.

“He’s right,” added Jaylen. “We want you to be a big dose of Vitamin-C, or D, or E, or whatever that thing is in orange juice that’s supposed to make us healthy.”

“Anyway. No, I don’t want to be a germ. I need to do a better job displaying a good attitude,” agreed Brandon.

“I think that’s something we all should be doing so I’m going to add ‘Display a good attitude’ to the board. Thanks for sharing,” said Brandon.

After writing on the board, Brandon looked at Scott, who was raising his hand, and smiled.

“Hey Scott. you don’t have to raise your hand to speak. This isn’t class or anything like that. If you have something to say, be sure to speak up and just say it.”

“Sorry. Habit,” said the freshman. “Anyway, I’m sure you’ve noticed but Jaylen always has a really good attitude. He’s always encouraging people.”

The teammates nodded their heads in approval.

“Yeah, you probably knew that. But what you may not have seen him do which I was able to witness is how he encouraged Coach last night. Come to find out he does that frequently. I know he has encouraged me throughout the year. By the looks on your faces, I know you agree with me. But it goes further. He encourages more than just his fellow teammates. He encourages everyone,” said Scott.

“You’re right Scott,” said Brandon. “Jaylen is quick with a compliment or praise. He always tries to be positive. He has encouraged me a bunch through the years. It’s no surprise he encourages everybody in our program, not just his teammates. We’re all a family. We’re one program. I’m actually going to put what you said on the board.

Brandon then wrote ‘Encourage team members’ on the white board.

“I put team members instead of teammates because we should also strive to encourage managers, trainers, bus drivers, coaches, whoever. We’re all in this together.”

“Hey Brandon.”

Brandon looked at Antonio half expecting him to pat himself on the back again for being on time, but that wasn’t why Antonio was speaking up.

“Mr. Frank’s story about that gold guy, R.U. Darby, really spoke to me. I also liked hearing about that explorer guy.”

“Cortez,” interrupted Bobbi who was trying to help out Antonio.

“Yeah, thanks, Mr. Book Worm,” responded Antonio. “Anyway, I realized I probably wasn’t very committed to this team or the process or the journey if I was getting frustrated too easily and always losing focus. It’s been about me way too much, especially when I’m not scoring many points, like last night. When this happens and I’m not committed to the team, then I’m probably not much good to anyone. I don’t think I have been committed to the team or focused very well lately and that is something that I’m going to work on.”

“Along with being on time,” James reminded him.

“Great point, both of you,” said Brandon. “Antonio, I agree with what you are saying but it isn’t just you. I hadn’t heard of either of those stories before Mr. Frank and Coach told them to us. But they spoke to me, too. We thought we would be good this year and for a bunch of different reasons we have underachieved. But maybe if we remain committed to the process and focused on our goal, then we might be close to that mother lode like R.U. Darby. I think this applies to all of us, so I’m going to write down ‘Remain committed and focused’.”

“We had a bunch of players-only meetings at my high school,” said Matt. “But none of them were like this.”

“I can’t say that I’ve been in one like this either,” Drew concurred. “They’re normally gripe sessions. Come to think of it, I probably did most of the complaining. But so far, I’ve really liked the way this has been going.”

There was a slight pause in the conversation and so Travis took the opportunity to share what was on his mind.

“Scott already mentioned how Jaylen is such an encourager, but I want to say something else about him that I think can apply to all of us. Well, I was talking with Jaylen in the training room yesterday after he hurt his knee. We all know that he’s a ball of energy and one of the hardest workers we’ve ever seen but I realized those qualities don’t need to be limited to just him. We can have 12 guys doing the same thing. It doesn’t matter our talent level or status. I decided that I’m

going to try and be like Jaylen. I want to put forth as much effort as possible. I want to supply this team with energy. I'm just warning you guys that I'm coming at you in practice and you better rise up if you want to win any sprints from now. I'm bringing it."

"That's awesome. I love it," said Brandon. "I think you're right. It stinks that Jaylen is going to be out of commission, but we can all pick up the slack. We can all do this."

And then Brandon wrote the phrase 'Supply effort and energy' on the board.

Drew then spoke up again, "Brandon, I know I already mentioned about my attitude in the traffic jam, but I wanted to bring up something else that I learned last night. For those of you who don't know, I was served a dessert called humble pie yesterday when we stopped to eat. I thought I was right, but I was dead wrong. I saw a great example of servant leadership from the restaurant manager. It was not normal, or at least my normal. I realized how selfish I can be and how I can get so obsessed with seeing just my tree and not the whole forest. I can get consumed with only my stuff. But to have a great team, we need each other. We need to help each other. We need to serve each other. This is not a concept that will be easy for me, but I realize I need to try and do better in this area."

Brandon had a big smile on his face as he listened to Drew speak. He was remembering the scene last night from the restaurant.

"I was watching that whole thing from the other table and thought it was funny," said Brandon. "Especially Bobbi getting all red in the face and sweating because he ate a spicy chicken. Glad that you weren't allergic or anything, Bobbi."

"Me too," said Bobbi.

"Drew, thanks for sharing," said Brandon. "That's going to be a tough one for many of us but we probably all need to think of each other a little bit more. We need to think about what's best for each other. This could be a key lesson as we look to finish the year strong, so I'm going to list it with the others that we've written down."

‘Help and serve others’ was then written on the board.

James then posed a question to his teammates, “I don’t know how many of you have ever been dog-cussed out by a coach.”

“Does a parent count?” asked Demetrius.

“Sure does. I’m really just asking if it’s happened to you. Doesn’t really matter who did it,” continued James. “I’ve been taken to the woodshed many times by my AAU and high school coaches. I’ve probably deserved it every time even though I probably didn’t act like I deserved it. I’m sure every single time this happened I passed the buck or didn’t take responsibility, like the first thing you wrote down.

“Hey, lose those excuses!” joked his roommate Antonio.

“I know. That’s what I’m saying,” continued James. “I’m sure I made excuses and they were probably good ones at the time, so what you guys listed as the first principle is very relevant to me. But when I saw that dude from State get ripped last night on TV and then respond the way he did, it set something off in me. I mean in a good way, not the normal way of setting something off. It was like a slap in the face. It was a wakeup call. I realized that I’ve never responded that way even when it was my fault. Dude said it was his fault and he wanted to improve. I’ve had coaches tell me that I’m uncoachable and I normally blow it off or get defensive. That dude from State was coachable. He certainly didn’t respond like have done in the past. I need whatever it is he’s having. I need to be more like that. If you guys have any suggestions, please let me know but I just thought I’d mention it.”

Brandon asked James, “Would it be okay if I wrote it on the board. I think that’s a principle that is important and can apply to all of us.”

“Sure, man. It seems good. However you want to sum up what I just said is fine with me,” said James.

“Thanks for sharing. I’m going to put ‘Improve and be coachable’ because none of us know everything and we can always get better and the way most of us can get better is to be coachable.”

“Sounds good to me,” said James.

Brandon looked at his watch, put down the marker, and then turned to his teammates.

“We’ve been here long enough, and I appreciate all of the honesty and things you guys have said. This has certainly been one of the most productive meetings I’ve been a part of. I really wasn’t prepared for this. Like I said, Learie and I just wanted to share our thoughts on excuses and taking responsibility for our actions. I wasn’t ready for all of you to share like you did but it was awesome.”

“Hey Brandon,” said Demetrius. “I’m sorry to interrupt you but you mentioned that you weren’t prepared for what was going to be said at this meeting. That must have been a sign that you used that word. I wasn’t going to say anything because we’ve been here long enough, but you said that word and I think it’s important.”

“I agree but why do you say it’s important. What are you thinking?” asked Brandon.

“The word ‘prepared’ stood out to me because I wasn’t prepared for the game yesterday. In fact, I’m rarely prepared because I don’t play much. Bobbi and I were talking and he kind of lit into me about how my being unprepared can actually lead to me losing out on opportunities. It can also hurt the team and you guys are my friends. Champions are prepared. Winners are prepared. I know some of us have not been taking things as seriously as we can. We haven’t prepared as well as we can. I’m certainly at the top of that list, but I don’t think it’s a coincidence that we’re playing badly and having a poor season. Whether it’s practice, weights, sleep, scouting reports, or anything else, we need to do better if we want to win.”

Since Bobbi was involved in that conversation, he felt the urge to support his teammate in what he was saying.

“Demetrius is right. We may have some tight games moving forward and our preparation might just be the difference between winning and losing. I think Demetrius can be valuable to us moving forward if he is prepared. In fact, we can all be valuable to each other by being more prepared,” said Bobbi.

“My grandma has this little magnet thing on her refrigerator,” Brandon said. “It’s some old guy from medieval times or something. His name is Sun Tzu but evidently, he said that ‘the battle is won or lost before it is fought’. Maybe if we all prepare a little harder then we might win a little bit more. That was a good one. So, thanks, Demetrius.”

‘Prepare to win’ then became the tenth principle that Brandon wrote on the white board. It was hard to believe that in one day, in one bus trip, a team could learn so many crucial lessons.