



# **COACH'S PLAYBOOK**

# LEADERSHIP

Your ability to unite your team and motivate them to achieve a shared goal.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Not be the person that others look up to when things get difficult.
- Not consistently rally the team to get better every day.
- Let failure get the best of themselves and their team.
- Have a low desire to lead.
- Have a difficult time delivering tough messages to teammates.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Instill confidence in others and be the person that others look up to when things get difficult.
- Have a strong focus on rallying the team to get better.
- Look at failure and mistakes as an opportunity for the team to learn and get better.
- Have a strong motivation to lead.
- Give necessary feedback to help their teammates improve.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Give Every Single Athlete Opportunities to Lead:**
  - ✓ Young athletes think that only coaches and captains are the leaders. Break this myth by setting the clear expectations that everyone needs to be a leader in their own way.
  - ✓ Acknowledge that leading can feel scary since athletes may worry what their friends will think if they speak up. Encourage your athletes to focus on what is best for the team and speak up.
  - ✓ Share examples of the different ways each person can lead, including: leader on the field, locker room leader, leader from the bench, team chemistry leader, or leader on campus.
  - ✓ Make sure that the older athletes take the responsibility to mentor and help the younger athletes feel like they are part of the team. Do not create divisions based on age.
- **Lead by Example:**
  - ✓ Your athletes are watching your every move and listening to every word. Set the example of being a positive leader in the words you use, the tone you set, and showing them great effort each day.
  - ✓ Your athletes won't care what you think until they know how much you care about them. Model this rule.
- **Create a Vision of Success and a Path to Get There:**
  - ✓ Communicate an inspirational picture of what success looks like and how you will drive the team there.
  - ✓ Give everyone a chance to share their thoughts on this vision... let them own it. This is modeling leadership.
- **Let the Team Establish the Standards of Excellence:**
  - ✓ Involve each athlete in setting team standards that describe how the team will act. This allows them to lead.

### Talking Points

- Discuss different ways every athlete can lead, even if it is in small ways.
- Share examples of great teams who have a culture of "everyone leads."
- Discuss how leadership is like a muscle that must be stretched and worked out every day.
- Share examples from your team where they stepped up to be a leader (or missed the opportunity to lead).

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Everyone Leads, All Star Leaders
- CORE Elements: Team Player, Coachable, Competitive Drive
- PRESSURE Elements: Self-Doubting, Attention Seeker, Stubborn, Perfectionistic

*"Earn your leadership every day." – Michael Jordan, NBA Great –*

# CONFIDENCE

Your belief that you can succeed.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Think negative thoughts like “I am not sure if I can do this.”
- Get anxious and overwhelmed when it is time to play.
- Not put forth the needed effort to win or achieve their goals.
- Not perform as well as they should because of doubt.
- Become their own worst enemy.
- Not enjoy the sport very much.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Think positive thoughts like “I’ve got this!”
- Be in control of their emotions & anxiety.
- Persist by putting forth higher levels of effort to overcome challenges.
- Raise the bar and seek out pressure situations.
- Perform at high levels because they believe in themselves.
- Enjoy the sport a lot.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Preparation:**
  - ✓ Work your drills progressing from easy to difficult so athletes can build confidence at each step.
  - ✓ Drive home the message that previous success will help with future challenges (“We’ve been here before.”).
  - ✓ Share examples of the team’s previous successes that resulted from their strong effort.
- **Learning from Others:**
  - ✓ Let athletes learn by watching you or someone else demonstrate the correct form or sequence first.
  - ✓ Break new skills/plays into manageable chunks that build onto each other. Practice each step in succession.
- **The “Right” Feedback:**
  - ✓ Be positive by describing what an athlete can do or become rather than solely on what they did wrong.
  - ✓ Treat failures as learning opportunities. Share examples of overcoming setbacks.
  - ✓ Provide positive and constructive feedback that is as specific as possible for it to have impact.
  - ✓ Deliver feedback immediately after the behavior occurred for the greatest learning to occur.
- **Mental Focus:**
  - ✓ Ensure your athletes are focused and have the right level of intensity. Practice at game speed.
  - ✓ Build in a few minutes the beginning of practice of games for your athletes to visualize success.
  - ✓ Handle distractions or team conflicts quickly in a positive way. They can crush confidence quickly.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how confidence comes from within each person (Confidence = Self-Talk x Actions).
- Share examples of how being either underconfident or overconfident can hurt performance.
- Ask if the type of feedback you provide as a coach helps your athletes feel more confident.
- Discuss what is weakening your athletes’ confidence shield and what adjustment are needed to strengthen it.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Confidence Shield
- CORE Elements: Composure, Mental Toughness
- PRESSURE Elements: Overconfident, Self-Doubting, Perfectionistic

*“Confidence is a tangible thing. It comes from practice and repetition. You have to put in the work in order to build that confidence. When others see you have that confidence, they will gravitate around you and have confidence in you. But it starts with you.” – Kobe Bryant, NBA Great –*

# GROWTH MINDSET

Your belief that your ability can be developed through dedication and hard work.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Give up quickly if things don't come easy or go their way.
- Tend to rely on natural talent and see extra effort as not useful.
- Feel threatened by the success of others.
- Feel embarrassed by failure and think they are not good enough to do better.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Focus on continual learning.
- Embrace challenges and push on in the face of setbacks.
- See their effort as key to success.
- Find inspiration in others' success & work to be like them.
- Believe the best way to improve is through hard work and learning from mistakes.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Reward Effort and the Process:**
  - ✓ Praise athletes for their effort first before focusing on the outcome.
  - ✓ Continually drive home the message that your athletes control their effort, but not necessarily the outcomes.
  - ✓ Set challenging, but realistic effort expectations and provide clear feedback on the process.
  - ✓ Create a team scoreboard or tracker for strong effort and progress.
- **Words Matter:**
  - ✓ Stop athletes in their tracks when they say things that imply they have a fixed mindset (e.g., "I suck at this, I'm not good enough", or "I'm jealous because he/she is so great at this."
  - ✓ Embrace the word "YET". When athletes say, "I can't do this," correct them by adding, "yet" to their statement.
  - ✓ Use feedback language that fosters a growth mindset (e.g. I believe I can improve. Today's effort is worth tomorrow's reward. Minor setback, major comeback. I will learn how the best do it. Let's find a new way.).
  - ✓ Use slogans on banners, walls, or t-shirts that emphasize effort and a growth mindset over outcomes.
- **Treat Failures as Learning Opportunities:**
  - ✓ Create a team culture that values feedback. Encourage athletes to ask for feedback.
  - ✓ Train your athletes to understand that making mistakes is fine since it is a fast way to learn and get better.
  - ✓ Share personal examples of how you overcame setbacks and improved. This will help your athletes relate to you on a deeper level.
  - ✓ Quickly correct bad form or missed assignments so that they don't become bad habits.

### Talking Points

- Have regular pulse checks on where your athletes are focused – their efforts and ability vs. their natural talent. Then discuss how developing a growth mindset is continual process.
- Discuss how the team can collectively create new strategies to be overcome challenges.
- Share examples of how the greats in your sport have failed but learned from those moments.
- Discuss your athletes' self-talk and uncover fixed vs. growth mindset thoughts.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: What's Your Mindset, Bad Wins/Good Losses, Play to Win, Getting in The Zone, Mental Imagery
- CORE Elements: Coachable, Competitive Drive, Mental Toughness
- PRESSURE Elements: Self-Doubting, Stubborn, Impatient

*"I've always been a firm believer in mind over matter. If you don't believe you can achieve, your body will start to believe this and you'll be stuck."* – Sheryl Swoopes, WNBA Great –

# MENTAL TOUGHNESS

Your ability to not give in to fears, setbacks, or circumstances.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Often make excuses for their mistakes or shortcomings.
- Only focus on the past and don't plan for the future.
- Give up when they are challenged or have to try a different approach.
- Often give in to fear of failure or simply cannot cope with pressure or pain.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Display higher levels of persistence and grit.
- Avoid making excuses and find a way to adapt to the situation no matter what hurdles they see.
- Work toward greatness and not perfection.
- Rarely give in to pressure and can push past pain or pressure to excel.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Connect Your Athletes to Their "Why":**
  - ✓ Understand that athletes will go through more hardship and pain when it is tied to a meaningful long-term goal.
  - ✓ At the beginning of the season, agree on a team purpose. Then reinforce that message throughout the season.
  - ✓ Reinforce optimism toward reaching long-term goals as a key driver of mental toughness.
- **Train in Unpleasant Conditions:**
  - ✓ Intentionally train in crummy weather, loud conditions, etc. to have athletes work through tough times.
  - ✓ Focus on training your athletes' minds that they can overcome. Tell them that the human mind is designed to avoid danger and seek protection. Training in tough environments helps overcome this instinct.
  - ✓ Stress the importance of planning for any condition they may experience in a game situation.
- **Do One Hard Thing Every Day:**
  - ✓ Encourage your athletes to practice mental toughness outside of practice (e.g., taking a cold shower, stepping out of their comfort zone socially or academically, going one week without processed foods, no social media).
  - ✓ Stretch your athletes a little more each practice so they can continually build their grit.
- **Reframe Negative Thoughts into Positive Outcomes:**
  - ✓ Stress a hyper-focus on the task at hand so that athletes have mental clarity without distractions.
  - ✓ Have athletes pay attention to daily bad habits that steal mental strength, such as feeling sorry for themselves, not letting go of things they can't control, or giving up easily in class or anything else.
  - ✓ Let your athletes know that mentally strong people don't give away their power by playing the victim.
  - ✓ Encourage your athletes to find the silver lining in hardships so they can refocus negativity into positivity.

### Talking Points

- Discuss what daily habits each athlete is trying to break or create to increase mental toughness.
- Share examples of how the greats in your sport have showcased their mental toughness.
- Discuss how your athletes can build grit by becoming adaptable and letting go of things they can't control.
- Discuss the benefits of mental toughness in all phases of life... sports, school, work, relationships, etc.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Mental Toughness
- CORE Elements: Mental Toughness, Competitive Drive, Composure
- PRESSURE Elements: Self-Doubting, Short Fuse, Impatient

*"I don't count all my sit-ups. I only start counting when it starts hurting because they're the only ones that count."*  
– Muhammed Ali, Boxing Legend –

# MOTIVATION

Your desire to work toward a goal and stick with it.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Make excuses when they perform below their expectations.
- Give up easily after setbacks or if things don't go their way.
- Tend to lose focus on improving every day.
- Not set clear goals for improvement & won't raise the bar.
- Have lower levels of self-confidence.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Always give high effort to do the best that they can.
- Stick with it and overcome setbacks.
- Have a very strong focus on getting better to succeed.
- Set clear goals for improvement and continually raise the bar for their effort.
- Have higher levels of self-confidence.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Set Effort Goals Over Outcome Goals:**
  - ✓ Discuss that effort goals focus on (1) how hard an athlete tries and (2) things within the athletes' control.
  - ✓ Set effort goals for your team such as: get a defensive touch each play, run hard through first base on every grounder, sprint after the ball after every pass, block out each opponent after every shot.
  - ✓ Reinforce the message that outcome goals (e.g., win the game, become conference champions) are common to most teams and do not provide the same motivational impact as effort goals. Outcome goals can discourage effort. It's all about what each athlete can control.
- **Set Specific Effort Goals:**
  - ✓ The more specific the effort goal, the better because it removes any misunderstandings on expectations.
  - ✓ Setting a general goal like "I will stop my opponent this game" is less effective than saying "I will steal the ball five times this game." Similarly, setting a goal to "Practice every day" is ineffective versus setting a goal to "Make 100 shots every day," which is more effective.
  - ✓ Research shows that setting specific goals over general goals will give you an 8-16% boost in performance.
- **Set Challenging Effort Goals:**
  - ✓ Set challenging, but realistic effort expectations. Slightly increase the difficulty in practice as athletes improve.
  - ✓ Slightly raising the bar, according to psychologists, will give you a 10-16% boost in performance over time.
  - ✓ Know that every team sets goals, but not necessarily the correct way. So, you should make sure you set them correctly for an advantage.
- **Use Feedback to Make Real-time Adjustments:**
  - ✓ It is critical to keep track of progress and provide timely feedback in a positive, developmental way.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how the team can collectively set effort goals rather than just having the coaching staff set them.
- Have each athlete bring an example of how their favorite great athletes and teams use effort goals.
- Discuss if the goals being set need to be changed periodically to raise the bar.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Set The Right Goals
- CORE Elements: Coachable, Competitive Drive, Mental Toughness
- PRESSURE Elements: Self-Doubting, Overconfident, Stubborn

*"Nothing will work unless you do."* – John Wooden, UCLA Basketball Coach & 10-time NCAA National Champion –

# TRUST

Your ability to be counted on when teammates need you and you need them.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Have a hard time following through on promises.
- Not take ownership for mistakes.
- Not be someone that other teammates want to confide in.
- Not communicate openly or in a respectful way.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Always follow through on promises.
- Be willing to take ownership for their mistakes.
- Be someone that others can easily confide in for issues.
- Share their thoughts openly and treat others with respect.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Lead by Example:**
  - ✓ The best way to build trust in your athletes is to show them that you trust them. They are always watching and taking cues from you, especially on how you follow through on commitments and whether you play favorites.
  - ✓ Appreciate and value each athlete's unique abilities and style. This shows you care about them and builds trust.
  - ✓ Show confidence in your athletes' abilities and believe they can follow through.
- **Communicate Openly with Respect:**
  - ✓ Create a team charter that defines the team's purpose. Next, identify 5-7 standards that define how everyone will treat each other (e.g., bring your "A" game, mutual respect, fun, no gossip/cliques) throughout the season.
  - ✓ Designate a few minutes of each practice to check-in with the team. Ask if anyone has any issues they want to discuss. Encourage honesty and mutual respect to reduce conflict and move towards solutions. You will have to take the lead in modeling the way early on until athletes get comfortable speaking up.
  - ✓ Create a culture where the team never points fingers. Rather, create a culture where they focus on solutions.
  - ✓ Stop gossip and conflict immediately as they will destroy trust quickly.
- **Know Each Other on a Personal Level:**
  - ✓ Encourage meaningful bonding beyond the regular practice schedule. For example, create situations such as a "Team Olympics" where they try different activities outside of your sport. It is fun and often levels the playing field for bonding to occur. Or set up a team dinner (e.g., Taco Tuesdays) where everyone helps prepare.
  - ✓ Encourage people to get to know what is going on in their teammates' lives outside of the sport.
  - ✓ Randomly pair up teammates on a regular basis for different drills or off the court activities to build deeper connections and avoid cliques.

### Talking Points

- Discuss the negative power of gossip and cliques. Agree that people won't say things about others unless they will say it to their face.
- Share examples of how trust (or lack thereof) have impacted teams and their success.
- Have each athlete suggest creative and fun ways to get know each other better.
- Discuss how athletes can build trust in little ways, such as being generous, patient, dependable, & consistent.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Trust is Key
- CORE Elements: Team Player, Coachable
- PRESSURE Elements: Skeptical, Stubborn, Perfectionistic

*"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the 'me' for the 'we'."*

– Phil Jackson, NBA Coaching Legend –

# COMMITMENT

Your willingness to give 100% to your team and sport to achieve success.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Seem to care more about winning than about the team.
- Put themselves first and the team second.
- Have little passion for their sport.
- Are fine staying at their current ability level; struggle pushing themselves to get to the next level.
- Need a lot of help learning to train at competition speed.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Have a lot of passion for being part of the team.
- Have high expectations for themselves to do whatever is needed for team success.
- Want to get better and put in the extra time and effort.
- Have some good experience practicing at competition speed but understand they can still improve.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Athletes Commit When They Find Value in Their Sport:**
  - ✓ People must know what they are committing to. At the beginning of the season, have the team decide on the team goals. As a coach, keep in mind the question, “Why will achieving this goal be important to each athlete?”
  - ✓ Understand that different athletes have different personal motives for being on the team. Athletes are more likely to persist with goals that are linked to what is meaningful to them. So, involve them in this process.
  - ✓ Appreciate that commitment does not have an on/off switch. Be patient as it grows steadily.
- **Athletes Commit When They Feel Successful and Can Stretch Their Abilities:**
  - ✓ Pick the right level of challenge for your team, and tailor it to each athlete to the extent you can. This will help them feel good about themselves and will increase their commitment.
  - ✓ Keep athletes excited about doing better by gradually increasing both team and individual goals.
  - ✓ Keep visible reminders of past successes – big or small – and let your athletes know how much they have grown because of their hard work.
- **Athletes Commit When They Find Their Sport Enjoyable:**
  - ✓ Don’t forget to have fun and celebrate as a team for any occasion – big or small. Sports are a game, after all.
  - ✓ Plan events paced out through the season, such as fun team building activities, a few minutes of fun to begin or end practice, team dinners, or award ceremonies.
  - ✓ Don’t assume your idea of fun is the same as your young athletes. Let your team plan some events as well.
  - ✓ Interpersonal conflict destroys commitment, so handle issues in a positive way to maintain enjoyment.

### Talking Points

- Have everyone decide on team goals and what a successful season will look like. Include more than wins & losses.
- Share examples of how the greats in your sport have showcased their commitment to the team and their success.
- Discuss how commitment can break down during a season and how everyone can get back on track.
- In a routine pulse check, ask them how they are enjoying the team and if any adjustments need to be made.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Be Committed, Game Speed
- CORE Elements: Team Player, Mental Toughness, Competitive Drive
- PRESSURE Elements: Stubborn, Short Fuse, Self-Doubting

*“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.” – Vince Lombardi, Green Bay Packers Coaching Legend –*



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Your ability to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Always feel that they must win arguments no matter what.
- Have a difficult time listening to others and will often interrupt during conversations.
- Hold grudges and can't forgive people.
- Only see issues from their perspective.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Understand that the goal of arguments is not to win, but to solve the problem.
- Be great at listening to others before responding.
- Forgive others and move on for the good of all.
- Are able to consider and appreciate different perspectives.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Educate the Team Early & Often:**
  - ✓ Let your team know that conflicts are unavoidable in life but keeping them from being negative is avoidable.
  - ✓ Acknowledge possible areas of conflict to help athletes recognize tensions before they get out of hand.
  - ✓ Offer examples of the keys to resolving conflict: listen, find areas of agreement first, let things go, & use humor.
- **Encourage Communication with a Double Dose of Listening:**
  - ✓ Most conflicts stem from miscommunications or misunderstandings, especially when people are stressed. Help athletes step back and look at the situation more objectively.
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to pause, listen, pause, restate what the other person said to ensure understanding, and then offer their thoughts. They need to listen twice as much as they talk in conflicts.
- **Provide a Common Goal & Areas of Agreement:**
  - ✓ Conflict is not about winning. Have your athletes focus on the areas where they agree first. This may make their disagreements seem less important.
  - ✓ Refocus athletes on the team goals and how each person plays a critical role. Focus on positive examples.
- **Create a Positive Culture:**
  - ✓ Be a role model for being calm and solution-oriented. Don't take sides and let the athletes try to positively work it out first. Intervene if tensions escalate.
  - ✓ Establish team values of trust, respect, and open communication. Then reinforce athletes by recognizing when they successfully display the values.
  - ✓ Use humor to help people let go of issues. Laughter is often the best medicine.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how conflicts are a natural part of life. Then, as a team, create "go-to" solutions to use if conflicts arise, such as: focusing the problem & not the person, using humor, not gossiping, or focusing on shared goals.
- Share examples of famous athletes who had conflicts and the negative impact on their teams.
- Discuss how different people have different reactions to conflict, but everyone needs to handle it positively.
- Have everyone share their "triggers" or "hot buttons" are so that the team is aware of what might spark a conflict.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Resolving Conflict
- CORE Elements: Team Player, Coachable
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Skeptical, Stubborn, Perfectionistic, Attention Seeker

*"Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude."* – William James, American Philosopher and Psychologist –

# COMMUNICATION

Your ability to send and receive messages with others based on mutual respect.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Need a lot of work to be a better communicator.
- Often get off track when talking and confuse people.
- Not listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Hang their heads and clench their fists when frustrated.
- Need a lot of practice controlling their body language.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Be a great communicator.
- Stay focused and make sure people know what they mean.
- Be a great listener.
- Remain positive when losing and motivate others.
- Have some good experience controlling their body language, but still realize they are a work in progress.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Deliver Direct and Specific Messages:**
  - ✓ Try team building activities focused on being clear and concise. Athletes must learn the importance of not making people guess what they're trying to say, especially in the middle of a game.
  - ✓ When athletes are not being direct and specific, pause to give feedback as a coachable moment, then get back into practice. This will reinforce the importance of clear communication for everyone.
- **Responsibility for Failure to Communicate:**
  - ✓ Set the expectations that each athlete is 100% responsible for delivering a clear message, so if they think others aren't getting what they're saying, they need to say it again or in a different way.
  - ✓ Create ground rules for "how" you will communicate as a team during time-outs and huddles.
  - ✓ Practice a "zero-surprises" policy, by having all team members share important information in a timely way.
  - ✓ Draw out the quiet or less experienced athletes to share. Let them know not talking is a failure to communicate.
- **Listening is the Hardest Part of Communicating:**
  - ✓ Encourage your athletes to ask questions and share their opinions. Then carefully listen to each other.
  - ✓ Teach your athletes to listen with their eyes as well as their ears. They should pay attention to nonverbal cues. Be respectful. Look the other person in the eye and listen quietly and carefully.
- **Body Language Matters:**
  - ✓ Set the expectation that you are evaluating body language and attitude just as much as physical skills.
  - ✓ Lead by example in your own body language. Be composed and upbeat.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how to communicate more clearly with direct and specific messages.
- Watch the Geno Auriemma YouTube video on body language and discuss it for your team.
- Discuss the major breakdowns in communication on your team and how to make improvements.
- Talk about the point that "how" you say something is often more important than "what" you say.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Communicate Clearly, Body Language
- CORE Elements: Composure, Coachable
- PRESSURE Elements: Attention Seeker, Short Fuse, Stubborn

*"What are you selling today? Are you selling positive, or are you selling negative? Are you affecting everybody else in a positive way or a negative way?" – Nick Saban, Alabama Football Head Coach and National Champion –*

# TEAM FOCUS

Your ability to put the team first and work together for the greater good.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Care more about themselves than the team.
- Not put forth the necessary effort needed to make their teammates better.
- Not be all that concerned about making everyone on the team feel supported.
- Be confused about their role on the team.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Care more about the team than their personal stats.
- Put forth the effort needed to make others better.
- Want to make everyone on the team feel supported.
- Understand their role on the team and how they contribute.
- Be happy helping the team succeed no matter what role they play, as long as they can give their best.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Build an Intentional Culture:**
  - ✓ Either you drive your team's culture, or it drives you. Don't make the common mistake of letting your team's culture develop on its own. It is more than a one-time discussion. It is a continual process each time you meet.
  - ✓ Work with your team to define what it means to be on the team, how you will treat each other, how the team will operate, and what success looks like (beyond just wins and losses). Post these standards for all to see.
  - ✓ Preach that a great player can win a game, but a great team can win championships.
- **Involve Everyone as Equals:**
  - ✓ Demand respect for everyone on the team, always. Correct behavior that isn't respectful.
  - ✓ Discuss how everyone's role is important regardless of how much playing time they get.
  - ✓ Plan a regular gathering outside of training that allows everyone on the team to hang out as friends.
- **You Get What You Reward:**
  - ✓ Coaches often reward/praise (e.g., game ball) athletes for what is in the stats sheet. To build an intentional culture, you need to reward behaviors that are aligned with the agreed upon cultural standards (e.g., always bringing your "A" game, treating others with respect, getting better every day).
  - ✓ Create a frequent routine of recognizing athletes for the little things that make the team stronger, such as picking each other up after a setback, helping a teammate study for test, or being supportive and positive.
  - ✓ Let the athletes recognize each other for "team first" behaviors.

### Talking Points

- Discuss the values and attitude the team considers important.
- Ask each athlete how they will hold themselves personally accountable to be the best teammate they can be.
- Examine examples of great team cultures and determine what you can borrow to build your team culture.
- Ask each athlete what he or she has done to live up to the team culture. Praise them for their efforts.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Accepting Your Role, Team First, Be a Role Model, Keeping Your Focus
- CORE Elements: Team Player, Coachable
- PRESSURE Elements: Attention Seeker, Stubborn, Perfectionistic, People Pleaser

*"There are five fundamental qualities that make every team great: communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring and pride. I like to think of each as a separate finger on the fist. Any one individually is important. But all of them together are unbeatable."* – Mike Krzyzewski (Coach K), Duke's Legendary Basketball Coach –

# POSITIVITY

Your ability to be optimistic and overcome negative thinking.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Not easily recognize their negative thoughts.
- Have negative self-talk, such as “This is unfair!” which results in poor performance.
- Have difficulty getting along with teammates, especially if they feel they have been treated wrongly.
- Perform poorly in the face of obstacles.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Do a good job identifying negative thought patterns.
- Effectively challenge their negative thoughts & replace them with positive or more neutral thoughts.
- Be effective at keeping good relationships.
- Have excellent performance in face of obstacles because of their belief that they can succeed.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Promote Optimistic Thinking:**
  - ✓ Have athletes actively reframe negative thoughts that lead to poor performance. Encourage them with a mantra like the one used by Coach Nick Saban, “What are you selling today? Positive or negative?”
  - ✓ Praise and reinforce when athletes can channel their negative emotions into positive performance actions such as competing even harder.
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to be fearless and take a chance, which gives them something to strive towards.
- **Stay Grounded:**
  - ✓ Be aware of black and white thinking or language that promotes “always or never” type of thoughts. Encourage athletes to see the grey area in issues.
  - ✓ If athletes have a bad game or practice, encourage them to shake it off and look to the next play.
  - ✓ Help athletes see the bigger picture. Explain how every athlete has setbacks. It’s not about the setback, but rather how they bounce back that matters.
- **Control Emotions:**
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to practice mindfulness to stay in the present moment rather than thinking about the past or focusing too much on the future. Have your athletes take a single deep breath to give their mind a quick break and help change their perspective.
  - ✓ Create a list of motivating statements or mottos as a team to help overcome obstacles.
  - ✓ Help your athletes find healthy outlets (e.g., friends, workout, movies) to control their emotions rather than bottling them up.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how negative thinking can impact performance such as not playing as hard or playing to not lose.
- Find examples of professional athletes who were able (or not) to remain positive and how it affected their game.
- Teach your athletes see failure as an opportunity to learn and be better when the next opportunity comes along.
- Discuss ways your athletes can use to shift their attention from negative to positive aspects of the game.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Choose to Be Positive
- CORE Elements: Mental Toughness, Composure
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Self-Doubting, Stubborn, Impatient, Perfectionistic

*“Even when bad things happen you have to try to use those bad things in a positive manner.” – Natalie du Toit, South African world class swimmer who lost her leg after being hit by a car. She went on to be a Gold Medalist in the 2004 Paralympic Games –*

# OVERCOMING ANXIETY/FEAR OF FAILURE

Your ability to challenge yourself and perform well by rising above anxiety and fear.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Worry to the point where it hurts their performance.
- Have a hard time taking risks or visualizing their success.
- Have low expectations of themselves or others.
- Are more focused on individual performance & provide little support to others.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Regularly engage in positive thinking about performance.
- Make a habit of seeing themselves playing great and winning.
- Set high standards for themselves and for others.
- Offer encouragement & support to others as they try to get better.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Incorporate Visualization in Team Practice:**
  - ✓ Have athletes engage in visual imagery to walk themselves through every step of their performance. Work as a team to perfect visualization skills.
  - ✓ Praise and reinforce when athletes can channel their negative emotions into positive performance actions.
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to be fearless and take a chance on learning new techniques or skills. Have them practice visualization in different situations and settings so they become comfortable with the mental tool.
- **Beware of Mind Traps:**
  - ✓ Be aware of black and white thinking or language that promotes “always” or “never” type of thoughts. Help athletes to see the grey areas when needed.
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to believe in themselves and their teammates.
  - ✓ If athletes have a bad game or practice, encourage them to shake it off and look to the next play or practice.
- **Control Emotions:**
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to practice mindfulness to stay in the present moment rather than thinking about the past or focusing too much on the future.
  - ✓ Create motivating statements or slogans (e.g., “Be more, do more” or “Stronger together!” or “Believe it, achieve it!”) as a team to help overcome obstacles.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how anxiety and fear are normal for everyone, but the best have strategies to overcome their fears.
- Discuss how negative thinking can impact performance negatively. If you have a negative mindset, your performance and teamwork will be negatively impacted.
- Discuss how each athlete can reframe their failures as an opportunity to learn. For example, discuss what they are thinking when they down in a game. Discuss that they need to forget the score and focus on the next play.
- Talk about the importance of creating a mental memory of their skills and how it is just as important as physically practicing. Ask them if they actively practice visualizing their performance in both positive and negative situations.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Choose to Be Positive
- CORE Elements: Mental Toughness, Composure
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Self-Doubting, Stubborn, Impatient, Perfectionistic

*“Worrying is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but it gets you nowhere.”*

– Glenn Turner, New Zealand Cricket Great –

# SUPPORTIVE

Your ability to provide encouragement or emotional help.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Give more negative feedback than positive feedback.
- Make their teammates frustrated or angry when giving feedback.
- Have a negative impact on their teammates' confidence because they are too critical.
- Not use physical contact (high-fives) to build team spirit.
- Only support others during positive situations, but not tough times.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Give more positive feedback than negative feedback.
- Make their teammates feel better when giving feedback.
- Have a positive impact on their teammates' confidence because they praise them in a truthful way.
- Use physical contact such as high-fives effectively to build team spirit.
- Effectively support others in both positive and negative situations.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Reinforce Giving Timely Feedback:**
  - ✓ Serve as a role model by giving appropriate and timely feedback. Reinforce your athletes to do the same.
  - ✓ Provide specific and honest feedback delivered in a positive way.
  - ✓ Set the tone that feedback is a great and necessary thing to improve rather than something to fear.
- **Use the Magic 5:1 Ratio to Provide Feedback:**
  - ✓ Athletes will continue to work hard when you provide feedback using this 5:1 ratio. For every 1 piece of negative feedback, you should also provide 5 positive statements. Research shows this is the ratio where trust and support will grow tremendously.
  - ✓ Be aware that some athletes will shut down and not grow if they are constantly given negative feedback with no praise.
- **Build Team Trust Everyday:**
  - ✓ Encourage a culture of trust as the foundation of a strong team. Discuss breaches of trust or misconduct that negatively impact team cohesiveness.
  - ✓ At the beginning of the season, have the team agree on consequences for violations of trust. Praise players who can bring the team together. Be sure to recognize the supportive behavior each practice.
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to cheer for each other and engage in high-fives, fist bumps, etc.

### Talking Points

- Discuss different types of support team members may need, such as high-fives, hugs, or supportive words.
- Share examples of teams who work well together like the Golden State Warriors during their championship runs.
- Recognize players who are supportive of their teammates. Create an award or weekly recognition for them.
- Discuss if additional types of support are needed outside of the team environment.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: High Five, The Magic 5 to 1 Ratio
- CORE Elements: Team Player, Composure
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Skeptical, Stubborn, Perfectionistic

*"Really get to know and establish relationships with your teammates because they are your new family and they will be the ones there for you when anything goes wrong."* – Alex Morgan, Women's USA Soccer Star –

# OVERCOMING SETBACKS

Your ability to find a way to get the best out of difficult situations.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Set very unrealistic expectations and believe they must meet them.
- Let their emotions get the best of them during tough times.
- Be unable to let go of mistakes and constantly replay them in their head.
- Say their success is because of luck and their mistakes are because of their ability.
- Not think they can change their outcomes through effort.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Set realistic expectations and have a healthy perspective on wanting to meet them.
- Keep their cool when things do not go their way.
- Be able to easily let go of mistakes and focus on the next play.
- Say their success is because of their skill and effort.
- Believe they are in control of their own destiny.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Don't Live in The Past:**
  - ✓ Reviewing past mistakes can be beneficial to learn from, but it is critical to encourage athletes to take that information and move on to make improvements. No one can improve when their head is buried in the past.
  - ✓ Practice taking in feedback and making changes. Some athletes will naturally be able to do this, while others will take it as a personal attack. Address the negative thoughts that result in defensiveness.
- **Get Your Team to Accept That Things Will Not Always Go Their Way:**
  - ✓ Have team discussions that every call or bounce will not go their way; it's always been part of the game and always will be.
  - ✓ Encourage athletes to take time to reflect on their skills and continue to make improvements in their practice.
  - ✓ Create a mantra to shout when needed such as "Next Play!" to help athletes focus on what is in front of them.
- **Be Honest and Accurate with Feedback:**
  - ✓ Be aware of your own language when discussing athlete feedback in a positive, developmental way.
  - ✓ Discuss areas of growth and things that are going well. Identify areas of improvement and communicate those goals with your team.
  - ✓ After success, highlight ability and the amount of effort put forth.
  - ✓ When there is a setback, identify areas that did not go well and lay out a game plan.

### Talking Points

- Discuss the difference between learning from past mistakes versus wallowing in self-pity. Explain how the overcoming mindset will positively impact confidence and subsequent performance.
- As a team, identify areas to make team improvements.
- Share stories about yourself or professional athletes that have overcome adversity or setbacks. Highlight how the person grew from those experiences.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Trust is Key, Causes of Performance, Life Is Not Always Fair, Next Play Attitude
- CORE Elements: Mental Toughness, Composure, Competitive Drive
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Overconfident, Impatient

***"I've never known anybody to achieve anything without overcoming adversity."***

– Lou Holtz, Former NCAA Champion Football Coach –



# COMPOSURE

Your ability to keep calm and confident in the face of pressure.

## WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

### LOW

#### Athletes at low levels will:

- Not be aware of their anger and how it can affect teammates.
- Let their frustration impact their performance.
- Get stuck in their pattern of anger and negative thoughts.
- Not be able to generate many solutions to problems.

### HIGH

#### Athletes at high levels will:

- Recognize their angry thoughts and use them as motivation.
- Effectively manage their frustrations.
- Be able to refocus their anger and negative thoughts to improve performance.
- Be able to generate many solutions to their problems.

## HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

### Coaching Tips

- **Build A Support System to Help Athletes Manage Their Priorities of Being a Student Athlete:**
  - ✓ Help athletes engage in problem solving so they can better handle the demands of being a student/athlete.
  - ✓ Encourage players to use supports system (e.g., counselors/teachers, family, friends) to overcome stressors.
  - ✓ To reduce stress, build in weekly study groups or other ways for students to productively handle their demands.
- **Teach Athletes to Recognize Negative Thinking Traps:**
  - ✓ Athletes who have negative thinking errors like, "Everyone must listen to me" will have difficulty remaining calm when things do not go their way.
  - ✓ Praise athletes when they regain their composure. When they can reframe their thoughts and challenge negative thinking traps, their behavior and attitude will change for the better as well.
- **Teach Athletes (and yourself) to Let Go of Mistakes:**
  - ✓ Find out what triggers athletes' frustration. For example, mistakes like missing a shot do not cause frustration, rather, how athletes think about that mistake causes them to be frustrated. Have them list the top most frustrating mistakes and encourage them to reframe these thoughts. Help them turn mistakes into learning opportunities.
  - ✓ Challenge athletes to change their thinking and give them a new reaction. For example, "I'm not perfect. I'm human and can move on." Get them to rehearse, review and memorize that new reaction. It's not the mistake that is controlling them, it's their negative thinking about that mistake.
  - ✓ Don't allow athletes to focus on the past. Encourage them to learn from it and move on to new goals.

### Talking Points

- Discuss how they can support each other in and out of the classroom.
- Have a regular pulse check on how each athlete is balancing their demands and offer tips.
- Share examples of professional athletes who have been able to maintain their composure in the face of stressors.
- Have a weekly recognition of players who have been able to overcome difficulty.

### Tools

- APP Lessons: Keep Your Cool, Two Number Ones
- CORE Elements: Composure, Coachable, Mental Toughness
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Stubborn, Perfectionistic

*"Always keep your composure. You can't score from the penalty box; and to win, you have to score."*  
– Bobby Hull, Hockey Great –