

HIGH SCHOOL
sports leader

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Coaching team leaders
and captains to a
season of significance!

Craig Hillier

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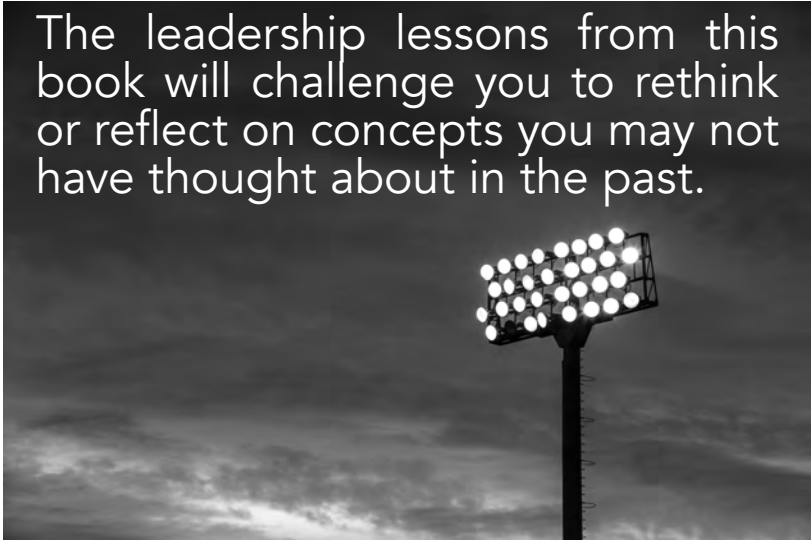
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**"There are some
team leaders
who are not team
captains.**

**There are some
team captains
who are not
team leaders!"**

—Craig Hillier

The leadership lessons from this book will challenge you to rethink or reflect on concepts you may not have thought about in the past.



A Season of Significance

According to Webster's dictionary, the word "significance" is defined as something that is "meaningful, important, and memorable." Success is defined as a "favorable result." Significance is about creating lasting, important memories and lessons, whereas success is about the end result. **Ideally, your season and your life will be both significant and successful.**

Because this book focuses on a creating a season of significance, I'm often asked, "Are you saying winning is not important?" It's a valid question. Let me be clear. As someone who is very competitive—even with something as simple as a board game—I want to win! Given the choice of winning or losing, I'll take the win. But, it's also important to understand that winning becomes a by-product of hard work and preparation that takes place before and during a sport's season.

Creating a season of significance is challenging

Unfortunately, several things can get in the way of a significant season. When I conduct live workshops, we discuss the issues that can steal away a great experience in high school sports. Students generated the following list when asked to name the top 10 things that prevent a meaningful, important, memorable season.

1. Poor attitude
2. Complaining teammates
3. Injuries
4. Little or no talent
5. Issues with the coach
6. Selfishness
7. Infractions
8. Lack of preparation
9. Bad decisions outside the sport that create drama
10. Poor or no leadership



Look carefully at the list. Teams have some control or influence over eight of the ten items. There are only two items over which teams have little or no control: injuries and talent level.

Injuries can happen to anyone on any time. Many trainers say, however, that getting in strong physical condition, eating right, staying hydrated, and stretching can minimize or prevent injuries.

Top 10 qualities of emerging team leaders

Quality # 1 Trustworthy

David Horsager, author of *The Trust Edge*, asks his readers to think about an important event: "Describe a time when you were totally trusted by someone." I thought back to a family vacation we took to a resort in northern Minnesota. At the time DJ was five, and Abigayle was two. Abigayle loved being in the pool but could not swim. I was in the pool where the depth was five feet and Abigayle was standing on the pool's deck, about two feet from the pool's edge. The video clip shows me encouraging her to leap to me in the water. Even though she was young, she was aware of how deep the pool was and she wasn't wearing any type of floating device.

Abigayle hesitated for a minute and then took two big steps and leapt into the pool where I caught her. The smile on her face was priceless! Do you think she would have jumped into the pool if she didn't trust me? No chance!

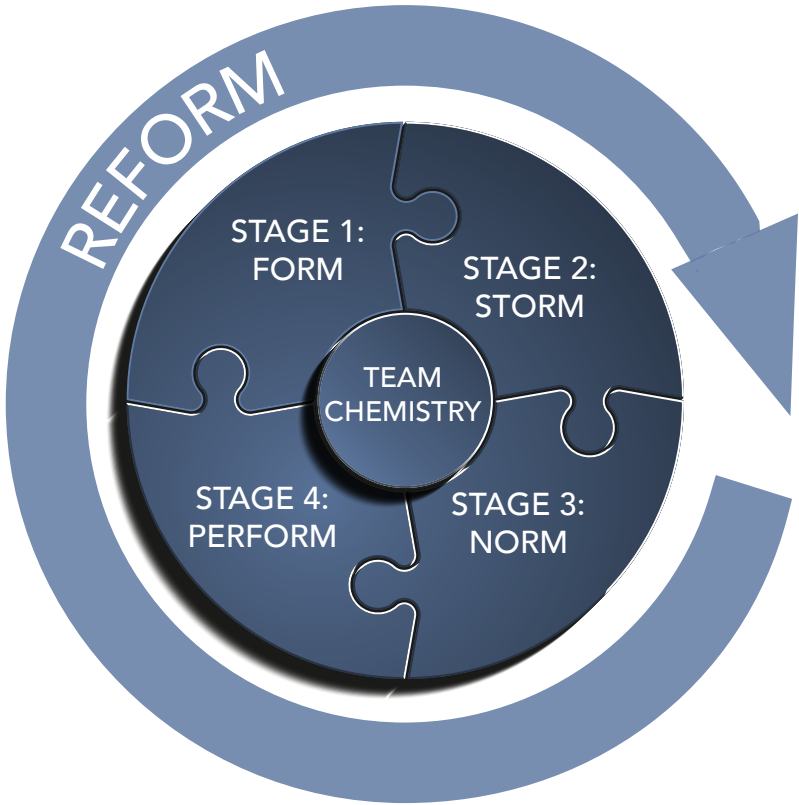
How trustworthy are you?

After a coach walks out of the door, do you mock or criticize her? If someone on your team shares some confidential family information, do you spread it to the rest of the team or post it on social media?



In addition to being balancing tasks and relationships, it's also to important to understanding the five stages of team chemistry.

Stages of Team Chemistry



to improve a team's connection and communication. Thousands of students, athletes, educators, and other professionals worldwide have found incredible insight by completing the survey. It's called [the "T.E.A.M. Dynamics Leadership Indicator. The indicator that blends individual roles into team goals."](#)

The next several chapters take a deep dive into understanding leadership roles. You'll start this learning process by taking the *T.E.A.M. Dynamics Leadership Indicator*. This exercise will reveal your dominant and supporting leadership styles. You will also:

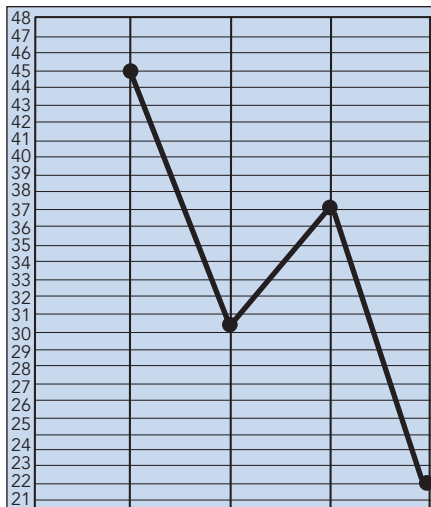
- ➔ Learn about four leadership styles.
- ➔ Understand your leadership style in more depth.
- ➔ Develop a new appreciation of other people's leadership styles.
- ➔ Learn specific strategies to connect and communicate with others.
- ➔ Navigate conflict with others whose style of leadership differs from yours.
- ➔ Recognize each style has natural strengths, challenges, and room for improvement.

When I present this survey in a live workshop, there are countless "ah ha!" moments among participants. Students often say after the program they have finally figured out why they have such a difficult time with certain people and more importantly, what they can do about it. This insight can be a game-changer for leaders. Let's get started.

The next several chapters describe each leadership style in detail, including:

- Common characteristics
- Communication process
- Motivating factors
- Demotivating factors
- Challenges
- Managing relationships with other styles
- Areas for improvement

As you read the description of each style, keep in mind the greater the difference between the points on the grid, the more accurate each description becomes.



Areas of Improvement

- ➔ Get others involved
- ➔ Listen to all available options
- ➔ Treat others with respect
- ➔ Make sure others see the vision
- ➔ Stay composed

Enterpriser's Approach to Leading a Team

Enterprisers are usually willing to take on a leadership role. Others may actually perceive them as leaders because they are vocal and creative. Most people enjoy the



Enterpriser's out-of-the-box nature. At times, however, Enterprisers can be viewed as the person who enjoys the spotlight and takes credit for the group's work. The Enterpriser can get to the next level of

leadership by honoring others' contributions and involving team members. Their competitive nature, however, can take the team to a whole new level. The key is to get to that level without losing relationships in the process.

You must become a master observer. Watch how people interact with others. Watch how they respond to a question. Observe how organized they are in their daily life. Watch how they act. If you are a strong observer and understand the tendencies of all four styles, you will be able to make an educated guess. At this point, it's important to know what adjustments to make to connect with a person with a particular style. You can find those details in the previous chapters.

Sometimes people say, "I'm not going to change who I am in order to connect or communicate with someone." Think about that statement for a minute. We are constantly adjusting the way we act. Do we act the same at a dance as we do at an important ceremony? It's doubtful. Do you talk the same way to a three-year-old as you do to a supervisor at work? No way.

If leaders are not willing to change and adjust to the situation and people involved in the situation or group they will be ineffective leaders.

All Styles Create Strength

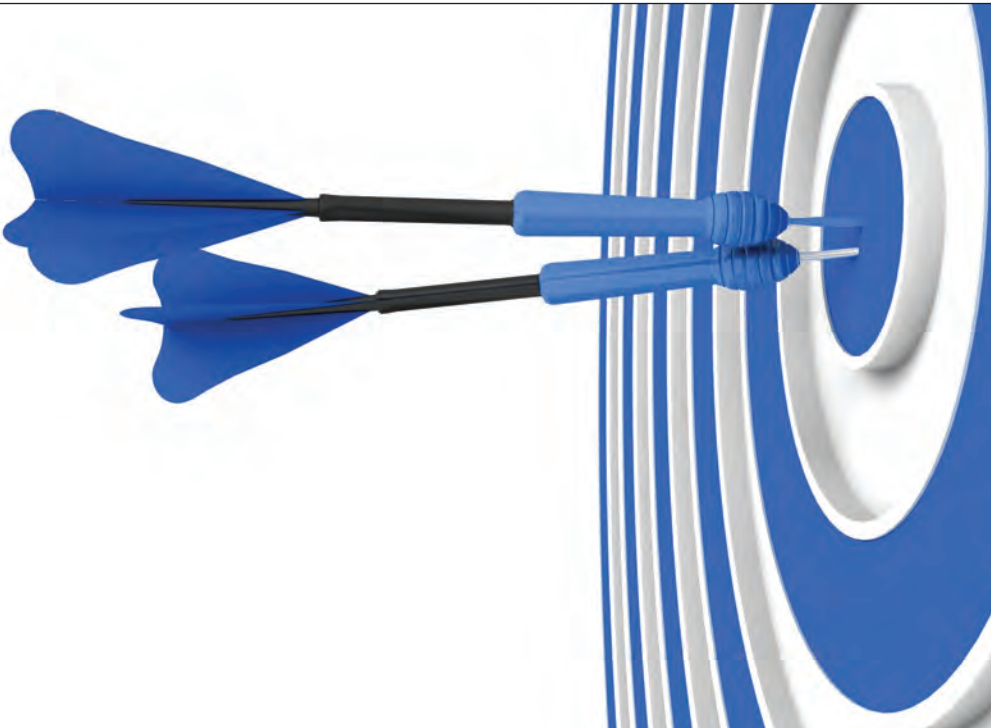
It's important to remember all four styles are important on a team. Let's use a four-legged chair for this example. Each leg of the chair represents a different leadership style.

If a person wants to stand on a chair with four legs (leadership styles) represented, could they be reasonably confident they could stand firmly on the chair? (The word "reasonably" was added for the Analyzers!)

The answer is "yes." Why? The four legs create balance. **Remember, the differences create the strength!** If one leg/leadership style was removed from the chair, could someone stand on it? The answer is "probably." You

The GOALS formula stands for:

Genuine
Optimistic
Accurate
Listed
Symbols



alcohol have negatively impacted individuals and teams. I could write an entire book on the stories students have shared with me.

The Effects Are Bigger than You Think

Often the most popular drug used in schools today is alcohol. Some people tend to think alcohol isn't a drug, because there's a legal drinking age. Cocaine, LSD, heroin, and other drugs are clearly illegal—no matter how old you are. Whether you—or someone on your team—is using alcohol or steroids, they're illegal, even if you purchase them online as in the case with steroids or performance-enhancing drugs.

The detrimental effects of alcohol on performance are well documented and include impairment of the following:

- Balance and steadiness
- Reaction time
- Fine and complex motor skills
- Information processing
- Speech
- Decision making



"You don't want to
spend your life
living down
one night
of living it up."



Appreciate Everyone's Role

Not everyone on the team is going to be a star. Some people may be on the team because it's the only positive thing in their life.

One of my best friends in high school averaged eight points a season in basketball. He lived for warm-ups prior to the game. While he wasn't talented on the floor, his sense of humor carried the team a long way. He was quick with a joke and could make anyone smile regardless of the situation. He was the spark plug of the team despite the fact he didn't play very much. His role was to provide comic relief.

As a leader, it's vital to support players at all levels. **Remember: athletes develop at different rates.** A lanky junior can turn into a whole new player as a senior. If you demean ability, you are driving a wedge between you and your teammates. If you're going to play beyond the scoreboard, respect each person's role on the team. Whether they bring out the water or earn the highest score on the beam, respect everyone's role.

During a live leadership workshop in Michigan, I asked the student athletes to discuss a difficult situation they faced in the past. Students were asked to talk about the event in their small groups along with what could have been better. A junior shared her experience of moving up from the junior varsity to varsity as a sophomore. Although she was excited about the opportunity, two seniors were not thrilled about the situation. During warm-up passing drills, one of the ticked off seniors was throwing the ball

as hard as she could at the sophomore's face. As this athlete relived the experience, her voice became shaky. The room went silent when she ended her story with, "I just wanted to help the team. I didn't want anyone hating me for it."

There will be times when your coach makes changes that could involve younger players seeing more playing time. You will have a choice to make them feel "a part of" or "apart from" the team.

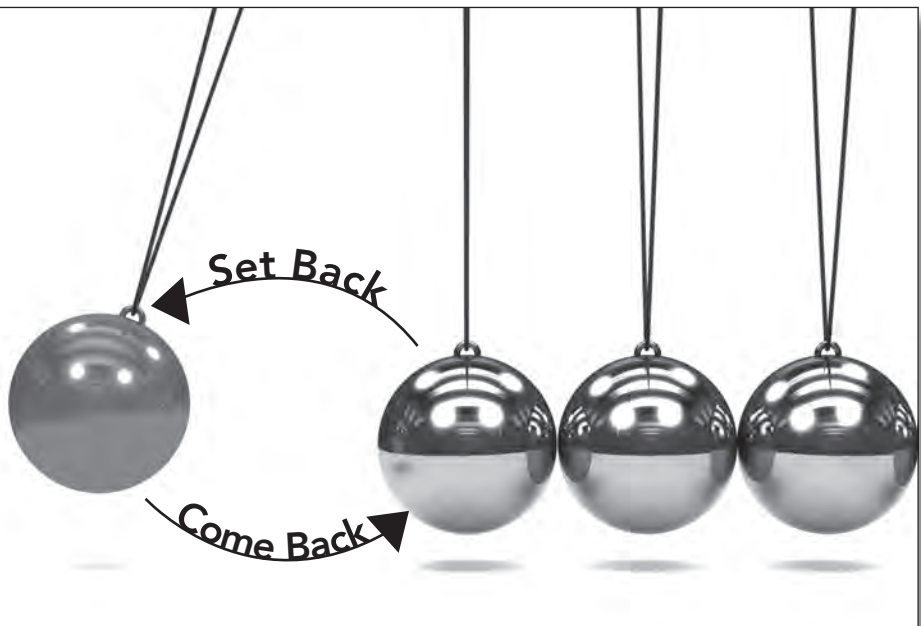
You may be in a sport that is both an individual sport with a team aspect such as track, gymnastics, cross-country, wrestling, and so on. If that's the case, creating an atmosphere where underclassmen are welcomed is absolutely vital for the team to perform at its best. In track, for example, the freshman that runs the 1600-meter race at a blistering pace may be the difference between advancing to post-season competition or ending the season prematurely.

When everyone on the team, freshman to seniors, feels his or her contribution matters, you are destined for a season of significance.

Policies for rebounding from a loss

1. Review and evaluate your performance
2. Understand you will make mistakes
3. Understand others will make mistakes
4. Determine what you can fix
5. Look to improve

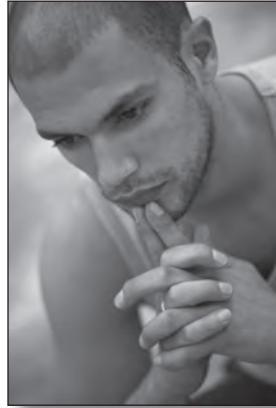
"First, accept sadness. Realize that without losing, winning isn't so great." – Alyssa Milano



The costs of hazing

Anyone who organizes, participates, or even watches a hazing event could be subject to loss of title, team suspension, loss of college scholarship, or face possible criminal conviction.

When a hazing incident is reported, the first students to be called to an administrator's office will be team leaders and captains. *It is unlikely the hazing took place without a team leader's knowledge or approval.* Furthermore,



one of the fastest ways to go from hero to zero is to initiate a hazing event or be at the event and not stop it. If you are a team captain, and a hazing incident takes place under your watch, you will most likely lose your captainship.

After a hazing event has been exposed, the next step usually involves suspensions or forfeits. If you participated in or witnessed a hazing event, it's common to

One of the fastest ways to go from hero to zero is to initiate a hazing event or be at the event and not stop it.

be suspended for several games. Many athletic directors have removed athletes for the rest of the season to show the school and community a zero tolerance stance. In fact, some nationally ranked teams have cancelled the balance of their season because of hazing. Can you imagine a stupid act putting you and your team in a national spotlight? Your school's image will be stained because of a poor decision a small group of people make.

**Conflict
is
inevitable.**

You've just experienced a pitfall called conflict. How will you work through this and come out stronger? This is one area with which I had difficulty as a team leader and captain. I do not like conflict.

Too often I tried to ignore the crisis and hoped it would go away. Occasionally, that worked. But most of the time, it didn't.

This chapter gives you some ideas on working through conflict. You will learn a formula to manage conflict in a tactful way rather than losing your cool and saying things you may regret later. You will become a stronger individual and a stronger team because you had the courage to face the conflict and resolve it.

Dealing with Conflict

This chapter is titled *Dealing with Conflict*. It doesn't say *ignoring* conflict or **attacking** conflict. Let's face it, conflict is inevitable. If you put two or more people in a room together, it won't take long before a problem arises. If a problem is addressed in an assertive rather than an aggressive fashion, you and your team will be able to tackle the issue and move on. If it's not addressed appropriately, the conflict could snowball into a major crisis that divides the team and eventually makes people want to quit. Then, you find yourself losing games you should have won because the off-the-court issues were preventing you from working as a team. I've heard literally hundreds of horror stories about how conflict has destroyed teams and friendships. Sometimes the conflict or problem itself is the reason the relationship was

Normally, coaches respect the fact you had enough courage to discuss an issue with them directly instead of talking about it with everyone except them. If you approach the difficult conversation of playing time correctly, you will gain insight from your coach's perspective and allow your coach to hear your side of the story.

Here's how it may go:

(Athlete in blue—Coach in bold black italics.)

Make sure you are approaching the discussion at an appropriate time, potentially after practice.

Coach, do you have a few minutes?

"I have two minutes, what's up?"

In the event the coach has another commitment and is rushed, this is not the time for the conversation. A rushed conversation dealing with a delicate conversation is a recipe for failure. If the coach doesn't have the time when you approach her, say...

"I've got a few things on my mind and I understand you have to run. When would you have 15 minutes?"

"How about tomorrow after practice?"

If that works on your end, agree to the time. The next day after practice, make sure you are in a spot where the conversation isn't going to be overheard.

"This is a little awkward and uncomfortable. I feel I owe it to you and to myself to have a conversation with you directly. It seems like I have not been playing as much as I expected." (Observation.) "Can you give me your thoughts and feedback on this?" (In this situation, you are combining Thoughts and Feedback.)



It's a jungle out there! Social media refers to interaction among people in which they create, share, or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media is booming; in fact, there are hundreds of sites that collectively host millions of

users worldwide. While social media has value, purpose, and positive qualities, it also presents opportunities for pitfalls.

It's no secret that schools want to be known for how their athletes and teams are creating a season of significance. They can do without the social media nightmares that often create a negative firestorm in their school, among their teams, and in the community.

This chapter covers four fundamental factors of social media and outlines the POST formula for managing social media posts effectively.

Fundamental Factors of Social Media:

1. The meaning of text is up for debate.
2. Don't count on being anonymous.
3. Everything sent or posted is potentially permanent.
4. What you say or post is a reflection of who you are.

The meaning of text is up for debate.

Take a simple, six-word statement, "I didn't say he liked her." How many different meanings does this sentence imply? Just by emphasizing each word independently,

There are several aspects of sportsmanship. Unfortunately, some of these areas you have little control over. These include the behavior of opponents, fans, and opposing coaches. It's nearly impossible to control other people's behavior. However, you can influence their behavior. There is little you can do to influence the opponent's sportsmanship, but you can choose how you and your team respond and react to various situations.

Sportsmanship means committing to be a class act regardless of the circumstances. This is a skill you can use for the rest of your life. People who are class acts gain admiration from others. They draw others in. They look at the big picture regarding their approach to life and their sport. They don't get too high with their success or fall apart when they face failure.

Top-notch teams, leaders and athletes demonstrate the CLASS formula.

- ➔ **C**ool heads prevail
- ➔ **L**ose with dignity
- ➔ **A**void arrogance
- ➔ **S**ucceed with grace
- ➔ **S**ee the big picture



CHAPTER 19

SHIFTING INTO THE TEAM CAPTAIN ROLE

"It's not about you!" — Craig Hillier

In Chapter 3 of the team leader section, you learned about the qualities of an emerging leader. The advanced qualities outlined in this chapter will help you shift from a team leader to a team captain.

Advanced Quality #1 Serving

One of my first jobs in high school was being a server in a restaurant. I liked the job, because it involved working with people. Plus, if I performed well, guests would leave a tip. During my initial training, the manager said, "If you want to be a successful server, you must put the customer first." At times, that

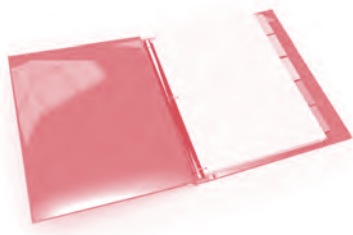
meant the cooks had to prepare a dish that was not on the menu for a guest with a dietary restriction. My goal as a waiter was to



do everything possible to insure the dining experience was memorable for the customers. I knew if I went out of my way to serve the customer, my tip would be larger.

In addition to using an organization app, it will be helpful to create a “Captain’s Kit.” A simple three ring binder with a clear sleeve on the cover will work well.

The clear sleeve allows you to insert a team photo. Some team captains create a page with motivational phrases or the theme of the year to place in the sleeve. Purchasing divider tabs makes finding information easier as well. A Captain’s Kit can be customized to suit your needs. You also need to print a calendar and add any of the following events that pertain to your sport.



Calendar

- ➔ Practice times
- ➔ Game schedule
- ➔ Bus departure times
- ➔ Captain’s practices
- ➔ Fundraiser dates
- ➔ Date of photographs for team poster

A contact directory will allow you to quickly contact a player, parent, coach, or vendor via phone or email. Ideally, you have mailing addresses as well. It would also be beneficial to create a form for each type of contact. You can easily create a template using spreadsheet software such as Excel. This may sound “old school,” but it will be very beneficial if something unfortunate happens to your phone or computer.

Pointed Question #2: "If you were to write a job description for me this season, what would it say?"



Chances are this is your first experience as a team captain. You are looking for specific responses in this question. A job description should describe what the coach expects from you every day as well as what's expected of you for the overall season.

Pointed Question #3: "How can I help you this season?"



Team captains rarely ask this question, so you'll stand out when you do. Usually, captains focus on what the coach can do for them. Coaching is a difficult job. This question is designed to show the coach you're committed to a season of significance and that you're thinking of the team instead of just yourself.

Pointed Question #4: "What's the process to address problems and concerns this season?"



Every team deals with issues during the season. When these issues show their ugly heads, it's key to have a plan of attack. Average teams and team captains just let things slide and hope these difficulties go away. Captains and teams that are willing to have a difficult discussion on an uncomfortable topic create the opportunity to solve the issue and move forward. This question will outline the range of discussions a coach desires from a team captain.

**Every team deals with
issues during the
season.**

Sadly, when this question is asked of 150 student athletes in a workshop, only a handful of students have an example to share with the group. This response indicates only a small percentage of team captains have left a legacy.

How will you be remembered?
Will you be a legacy leader?

If you have read this far into the book, you have proven you want to be the best team leader and captain as possible. If your peers or underclassmen were asked five years after high school graduation to describe a legendary student leader, would your name be a part of the conversation?

If your response is, "I don't really care," you will not be an effective captain! If you hear the question and think, "I'm going to do everything possible to leave a positive legacy," chances are strong your name will be brought up when others are asked to name a legendary leader.

Becoming a legendary leader does not happen by accident. It takes tremendous effort to become a leader who is remembered long after graduating from high school.

"My legacy is that I stayed on course
from the beginning to the end,
because I believed
in something inside of me."

— Tina Turner

Opening Chapter: **Creating a Season of Significance**

In the *Realizing a Need* opening chapter, Craig outlines his leadership story as a high school leader and a team captain. It will be valuable to reflect on your thoughts regarding leadership. Take a few minutes to review the following questions and then write your answer on the lines. The key in any self-evaluation survey is to be 100% honest with your responses. Answering these questions will create a baseline regarding your journey into leadership.

Complete the following phrase from the opening chapter. Leadership is a _____ —not _____.

In your opinion, why is this phrase important to understand?

A quote in the opening chapter read, “**There are some team leaders who are not team captains, and there are some team captains who are not team leaders.**” What are your thoughts on this statement? _____

Do you consider yourself a leader now? Why or why not?

Describe some of the experiences you have had with leadership. _____

In your opinion, why would someone willingly follow you as a leader? _____

Significance is defined as “meaningful, important, and memorable.”

Students from Craig’s live workshops generated a list of the top 10 things that can prevent a season of significance. Think about your upcoming athletic season. Rank the list, randomly created, from 1 to 10 for your team, where 1 is the thing you are most concerned about and 10 is the item you are least concerned about.

- _____ Selfishness
- _____ Little or no talent
- _____ Issues with the coach
- _____ Bad decisions outside the sport that create drama
- _____ Poor or no leadership
- _____ Complaining teammates
- _____ Infractions
- _____ Lack of preparation
- _____ Injuries
- _____ Poor attitude

Write your top three concerns about your ability to create a season of significance:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What can be done to address these issues?

Chapter 16: Dealing with Conflict

"To get it right, you have to see it right."

What is your typical pattern for dealing with conflict? For example, do you withdraw and become silent? Verbally attack the other person or group? Deny there is an issue or joke about it? What results do you achieve using this pattern?

Rate your comfort level regarding dealing with conflict by placing an X at the appropriate spot and explain why.



Very Comfortable Comfortable Very Uncomfortable

What is important when starting a conversation when there is a conflict? _____

What do each one of the letters stand for in the OTFDN formula?

O _____

T _____

F _____

D _____

N _____

What is the most important take away from this chapter related to dealing with conflict? Explain why.

We owe it to our kids to let them truly experience all that sports have to offer, from the mental highs of upsetting a state-ranked opponent to the lows of little or decreased playing time.

It's their experience—not ours.



Contributing Practice #1:

Enjoy the experience!

A question all parents must ask is, “Why do students participate in sports?”

All the research on the motivating factors to participate in sports indicates the number one reason an athlete is involved in a sport is to have fun! It's very common for young athletes to have dreams of being a professional athlete. In 8th grade, I believed the Philadelphia 76ers would be drafting me after an illustrious basketball college career. A long story short, not a single Division 1 college offered me a scholarship, and the 76ers didn't draft me.

With that being said, it's great for kids to have a vision to play at the next level. And as parents, we don't want to squash their dreams. However, it's helpful to know the odds of becoming a professional athlete.

The NCAA has compiled the research on the number of high school athletes who play at the college or professional level. Using basketball as an example, of the 158,000 male high school basketball players, only .03% make it to the pros. This amounts to 44 men being drafted. Of the 128,000 girls who participate in high school basketball, only 32 or .02% will be drafted for a professional career.

As you can see, the odds of becoming a professional athlete are pretty slim. So if that's the case, why participate if you can't advance to the next level? For fun! Sports are supposed to be fun. The thrill of working hard toward a goal, the camaraderie of being on a team with friends, and learning to take feedback from coaches in pursuit of improving, is fun! Now, is everything in sports fun? No, sometimes practice isn't fun. Losing is never fun. But how will they know if they are going to win or lose unless they participate? One thing is certain; when the fun evaporates from sports, participating becomes a struggle.

Contaminating Practice #2: **Critique your athlete's performance, whether they ask for it or not.**



When I present to athletes and parents, I like to get the audience involved by incorporating a large group game of "Simon Says." Prior to the program, a handful of chairs are placed in front of the audience on a gym floor or auditorium stage. I also ask the meeting planner for a few names of loud parents who may not always be supporting with their words from the stands. The entire audience plays the game and a handful of parents have a "VIP seat" where everyone can see how well they play the simple game. Before the game starts, I ask the parents in the "VIP seats" to look back at the audience. It's comical to see the look of terror that appears on many of their faces when they look back at me. I once asked a woman, "What is going through your mind," after she looked back at 1,000 people in the gym. Her eyes got rather large and she said, "There are just a lot of people watching me," she added, "**There's a lot more pressure being up here than sitting back there.**" I simply smiled and nodded in agreement.

As the game of Simon Says progresses, parents seated in the VIP chairs begin to make mistakes and sit down. I often will pause the game to make comments like, "I can't believe you fell for that." Sometimes I say, "Come on. . . what are you doing?" I