

Building Team Culture in Basketball

by

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## **Abstract**

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This project focuses on the head coach's role in developing team culture in competitive amateur basketball. It explores the factors that the coach must consider and develop when creating and building winning team culture in basketball, and additionally why these factors are so important. Leadership, personnel and team building all emerge as key categories. Within these 3 categories key topics such as recruiting, shared leadership, projection, tradition, goal setting, character, coaching techniques and team building are discussed.

These topics lead to an activity based coach education resource that aims to help coaches develop, discuss, grow, re-visit and share key factors and topics that will help facilitate a vision and plan of action for developing winning team culture in competitive amateur basketball. The coaching resource also contains several working documents that can be used in actual team building/goal setting situations. The major activity within the coach education resource is an interactive documentary that takes participants through a complete basketball season and provides reflection and discussion opportunities within. The focus of the project is to present the key factors and considerations necessary developing strong team culture, and additionally provide a coaching resource to help create, clarify and grow strong team culture within a basketball program.

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## Chapter 1- An Inspirational Journey



*Figure 1. Team Culture Introduction*

I often look back on my involvement with the game of basketball and reflect on what my life path would have been without participation in the sport. Who would I be? What level of education would I have achieved? Who my friends would be? What career would I be in? There are obviously no specific answers to those questions, but I am 100% confident that the experience of competitive basketball changed my life for the better in every manner I can possibly consider (with the exception of the physical condition of my joints). It is that knowledge and experience that continues to drive my interest and involvement in the game. “Character lessons not only produce good sporting behavior, but good citizenship, as they can be transferred into athletes’ everyday lives” (Gaines, 2012, p.31).

The impact that basketball had on my life, drives the countless hours, efforts and sacrifices I still devote to the game, 15 years past my competitive playing days. Beyond basketball, those experiences are also why I am a huge supporter of amateur sport on every level and in every game. Over and above my appreciation and support of the opportunities and growth

sport can offer one's life, I also hold strong beliefs about how the competitive team experience should look to maximize potential and growth. In this project I plan to explore the massive gap in experience, development and growth between simply playing basketball, and being part of an elite successful basketball program. More specifically, I will unpack team culture and how a coach who creates a strong and successful team culture can have the greatest impact on his/her athletes within their current season and in life beyond sport.

Through my experiences and lessons with my involvement in the sport of basketball over the past 30 years, I have gained great appreciation and belief in the work, investment and sacrifice it takes to coach competitive amateur basketball with high expectations, values, discipline, culture, character and success. Furthermore, I am concerned that some of the foundational beliefs I have in coaching and competing in amateur basketball may be eroding in the province of Alberta. From my perspective, the state of the game and level of coaching, beyond a participatory level of involvement has decreased in our province in the last 5-6 years. Basketball Alberta states that "membership has grown by 30% over the past 4 years", and "school participation numbers have grown by 20% over the same time period" (Sir, 2015). More and more kids are playing the sport, but I feel the level of competition, coaching, and play has suffered. This concerns me, but more so intrigues me as to potential solutions.

I feel I have lived and observed many of those reasons on a face to face level through my intense coaching experience over the last decade which has been from a developmental grassroots level, all the way up to the highest level played in our country. More recently, through the involvement of my own kids, I have also had the opportunity to become involved in other amateur sports (lacrosse, hockey, soccer, and gymnastics) at their grassroots and developmental levels. This has offered a great deal of perspective on the challenges, processes,

and developmental systems, coaching education and level and vision that exists in various sports, especially at the developmental levels. This has stimulated a great deal of thought and opinion on where I feel the game of basketball is going and being structured in Alberta.

Competitive amateur basketball in Alberta is the site and foundation of this project and the basis for my personal philosophies and beliefs, but many of the themes and values I have within my area of expertise have links to other sports, locations and coaching/leadership situations.

### **Foundations**

I have been fortunate enough to play and coach the sport of basketball all the way up to a national level. I have also been fortunate enough to have been involved with Alberta Basketball and Canada Basketball's development programs as I developed my knowledge and gained experience as a competitive coach. I was able to play and coach the game at the highest level in our country, which was not something I imagined was even possible as a young athlete. These experiences form the foundations for many of my beliefs and observations of the state of coaching in our province. My goal is to shine some light on some of the current issues the game of basketball in Alberta is facing, but more so help push, develop and improve coaching and opportunities for young competitive basketball players.

Taking my involvement in the game of basketball to a level beyond my early expectations was an amazing and challenging ride, which truly helped shape my vision and beliefs of the responsibilities of competitive amateur coaching, and the positive consequences sport can have on one's life experience and growth. From a personal perspective, without the sport of basketball and the people who influenced me within that experience, I believe my level of happiness, education, personal wealth, social wellbeing, work ethic, ambition, mental wellness, health and overall life experience would be much lower. I know from experience that

for some, sport can be life changing. I have lived it, but also witnessed it countless times in other teammates and players. I hope to continue to help create and provide better and high level opportunities for young competitive athletes within the game of basketball. One way to extrapolate these opportunities is to have more coaches working at a higher level of knowledge and expertise.

I give a great deal of credit in my life for the opportunities and growth I experienced to the vision and expectations of a legendary coach, as I worked and competed within one of Canada's elite basketball programs. It was under that coach, and during my years in that program that I learned the importance of the vision, expectations, behaviors, sacrifice, character, resilience and work that a properly run program can offer young athletes. The growth and benefit this program helped pave for so many young athletes was astonishing to witness and experience. Not only was it impressive to witness, it also allowed me to see how creating a competitive athletic environment with the proper expectations and culture could truly separate one team from another on the scoreboard and in the individual character growth of athletes. My experience and link to a strong coach whom I made a connection with, helped create an environment where I could envision, grow and accelerate my development and maturation. Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2013) reinforced my experiences and beliefs by stating that "the perceived quality of the coach-athlete relationship was also positively correlated with positive developmental experiences" (p.557). There are many athletes with basketball dreams, but I believe it takes exposure and experience within a coach created winning culture to bring out the best and properly develop young athletes and people.

The major issue I have, and the driving motivation behind my masters degree capstone project, is that there are so many athletes that have the potential to reap the same or even greater

rewards this game offered my life, but are not fortunate enough to be around the right people or in the right situations to realize that potential. As a coach, when I see the physical and mental gifts within an athlete that could open the door for so many great opportunities, I always find myself hoping they get in the appropriate situation to truly maximize potential and use the game to get the most possible opportunity and growth from their efforts. Unfortunately, in my opinion, this often not the case.

I plan to explore some of my perceptions as to why capable athletes sometimes miss opportunities, and raise some major concerns I have with the future of competitive basketball on a local and provincial level. I will eventually narrow the focus of my project on a more universal foundation of success, not only in basketball but in team sport in general, team culture. I will clearly show how a strong leader creating an appropriate environment for excellence is essential for maximum success of competitive amateur basketball players.

### **My Journey**

I have been involved with basketball most of my life. I was exposed as a young child when my father coached collegiate basketball, and I also played recreationally. My first exposure to what I would call competitive basketball came in high school. I immediately enjoyed the challenge, friendships, accolades and status within the school community that being successful in competitive sport brought into my high school and life experience. However, I was a fairly immature student athlete and did not spend much time or effort focusing on the possible growth and opportunity that basketball had the potential to offer my life. I went to the practices and worked really hard physically, but there was very little personal focus, long term vision or outside influence that highlighted all the potential opportunity that being an elite athlete could potentially offer. My coaches were good people doing their best, but I was not part of a program

with any stated vision or structure to take the game and the opportunities within it to greater heights. The previous athletes in the program had little history of elite postsecondary success and the coaches had little elite/high level experience. At the time, as a elite basketball athlete, on a provincial or national level, I wasn't even in the picture. I received very little guidance, elite coaching/development or discipline. It wasn't until the possible finality of my grade 12 season/competitive basketball involvement that someone managed to get through to me about the commitment, effort, academics, training, vision and skill development needed to realize my potential. I was too immature to self-discipline myself properly, and didn't have the outside expectations, connections or inspiration to see the bigger picture or my true individual potential. I was a big fish in my "basketball bubble" but in reality I was already behind other top players in the province who were playing for top technical coaches in programs that were perennial powerhouses and consistently sending blue chip prospects to top university and college programs.

Fortunately for me, I was able to crack the lineup of an elite college program in my first year of college under a coach that would push my limits far beyond what I perceived as possible. I didn't come into the program as a heralded top recruit and was very fortunate to have enough parental involvement and encouragement to set me up and initiate involvement with a post-secondary institution and some athletic and academic opportunity in front of me. In reality, I was starting from the bottom, as there were several of the perceived top high school players in Western Canada coming into an already strong program, who were heralded and treated as the next generation of elite players in our province.

Entering that sporting culture of excellence and new level of expectation from coaches and teammates was an extremely eye opening experience. All of a sudden I was being pushed to

limits I didn't even know were possible, especially academically and physically. The experience was incredibly challenging on many levels in my life. There were now expectations academically and within our individual training that I was never exposed to previously. Intense work ethic and excellence was demanded from the coaching staff, and the athletes within the program worked harder and competed at a level of intensity very new to me. The next two seasons brought personal growth physically, mentally and socially at levels that I would never have predicted. All of a sudden I was blooming into a new level of athlete and person. My work ethic and focus was at an all-time high in my life. I was getting physically bigger and stronger, and making great leaps forwards academically. This helped take my skills, work ethic, confidence, friendships and commitment to a whole new level. I was in a culture that demanded, encouraged and shaped this development. I was becoming a different person, a better person. Even then I didn't see the next step coming. Over the next 2 seasons, our team would develop into one of the top collegiate teams in the country and many of our athletes were being heavily recruited by major universities and I was one of them.

Just a few years earlier I remember going to a game to watch a game at the University of Alberta. They had just won a national championship and had developed into one of the national basketball powerhouses. I remember thinking to myself that "it would be amazing even to take warm up at that level, play for that coach and in front of that crowd". All of a sudden I had developed into one of their recruits. I was being brought into a program that the two time defending national champions, to play for a legendary coach who was one of the most successful, intense and demanding in the country. I was going to be pursuing a university degree and be on the same team as athletes I grew up perceiving to be out of my league.

The tradition and culture of this new program took the demands of excellence to a new heights. The University of Alberta basketball program had reached the peak of success at their level of competition, and now I was being assimilated into a collective vision that chased excellence and had experience what it took to actually achieve it. The way I perceived challenges and my potential completely changed. This situation not only accelerated my personal development and growth, but it took my individual basketball game to a whole new level. My perspective on life changed.

Not only did I become part of that program and culture, but eventually I developed into the captain, a league all-star and even continued on as a coach within the program years later. The environment, vision and culture that my post-secondary coaches created changed my life. That is why I am so passionate and certain of the necessity for competitive coaches to create of proper winning culture for their athletes. I take that knowledge forward and see so many basketball programs that are not set up for excellence. I feel it is short changing the athletes. Being connected to successful culture, character, discipline, people, and coaching throughout those years, and then taking those experiences into my career, personal life and coaching career is what has made me so passionate about the culture, high standards, and interdependence necessary for success. By success, I don't only mean winning basketball games, but also developing young athletes/people as people and citizens. The proper team culture and competitive environment is key to developing future athletes, and people. The image below is from a game during my playing days I have spoken of. I include it because when I look at it, it elicits emotions and memories from experiences consistent with what I have shared in this reading. Some of my best friends, lessons, memories and experiences I have lived, are tied to the people, team and sport in the photo.



*Figure 2.* Golden Bear Basketball team huddle artifact 1998

Being developed in a culture that demanded and strived for excellence and the amount of work necessary to pursue such heights, is something I credit for bringing out my true inner will and work ethic. To me, the majority of that environment was created by my coaches. I was pushed to challenge my perceived limits and set ambitious goals for myself and our team. The demands placed on us were as challenging as anything I have ever experienced and those demands were consistent every single day, practice, training session and game. The relationships and shared growth I have with these teams are something that I am thankful for every day, and the source of many of the most important people in my life outside of immediate family.



*Figure 3. Team Body Language*

### **Where is the game headed?**

As clearly outlined, the sport of basketball has benefited me throughout my life. (Improved fitness, confidence, responsibility, fun, work ethic, time management skills, career connections, community involvement, friendships, mental toughness, communication and leadership skills, etc.) However, it wasn't until I became truly committed, ambitious and dedicated to the game and a team with similar focused ambition that I feel I really started to see the biggest positive changes in my personal development. I know from experience what competitive sport can offer young people, but I believe the benefits to an individual are only maximized when a team/program/coach sets up appropriate guidelines, culture, demands and expectations.

This intense personal experience and benefit is what has me so worried about basketball in our province and communities today. As a teacher, coach, parent, participant, supporter, community member, alumni and grower of the game of basketball, I am worried about the next generation getting similar positive experiences and potential benefits. Basketball in Alberta is a

game where the majority of the development, focus and opportunity is directly attached to the school system. Unlike hockey, where kids generally develop within a “club” type system, basketball is a “school sport”. Similar to what you may see with football and volleyball. I fully acknowledge that these games within Alberta have now progressed to incorporate many playing and development opportunities outside of the school system, but the school system is still a huge aspect of the opportunities within the game of basketball. The height of the competitive amateur experience in North America still lives in the educational system (e.g. CIS, NCAA). Elite high school aged basketball players are being recruited to play on teams at colleges and universities, and there is an academic component not only to being accepted into a school, but also just to be eligible to play and receive scholarship. In comparison to a game like hockey, where the majority of North American high school aged athletes playing at an elite competitive level, are not playing within a “school system”. The alarming and disappointing attachment to this model is that from my perspective, the school system in Alberta has really “dropped the ball”. As mentioned, basketball is gaining huge popularity, but I am witnessing fewer and fewer specifically educated, committed and elite coaches within the school system. That step back in coaching ranks is being felt in schools and postsecondary institutions.

Recently, my perspective of the grassroots/development system for the game of basketball has been further influenced through my experiences as hockey dad and a newcomer to the game of minor hockey. My son is playing competitive novice hockey on a rep team on the north side of Edmonton. From what I have observed, the game of hockey is often being coached at a higher level of commitment, coaching and expertise to 8 years olds than basketball is at many high schools. The more I experience the system in place for amateur competitive hockey, it becomes fairly obvious why our province produces so many elite athletes and high level

players. The expectations, coaching education, and time on task surpasses anything I have witnessed in any other sport at that level. I realize there are many perspectives and criticisms of the intense culture surrounding youth competitive hockey, but from an elite development perspective, basketball would be difficult to even compare to hockey. Successful team culture is directly linked to this contrast. One complaint I have heard and experienced from many university and college coaches is that the expectations, levels of commitment, work ethic, tactical expertise and fundamental skills of many players moving up from the high school system is not where it needs to be. Horwood (2015) provided very specific criticisms of the high school system.

“The basketball season is way too short. Start late November and go to the end of February if you don't make playoffs. And in that time you have Christmas break and exam break in late January. How much actual practice time is there? There just isn't enough time to teach the skills and have the kids practice them. When you have 12 year old gymnasts and swimmers working 2-3 hours a day on their sport how can basketball players develop with the very small amount of time in a high school season. And don't even get me started on junior high. Any athlete at international level in any sport is practicing much longer than Canadian basketball players especially if they rely on the high school system for their training. Can you imagine a hockey player in Canada only playing for about 2 1/2 months and being told they can't start practicing until the end of November. And Canada is the best hockey playing in the world--arguably!”

When then examined through the lens of building elite competitive players, basketball has a lot of catching up to do when compared to other sports. Many of the weaknesses Horwood highlighted lie within the system, rules and regulations the school system places around its

athletic system. However individual high school coaches also have great responsibility and ability to help create a stronger system, and it begins with the culture and demands of their developmental program. From the perspective of an elite post-secondary coach, who recruited players from the high school system for more than 25 years, Don Horwood (2015) further criticized the coaching and team cultures many prospective athletes and recruits were being developed within.

“Coaches don't make enough demands on their players. I believe they need to understand better conditioning and demand that players work harder in practice. Coaches often let players get away with less than maximum effort and that is doing a disservice to them from the point of view of getting them to understand what is possible with maximum effort. Allowing players to be late for practice and go through the motions teaches them that lack of effort is not important.”

From my perspective, in recent years these issues have only become worse within the developmental system and playing experiences of high school athletes. Many coaches don't understand or know how important the team culture and expectations they set for potentially elite athletes are.

When I interviewed the Director of Basketball Alberta, Paul Sir about the state of the game within the high school system of Alberta, he described it as “very weak”, with currently “few knowledgeable, dedicated and accomplished coaches in the province”(2015). He also noted that upon surveying the majority of post-secondary male and female coaches in the province that it was “100% consistent” that the “players in the province, male and female, are the weakest they have ever seen”. (2015) Edmonton Public Schools athletic director Scott Staples, commented “in the past decade I have seen a trend where numbers are dropping in quality

coaches willing to give their time within the school for all sports” (2015, Personal Communication). Tim Rickabaugh’s (2009) examination of youth sports leadership communicated that only 10% of an estimated 2.5 million adult coach volunteers have formal training. The Canadian school athletic system is presently set up to completely rely on such volunteers, and the damage is being felt in the competitive basketball community.

My observations, experience and conversations with interested educators and experienced coaches around the province have been confirmed. Many competitive young basketball players are not getting the same opportunities and fortune this game offered me because the programs and level of coaching is depleting. “Any athlete at an international level, in any sport, is practicing much longer than Canadian basketball players especially if they rely on the high school system for their training” (Horwood, 2015).

There are major issues for the sport at the school level. There are fewer and fewer teachers even willing to volunteer to coach, and the ones that do, are often not qualified and educated. They are also entering a system with few coaching standards, limited professional growth opportunities, and what I observe to be more a recreational sport environment. When asked if the Alberta school system created a system that promotes high level training and competitive basketball, the director of the game in our province simply responded, “not at all” (2015). Teachers in Alberta who coach within the school system receive no pay or time in their schedule for taking on coaching positions, and the teacher coach is not only unsupported, but starting become a rare commodity. One thing that I have noticed within the school system where I have worked for the past 15 years, is that there appears to be very little vision of excellence on a district level when it comes to athletics. Edmonton Public Schools (2015) describes inter school athletic activities as an opportunity “to enhance skill development and

encourage healthy lifestyles” (Student Programs of Study). I find very little policy or vision that encourages or supports excellence in this field. Any further vision and policy I could find was very limited. Athletics was further addressed in the districts Health and Wellness policy when it was mentioned that students should be given the opportunity “to participate in interschool athletic activities, provided that facilities and appropriate staff are available to coach and/or supervise” (EPSB, 2015). I find it troubling for the game of basketball and for future scholarship winners and elite athletes, that the system supporting the game has limited standards/vision beyond a participation level. To me, this limited vision and lack of prioritization was confirmed in my school board, when budget cuts removed the consultant position that handled athletics. Having personally worked within that school system for 15 years, I have never felt that the system has been set up with any elite vision or developmental system, and in the past 5 years, it appears to me that it is becoming even less of a priority. Unfortunately for the game of basketball, the school system is a large part of its development structure and it is not being supported by a system that creates excellence and demands elite certified coaching.

It is tough to be selective and maintain coaching standards when many school athletic directors/programs are just relieved to feel a spot. I know in the school I work at, we have experienced difficulties and decline on every level and in every sport. For example, when I first arrived at my current school over a decade ago, we fielded competitive Division 1 (top league) senior and junior football teams, that required us to make cuts every season and had 7 school staff involved in coaching. Most coaches received time in their teaching schedule for their involvement. We currently field a single senior team that struggles to maintain player membership, competes in the lowest division in the city, and failed to make the playoffs. We also

struggle to get teachers to volunteer to coach and teacher volunteers no longer receive time in their schedules for their involvement. In the past 2 seasons, only 1 teacher volunteer has been involved with the coaching staff. The conditions for sport that rely on the school system at a competitive level, are in my opinion, in an unhealthy direction and state. “We are already seeing the same people over worked and getting tired and new people coming in and not willing to put in the same amounts of time to be successful (Staples, 2015, Personal Communication).

Fifteen years ago the conditions within “school based” sports were far from perfect, but recently the decline in coaching and competitive sport opportunity has been difficult to watch. In my opinion, athletics is not only far from being a priority of the school system, I believe it is not even on the radar. This is very concerning and disheartening to me as a coach and teacher, who has experienced the benefits of competitive athletics first hand and worked most of my professional life in the field. I see so many kids who could benefit from the impact of competitive athletics, but as I clearly expressed, the environment needs to be appropriate for maximum growth and development. There is much work to do on the bureaucratic and administrative level of basketball and sport in the school system. I do hope to shine some light on this topic within this project, but my main intention to support coaches and share the part of competitive sport that I feel brought the most to my life during and after basketball. The character development and personal growth I experienced as a young man is what initially inspired me to pursue this career, and my involvement within the coaching ranks and school system has provided further reinforcement of my beliefs and the values and requirements for successful coaching and player development. Unfortunately, I feel there are many current challenges and even some regression in the development of the sport. I see this as a coaching issue within a system that is not set up for success. I will look at some of these current issues

that are hurting the development opportunities for our basketball athletes in Alberta, but the main focus of my masters' project is going to be on the coaching and team development issues our game faces in Alberta. More specifically, I plan to provide coaches with some insight into how to set the stage for successful team culture to develop a program that will not only lead to greater team success but set up competitive basketball players with the greatest potential for personal growth.

I hope to use my personal experiences, research and the experiences and beliefs of some of the game's most successful coaches, to create a product that will help set young coaches up for the greatest opportunity for success. Not only personal success, but to set up their athletes to receive the most out of their competitive basketball experience. In my opinion, the guidelines, expectations and culture of a program are created by the coach. Each coach has a responsibility to try to maximize the opportunities and growth of their athletes. My fear is that it is not happening in our sport right now on a local and provincial level, and probably further. I hope to shine some light on these issues and but most of all provide information that contributes to the growth of coaches and the sport.

## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review: Successful Team Culture in Competitive Amateur Basketball: A Coach's Role**

As was discussed and shared from personal experience in chapter 1 of this capstone project, coaching and mentoring within competitive amateur sport has the potential to change the lives of athletes well beyond the competitive sport experience. I also highlighted some real shortcomings in the developmental system of the game in the province of Alberta, and a large perceived dip in the quality of overall coaching players in our province are receiving. These observations within the basketball community have mirrored my experience and observations in recent years. There are fewer kids playing in a program that has the expertise and structure to create an environment of excellence and elite competition that will truly realize potential, not only in basketball but in the personal growth opportunities within the sport.

The most direct goal of this capstone is to shine a light on what is required from the leadership position of a competitive amateur basketball coach, and to eventually create a resource to help coaches grow, create and demand a team culture that will increase the opportunities for tomorrow's young competitive basketball athletes. Within that examination, I will focus in on the essential aspects of building a successful basketball program that is foundationally based on positive team culture, developed and guided by the head coach.

Initially in chapter 2, I will attempt to define what positive team culture is and the many dynamic factors involved. Within that exploration, "success" in team sport will be further explored and defined, and the link to performance will be connected. Once the vision is

outlined, I will dig deeply the essential roles and requirements within the team's leadership, personnel and team building processes that create the potential to develop a strong successful team. As the project progresses into chapter 3, I hope to roll out a potential template that will highlight desirable characteristics to promote within a successful team culture, but also offer some tangible "hands on" activities, documents, artifacts, discussion points, examples and opportunities for coaches and teams to use, that will help initiate, foster, create and improve the team culture of the specific team.

To introduce and set up chapter 2, I will breakdown the leadership role of the head coach and the foundations that must be in order for the successful team culture to develop. Factors such as leadership requirements, shared leadership and program traditions will be highlighted as essentials. In part 2, the coach's task of bringing together the appropriate personnel will be extensively examined. The importance of establishing, projecting and recruiting what is required for each specific team/season situation will be researched and supported. The 3rd section will then look at the dynamic season long process of successful culture building within a competitive basketball team. Goal setting, player-coach relationships, and team roles will all be highlighted and linked to building a successful team environment. As successful team culture in sport, and more specifically amateur competitive basketball in Alberta, is explained and explored, some of the issues facing the developmental system of the basketball in Alberta will be exposed and discussed. Within those challenges and potential shortcomings, this project will move forward in chapter 3 to create a template and resource to help aspiring competitive basketball coaches with their development and duties required to create a team culture that improves and challenges individuals, creates a successful culture, and eventually leads to the development of athletic excellence and character development.

### **The Task**

The coach's role in harvesting a successful team culture in amateur basketball is an essential, dynamic, complex and shifting task that brings a new starting point, and a moving target, every season. This multifaceted task is an extremely common and universal goal for coaches, teams and basketball programs. Competitive amateur basketball programs are playing to win, and within that pursuit of excellence, the need and desire to create positive and successful team culture is not only important for the character development, image, and growth of the team but a necessity in the winning formula. “Culture wins over talent, because talent isn’t enough. We preach that, we live that, we recruit that” (Eccleston, 2014, p.1)

Initially, head coaches need to learn to prioritize and develop tradition, behavioral guidelines, goals and a way of operating that promotes positive team culture. To create the appropriate environment to foster this culture, head coaches need to surround themselves with the appropriate personnel (athletes, coaches, staff, alumni, etc.) that fit their vision of successful winning team basketball. Establishing effective leadership with the right personnel, and then appropriately undertaking the building process of a successful team is how successful team culture it created. These foundations form the building blocks that will set the stage for a head coach to build a successful basketball program. The preparation and planning of the team vision begins long before the first practice and continues on well after the final buzzer.

To shine a light on the challenging, desirable and necessary building blocks of positive team culture in successful competitive amateur basketball programs, initially the concept of team culture will be defined and the leadership behaviors that allow it to develop and flourish will be explored. Additionally, the demands and appropriate behaviors and actions of the leader (head coach) will be explored, as he/she attempts create the appropriate foundational behavioral

guidelines, personnel, vision and team building procedures to hopefully develop a group of athletes, coaches and staff to reach heights beyond perceived potential. Finally, and with the foundational leadership and personnel in place, the process of team building will be examined with the purpose and vision of team and individual success as the major goal.

### **Team**

Team can be defined generally as “any group of three or more persons who have a common charter or singleness of mission and an absolute need-not simply a desire- to cooperate in order to achieve an expected output”. (Patten, 1977, p.31) When this explanation is applied to the team sport of basketball, the members of the group, the specific obstacles, situations and challenges will be unique to each season. It is the dynamic changing parts within that group, and the obstacles unique to each team/season that make the tradition and vision of a high functioning group of athletes so challenging and distinctive.

The exclusivity and uniqueness of each season and team was illuminated when Yukelson quoted Patten (1997) and stated “a team is always in the process of becoming something other than what it is when viewed as a snapshot at some given point in time” (p.74). A team is always a work in progress, and the individuals/circumstances within that process are unique to every team and season. The head coach is the person that bears responsibility for the process and environment that nurtures and cultivates progress to the collective goal and team environment. A coach must create an environment so a group can “identify the values, attitudes, and beliefs “that will “act as the foundation for your team culture” (Taylor, 2013,p. 2). The challenge for the coach is to create a setting that fosters the cohesive unit to realize their interdependence and act in a manners that improves the group. This challenge has many angles, responsibilities and tasks. Fletcher and Arnold (2011) acknowledged this complexity by

describing “the multifaceted nature of orchestrating elite performance” which involves “the development of a vision, the management of operations, the leadership of people, and the creation of culture” (p.234).

After acknowledging the individuality of each team situation, Patten (1981) brought together common traits one would see in a “well-built team” (p.74). The team's foundation is one that would be “encompassing any group of individuals whose social-emotional bonds have tightened and whose techniques and social skills have been sharpened in order to fulfill individual and organizational purposes” (1981, p.74). The vision for this team culture is one that develops into tradition within the basketball program that has the potential to lead to success and winning. Roberts (2009) fixated his template for success within basketball by sequencing chemistry, experience, depth at every position, having a go to player, and an intelligent and strategic coach as the foundations of a strong team/program.

### **Winning/Success Defined**

Winning/success in basketball and its dependence on team culture is also a claim that must be unpacked, because winning has many possible perspectives and results. In every league, there can be only one champion every season, so it is best to avoid attaching all a team's efforts, growth and progress to a single result. The quantitative win-loss results will not always be the team's measuring stick of success and winning. Smith and Smoll (1997) clarified the term by stating that “winning is defined not in terms of won-lost records, but in terms of giving maximum effort and making improvements” (p.21). Those improvements are not only seen in skills and tactics, but within relationships, values, goals and other character traits that extend far beyond sport. “For optimal developmental outcomes, it has been consistently suggested that

coaches define success in terms of providing maximum effort, improving skills, and increasing positive interpersonal interactions” (Vella, Oades and Crowe, 2013,p.551). Hall of Fame Canadian basketball coach Don Horwood clarified the individuality of team success by referring to the “specific circumstances of the individual team”, being “the only way to determine success” (2015, personal communication). Success, reward and growth from sport are very wide reaching, unique and distinctive.

There is little dispute from coaches within basketball settings as to the connection of strong team culture and sport and success. The question is often asked in competitive sports, are there even examples of successful winning teams that aren’t renowned for “their strong team culture and values?” (Goodenough, 2015, p.1). Examples are very hard to find, and a common theme in the coaching faculty is that “culture can have a powerful impact on performance” (Mankins, 2013, p.1). “Building a team that will win on the court requires people who are willing to work together, sacrifice for each other and demonstrate respect” (Sitkin, 2011,p.495). The connection for a coach is that when he/she creates an environment that demands and celebrates hard work, improvement and positive team relationships, the results will show on the scoreboard over time. One hand feeds the other. “Culture and values comes first-they lead to improved performance” (Goodenough, 2015, p.1) which leads to a level of success.

### **Character**

As mentioned, directly tied to success and strong team culture are the character traits and values that must be developed and held true. “Teaching character through sport can only be achieved when parents, teachers, and coaches teach, model, and reinforce the development of character in athletes by setting examples of moral courage and doing the right thing. Athletes will follow these behaviors.” (Lumpkin, 2011 p.15) Coaches must see and prioritize the

connection between behavior and success. The guidelines for what behaviors, expectations and traditions the team culture uses as its measuring stick of success are up to the coach. As demonstrated, success is a completely unique equation for each coach to juggle. However, a theme among competitive coaches persists. Winning basketball games and the character behaviors of a team not only work in unison to define success, but are dependent on each other for success. Konig reinforced this theme after communication with many competitive coaches and stated that “9 of 10 interviewees try to establish cohesion and hierarchy in their team with the belief that both elements lead to increased efficiency” (2015, p.254).

“Research in sport regarding character development has suggested that sport can build character, but only if coaches and sport administrators implement specific strategies to do so” (Gaines, 2012, p.31). The bonds between the social side of team sport and successful game results are difficult to dispute among any experienced competitive coach. The positive character connection intertwined with sport success, is what creates the fact that success in sport is always about more than wins and losses. Sport offers experience, friendship, competitive struggle, challenge and the power of collective human spirit. These experiences and growth opportunities will be with athletes far beyond their last competitive contest.

### **Purpose and Results**

This top down filter of culture is present not only in basketball and sport, but within corporate teams. Patten (1977) has outlined extensive research that shined light on leadership’s team building efforts that “benefited individuals” and helped groups “behave more effectively” (p.31). Patten (1977) observed how team members “improved their mutual trust, developed a variety of interpersonal skills, particularly those in resolving conflicts with others, communicating openly with others, and confronting issues”(p.49). In challenging tasks that

require groups working together to achieve the desired results and goals, these improved communications and team skills can only be seen as helpful. The leader needs to take responsibility for creating an environment and atmosphere that fuels and fosters the growth of the team's relationships, trust and communication abilities.

A quantitative link beyond the experiences and tales of big time coaches also holds true. Strong units also win games. Smith and Smoll (1997) referred to a "recent meta-analysis of 66 empirical studies of the cohesion-performance relation in a variety of settings" and found "positive relations in 92% of the studies, with the strongest relations being found in sports teams"(p.116) Further scholarly examination of the links is also apparent. Dirks (2009) highlighted basketball evidence that suggested teams with higher levels of trust in their coach excelled and the teams with the lowest levels of trust in their coach did not (p.1008). Patten (1977) added to the connection between success and the strength of the team unity and culture. A strong team environment/culture not only "benefited individuals" within the team, it helped groups operate more effectively (p.31). The creation of a strong team culture is "central to effective performance leadership and management" and in turn, this culture is more "conducive to realizing the team's vision and goals" (Fletcher and Arnold, 2011, p. 235). The central leader in the construction of the winning culture, and the person who bears the responsibility of the success or failure is the head coach. It is his/her leadership, personnel selection/management and team building processes that will set the direction of the culture and tradition of the team/program.

### **Leadership**

In basketball there needs to be leaders in place to set and uphold the standards, traditions and expectations for the program. Leadership is routinely top on the hierarchy of necessary ingredients of any successful team or group.

“A Leader, particularly a teacher or coach, has a most powerful influence on those he or she leads, perhaps more than anyone outside of the family. Therefore, it is the obligation of that leader, teacher, or coach to treat such responsibility as a grave concern. I consider it a sacred trust: helping to mold character, instill productive principles and values, and provide a positive example to those under my supervision” (Wooden and Jamieson, 1997, p.111)

For, authentic positive team culture to flourish, the leader/coach has to have character intertwined within their definition of “winning” and make it be so. “Leadership is the catalyst” (Center for Comprehensive School Reform, 2005, p. 1) and the head coach is responsible for leading and setting the stage for the winning team culture to grow and develop.

### **Foundations of Coaches Leadership**

One of the foundational pieces for leadership in the process of developing team culture, is developing trust amongst the players and staff. Trusting one's leadership “is important in that it allows the team to be willing to accept the leader's activities, goals, and decisions and work hard to achieve them” (Dirks, 2009, p.1005). It is the leaders' job to communicate and cultivate a vision and path to create a cohesive outlook and individual ownership of the work to task. “If team members understand their own roles and are aware of others' roles, the prevailing culture is likely to be more conducive to realizing the team's vision and goals” (Fletcher and Arnold, 2011, p.235). Communicating a winning plan in the proper manner is the challenging necessity of a successful coach, program and season. Fletcher and Arnold provided further vision that went

beyond sport, and applied commonly to any group or team (workplace, classroom, arts, etc.) with a vision or goal. “In order to sustain the highest levels of performance in their teams, leaders and managers must identify and disseminate their vision, optimize their resources and processes, challenge and support their people, and transform individuals’ attitudes and group cohesion” (p.238). Coaching has many factors but when striving to be the best unit possible but “we should never underestimate the power of human relationships” and the power of the collective (Balik, 2011, p.155).

As demonstrated, strong leadership extends far beyond the basketball court as a necessary competency for successful team culture. “The leader’s role typically involves a number of activities related to team performance, such as determining team member roles, distributing rewards, motivating employees, developing team members, and setting the team’s goals and strategies” (Dirk,2009, p.1005) As previously mentioned, in amateur basketball the ultimate responsibility and foundation of the team’s leadership is the obligation of the head coach. “Athletes look to coaches to teach them how to respond to difficult situations in their sport” (Gaines, 2012, p.31), and the answers to those decisions are often defined by the team culture and leadership guidelines. “A culture is the expression of a team’s values, attitudes, and beliefs” (Taylor, 2013, p.2) and the coach is responsible for the framework that not only frames but fosters and grows positive winning culture. The core values of the culture need to be set early and the coach must establish the discipline to uphold them. Legendary NCAA basketball Coach Mike Krzyzewski outlined the early need for these guidelines in the pre-season. He highlighted respect for authority, honesty and integrity, personal responsibility, discipline, rules, shared goals, preparation and planning as key topics and foundational pieces necessary and unique to each team (Phillips, 2001). In sport, these essential policies and values are often

communicated in very explicit and non-negotiable terms. The coach sets the limits and makes sure they are adhered to. “This isn’t all about ‘I love you,’ and let’s hold hands and skip.’ It’s also about “Get your rear in gear,’ ‘What the hell are you doing?’ and ‘Why aren’t you in class?’” (Phillips, 2001, p.35)

### **Shared Leadership**

The leadership challenges for the coach are many. One form of coach led but transitional leadership, is to tap the leadership abilities and skills of other players and personnel. Assistant coaches, trainers, sport psychologists, and especially athletes are a core component of the leadership of the team. “Performance beyond expectations happens when leaders lead not by themselves but with and through others” (Balik, 2011, p.670). These traits are not unique to basketball teams. Recent movement in education has coined terms like “shared” and “distributed” leadership as trending catch phrases within schools and districts. Similarly it is believed that having an individual leadership role among the group “helps people make sense of their work and enable them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work”, and also “increases the employee’s enthusiasm and optimism, reduces frustrations, transmits a sense of mission and indirectly increases performance” (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform, 2005, p.2). Leithwood simplified an understanding of distributed leadership by explaining that “leadership is manifested through other people, not over other people.” (1992, p.9).

There are many different forms that leadership can take in the complex team environment, and that leadership must extend far beyond the head coach. “The main reason for building a strong team is the need for interdependence” (Yukelson, 1997, p.74). The head coach is responsible but the realization of his vision is dependant of the actions and decisions of others within the unit. Copeland spoke to the power of collective leadership/responsibility within groups of

educators by stating that it “empowers those who participate in the process. There is hope, there is optimism, there is energy” (2003, p.377).

The head coach will determine formal roles/duties for assistant coaches, captains and staff. Some of those duties are also defined in rules and the tradition of the sport. For example, in basketball captains will be called to center to meet with officials prior to all games and they are the athletes who will communicate these instructions to the coach and team. Assistant coaches often get appointed certain stats on the bench or positions/positional responsibilities. (e.g.- defense or offense or post/guards) During games, assistant coaches cannot stand and address players or officials during play. The rules of basketball allow only allow the head coach to do this.

Roles can sometimes be program/coach specific or traditional to a sport. For example in hockey, the team captain has “a capital “C” sewn on the left-hand side of his jersey” and is “the only player who is allowed to talk to the referees about the interpretation of rules during the game” (Deutsher, 2009, p.431). Less formally and not determined in the rules, a hockey captain is expected to be a leader during games as well as before and after games in the locker room. Furthermore, he is the one who is responsible to represent his teammates’ concerns to the team management” (p.41). Whatever form it takes “peer leaders are in a powerful position to both establish and maintain the character climate on the team” (Gaines, 2012, p.31). These less formal leadership expectations may have similar roles amongst many team sports, however, the delivery, tradition, and execution of the leadership roles would vary significantly due to the specific traditions, rules, personalities, coaching demands and culture of the individuals, program and sport.

Roles designated “formal” (Assistant coaches, trainers, captains, etc.) should be clearly defined and delegated by the head coach, but there are also countless informal roles, routines and relationships that will grow naturally and are completely unique to each team. “Informal roles, are an integral part of the structure of sport teams” (Beauchamp, Schinke and Bosselut, 2009, p.27). There are many jobs/roles that can be assigned or assumed, but the interdependence of a group result has great shared responsibility beyond the leadership (head coach). It is the coach’s job to tap into and promote these resources, and snuff out the undesirable ones. “The process of establishing role awareness is important for building and maintaining a culture because it ensures that everyone is aware of what they are required to do, thus minimizing ambiguity and negativity” (Loughhead and Hardy, 2004,p.253). Beauchamp et al. (2009) highlighted some common roles that athletes recognized and reinforced as common and having various impact on team sport performance. “The comedian, spark plug, cancer, distracter, enforcer, mentor, informal leader-non-verbal, informal leader-verbal, team player, and the star player” (p.23) were all athlete examples of the various terms and character traits that play a role in team culture and success. The ability of the head coach to recognize, organize, encourage, manage and potentially even have to stop, emerging roles within a team is a dynamic and fluctuating process and plays a major role in the culture of the team.

### **Tradition**

Another key aspect that can help leadership grow and excel acceptance and assimilation of the team’s vision, demands, expectations and culture, is tradition. A program’s traditions help assimilate new people to the behavior expectations and also distributes the leadership, enforcement, and teachings of the program to other leaders and personnel. A head coach has to have a vision for the culture he wants within his program and then go about setting the

procedures, boundaries and guidelines for the culture and traditions to develop and flourish. New coaches need to start traditions within their program, and longer tenured coaches need to maintain and re-establish the traditions they want within their program.

Traditions allow the transition of expectations and behaviors from season to season without starting from the beginning every year. “Try to create a legacy that binds the past to the present” (Phillips, 2001, p.75). Personnel observe, share, and hold each other to standards based on the procedures, practices and actions of those who have been there before them. For example, one coach spoke of how former players will come back and are “encouraging and helpful” and “help instill a sense of pride” (Gels, 2001, p.2) Players coming back to the program have the ability to not only see the traditions they were once a part of live on, but also role model and relate to the current situations of the players in the program. This is both beneficial to the pride and involvement of the alumni and the growth of current athletes. Traditions and strong team culture create each other, and are essentials for taking the team experience beyond sport and the current season/athletes. Traditions help “lay the foundation for those that follow” (Carnegie Mellon University, 2014).

Head coaches maintenance and prioritization of traditions within the program also has the potential to create an identity that symbolizes the pride and culture of a program. “Traditions help create relationships with students” and coaches can develop these relationships to better the communication of expectations and demands (Drolet, 2011, p.13). Certain traditions within sport are widely known and celebrated as symbols that represent the character and vision of the coaches and players. For example, Notre Dame Football has a long standing tradition of each player touching a wooden sign that reads “play like a champion today” as they take the field for each game. This has roots dating back to 1842. One athlete commented that touching this sign

every game reminds him that he came to “Notre Dame to be a champion” (Touney, 2004, p.1). Traditions endure “because they are important symbols for students and their Alma matter, and are a way of nurturing loyalty” (Drolet, 2011, p.13). “The best traditions-the ones that survive-are about bonding and belonging: they create an enduring link between the student and the institution” (p.13). Again, this responsibility falls on the coach’s plate to continue and uphold team traditions, however the source of the tradition could originate from the actions of a single team member or from an event of significance. The coach is important in the traditions, because he/she is often a much more consistent individual on the team, than athletes who will almost always be a different group of individuals each season.

Unfortunately for new coaches or coaches new to programs, the challenge is to place the appropriate personnel (athletes, coaches, alumni, etc.) and have it work toward creating your visions of what the program will look like. Programs with a history and tradition of success, garnered more trust and buy-in from it incoming athletes. “Trust in a leader plays a crucial role in helping translate past performance of a team into future performance” (Dirks, 2009, p.1010). Many athletes had an inherent trust in the program and coach due to what had been accomplished previously. Dirks presented evidence that in sport, “there is considerable evidence to support the dictum that over time, the rich get richer and the poor poorer” (p.1010). “Low levels of past performance may be translated into low levels of future performance, because the team does not trust the leader and in unwilling to accept his or her decisions, goals, and strategies” (Dirks, 2009, p.1010).

Coaches and programs who have had previous tradition of success and established themselves as winning programs and coaches, will not only have an early “leg up” in team building, but have an advantage in attracting the most desirable personnel. The challenge for

new coaches and programs, or programs with less successful history is large. It is tougher to recruit and establish buy in and trust when previous success and evidence is not there. Coaches need to stick to their vision for their program and the team building process over the long haul. Success may not happen overnight, but developing the proper guidelines, expectations and vision for your team can bring results and results can help accelerate and enhance the entire team's growth process goal. "With accomplishment comes confidence and with confidence comes belief. It has to be in that order" (Phillips, 2001, p.40).

### **Personnel**

As the conversation of winning team culture in basketball progresses, the desire and need for the proper talents, skills, positional requirements, personalities, academic standards, leadership and character consistently comes back to the topic of personnel. Who are going to be the people wearing the jerseys? Wearing the suits and ties? The track suits? Carrying the cheque books? The doctors coat? The teachers' hat? Being extremely selective and cognisant of the personnel coaches bring into the group, is a primary foundational piece in the pursuit of successful winning team culture. "You don't bring a player in who doesn't fit the mold you created" (Ryan, 2014, p.2).

In amateur sport, the lead role in establishing the personnel of a team is again under the job description of the head coach. He/she not only makes the decisions on which athletes are going to be part of the team, but also which other coaches, staff, and alumni will have an active role with the team.

Assembling your personnel and recruiting can look very different at various levels of competitive amateur basketball. A coach could be running a college or university basketball

program where he/she is competing to recruit players and staff on a global scale with full ride scholarships, salaries (coaches) and his/her job performance based on wins and losses. Conversely, competitive basketball can be played out on the high school level with volunteer coaches, where recruiting in its truest sense is illegal, and the coach is basing personnel decisions on athletes who decide to try out and coaches/staff who are willing to give up their free time. Regardless of the level and stakes at hand in amateur competitive basketball, the guidelines remain consistent. “Recruit great individuals who are willing to be part of a team”. (Phillips, 2001, p.18) “Uncoachable players are a drain on the coaching staff and the rest of the team. Often coaches will focus more time and energy on a disruptive player than they are worth, even if they are very good. A coach needs to weigh very carefully the pros and cons of keeping such a player. It has been my experience that it usually works out to the detriment of all concerned” (Horwood, 2015). Character is paramount when coaches include positive culture and highly functioning teamwork into their equation for success. “Culture is about the people. More specifically, the culture is about the relationships within the organization” (Ramsey, 2008, p.15).

### **Recruiting**

“Recruiting is the foundation of every collegiate athletic program. The recruiting process seeks to bring in prospective student athletes who fit a program philosophy” (Petersen, 2012, p.87). As unpacked earlier, the head coach must establish these guidelines and criteria. Ryan (2014) simplified the idea of having the proper personnel and recruiting guidelines by identifying the need for “players who will sing in your choir, not ones who will break off into a solo”. Legendary basketball mind Dick Bennett outlined five criteria for a successful basketball program and 3 out of his 5 core statement started with “surround yourself with” (Gels, 2001, p.2), and referred to the people (players, coaches, staff, etc.) that make up the

team/program. He highlighted the need for the coach to surround the program with good, passionate people who believe in servanthood. He further warned about protecting the team from any people who could potentially “break up the family unity”. (Gels, 2001, p.2) This would encompass the entire team. A head coach does not want another coach on staff who doesn’t echo his beliefs and message, or a player who is encouraging objectives and behaviors that are counter culture.

A coach may use many angles to gather information on an athlete’s or staff’s personality and character before bringing him/her into their team unit. Coaches often gather information from parents, teachers, past teammates, former coaches, friends, community members, social media profiles/posts, body language, and interviews/meetings in an attempt to get a feel or prediction of the character, skills, potential and fit of potential recruit. Lynch(2014) coined the most desirable values and character traits in “The 10 Building Blocks of a Strong Culture”, and used the descriptors and explanations listed to outline the desirable traits to add to a strong team culture. “Commitment (to a higher cause, purpose, other), Responsibility (Accept your role), Accountability (give and take critique), Integrity (gap between say and do), Respect (game, opponent, self, coach, team), Trust (self, others, coach), Leadership (everyone’s work), Courage/Compassion (give), Service (sacrifice/suffering), Humility (others get credit, gratitude and thankfulness)” were all used as keywords to outline the desirable character traits and vision for a successful basketball team’s culture and tradition. As noted, coaches will use various observational and diagnostic measures to forecast a personal judgement to determine if an individual joining the group will fit the team culture and help build success.

The coach’s role of assembling the proper pieces to the winning puzzle are not easy to determine or in any way guaranteed. People do not develop, behave, or react in ways that are

easily predictable. People may also initially demonstrate certain qualities that one finds are not true to their character assessment. These emerging characteristics can express themselves both positively and negatively. “Recruiting is an inexact science” (Felder 2013, p.1). Coaches have to attempt to determine which people they would like to try to add or delete from their team every year, and factors such as skill, size, position, character, leadership, work ethic, potential, personality, eligibility, experience and coachability are all among the countless factors that play into the complex forecast. “Coaches must master the process of projection” (Staples, 2014, p.2). These projections should be a direct result of criteria and desirable traits that coaches determine will fit their vision for successful/winning culture.

When determining who will wear the uniforms from year to year, the decisions are based on individual projections. Konig (2013) stated that “compiling a team should be based on players’ specific game abilities and tactical matching as well as their specific character traits” (p.262). The complex balance of sport talent versus character is a very challenging lure to coaches hoping to win games in competitive basketball. Competitive coaches want the best and most talented athletes, but should never do so at the expense of their cultural vision for their group. “While the goal is to get talent, no one wants to play with kids they do not like” (Felder, 2013, p.9). It is not an uncommon occurrence among sports teams, where team’s with the most perceived talent, end up underperforming due to character and “locker room” issues.

### **Projection**

Projecting the potential and future of athletes and staff takes many forms among competitive amateur coaches. Staples (2014) spoke to one variable that is often talked about at the amateur levels and that is an athlete’s physical forecast. He alluded to the “trickiest variable of all: puberty” (p.2). Coaches often attempt to predict, with very simple and inexact science,

the physical potential in young athletes. “Tall, thin skill players in high school can grow into tall thick players in college”. “A coach may look at a young prospect and determine that “a 16 year old who shaves daily is probably close to his adult size” and take a similarly or less talented athlete, based on a scientifically unproven projection of future potential, ability, height or size. Staples spoke of this of this culture of prediction from the post-secondary recruitment angle and highlighted that “a player slated to graduate high school at 17 should be evaluated differently than one who will graduate closer to his 19th birthday” (p.3) Coaches would also use the appearance of an athlete’s parents/”family tree” to further project where an athlete's potential might be physically. Coaches will also attempt to work (camp, workout, practice situation, etc.) with prospective athletes to try to expose and extract signs of how players will react to the rigors of a competitive basketball season. Many coaches relish the opportunity to “yell at them, push them and see how they respond to pressure. They see how quickly the athletes take coaching and how well trained in fundamentals and techniques they are” (Felder, 2013, p.7). Using as much first hand evidence as possible will aid a coach in making a determination if an athlete might be the correct fit for their program. This fit is based on projection and predictions of many complex and variable different characteristics.

As mentioned, the determination of personnel and deciding which people to recruit into a team is not an exact science. Each season brings new players moving on and new players coming in. The dynamic variables and exclusive situations each individual team faces with their distinct group of individuals, makes the need for different personnel, character traits, skill sets and personalities a continuous on going task with a moving target.

### **Team Building**

It has been demonstrated that to promote and grow positive winning culture in basketball the people, character, vision and goals of the group is paramount. After the personnel/team is assembled and proper visionary leadership is in place, the next step is to start the journey of developing the unit into a group where positive winning team culture can flourish. This task will be a major part of the coaching staff's necessary vision each season, so the collective power of a group of individuals can become more effective, productive and successful than its individual parts. Cohesive teams are "more resistant to obstacles to goal attainment" (Smith and Smoll, 1997, p.116) and together can potentially achieve heights much greater than the perceived individual talents. Once the unit is assembled, it is time to get the ball rolling with the momentum of an inspired group dedicated to a common and interdependent goal. "Any one fist can break any one finger. Therefore, your goal as a leader should be to create a dominant team where all five fingers fit together into a powerful fist" (Phillips, 2011, p.84).

Although, the coach's role in creating a winning team culture for a basketball program has been shown to be uniquely dynamic and complex, the scholars, elite coaches and experts in the field share many themes, values and processes on the topic. "Team building is an ongoing, multi-faceted process where group members learn how to work together for a common goal and share pertinent information regarding the quality of team functioning for the purpose of establishing more effective ways of operating" (Yukelson, 1997, p.73) The process of creating this collective power is season long task for the group, and the head coach must steer the ship. Lynch (2013) provided some vision for the "process of building a strong foundation/culture that will ultimately create peak performance on a consistent basis, thus placing them in a position to be the best they can be" (p.1).

### **Relationship and Role Building**

The necessity and desire of coaches to create successful culture has been well outlined. The process of building the team and creating an environment that can push the potential and success of the unit not only adds further complexity but is unique to each team and coach. Every team has a unique conglomerate of personalities, strengths, weaknesses and potential. The task is to attempt to create an environment and culture that will maximize and even surpass the perceived potential in the team and in each individual.

Some of the work of the team building process may already be well underway prior to formal team activities and or coach mandated expectations and actions. Personnel decisions are in place to reflect the vision, priorities, needs, intended culture and guidelines of the program. Furthermore and previously highlighted, many coaches and programs have the luxury of having a reputation and tradition of success and conduct expectations that may accelerate the building process. Many new players may be well on their way to adopting these guidelines and expectations as their own, through assimilation and role modelled behaviors by veterans to the program. These values, expectations and behaviors are more easily spread and adopted if it is coming from a person or program who has a history of success coupled with the desired and promoted team culture.

A coach's initial step after assembling the unit, is to begin by creating trusting and positive player-coach relationships. Establishing a solid player coach relationship is a social challenge unique to every single player, coach and team situation. Coaches need to attempt to find the most successful ways to squeeze the most out of each unique personality/athlete. That means interacting and coaching each athlete in the appropriate manner that functions best with a specific player's personality and situation. Motivating and getting each player on board and giving their best to the team ambition requires differentiated techniques and

communication. Philips (2001) quoted legendary Duke Basketball (NCAA) and U.S.A. national team head coach Mike Krzyzewski, who prioritized his early “goal in the pre-season is to get to know my players and what they can do. My total focus is finding out who we are and developing a personality on our team” (p.78). “Communicate with your players as a group and one on one. The coach-player relationship is a vital aspect of your entire program. Players need to know that you care about them, not only as players, but as individuals” (Gels, 2001, p.2). Strong relationships and trust are going to form the foundation of team building process. “Trust in leadership allows the team members to suspend their questions, doubts, and personal motives and instead throw themselves into working toward team goals”(Dirks, 2009,p.1009). Coach Mike Krzyzewski provided further example of this relationship building focus by using his role as the gold medal winning U.S.A. Olympic head coach as an example. “One thing I tried to do in every practice with the Olympic team was to have my assistants do a lot of the technical things. I made it a point to talk to four to six guys every day, and about things other than basketball-“When is your family coming over?” or “I heard this is happening, what do you think? That kind of thing”. I got to know them as people, which helped me understand the dynamics that I had to work with as a team” (Sitkin, 2011, p.497). Coach Krzyzewski was able to establish a 1 on 1 relationship and create a mutual trust within his team. Without those type of positive relationships, it would be very difficult for a team to continue successfully within the team/culture building process. “Given little trust in the leader, team members are unlikely to be willing to sacrifice their interests for the team or its goals” (Dirks, 2009, p.1005).

This information gathering and relationship building also helps reinforce and highlight potential strengths within the unit that can be built upon. For example, if a coach finds an athlete

who is very vocal on the court, he or she may be encouraged to take a leadership role of being a vocal leader on the floor in games and practice. Although desirable, it may not be possible to get each athlete to communicate loudly, clearly and with confidence during play, but if one player's strength can make up for another's weakness, the unit benefits. Through a coaches "leadership and open discussions with team members, your team can identify the values, attitudes, and beliefs that you and your athletes want to act as the foundation for your team culture" (Taylor, 2013, p.2). As the relationships grow, roles start to form and the team building process is in full bloom.

Along this path there may be some obstacles in the progression of the team. For example, some players may not like their role (e.g.-playing time, position, expectations) or negative character traits and relationships may emerge. Under the guidance and guidelines of the head coach, this is where discipline and further personnel decisions may be essential (e.g.- removing a player or coach from the team, suspension, benching, extra conditioning/punishment, 1 on 1 meetings, sport psychologists, parent meeting, etc.). Behavior and actions that do not fall in line with team expectations are usually a "detriment of all concerned" (Horwood, 2015), and appropriate action must be taken to right the ship.

As the team and player-coach relationships build both formally and informally throughout the group, the coach now needs to guide the unit in setting a common vision and goals. The goal setting process is a foundational piece in the process of building successful team culture. "Leaders who set a clear sense of direction have the greatest impact" (Center for Comprehensive School Reform, 2005, p. 2). "If there is a belief in a common goal and that it is attainable then it is much easier to get player to "buy" in. Without an attainable goal, then players can question more readily why they have to do some of the things that a coach might ask them to

do. In order to accomplish worthwhile goals it will be necessary to work extremely hard.” (Horwood, 1015). The intense effort required to win and improve requires players to be on board with the group’s vision and culture.

### **Goal Setting**

The interdependence of individuals on group success in sport has been clearly laid out. Yukelson (1997) referred to core components to consider when building successful teams which include “a shared vision and unity of purpose, collaborative and synergistic teamwork, individual and mutual accountability, an identity as a team, a positive team culture and cohesive group atmosphere open and honest communication processes, peer helping and social support, and trust at all levels”(p.73). The groundwork for the team building process has been laid (specific personnel, strong and organized leadership, and emerging relationships), now the group must set its sights and take action. Goal setting will move the developing group into action with vision and purpose.

As highlighted, strong relationships with the proper personnel and effective leadership opened the door for common interdependent goals to be set and pursued as a group. The group can now move forward under the guidance of the coach as a unit, with its sights set on the stated outcomes. “Providing opportunities for the group to achieve its target, means that group members will be motivated to invest their resources in their group membership because their identification contributes to their sense of self” (Slater, Coffee, Barker, and Evans, 2014, p.678). Specific team goal setting has been shown to “enhance motivation”, “encourage athletes (and coaches) to develop new skills and strategies to improve performance” and help “focus attention on the task one hopes to accomplish” (Stratton, 2005, p.31). These are all major components of success. Kyllö and Landers (1995) analysed 36 studies that examined the effects of goal setting

on sport performance. They determined that goal setting was effective in enhancing sport performance. They also noted the importance of including athletes in the goal setting process. Team sport success requires group direction. “The main reason for building a strong team is the need for interdependence” (Yukelson, 2009, p.74), because in team sport, group goals require the power of the collective human spirit and ambition.

Early in the season coaches will work collaboratively with their teams to set and outline goals and guidelines. It is very important that each member of the team is clear of the expectations and goals, but also participates in their creation. The head coach will act as the guide during the process, and may even have some non-negotiable rules (E.g.-drug/alcohol use, attendance, commitment expectations, league rules, etc.), but the team must be an active part in the forming of the vision. The group and individuals within the group must feel that they were part of setting appropriate and desirable group vision and expectations. Goals and aspirations can not only be mandated from the top down.

As previously discussed, leadership roles and individual voice within the team culture will help shape and strengthen the unique aspirations of each team. The team must take ownership of their vision and a collective group of individuals. “If you’re always striving to achieve success that is defined by someone else, you’ll always be frustrated. Define your own success”(Phillips, 2001,p.64). This unique collective desire is what transcends individual talent in sport, and allows a unit to reach greater pinnacles. “Members of an effective team are committed to a common purpose, have established goals, and hold each other mutually accountable (McAtave and Nikolovska, 2010, p.309). This is only possible when the goals are clear and the group has helped develop the vision to make it happen. It is clear that “leaders play a crucial role in determining the fulfillment of groups’ goals” but “it is the shared connection

between leader and group that forms the foundation of successful leadership” (Slater, Coffee, Barker, and Evans, 2014, p.672).

This early season collective planning is the in-season foundation and process for successful team culture development. Individuals on the team help create a group goals and vision. This is not only essential for team success but it also provides the opportunity for individuals to find personal meaning and drive within the collective. “Research findings have suggested that planning and delivering activities or structures that reflect the leaders’ and group’s values is important to allow the positive benefits of social identities to become reality” (Slater, Coffee, Barker, and Evans, 2014, p.672). A collective goal is powerful and necessary but is entirely dependent on individual interests, efforts and fulfillment within that squad. “Having such goals helps people make sense of their work and enables them to find a sense of identity for themselves within their work context” (Center for Comprehensive Reform, 2015, p.2). Additionally, coaches may use the goal setting process to further ingrain culture through their own actions. For example, “a coach may set a goal not to speak negatively about, or to, the officials. This conveys to the athletes on the team that respect for officials is a character trait that is valued on the team” (Gaines, 2012, p.31). Coaches can use many techniques to further reinforce and role model the values of their successful culture template.

Goal setting is clearly an important and collective process, but these goals must also be set properly. Coaches should set specific goals with a combination of long and short term objectives that can be evaluated frequently. Goals should also be reachable but challenging (Stratton, 2005, p.31). “Set, specific, measurable, attainable, and timely goals” (Lumpkin, 2011, p.15). For example, an individual or team goal to “play better defensively” provides no specific direction to the athlete and is difficult specifically measure. A team may set a defensive goal to

keep the opposition under 65 points per game. This is very specific and measurable and can even be further broken down within a game situations. A coach could use the number of opposition points to evaluate the defense in each quarter of the game (e.g.-any total over 16 points in a quarter will not reach the team defensive goal). This provides immediate measurable feedback in game that is linked to team goals. This measurable goal is easily evaluated in each game and can be tailor made to a specific level or team to create an appropriate challenging goal. Teams should set these type of goals so they can continuously evaluate their performance in specific areas of performance, but longer term and ultimate team goals must also be set as a part of the team vision (e.g.-league championship, make playoffs, national title, etc.). Every season should have a finish line that the team strives toward, and will require them to potentially exceed expectations and push their group and individual limits.

### **Results**

Leadership (coaches) challenging and pushing the limits of the players is a major part of realizing and exceeding perceived team potential and individual growth within sport. As the season plays out, and coaches and teams chase their goals, coaches need to continuously revisit the goals and use them as a part of motivating, focusing and maintaining vision on the process and results. This is where winning games becomes a very important part of successful team culture. It was previously unpacked how maximum effort and improvement were a major portion of the definition of winning, but there is no question that the results on the scoreboard have a very broad stroke. Winning games and championships is why score is kept and is what drives many athletes and coaches. Sport is competition and the will to win pushes work ethic, sacrifice, emotional investment, determination and passion. “Striving to win is a motivator” and setting goals around winning “will help push teams to the level they may not achieve otherwise”

(Horwood, 2015). The great thing about goals in sport, is that they have the ability to be extremely tangible and measurable. One of the unique and extremely rewarding aspects of being on a highly functioning competitive sports team, is the collective will to win and the ability to express and show your commitment through your very visual efforts and behaviors in competition and training. Winning is celebrated and the fruits of the labour can be very evident. Athletes can clearly and tangibly feel success through winning (games, championships, awards, etc.) and then learn and process the steps and efforts it took to accomplish the success. The clarity of winning championship, making playoffs, gold medals, etc. is very visible and evident. Setting foggy goals such as “just do the best you can” is “so abstract and a player never has to be accountable” (Horwood, 2015). Sport can have very specific goals, where it becomes very clear if they are met or not.

Winning and success is important, they may even be the engine that allows the entire process of creating successful team culture to move forward. It was previously demonstrated that historical success within an athletic program has an impact on present culture, athlete assimilation, expectations and mind set. Pushing that thought even further one could suggest that winning games is the fuel to a successful cycle. “The more success a team has, the easier it will be to have good team chemistry” (Ryan, 2014, p.2). Team chemistry and culture is essential in the winning formula, so much so, that one may not happen if the other is not present. It is difficult to win without winning team culture and difficult to grow successful culture when games are not being won. New coaches need to know that the cycle has to start somewhere and experienced winning coaches understand the vivid interdependence.

## **Summary**

It has been specifically broken down and discussed, how creating successful team culture in competitive amateur sport, and specifically basketball, is a complex balancing act of establishing organized strong leadership and appropriate worthy personnel to create the building blocks for building the successful team/program. Topics such as recruiting, tradition, player-coach relationships, formal/informal roles, goal setting, role modelling, team guidelines, expectations, winning, athletic ability, projection, skill, trust and communication all emerged as complex factors unique to each team/program. Success in competitive sport is not simple nor easy, and is a goal that is shared and pursued by many competitors/opposition. It has been shown how commitment to a vision with strong foundational leadership and appropriate personnel can provide the best opportunity for the amazing and sometimes unexplainable power of what collective human spirit can accomplish. Coaches seek it tirelessly. Achieving that unique synergy, team spirit and feelings of success are the highest and most rewarding moments of the coaching profession in competitive sport, especially when groups exceed expectations. Coaching successful basketball has been defined as seeking “maximum effort” and “improvement” (Vella, Oades and Crowe, p.551, #9), but also demonstrated to be highly influenced by winning. There are many unique factors that influence success, but they are all collectively linked and interdependent. These competitive experiences among highly functioning teams are where individuals learn the character, ambition, work ethic, determination and vision necessary to accomplish goals. The challenge is that most of the competition has their eyes set on similar desires and goals. That competitive ambition is what drives coaches and athletes to push their bodies and minds to higher levels of commitment and effort. Success within that competitive environment has many results, and can take many different paths, forms and interpretations. The personal growth, experience, intensity, passion, relationships, sense of

accomplishment and experience of the power of the collective human spirit, is what makes competitive sport so unique, rewarding and celebrated. Competitive athletes and coaches dedicate and commit much of their lives to these experiences. The amount of dedication, planning, personal sacrifice, physical pain, commitment, time and focus that is required to get the most of one's athletic experience is massive, but often, sport will give you back all and more of what one puts in.

In the end, there are countless dynamic experiences and life lessons that competitive sport offers individuals and society. These experiences are also often the inspiration for the future passion, commitment and value that people place on positive team culture and success in sport. Chasing competitive sport dreams are most rewarding and possible when pursued the “right way”, and that is with successful team culture as the foundation.

### **Chapter 3: Team Culture Project Proposal-The Walk Through**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 1 and 2 I have clearly highlighted the need/desire for strong team culture within successful athletic teams and expressed personal connections and experiences to its necessity in the successful sporting experience well beyond winning games. This concept was unpacked and examined through personal experience and reflection, but was also supported in the academic world of professional journals. Additionally, and in my opinion the strongest support for my vision, comes from the expert and elite basketball coaches who preach the necessity and priority of developing winning team culture for success. Specifically, this project will focus on the head coach's role in the process of developing strong winning team culture within his/her competitive basketball program.

Within the examination of team culture and the process of its development, I have also proposed some perceived local areas of weakness in the coaching and development process within amateur competitive basketball in Alberta, and the school system that supports it. It has been demonstrated how the expectations, expertise, demands, and developmental programs within local competitive basketball need some major changes. This need for change is perhaps best demonstrated by the glaring fact that the university and college coaches within Alberta have to seek more and more athletes out of province and are very discouraged with the level of high school basketball players. To improve this trend, grassroots and developmental coaching needs to improve. These improvements can come in many different areas such as tactical expertise, improved focus on proper fundamentals, Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD), fitness, nutrition, etc., and those topics will be part of the learning and reflection within this project. This

specific project will focus on providing a resource for coaches to help them create and grow a stronger team culture that can help develop a more successful team unit and potentially develop better athletes. Athletes that pursue excellence on and off the court, and within their relationships and actions within the team concept.

At present, I believe that the competitive developmental system within Alberta does not have the overall level of coaching to properly develop players, not only fundamentally but within a culture that produces elite environments with appropriate demands, expectations, tactical knowledge and overall coaching. My vision, as to be explored in this part of my capstone paper, is to begin to teach coaches within the amateur competitive system how to develop a team culture and program that will develop players to tap into as much of their potential as is absolutely possible. This knowledge and skill on the part of coaches addresses far more than becoming good at a sport, it is about character, working within a team, pushing personal limits, mental toughness, determination, building strong relationships, career opportunities, and beyond.

## **Project Proposal**

### **Rationale**

This project is designed to be included as part of a coaching development course. The project is designed and targeted at helping coaches new to higher level competitive basketball coaching, with the transition to greater responsibility, pressure and demands. Additionally, it should also provide experienced coaches opportunity to reflect on their practices, experiences and learn from their peers. The target audience would be basketball coaches who are coaching at a level where winning is a priority and are running an amateur competitive basketball program. It would be most appropriate for high school aged basketball (ages 15-18) and beyond (college/university). This team culture project is specific to basketball. There are many common

elements within this project that would be applicable to other team sports, but it is not intended for team culture in business/professional situations. The emotion in competitive team sport situations is very unique, and is one of the reasons I don't always see the connections leaders of professional and workplace teams often try to link with competitive sport situations. The physical nature of athletic competition, culture unique to each sport and the intensity of the competitive spirit is what creates a necessity for coach education specific to the sport and level.

I see this project as a 3-5 hour session being run by an experienced competitive level coach (college/university) as a guide through the activities and a facilitator of discussion. The presenter should be able to stimulate discussion points that may not be mentioned by participants in the project activities, and should also be able to offer some reflective experience on the type of issues that can arise within a competitive basketball environment. The goal of the project is to educate coaches on the countless issues and topics that must be considered and will arise when one is the head coach of a competitive basketball program. The project aspires to help coaches in the process of creating a winning/successful team culture for their competitive amateur basketball program. The idea is to support the topics with actual basketball footage and imagery. The hope is for the presentation to be both an opportunity for reflection and discussion, but also be supported by entertaining, intriguing and valuable media.

This project aims to build on Chapter 2 and attempt to bring to life the importance and value that building strong winning team culture can convey to success and the sporting experience. The project will begin with explicit connection to many of the sources used in Chapter 2. It will also include several of the most relevant articles as appendixes. Additionally, several of the most well-known and established experts used to build this topic and project in Chapter 2, will be featured as introductory exemplars in the opening activities of the

project. Upon completion of Chapter 2 and 3, the resources and information within the opening chapters could serve as great information and background for participants in the project itself. The project itself attempts to be more entertaining and user friendly, but the information within Chapters 1-3 could potentially also be very usable and valuable to the active participants in the coaching education portion of the project.

### **Logistics**

This project is designed and formatted for use, both in a formal coaching education environment, but also for coaching staffs in a retreat/team building scenario. Furthermore, it could easily compliment a coaching clinic in a classroom setting. Coaching staffs could go through the activities privately and discuss the topics “in house” or the action could be for collaborative use among colleagues in a diverse coach setting.

Although the manner/system of coach education is changing, it could fit nicely into either an NCCP level 2 or 3 curriculum, and could enhance and strengthen the classroom portion of a higher level coaching certification courses. This project could easily be blended into the classroom portion of a coaching course that also includes on court portions. Within the project, each participating coach would receive a workbook and the presenter would need a computer with web access attached to a Smart board or projector. Participants would also gain from internet access during activities. It would allow access to important documents and information without the need to print many pages of information. Below is a sample timeline/itinerary that could be used for this coaching education session and a link to an important participant document.

**Canada Basketball LTAD link:** <http://www.basketball.ca/files/LTAD.pdf>

Sample Course/Project Timeline and Itinerary:

*\*\*Participants are encouraged to make notes and add to answers as the video section play. Further detail and consideration can be added during group discussion. The workbook is a document for personal growth and reflection and is not assigned a grade or marked. Times provided are approximate. Work through at an appropriate pace for your group.\*\**

9:00 AM-9:15 AM- participant and instructor introductions/housekeeping/Dick Bennett's List

9:15 AM-10:00 AM- Intro to the Legends-show video 1-5 with appropriate section

10:00 AM-10:45 AM- Initial Reflection Activity (Appendix C) and review Family Considerations Section-complete Activity B

10:45 AM -11:00 AM- Break

11:00 AM-11:30 AM- Intro Major Activity-iMovie Culture Builder and complete Introduction Activity and discuss (play introduction section twice while participants brain storm)

11:30 AM- 12:00PM- Watch Chapter 1 : Preseason and complete questions and discuss- participants may want refer to the LTAD, appendices C, F, G, H and I and their course coaching manual in this section

12:00 PM-12:40 PM- Watch Chapter 2: Foundations and answer questions and discuss- participants may refer to appendices C, F, G, H and I in this section.

12:40 PM-1:30 PM- Lunch

1:30 PM-1:50 PM- Welcome back and watch and complete questions for Chapter 3: Regular season and discuss.

1:50 PM-2:15 PM- Watch and complete questions for Chapter 4: Forward then Back Again and discuss. Your class text and LTAD will be helpful in this section.

2:15 PM-2:30 PM- Watch and complete questions for Chapter 5: The Final Push and discuss.

2:30 PM-3:00 PM- Watch and complete questions for Chapter 6: Conclusion.

2:30-3:00 PM- Complete Activity D; Goal Setting Session. If pressed for time you may choose option B which is shorter. If there is more time and the instructor sees value in the extra effort, complete option A and work to create the foundations of a document you would use in a team building/goal setting/ retreat type situation. Use appendices C, F, G, H and I where necessary.

3:00 PM-3:15 PM- Fill out course evaluations/reflections and wrap up



*Figure 4. Team Canada body language*

### **Project Introduction**

The project begins with a look at some of the experts in the field of coaching, more specifically a look inside 3 coaches (Gregg Popovich, Mike Krzyzewski and Phil Jackson) who have been very successful in creating strong winning team culture in basketball. This section brings back some of the information that was examined in chapter 2 but also incorporates video/imagery to make the material more “learner friendly” in a coaching course situation. Popovich, Krzyzewski and Jackson are familiar names in coaching and it should provide an immediate learner connection to the material. The first coach discussed is Gregg Popovich and at the end of the section on him there are two video links that were part of the inspiration for this project. The video links are included and are intended to be shown as introductory pieces to lock in the participants into the team culture presentation/clinic right off

the start. They are also intended to provide some aspiration and inspiration. Coaches will immediately see vivid examples of what can be aspired to in terms of how their players act, perform and communicate. Below is a link to the video `Beautiful Game Part 1`, which helped inspire some of this project proposal. To see the entire project, see appendix XX.

### **Sample from Project Introduction**

#### **Video 2- San Antonio Spurs- Beautiful Game Part 1**

This video captures one of the most celebrated examples of team culture and team play in basketball. It is a look inside and a reflection on some of the best selfless team basketball ever witnessed at the highest level of play on the planet. There is also commentary from Gregg Popovich himself, speaking to his values and the characteristics that make up strong team culture. The video finishes with a series of highlights of how this plays out in the on-court performance.

Beautiful Game Part 1- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3y7cWmoBCI>

### **Initial Reflection Opportunity**

After introduction to the topic through the expert examples and video, the coaches will be presented with some personal reflection questions. They are intended to make new coaches aware, and allow experienced coaches to reflect, on the commitment, effort and sacrifice that goes into competitive coaching. The reflection questions allow for some thought on the impact the position will have on a coach's personal life and the support system around their coaching position. Competitive head coaching is a stressful and demanding position and knowing some of the challenges and pitfalls going in can be beneficial. It should also give experienced coaching the chance to look back, reflect and share what they have experienced. Following some personal time to reflect on the questions, the participants will be asked to share some thoughts with the

group, at a table, or with an elbow partner. The discussions within this portion of the activity, and throughout the entire project, should help coaches at every level reflect on their practices and those of other participants. These discussions may also offer coaching experiences and methodology that will help other coaches reflect on new ideas/coaching techniques. There is always room to grow in the coaching profession. Below is an example of some of the questions provided. For a full list, see the completed project in Appendix A.

### **Sample Questions-Initial Reflection Opportunity**

- *How will it impact my family?*
- *Will I have the support of the school's administration, faculty, and the community?*
- *Do I have passion for the game?*
- *Do I have the energy, the desire, and good health to take this on?*

Following the initial reflection opportunity, the project participants will take some time to reflect on some of the questions above, and specifically on the impacts competitive coaching can have on family and personal life. Coaching high level sport is a job that can follow a person home and also have a ripple effect on those people involved in their life on a day to day basis. Travel, stress, energy, time management, mental/physical health, working for people with different visions and moving to new locations, are just a few examples of factors that if not handled properly, can cause a coaching position to lose its fun factor really quickly. These are important discussions and considerations that this project hopes to initially touch on.

Specifically, this portion of the coach education project will include some experienced perspective from the spouses of competitive university and college coaches in our province regarding their experiences living alongside a full time basketball coach. The complete responses to the questions they were asked will also be included as Appendix E in with the

project. The thought behind this portion of the project is create awareness, planning opportunities and thinking points regarding some of the challenges of the job. This section will also provide a chance for the group to share some potential steps that can be taken to help create better work/life balance for coaches. Below are the three questions asked and responded to by the spouses of some of Alberta`s best high level coaches. The entire interviews are provided as Appendix E.

### **Sample Spouse Questions**

- 1. What were the biggest impacts (both positive and negative) your partners' involvement in competitive coaching had on your family?*
- 2. What were the biggest relationship challenges being married to a competitive coach?*
- 3. What advice would you pass on to other coaches' families/couples?*

### **Major Activity- Culture Builder (iMovie)**



*Figure 5. Being a good teammate*

The next portion combines snippets from a documentary that I helped my friend and former teammate (Chris Horwood) create in 2008. Chris produced and edited a full length documentary on a complete basketball season. I have taken clips and added some visuals to create a coaching education video activity. The iMovie is accompanied with visuals and reflection questions. The activity comes with a workbook where coaches will be asked to reflect on what they believe, what they know, what they have experienced and what is observed in the documentary clips. The activity is intended to allow new and experienced coaches to reflect on the many complex topics that go into running a competitive basketball program. The movie clips

are also intended to stimulate ethical thoughts and considerations as to how coaches should act and communicate with players, peers and officials. The activity is centered on reflection, observation and sharing amongst participants and the instructor. Below is an introduction to the activity and some instructions for participants that are included in the project.. To see the entire project, see Appendix A.

**Activity Link-** Click the link below to access this activity.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1imFKjXdCoHdlEyMEFUSTIIMG8/view?usp=sharing>

### **Sample Instruction to Culture Builder Activity**

*Instructions: This activity can be used individually or in a group situation. Play the iMovie activity and pause the video when the discussion questions come on the screen. Use the questions to stimulate group discussion or personally reflect on your own vision and practice. It is recommended that participants take notes and write down personal responses/thoughts to what they see in the video. Upon completing the activity, coaches should have not only experienced the perspectives and values of the one particular successful coach, but should produce a template of their own personal values, demands and guideline they want to highlight within their own personal coaching experiences.*

As coaches work through the Culture Builder activity and cover certain topics such as training, goal setting, potential team guidelines and commitment, the activity will refer to and provide coaches with examples and information that supports sound practice. Documents such as the Canada Basketball Long Term Athlete Development Plan (LTAD), Canada Basketball Curriculum, goal setting activities, personal anecdotes from coaches, and coaching manuals/information will all be used as reference to supplement the discussions and learning.

The final project also offers an introduction to the movie written by Chris Horwood, the movie's creator. It is intended to set the stage and provide some context for the footage.

### **Culture Builder-Introduction Activity**

This section of the assignment is intended as a brainstorming activity to encourage coaches to begin to think of their expectations in many different areas of coaching. There are a series of questions and images that will be used to get participants thinking about many different components of coaching and their personal values as a coach. At the end of this section, viewers will be prompted to pause the video and work through the introduction activity. Below is a sample of a couple questions and images. To see the entire section and workbook activities, see the completed project in Appendix A.



*Figure 6.* Sample Image #1 from Culture Builder Activity



*Figure 7. Sample Image #2 from Culture Builder Activity*

### **Chapter 1-Pre-Season**

This section introduces the documentary footage from the movie “On the Line” as a learning tool for the assignment. Chapter 1 focuses on the pre-season and some of the issues and responsibilities that a coach needs to address and start from day one. The video will prompt the session leader to pause the movie and complete the reflection questions. This section of the video brings up topics such as work ethic, tradition and winning. It also provides a discussion point to look at some coaching considerations that need to be addressed in the pre-season specifically. Further topics that should emerge from this portion of the activity include appropriate training, levels of commitment, practice time, skills/tactical focal points and early exposure to the culture of the program and coaching expectations. This portion of the project

will also be supported by specific information from the Canada Basketball LTAD and some coaching basketball manuals that has specific information regarding proper training and planning for the pre-season. See below for examples of questions used in the completed project (Appendix A) and an image from the documentary

### **Sample Images from Culture Builder Activity**



*Figure 8.* Sample Image #3 from Culture Builder Activity



*Figure 9. Sample Image #4 from Culture Builder Activity*

## **Chapter 2- Foundations**

This portion of the video bring coaches inside the early season planning and culture building of one of Canada's most successful CIS coaches and programs. Coaches will again be prompted to pause the video and reflect on questions provided in the workbook. The footage is intended to show coaches an example of some of the keys to building a team culture, as well as promote discussion from participants regarding methods they have used or experienced to lay the foundations for a strong team culture. Topics such as goal setting, leadership, coach/program expectations, detractors and education will all be reflected and discussed. See below for a few examples of questions. This portion of the project will also be supplemented with a few examples (included as appendices B, F, G and H) that will provide coaches with actual working documents that could be used to help set appropriate goals and guidelines within their

teams. Both appendices are actual documents used in high school and college competitive coaching situations. See below for a sample of one of the documents.

**Team Building Sample Document from Appendix G**



**KBB TEAM RETREAT 2013**  
**Edmonton, Alberta**

4:00pm	Task #1 Groceries
5:00pm-6:00pm	Meetings start.... Bring a Pen, Drinks, and Snacks

**AGENDA**

**Team Rules Expectations**

Lates?

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Attire at games and practice?

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Water bottles

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Conduct on Bench and in the bleachers

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Conduct in general (alcohol, drugs, etc)

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Techs

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Anything Else?

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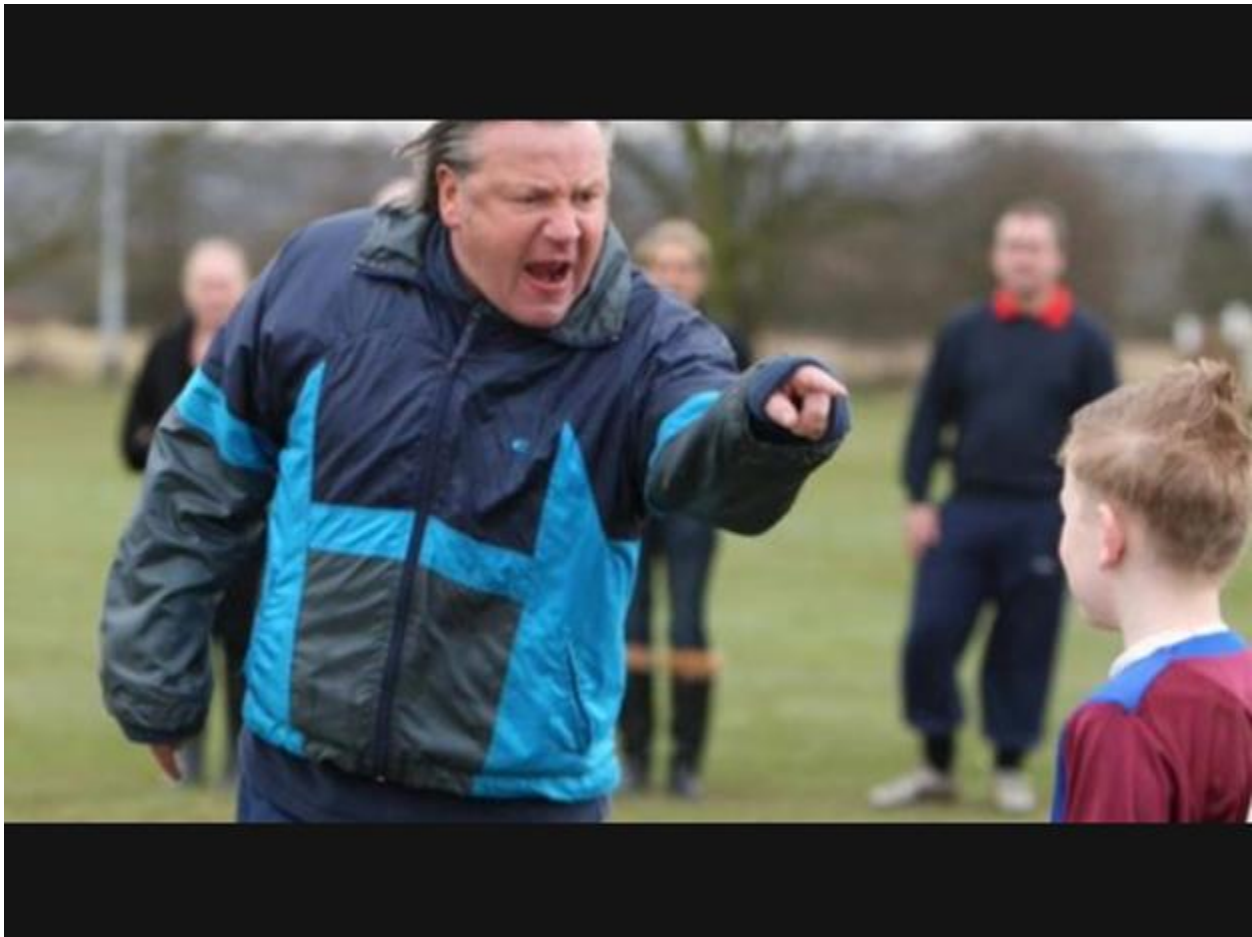
**Figure 10. Sample team building document from Red Deer College Basketball Program**

**Chapter 3-Regular Season**

Chapter 3 brings the learner inside an example of the type of intense situations athletes and coaches face inside a competitive sport environment. This portion offers an opportunity for

coaches to reflect on the type of behavior and methods of communication that they feel is most effective in competitive sport. This chapter is also intended to engage peers into sharing some best practices used in a competitive environment. Adversity will present itself in every season in many forms, and an opportunity to reflect and share practices and methods used in difficult and intense situations is very valuable. As the project progresses, the images and documentary footage should present some strong discussions points and peer anecdotes. The class will again be prompted to pause and reflect and then discuss as a group. Appendices D and I will also be referred to in this sections to support discussion and learning. See below for examples of questions used in the completed project and one of the images used in the video activity.

### **Sample Images and Questions**



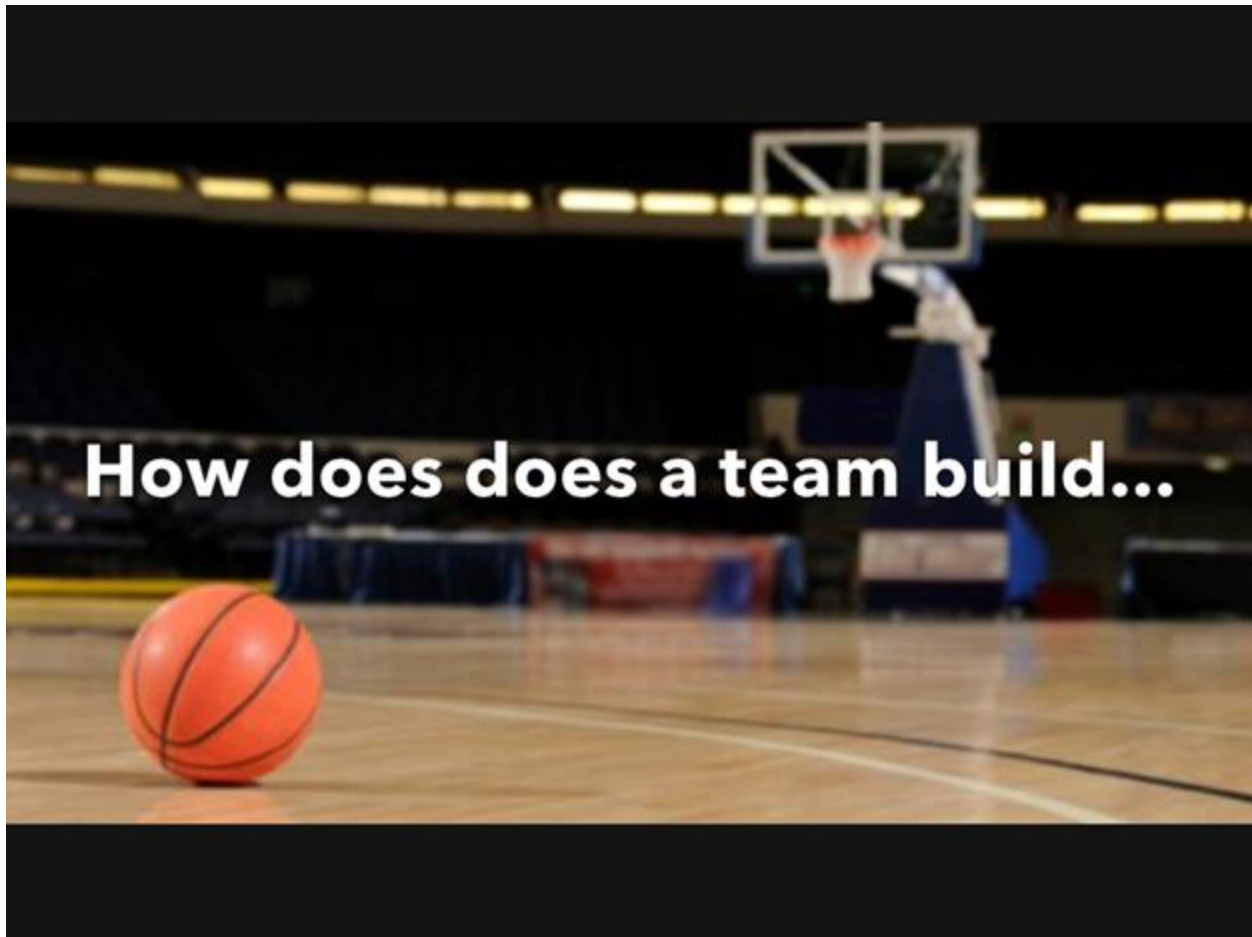
*Figure 11. Sample Image #5 from Culture Builder Activity*

- 1. How will you get maximum effort out of your team?*
- 2. What are appropriate techniques and communication when motivating players?*
- 3. List some techniques you presently use to help motivate and push athletes.*
- 4. Does the level of play influence coaching techniques and coach behavior?*

#### **Chapter 4-Forward then Back Again**

This section follows the same format of watch and response as the previous 3. This section of the project really focuses in on some adversities very common to competitive basketball. Initially, the topic of playing time comes to the forefront. The teacher guided discussion at this point will also examine the LTAD and its recommendations for level/age. This portion of the documentary also allows for reflection on coaching decisions that arise when goals and expectations are not being met. See below for an example of questions used in the completed project.

#### **Sample Image**



*Figure 12.* Sample Image #6 from Culture Builder Activity

### **Chapter 5- The Final Push**

This is a short section that continues with the previous activity format. It focuses almost solely on the tactical roles of starters and bench players, and how these roles can be communicated. There will be some overlap with the playing time topic from Chapter 4. See below for examples of questions used in the completed project.

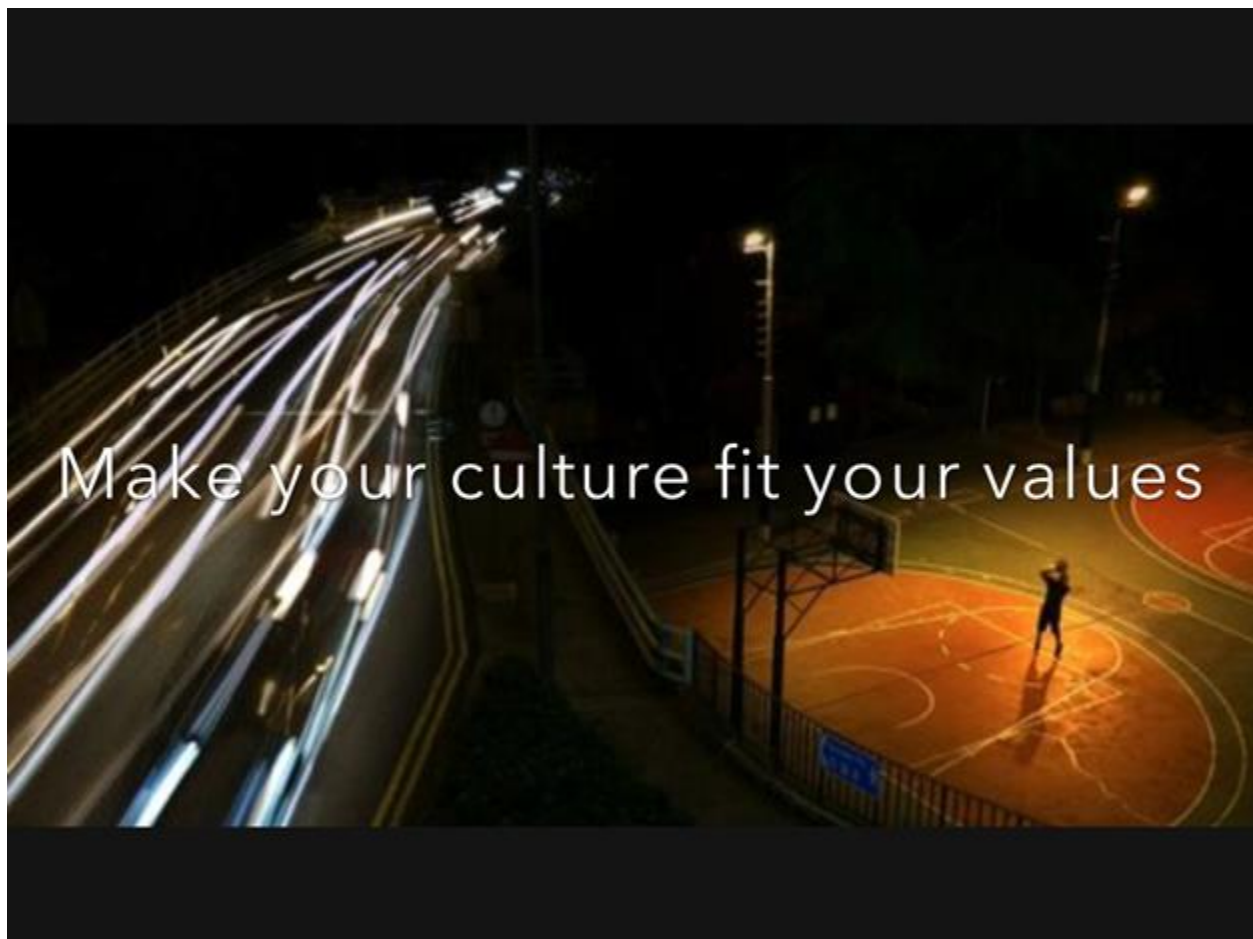
#### **Sample Questions from Chapter 5**

- 1. Is there a point in the season where roles are clearly defined and will not change much?*
- 2. Do you consider player character/personality when deciding on players that will start, versus those who will come off the bench?*

3. *How do you communicate these roles to individual athletes?*

## Chapter 6-Conclusion

This is the final section of the “On the Line” documentary activity. It will offer some perspective and reflection opportunity on postseason issues and will also include a section for each participant to offer some personal opinion on the film itself. At this point, the course instructor will wrap up the activity and move on to final portion of the coach education project. This point in the course would also be a good time to make connections to season planning and activities that are discussed in both level 2 and 3 NCCP coach training. See below for an example from the conclusion of the Culture Builder Activity.



*Figure 13. Sample Image #7 from Culture Builder Activity*

### **Activity D- Goal Setting/Team Building Session**

Upon completion of this video activity and following a solid break, the course instructor will now be instructed to focus in on helping participants explore the methods, types and formality of goal setting they will use on their teams. The activity will open up with a couple inspirational videos that can be used to focus in their teams and the commitment and effort it takes to reach goals. Appendix B also contains some personal reflection questions for players to answer in a team building session that is intended to bring the team closer by sharing personal stories, family information and individual interests. These are provided so coaches can take the links back and potentially use the videos and documents in their personal team situations. Participants will be directed to review appendices B, E, and H again. At this time, the coach instructor is given the option to get each coach or group to personalize a goal setting document, they think could be used with their team, or the instructor could also decide to spend 10-15 minutes with the group reviewing the videos and appendixes in a class discussion format. This would be a personal read by the instructor on the energy, time available and interest of the group. The video link examples and “The Banquet Exercise” (from Appendix B) below are intended to help clarify values and stimulate the goal setting process.

### **Goal Setting Sample Material from Appendix B**

#### **The Banquet Exercise-TEAM NAME Basketball Retreat Assignment 20XX**

Reflect- Imagine that at the end of your grade 12 school year, you are selected as the top athlete at your school. This award was given to you because of the type of athlete/player you were on the court, but also because of the type of person you were within the school, amongst

teammates, with coaches, and in the community. To honor you, there is going to be a special presentation at the athletics banquet. Many of your friends, teammates, family members and those closest to you are going to be in attendance. Some of your teammates and coaches are going to stand up and say a few words about you as an athlete, basketball player, and person.

Assignment- spend some time visualizing this moment, and then write down key points you would like the speakers to say about you that would make you feel that your career was successful, rewarding and worthwhile.

### **Goal Setting Video Link Examples**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxsdiusm1NQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXEjevXrLSc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWoIYqNMJ9s>

### **Activity E- Project Reflection/Evaluation**

Upon completing the goal setting activity, project participants will be asked to answer a set of questions to provide feedback, strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. This exit activity is intended as a growth opportunity for the instructor, but will also be used to improve and refine the project itself. The course participants will be given the opportunity to reflect and comment on the value, delivery and effectiveness of the project. Sample questions can be seen below. This is the final formal activity in the project.

### **Sample Evaluation Questions**

1. Were the team culture building activities beneficial? Please provide some specific examples of what you found beneficial or not.
2. Did the video links enhance the experience? What were the best videos and why?

3. Reflect on Activity C (Culture Builder-iMovie-documentary clips/visual/questions). Was this activity beneficial and well structured? Provide some specific examples of what you enjoyed and any improvements you feel could be made.

### **Discussion**

This project aspires to be a user friendly portion of a coaching education course that can not only help generate some reflection, thought and wisdom into the team and culture building process, but also provide some useful resources that interested coaches can use and adjust to fit their particular needs and level. The video and multiple images provided are intended to break up the writing, lecturing and work. The hope is that there is enough interesting imagery and discussion points to create a dynamic, reflective, inspirational and educational coach education session. If I get an opportunity to further develop and actually use the tool in a coach education scenario, I would definitely pursue reaction, feedback and suggestions from the participants to further refine and invigorate the course activities.

Completing a project with large aspirations for potential use in current coaching education may come with some limitations and challenges. As I reflect on the limitations, I feel motivated to try it out and get feedback from coaches as to its value, strengths and weaknesses. One immediate limitation that comes to mind with the target audience is limitation of the material to the sport of basketball. This presentation and information could have probably been adapted so it could apply to many team sports, which would potentially make the project more universal and accessible. On the other hand there are also specific details and familiarity that are unique to the sport of basketball. Looking back, I feel a benefit of this project is the wide audience of basketball coaches it could apply to, but at the same time, a limitation is that the audience is mostly limited to one sport.

Another challenge with the project is the need for a course instructor/presenter that not only has an extensive background knowledge and experience coaching basketball at a high competitive level, but also with running a program in a manner that exhibits the highest of character and expectations. Being personally involved with the basketball community within our country, helping create the documentary, and being an alumni of the University of Alberta basketball program has given me some unique perspective into issues and imagery in the project. How this project would roll out and stand-alone without my personal perspective and directive could potentially be an issue.

Another potential limitation of the project and the activities within it, is that the activity focuses primarily on coaching, decisions and procedures that occur within the actual playing season. As discussed thoroughly in chapter 2, a large part of having a strong team culture involves the people who are recruited/invited into the program. Careful recruiting, team selection and appropriate staff composing the team unit is vital. The project does touch on these topics, but perhaps not as much as it should considering the importance.

Another current challenge that has presented itself recently in my sporting experience, is actual application of knowledge by coaches. Reflecting on recent experience within minor hockey and past coaching incidents, an issue that I continue to see emerge within athletic coaching education is its effectiveness and implementation. I question whether much of the moral and ethical education offered within coaching education courses has any true effectiveness and application. I have continually observed well educated, experienced and even successful coaches that walk a fine line on some of the ethical and behavioral issues that emerge in this project.

More recently, I have seen some pretty vivid examples of conflicting behaviors from parents and coaches who have completed mandatory coaching education and respect in sport classes, who exhibit behaviors that directly conflict with the information and guidelines provided. As a parent of a young novice hockey player (age 7-9), a respect in sport course is mandated prior to registration. Coaches are also put through mandatory coaching education. Consistent topics within the education at that age level of competition is respect for officials, conduct in communication with players and coaches, and playing time. My observations of adult behaviors have not been consistent with the researched and mandated information provided to coaches and parents. Common themes within these novice aged focused courses are fair playing time and respect for officials. As we (my son and I) have progressed through an entire season of minor hockey, and worked toward the final playoffs, I have consistently witnessed actions inconsistent with training, on a daily basis. I have continually observed coaches adjusting kids' playing time in pursuit of winning, adults yelling at officials, and other forms of conduct that are not consistent with the education provided. I know that this material has been shared with all the participants, and to see some adults completely ignore it, is frustrating and discouraging.

This "I know best" phenomenon that I have observed seems consistent with some of the parent driven early specialization in sport I also see with today's young athletes. This project offered many reflection opportunities on age appropriate training, communication and commitment to sport. Some of the reflection activities on these topics pointed coaches to the LTAD (Long Term Athlete Development Plan) for reference on age/level appropriate development and coaching behaviors. The information provided in the LTAD's of each sport is based on research and expert experience.. I continue to see people ignore the researched

information and make decisions for young athletes that completely contradict recommended sport development. For example, most of the kids on my son's hockey team play year round hockey and also do speed skating and extra skill training throughout the season. After doing some research and then referring to the Canada hockey LTAD, I realized that most parents were doing almost everything the documents suggests not to do. It can be discouraging as an educator and coach to see well researched and supported material being communicated and then ignored by coaches and parents. There is a possibility that this project could communicate a certain amount of great and supported information that could potentially be ignored based on the character and personality of the coach. There is a great deal of researched information and methodology that coaches don't necessarily buy into.

The image below is copied from the Hockey Canada LTAD, and from my perspective and experience, most of the competitive/elite novice aged hockey players (age 7-9) are partaking in all or most of the factors under the "Don't" column. As basketball becomes more and more popular, competitive and organized, I would not be surprised to see similar trends emerge. I am sure there are already many examples out there.

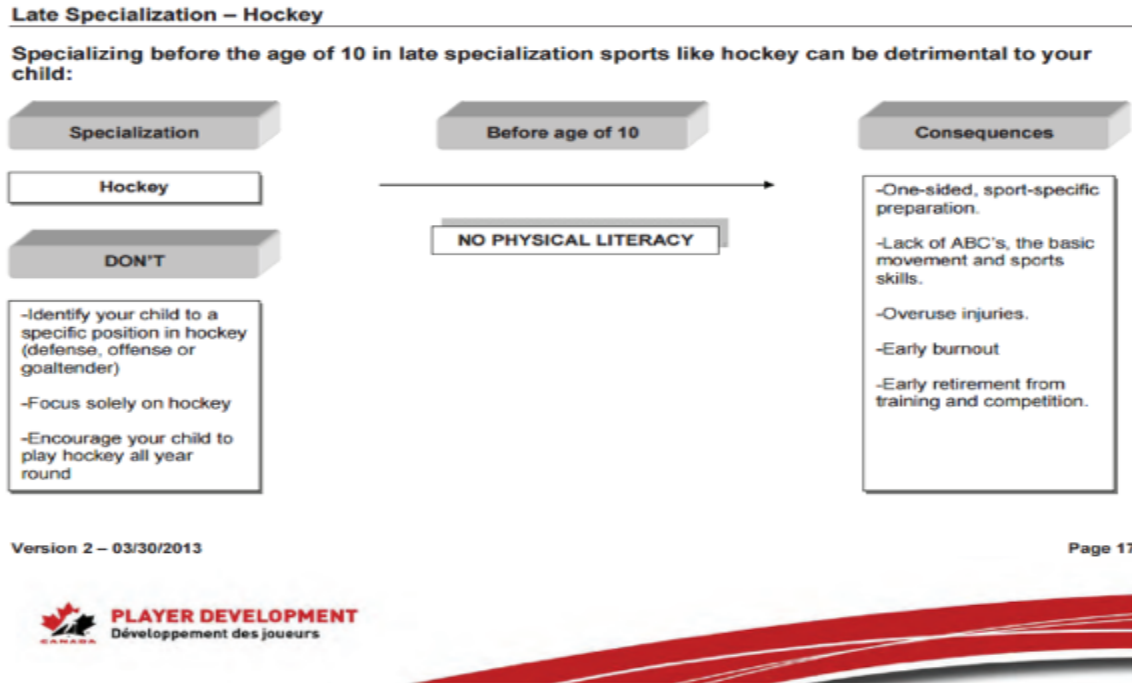


Figure 14. Specialization image from Canada Hockey LTAD

One encouraging sign is that recently, there does seem to be a bit of a push back from the sport science communities and federal sport bodies to combat this type of adult influence on youth sport. Recently, there appears to be more and more information being brought forward to discourage these types of behaviors. My concern is that if people are going to listen, believe and act accordingly I know in my little action research bubble within my son’s hockey team, 14 of 15 players aged 7-9 are playing all year round.

This topic of behavior that contradicts coaching education, could potentially become a discussion point within my project itself. Coach Horwood was considered a very demanding and intense leader. There were several clips from within the movie where he definitely pushes the boundaries of what is considered appropriate coaching behavior. In coaching, results (winning) can still be achieved with behaviors not considered appropriate or ethical. These ethical

discussions would be very valuable in a competitive coaching education environment and would add to the value of this project.

Another important consideration moving forward with this project, would be to specifically tie the activities, visuals and video to the specific current material, courses and format of coaching education in basketball. The questions and activities could easily be specifically linked to certain topics, chapters and sections within the coaching manuals or curriculum being used. It would not take a great deal of tweaking with the reflection and reading activities to imbed the project activities into the specific current course materials/texts. One potential challenge with this partnership could be the wide range of topics discussed within the project. The sheer volume and variety of coaching topics and issues discussed, might cover multiple levels/courses within coaching education and curriculum.

One last specific limitation and challenge to this project was the technology I used to create the Culture Builder activity itself. In a previous Masters course we were introduced in a peer led session to the iMovie application. I decided to use iMovie and an iPad as my technology for creating the video and digital portion in this project. I had very little experience with iMovie going into the project and once I got to a certain point, there was no going back. The positive about this portion of the project is that I gained new knowledge and expertise with the technology and eventually became very comfortable with the format. Unfortunately, I didn't realize the limitations that an iPad would create, especially considering the amount of editing and length of the task. The length of the videos I was cutting from, and the manner I envisioned text and images being used, ended up creating an extraordinary amount of extra work and frustration. The precision and commands on the iPad were much more cumbersome and glitchy than I would have encountered on an actual PC/MacBook. This made for countless hours

of extra work and frustration. The iPad version of iMovie had many limitations with font, editing, precision, and usability. One specific example of the frustration of using the iPad as my device was video clipping and editing. When I initially started to cut the documentary, I realized that with the length of the video file being used, the software app would only allow me to clip 9 minute segments. This caused me to take bigger clips and then have to further edit them once dropped into the project. This work was very time consuming and frustrating due to the actual application itself. The dexterity and sensitivity of the editing process became very challenging. These glitchy and inefficient challenges continued to plague many of the changes and additions I tried to make in the project. Limitations such as text, size, colour, audio editing, etc. were much more challenging than they needed to be. Fortunately, I remained patient and was able to create what I see as an effective activity, but I could have saved many hours of work and frustration if my hardware was more appropriate for the size of the project.

### **Moving Forward**

As I move forward and complete my masters' degree and this specific project, I hope to offer my project and time to the basketball community. As I have approached the completion of this project and masters material, I have already increased my involvement in the coaching side of basketball again. Moving forward, I also plan to sit down and review this project with the provincial body of basketball in Alberta. I hope to see if this project can potentially be used in coaching education courses across the province and country. I have already discussed the idea with the director of Basketball Alberta, Paul Sir. He appears to be supportive. Throughout the process of this masters degree/project, he has been very resourceful and helpful. I am hopeful to continue to work together moving forward. I look forward to an opportunity to run a coaching education session and see how the project looks and feels in action. I would also be very

interested to survey participating coaches involved, and find out if they found the experience beneficial, interesting, well organized, educational and motivating. Direct feedback from coaches going through the process could prove to be invaluable in refining and improving this project.

### **Conclusion**

As this project progresses into Chapter 4, there will be opportunity to reflect on potential shortcomings and changes that may be useful in improving the material and delivery. This should provide some time to reflect on the directions this project took. Through this reflection I hope to refine and strengthen the actual project itself. My hope for this project is that it doesn't just end at graduation. Personally reflecting back prior to Chapter 4 stimulates many thoughts and emotions as to how I would work and plan differently throughout this entire process. I look forward to the opportunity to improve and reflect, but I am also very eager to complete the project and see if it can be used in coaching education situations.

## **Chapter 4: Comprehensive Exam RD**

### **Personal Reflection**

The experience of going through the University of Victoria M.Ed. program has been eventful, challenging and rewarding. Reflecting on the experience, growth and professional learning stimulates many different thoughts and emotions. The strongest feeling that I am presently feeling is relief. I look forward to completing the work so I have more time and energy to put into community involvement, my career and family. As I get closer to being completely done, I have already started to increase my involvement professionally and within the community. I am excited to move forward with a great sense of accomplishment and motivation as I get more and more involved with initiatives at work and within my community.

When this M.Ed. program started 2 years ago, I vividly recall the days leading up to the first class. I was very apprehensive and unsure if it was the right move professionally and personally. I had always planned to do my masters' degree but I definitely hadn't planned to take on a program in curricular leadership. Add to that, three kids, a full time job, community and coaching commitments, and coming off the busiest and most stressful four years of my life, and I was feeling very uncertain. I come from a competitive sports background and was planning on focusing on a masters in coaching. I had several colleagues and friends who had gone to the University of Victoria and completed their masters in the coaching program and I was heavily involved in competitive coaching. I wanted to do my masters in something I found interesting, but also realized I needed to find a program that was affordable and suited my family and professional commitments. After attending the information session from the University of Victoria, I saw a program that was affordable and manageable time wise. I still struggled with the content and its connection to my interests and professional life. After consulting with one of

the school administrators, I decided to apply and, was accepted. I was assured that the program would offer opportunities to make connections to my interests and passion. That being said, I was still very apprehensive and unsure going into the first day of classes. Was this degree going to interest me? Was I going to be capable of doing the work? Do I want to give up big chunks of my holidays, weekends and free time for a course I was not sure about? Looking back now with most of the work completed, I have answers to all of those questions and feel like I have grown substantially through this processes, not only as a professional, but personally as well.

Coming into this educational experience and challenge, I had recently stepped away from my professional passion of coaching university basketball. The position I was in had me coaching full time as a university basketball head coach, but did not provide the financial support to allow me to stop teaching high school. For the 4 years previous, I attempted to juggle full time teaching with Edmonton Public Schools, full time coaching at the university level and the emergence of my young family of five. I eventually stepped away due to the impacts these commitments were having on me mentally, physically and personally. I had to re-prioritize my life and free up time for my teaching career, family and self. Now here I was stepping right back into another huge professional and personal challenge.

This MEd program allowed me to gain a great deal of professional knowledge, but more so helped me change my belief system in terms of my academic abilities/interests and time management ability. I have always had a very strong work ethic and ability to commit myself to my pursuits, but those qualities came through in my commitment to my family/friends and my involvement in the sport of basketball. I knew I could take on tremendous responsibility and work when it came areas of interest, but I wasn't as confident that this same drive would carry over into an academic challenge I was unsure of. Part of my initial apprehension going into this

course was if I would be able to exhibit those same blue collar qualities not only in academic pursuits but in areas that I wasn't necessarily passionate about.

That apprehension disappeared quickly into a pile of commitments and course work. I know now, that not only can I, I did. This course has not only opened my eyes to many forms of academic methodology and knowledge (Paper writing, APA format, research, professional journals, technology, professional dialogue, presentations, professional vocabulary, projects, etc.) but helped grow an internal belief system and confidence in my academic ability. I find myself very confident in my work moving forward. This confidence shows itself not only in my professional life as a teacher, but as a student, parent and community volunteer. I feel more knowledgeable in my professional work in many areas. I feel more informed and knowledgeable of the changes and challenges emerging within the educational field. The first summer courses in this MEd, explored, discussed and allowed input and opinion into the specific shifts and changes that are evolving within education and more specifically Alberta Education. These two courses set my foundations for the entire masters degree. Not only did they offer current and interesting material (which surprised me), they laid the groundwork for the commitment, work ethic, strategies, format, skills and level of work that would be necessary at the graduate level. This knowledge and growth made me much more confident and informed with the terminology, methodology and vision of my profession. Being on the other side of the classroom again has proved very valuable to me a professional and person. Many of the buzzwords and trends we see emerging within our district and school (e.g- 21st century learner, action research, whole child education, flex, etc.) are topics we have studied, researched, discussed and written about in this degree. I feel much more attached and interested to some of the new initiatives I see and hear about at staff meetings, professional development and within the district. In

professional settings and meetings I feel I have a much greater understanding of new educational initiatives and have a better ability to critically reflect and respond. The knowledge and vocabulary enhancement this MEd has offered has been extremely helpful professionally and as a learner and leader. Above that, the personal and academic growth I have experienced within this commitment goes well beyond any of the academic material covered. I know I am a better person, teacher and student than I was 2 years ago. I believe part of my role as an education professional is to role model a lifelong learner and always look to improve. I feel this degree definitely offered that.

Moving forward as a professional, I am already putting some of my personal growth to use in the form of action. Anticipating the appearance of more time and focus with the completion of the MEd, I have already jumped into some major commitments in my school and community. Somehow within this MEd, I have rediscovered my calling and commitment to coaching, but have also resurrected a desire and need to give back to community and my own family. As my kids have grown up within the world of a competitive coach and now progressed to also including the academic world, I have made a connection between the two that is exciting. Now it is time in my life to use my experiences, knowledge, skills and opportunities as teacher, learner, community volunteer, coach and parent and make impact the best way I know how. Not only does my final project aspire to help the basketball community, I have ramped back up my involvement and passion for coaching basketball, but this time from a different angle. This passion has now taken me into other sports, and most recently into the grassroots level of basketball within the communities I live and work in what started initially as a high school basketball offseason training and recruiting tool, has exploded into a full blown community initiative.

I teach in one of Edmonton's biggest high schools that sits in an area of the city that would attract a fairly large percentage of students that come from a lower socio-economic background. Our school is extremely multicultural and is home to many new Canadians and ESL students. This month I initiated and put into action a community basketball training center open to kids from grades 5-12 at no cost to the athletes. What we initially started as a way to get our players more committed to competitive year round training, eventually became a community initiative that included neighborhood youth and attracted over 100 kids. This all happened so unexpectedly and quickly, I find myself scrambling organize and get a full vision of the possibilities of this type of program. I did not expect to come out of this masters course and find myself back coaching high school basketball and running 2 youth basketball programs, and all for free! Truthfully though, I am enjoying coaching as much as I ever have, and feel I have adopted much more of a calling to service and community. I have jumped into the trenches again, but this time at the grassroots with a completely different vision and attitude. Through a combination of academic learning, a desire to be around my children, involvement in elite youth sport, a renewed passion and commitment to coaching and community and the culmination of my MEd, I am finding a new vision and path for a lifelong passion. I plan to not only share and model my connection to youth, education, and sport, I plan be part of an active vision to do it the right way and with my own personal priorities in check.

Outside of the basketball world and gymnasium, I remain open to other options that might come my way within education and coaching. I know my administration has asked why I never pursue leadership positions within the school district. In the past my focus had been almost entirely on competitive basketball and family. Now I would say my focus is family and community. I will

leave myself open to any professional opportunities that I come across, but right now I have a plate full of other commitments and priorities.

This focus on community has spilled over into my teaching every day. As a professional educator the spirit of sharing and giving is a giant intangible, and I feel that renewed attention to that has spread not only into my involvement in the sporting community, but into every teacher student interaction in my day. I am not sure exactly how this philosophical change emerged from academic graduate work, but my best guess would be through the research and focus on amateur sport, mixed with a desire to make up for lost time by being committed to what is most important to me.

Continuing from part 1, I am currently applying much of the experience, but more so personal growth, in the teaching and learning community. Much of the MEd application for me currently is after the bell, but there is no question that this experience will apply to my professional career on a daily basis.

Beginning from something as simple as my growth in my day to day tasks as a professional educator. Working through my MEd has forced me to become more confident and familiar with different forms of technology and communication. For example, my final project has been almost like a practicum on Google. Learning to format, share, edit, work with digital images, communicate and create within this format has proved extremely beneficial. My school board uses Google for almost everything and what I have learned within that technology will be useful moving forward as a day to day teacher. These skills are proving extremely valuable. The work within this Med has strengthened my technical confidence, skills and communication abilities. I have improved the professionalism, efficiency and quality of countless forms of assessment, reporting, communications, and documentation. I was at risk of

falling behind a generation in terms of current technology and communication confidence, and my experiences with this MEd sure helped me catch up quickly.

Specific to the application of this MEd, I was fortunate enough to end up with what I hope is a useful piece in the coaching education field. I am hoping to use and share my final project within the basketball community. When it is completed, I plan to share it with many of my colleagues in the coaching profession, both as a collaborative piece and for reflection and feedback. Additionally, the coaching staff from the basketball program at our school is going to go through and personally experience the entire coaching education portion, as we attempt to rebuild and grow the program at our school. I am excited to see the collaborative foundations for a strong basketball program to emerge.

Technically, I understand that my professional career is that of a PE and science teacher. I am paid for this time, received MEd scholarship for this position and am contractually obligated to that work. I would say that the professional and personal growth I have experienced through this MEd has definitely made me better at this job. I have grown and improved in many areas. However, the skills and personal growth I have experienced are currently more at play in my community and extracurricular commitments. From my perspective, this is also part of my professional life. I feel I can have more of a large scale impact from my ties to these type of activities, and truthfully these activities take up a great deal of my time and attention throughout the day. Although not written into my professional contract, these duties are also a huge portion of the expectations for me within my school community. I also believe that my involvement is contributing to and enhancing the “whole child” experience education seeks, and “bigger picture” is as much a contribution to youth education, health and learning as my paid position. School administration can also be very focused on athletics and teacher

volunteers. Someone in my position (PE teacher/elite sport experience) who chooses not to coach/volunteer can actually experience very negative professional repercussions.

Moving forward, I am open to opportunities and positions that may present themselves due to my “higher education” and personal and professional growth. I know that if I ever decided to get back into university level coaching, the possibility of getting a position is much better with a masters degree. Most positions require it. Presently, I don’t see that as even a professional option until my children are out of the house. The travel, loss of family time, intensity and emotional commitment is presently just not what I am pursuing. A personal benefit of having experienced the intense commitment of teaching and university coaching simultaneously, is a re-prioritization of family. My commitment moving forward is for my expertise to directly influence my own children and the youth within the community I work in. My passion and commitment presently lies closer to home. The research, reflection, work and growth this MEd provided played a large role in that vision. The one negative side to the type of work I am presently doing, is that there is very little financial gain. I will go up to maximum salary as a classroom teacher in my district upon completion, but beyond that, my current work is not lucrative financially. That can sometimes be frustrating considering the amount of energy, time and commitment this work takes, but it is a drawback I am willing to accept. To quote a wise old friend, who probably quoted some else....”experience is the currency of the wealthy man”.

Professionally and personally, I try not to limit options. When people ask me if I am going into administration when I finish my masters, I always answer no. That is currently an honest answer. They get the same answer when they ask if I plan to go back into university level coaching again. That being said, I know opportunities will continue to present themselves both

in the community and professionally. This MEd will play a part in the availability and accessibility of opportunities ahead. I look forward to exploring the options and opportunities ahead.

Looking back, I am very glad I didn't listen to those second thoughts I had about taking this M.Ed. I did have to make sacrifices and so did my family and professional life. The growth I experienced within this MEd of curricular leadership are far reaching. Well beyond what I expected. I did not expect to experience the professional growth I did. I know that this course fit what I thought was manageable and affordable on a practical level. I knew I would move up on the pay grade. The academic, personal and professional growth I experienced has been substantial. As a day to day professional I feel I am more motivated, informed, aware, conscious and effective than ever.

In Conclusion, where this MEd is going to take me in terms of my professional career is not certain or planned. I do know that I am putting it to use as an educational professional everyday within my class, school, gymnasium, community, family and team. I am extremely excited and relieved to almost be done. The final project turned into a huge task and grew much bigger than the course called for. It was very challenging, but it turned into a project that I had passion for. I am proud of the work I have done and think it will continue to pay me back for life, both professionally and personally.

### **Potential Links**

1. **M.E. LaZerte Coaching staff**- Myself and two colleagues have taken on the task of not only re-building a basketball program at our school, but also growing the sport in the community on a volunteer basis.

2. **Basketball Alberta**- I have been in communication with Basketball Alberta throughout this project. As they continue forward and grow the sport of basketball, they aspire to improve the coach education and level of coaching in our province. I hope to be a part of it. There is also possibility for this project and myself to be reconnected to Canada Basketball, with which I previously worked.
3. **Edmonton Public Schools/ Alberta Schools Athletic Association (ASAA)**- As I worked through this project I found very little policy connected to athletics within the school board. As I mentioned in the project, certain sports are connected to the school system at some of their highest levels of competition and through key developmental years. If this is the system that is going to develop our future athletes and coaches, I hope to have a voice in what it should look like. I feel that my research, expertise and passion will offer some valuable perspective.

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## Appendix A

### *The Project- **Building Team Culture in Basketball- A Coach's Tool-***

#### *Coach Education: Creating Successful Winning Culture-It never did go out of style*

Assembling, planning and bringing together a group of 12-15 basketball athletes, and coaching/training staff, to create a collective cohesive unit all moving together in the same direction in pursuit of the same goals, is a challenging and complex task. Creating successful team culture is a necessary team/program objective. Success on any level is rare without it!

**Instructions:** The following package is a tool intended to help create discussion, introduce, refresh, re-focus, individualize, grow, educate, learn, and eventually improve and aid in the growth of your basketball team's winning culture. It is intended for use, both in a formal coaching education environment, and additionally for coaching staffs in a retreat/team building scenario. Coaching staffs could go through the activities privately and discuss the topics "in house" or the action could be for collaborative use among colleagues in a diverse coach setting.

**Materials:** Along with this package and all the appendices, participants need a writing utensil. As well, **web access** through a computer, laptop, tablet or phone would be very beneficial. Coaches need access to the **Canada Basketball Long Term Athlete Development Plan (LTAD)** either online or with a provided hard copy. **Instructors/leaders need to ensure that they have a working projector/Smartboard with web access and audio/video.**

**Canada Basketball LTAD link:** <http://www.basketball.ca/files/LTAD.pdf>



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### **Sample Course/Project Timeline and Itinerary:**

***\*\*Participants are encouraged to make notes and add to answers as the video section play. Further detail and consideration can be added during group discussion. The workbook is a document for personal growth and reflection and is not assigned a grade or marked.***

***Times provided are approximate. Work through at an appropriate pace for your group. \*\****

**9:00 AM-9:15 AM-** participant and instructor introductions/housekeeping/Dick Bennett's List

**9:15 AM-10:00 AM-** Intro to the Legends-show video 1-5 with appropriate section

**10:00 AM-10:45 AM-** Initial Reflection Activity (Appendix C) and review Family Considerations Section-complete Activity B

**10:45 AM -11:00 AM-** Break

**11:00 AM-11:30 AM- Intro** Major Activity-iMovie Culture Builder and complete Introduction Activity and discuss (play introduction section twice while participants brain storm)

**11:30 AM- 12:00PM-** Watch Chapter 1 : Preseason and complete questions and discuss- participants may want refer to the LTAD, appendices C, F, G, H and I and their course coaching manual in this section

**12:00 PM-12:40 PM-** Watch Chapter 2: Foundations and answer questions and discuss- participants may refer to appendices C, F, G, H and I in this section.

**12:40 PM-1:30 PM-** Lunch

**1:30 PM-1:50 PM-** Welcome back and watch and complete questions for Chapter 3: Regular season and discuss.

**1:50 PM-2:15 PM-** Watch and complete questions for Chapter 4: Forward then Back Again and discuss. Your class text and LTAD will be helpful in this section.

**2:15 PM-2:30 PM-** Watch and complete questions for Chapter 5: The Final Push and discuss.

**2:30 PM-3:00 PM-** Watch and complete questions for Chapter 6: Conclusion.

**2:30-3:00 PM-** Complete Activity D; Goal Setting Session. If pressed for time you may choose option B which is shorter. If there is more time and the instructor sees value in the extra effort, complete option A and work to create the foundations of a document you would use in a team building/goal setting/ retreat type situation. Use appendices C, F, G, H and I where necessary.

**3:00 PM-3:15 PM-** Fill out course evaluations/reflections and wrap up.




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### **Activity A: Introduction- Experienced Perspective-A Look at Legends**

In 2014, the NBA's San Antonio Spurs managed to dominate throughout the regular season and NBA playoffs using a style that coaches loved. They played amazing tactical team basketball, but also demonstrated discipline, respect, strong body language and said all the right things. They have made fundamental team play a hot topic issue in basketball and the purists were eating it up. People rallied around this group of athletes who were perceived to play the game of basketball the "right way". The style of play, coaching, and character of the players within the unit became a trending topic of discussion in the basketball community. As presented with much academic and basketball specific evidence, this knowledge and effectiveness of the team concept and culture is nothing new. Coaches have been working toward this synergy within their teams throughout the history of sport. The 2014 San Antonio Spurs just made the light shine a little brighter on the value of team. Any athlete who has had the opportunity to play on a special group that managed to evolve into a team in its truest sense, will attest to the amazing experience it is. The question is how does one make it happen? Is it like trapping lighting in a bottle or is there a proven process to creating a true team? Some coaches seem to be able to re-create it year after year, and this project aspires to help coaches examine these successful practices and work toward demanding and pursuing similar results within their group of aspiring amateur basketball athletes. Experienced coaches should also find value in revisiting their values and reflecting how certain situations and experiences helped shape their program expectations. It is a challenging and extremely dynamic task that rarely sticks to a script! The adversity along the way is an important part of the process and will always test a team's true resolve.

Every season, basketball teams assemble and aspire to find that special chemistry within a group that provides the opportunity to win, but also win playing "the right way". Coaches spend countless time recruiting, organizing, defining and teaching leadership, planning team retreats/team building activities, adjusting and setting roles, developing strategies, building relationships, ensuring proper body language, developing routines/guidelines, creating and enforcing team rules/tradition. This building process and program/team identity should be the first order of business each season. Once the team and staff has hopefully been assembled with the proper talent and character the journey will be the test. Building and continuing strong team culture is a process and the head coach needs to lead.

**"Culture wins over talent, because talent isn't enough. We preach that, we live that, we recruit that" (Eccleston, 2014, p.1)**

**Dick Bennett's Advice For a Successful Program:**

- **Surround yourself with good people.**
- **Surround yourself with passionate people.**
- **Surround yourself with people that believe in servanthood. The "Road to Greatness" says, "I have very little ability to finish anything on my own but if we get together, we can accomplish much."**
- **Do not allow anyone to come in and break up the family unity. A TEAM must be protected and nurtured.**
- **Think about whom you are and what you want to do and STAMP IT!!**

This activity and learning opportunity is set to begin in the pre-season. Truthfully a great deal of the work toward developing a successful team culture happens before this point. As you reflect on your team values and vision within this project, you **MUST** remember to use those values and vision when assembling your group through recruiting and team selection (coaches, players, staff, etc.). It would be foolish to think you could have a group of people represent and grow into your vision and value system, who do not demonstrate the character you seek. Surround yourself with the character you hope to make flourish and don't fall into the pitfalls of allowing talent to fog your desired vision of character.

### **A Look at Legends**

This portion of the session will devote some time to looking at three coaching legends who are known for their ability to get a group of individuals on the same page. The respect they have garnered in the basketball coaching community is immense. A big part of that respect lies within their ability to create a culture within their group that reflects the high expectations of the head coach. Take some time as a group to read and review some of the best practices and beliefs of the following three legends.

### **Gregg Popovich- San Antonio Spurs/USA Basketball**

#### **Video 1- Introduction to Coach Pop**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcegYFTi78>

Initially, we can take a look and focus in on the 2014 world champion San Antonio Spurs and their coach Gregg Popovich. His team recently (2014) dissected a Miami Heat team with some of the biggest stars on the planet to win the NBA title in one of the dominating performances of all time. They did it so efficiently, that an analyst commented that it looked easy at times. Coach Popovich is receiving enormous credit for creating the team first style, and many coaches are searching for how he did it, so they can try to emulate it and use his practices to learn and improve. Coach Popovich has somehow managed to repeat his team vision for many years. When you take some time to see his methods and the people he surrounds himself with, it is quite obvious it is not luck.

Most basketball professionals would consider Coach Popovich's teams consistently among the best on and off the court in terms of exhibiting team behaviors. He is considered one of the greatest coaches of all time, and his staff have been some of the most pursued hires in the NBA community.

Popovich immediately deflects praise toward his athletes when asked about his impact. ***“The fact that they allow me to coach them the way I coach them, surprises me on a daily basis” (Popovich 2014)*** He describes his current team as a group of guys who have “gotten over themselves and play basketball the “right way”. Deflecting praise to others on the team is just one of the subtleties Popovich has in his repertoire.

Legendary NCAA football coach Urban Meyer has recently been looking to Coach Popovich for some techniques to use for his football team. **“Popovich talks about the culture, and if you don't fit into the culture you've got to go” (McGuire, 2014)**. One non-negotiable from Coach Popovich, is that if you don't fit the vision, you will not be part of the group moving forward.

*“Popovich yells, cajoles and screams at his players during the game, willing them into the positions and dynamics he desires, and he doesn't discriminate while doing it: superstars like Duncan and Tony Parker receive as much criticism from Pop as his end-of-the-bench players. And they accept it willingly. Parker has stated that "when he screams at me sometimes it's tough, but at the end of the day I know it's for the team. He always thinks about team. Nobody is bigger than the team. So if he screams at me and Timmy [Duncan] like that, then everybody will listen.”-(Allen, 2014)*

There is no more current or obvious evidence of the impact that team culture can have on success in basketball, than by looking at what Coach Popovich has created and repeated with the NBA's San Antonio Spurs. He is the longest tenured coach out of all the major North American professional sporting leagues and the current alpha dog in professional coaching. Coaches want to try to reproduce what he appears to have mastered...creating team! Review both the videos below for some perspective and motivation on today's topic of building team culture.

### **Video 2- San Antonio Spurs- Beautiful Game Part 1**

This video captures the mecca of team culture and team play in basketball. It is a look inside and a reflection on some of the best selfless team basketball ever witnessed at the highest level of play on the planet. There is also commentary from Gregg Popovich himself speaking to his values and the characteristics that make up strong team culture. The video finishes with a series of highlights of how this plays out in the on-court performance.

Beautiful Game Part 1- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3y7cWmoBCI>

### **Video 3- San Antonio Spurs-Beautiful Game Part 2**

This video provides more detail and evidence of the team play and culture of the 2014 San Antonio Spurs. Initially, it looks deeper into the tactical team concepts used on the floor, but it also provides some great perspective on the value of your team leaders buying into the team concept and culture and following the coach. There are also some vivid images of some of the player coach relationship dynamics.

Beautiful Game Part 2- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNZvNs6r800>

### **Article 1- Gregg Popovich-In Pop We Trust**

This article provides further perspective and commentary on the beliefs and methods that Coach Popovich uses when building and training his teams. It is a good easy and enjoyable read.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/gregg-popovich-in-pop-we-trust-20140602>

### Mike Krzyzewski Coach K -Duke University/USA Basketball



In basketball circles, the legend of Coach K (Mike Krzyzewski-Duke University) is well known. His success is undeniable, and his ability to create and demand strong team culture is one of his signatures. His ability to create strong relationships with players and also have those players buy in to the team concept is exceptional and a common topic in many of Coach K's books and interviews.

*“One thing I tried to do in every practice with the Olympic team was to have my assistants do a lot of the technical things. I made it a point to talk to four to six guys every day, and about things other than basketball-“When is your family coming over?” or “I heard this is happening, what do you think?” That kind of thing. I got to know them as people, which helped me understand the dynamics that I had to work with as a team” (p.497, 2011, Sitkin)*

Legendary college coach Mike Krzyzewski (Coach K) of Duke constantly reminds his team to play like a fist. All five guys/fingers playing as one. He gets his players to all put their fists in the circle. Easy for players to visualize the strength of the fist vs. an open hand. Coaching tactics are often learned about through experience but also the experiences and expertise of others is crucial. Coach K's “fist” analogy is often repeated and referred to in basketball coaching circles.



**“There are a lot of different dynamics right now in our sport. The one thing we do know is that we’re going to make sure our culture is the same.”- Coach K**

Another team/culture tradition used by Coach K is to have all bench players stand and make hand contact with each and every teammate as they were subbed out of the game. Athletes are expected to support the work their teammate just put in for the group goal. Duke basketball players are also expected to hustle over and help up any teammate who was on the floor during practice or games. This type of body language is very important to Coach K, the image of the program and the team culture.



According to Coach K, it is **“the little things that separate the great teams from everybody else”**, and he believes this type of body language boosts confidence, builds team unity, and even intimidates the other team.



**Video 4- Coach K-** Take some time as a group to review the following video. It provides some perspective on the charisma, passion and expertise of Coach K. (Sorry UNC fans...)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQTmWNcCCdo>

**Phil Jackson-Chicago Bulls/LA Lakers**



Legendary Coach Phil Jackson is one of the most decorated and successful minds the game of basketball has ever seen. He was another legend that placed team culture above all.

**“One of the main jobs of the coach is to reawaken that spirit so that players can blend together effortlessly. It’s often an uphill fight. The ego-driven culture of pro basketball, and society in general, militates against cultivating this kind of selfless action, even for members of a team whose success as individuals is tied directly to the group performance. Our society places such a high premium on individual achievement, it’s easy for players to get blinded by their own self-importance and lose sense of interconnectedness, the essence of teamwork.” (p.79, 1995, Jackson)**

Coach Jackson preaches about how **“achieving ultimate success in team sports comes down to 3 core pillars – culture, talent, and the system of play/game plan/game style. Great culture is the must-have ingredient at the elite level, regardless of how good the other 2 factors are. Without this there is nothing”**.

**Video 5-Phil Jackson-** Take some time as a group to review video #4 and gain some perspective on the mind set and priorities of one of the game’s most accomplished coaches.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_4YvDEMsPE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_4YvDEMsPE)

**Activity B- Initial Reflection Opportunity**

James Gels highlighted some excellent reflection in his article focusing on building a basketball program (Appendix C). His reflections could potentially be very beneficial for new coaches considering taking on a program, but also for experienced coaches to re-visit their experiences, foundations and current challenges.

**Action-** Take some time to read the article “Building a Basketball Program” by James Gels. When you finish reading and reflecting, write down some reflections on the questions below. Brief point form answers/thoughts are fine. Take some time to share answers as a group after completion.

- *How will it impact my family?*
  
- *Will I have the support of the school’s administration, faculty, and the community?*
  
- *Do I have passion for the game?*
  
- *Do I have the energy, the desire, and good health to take this on?*
  
- *What will I get from doing this? How will this benefit me?*
  
- *What can I give to others by doing this?*
  
- *What are my priorities and goals? What’s important?*
  
- *What is my coaching philosophy?*

**Family/lifestyle Considerations**

**“Early in our marriage, when Mike was the head basketball coach at West Point, I told him that one day I was going to write a book and I already had the title: The Season Never Ends.” -Mickie Krzyzewski**

**“Don’t let basketball become your mistress”-Al McGuire**

**Activity-** After reflecting on some of the factors that will impact your program, coaching and personal life and reading James Gels’ article, you should have come across some potential pitfalls and challenges the competitive coaching profession may have. One aspect that Gels’ warned about was the balance between basketball and family. The following reflections/summaries emerged after interviewing some of the spouses of competitive basketball coaches. Each participant's complete responses can be seen in Appendix E.

***What were the biggest impacts (both Positive and negative) your partner’s involvement in competitive coaching had on your family?***

***Positives (+)***

- *life experience in many cities*
- *new friends/extended family*
- *community connections*
- *pride*
- *support from other families*
- *personal growth (independence, “bigger plate”)*
- *kids get many exciting unique experiences*
- *role model for family and in community*

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***Negatives (-)***

- *high stress*
  - *all consuming*
  - *can’t turn it off*
  - *distracted spouse*
  - *loss of family time*
  - *nights alone*
  - *missing family activities (kids sports, birthdays, school functions)*
  - *game night anxiety*
  - *team can take priority over family (can’t compromise the team)*
  - *preoccupation/distracted spouse*
  - *personal health*
  - *child care*
- 

***What were the biggest relationship challenges being married to a competitive coach?***

- *distracted spouse*
- *less time together*
- *moving*

- *struggle for personal identity*
- *shouldering the parent responsibilities*
- *health/stress*
- *challenge to stay connected/grounded*
- *sacrificed career*
- *no connections in new cities*

***What advice would you pass on to other coach's families and couples?***

- *keep your own identity/interests*
- *manage time to stay connected*
- *set some limits (family time, no cell phone time)*
- *get a support system*
- *organize a calendar*
- *give your spouse space*
- *don't take their preoccupation personally*
- *communicate well*
- *commit to a day off (player contact/coaching duties)*
- *set boundaries*

**Activity C-Culture Builder-"On the Line" iMovie-Major Activity**



**Introduction-** *This iMovie activity is intended to generate discussion and to help coaches determine what vision they have for their basketball program. It focuses around the documentary "On the Line" which goes inside a single season of University of Alberta basketball and allows coaches an exclusive peek into the program created by legendary Canadian CIS Basketball coach Don Horwood. It will provide an opportunity for an insider perspective into the demands, guidelines, expectations, motivational techniques, vision, and challenges used a very successful competitive amateur basketball program. Coaches will be provided with some solid foundations that are important in attempting to grow a desired culture and vision for his/her basketball program. More so, it is an opportunity for coaches to evaluate or re-evaluate what they stand for as a coach and how they plan to communicate and grow those values in their program and through their athletes. Each individual team and level of competition will call for specific and appropriate levels of commitment and intensity. The idea is to help formalize not only a vision for coaches but also create conversation and spread knowledge of the complex many factors that go into running an amateur competitive basketball program.*

**Instructions:** *This activity can be used individually or in a group situation. Play the iMovie activity and pause the video when the discussion questions come on the screen. Use the questions to stimulate group discussion or personally reflect on your own vision and practice. Some question will ask you to comment on what you see in the video clips, while others are seeking personal reflection and commentary. Your personal opinion and values are what this activity is aimed at tapping into and growing. You should start to see some consistencies to emerge from the prior activities and this task. It is recommended that participants take notes and write down personal responses/thoughts to what they see in the video. Upon completing the activity, coaches should have not only experienced the perspectives and values of the one particular successful coach, but should produce a template of their own personal values, demands and guideline they want to highlight within their own personal coaching experiences. **Appendix I** provides some support and potential topics for discussion for each question below. (Teacher/leaders tool).*

**Activity Link- Video 6-**Click the link below to access this activity.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1imFKjXdCoHdIEyMEFUSTIIMG8/view?usp=sharing>

**Introduction Activity:** This section is intended as a 10-15 minute reflection to help you brainstorm, formalize and reflect on the values that you want to shape your team culture. Watch the introduction of “Culture Builder” and write down some thoughts and beliefs that you have in the following areas of coaching and building team culture. It is suggested that you watch the intro twice so you have time process some of the images and your personal thoughts. Feel free to discuss your answers and thoughts as a group or with an elbow partner to gain further perspective and insight. You may find as your progress through the activity you might want to add to or adjust some of these expectations/thoughts. This is a working document, and working back is encouraged.

1. *List some key words that you feel summarize what you stand for/believe in as a coach:*
  
2. *When others look at your program and your team play, what do you hope they see?*
  
3. *What are some of your expectations as a coach for:*
  - Character?
  
  - Being a good teammate?
  
  - Work ethic?

- Academics?
- Fitness?
- Commitment?
- Behavior?
- Communication?
- Accountability?
- Team Play?
- On court conduct?
- Shot Selection?
- Community Involvement?
- Interacting with officials?
- Social Media?
- Got rituals? (List some program/team rituals-e.g.-practice format, cheers, etc.)
- Got traditions? (List some program/team traditions?)
- Other- \_\_\_\_\_?

**Chapter 1 -Pre-Season-** Watch the next section of the video. After watching the video and reflecting on your own practice and values, complete the next section of reflection questions. Pause the video when prompted and provide some perspective and opinion where you can. Once completing each chapter of the activity, it is recommended to take up the

questions as a group (large or small) or with an elbow partner. This chapter will also ask you to read and reflect on the Basketball Canada LTAD and your coaches' manual.

### **Reflection Questions- Chapter 1**

#### **4. Competitive Level-**

**How important is winning at your level of coaching?**

**How might this (winning) influence coaching decisions, demands, expectations and communication?**

**5. Training**-This section should include some reflection but you should also refer to Canada Basketball LTAD, your course coaching manual and any other resources you feel there is value in.

**How much training is appropriate at your level of coaching?**

**How do you know if you are properly training your athletes?**

**How do you adjust training as the season progresses?**

**6. Communication**- **How will you communicate your expectations for your program/team?**

**7. Tradition**-**What traditions will your program incorporate, maintain, or already have?**

**Chapter 2-Foundation**-Play Chapter 2 and then pause and reflect on the following questions. This section should take 15-25 minutes to complete and discuss. There are 4 appendices that should be reviewed and discussed in this section and that can be used moving forward in this activity.

Participants should at this point direct themselves to the sample team guidelines (**Appendix F**) and team building documents provided as exemplars as **Appendix B and G**. There are 2 examples. The first document (**Appendix G**) is an example of a document that could be used in a retreat type situation, where the team vision and guidelines are coming together. **Appendix G** is a document used by Clay Pottinger at Red Deer College (ACAC) at his annual team building sessions with the men's basketball program and appendix B is another example of a goal

setting/team building document. **Appendix F** is a sample document for team guidelines that was used in 2007 for the MacEwan University Griffins Men's basketball team. Again, it is suggested to share thoughts and perspectives with colleagues. **Appendix H** is another goal setting document that was used within the Canada Basketball Alberta Center for Performance (CP).

8. **Communication-**

**What are some strategies and techniques that you will use to set the vision for your team?**

**How will your players know what you stand for?**

9. **Leadership-**

**How will you select your team leaders?**

**What characteristics are you looking for from your leaders?**

**What will their roles and responsibilities be?**

**How will you encourage different forms of leadership from team members?**

10. **Growth-**

**What methods will you use to strengthen team chemistry?**

**How can you strengthen player-coach relationships?**

**How do you build trust within your team?**

**Who else can help strengthen your team?**

11. **Vision-**

**How will you know the potential of your team?**

**How will this help you guide your team to set appropriate goals?**

**Is there danger is goals too big, or potentially not big enough?**

**12. Goals-**

**How/who will you set your team goals?**

**How specific will they be? Do they include a plan of action?**

**How will you ensure that the players are working toward these goals?**

**13. Growth-**

**Can you teach players to work hard?**

**Can you make players tougher mentally and physically?**

**14. Detractors-**

**What if some players are not on board with the goals and vision?**

**Can a few players not board derail the entire team culture?**

**Chapter 3- Regular Season-** continue reflecting on the following topics, as you get the opportunity to observe similar issues in the Culture Builder iMovie activity.

**15. Motivation-**

**How will you get maximum effort out of your team?**

**What are appropriate techniques and communication when motivating players?**

**List some techniques you presently use to help motivate and push athletes.**

**Does the level of play influence coaching techniques and coach behavior?**

**16. Individualization-** Will you coach/communicate with each player differently? How?

**17. Adversity-** How do you change/react to an underachieving team? How will you guide a team through adversity?

**Chapter 4-Forward then Back Again-** again during this section it is very valuable in your answers and in the discussions to use the Canada Basketball LTAD and your course text when answering some of the questions. What is appropriate will vary depending on your level. (e.g.- playing time)

**18. Playing time-**

**What is appropriate for sharing playing time at your level?**

**How will you communicate when game/playing time is concerned?**

**When does winning a game surpass individual player development?**

**19. Motivation-**

**What can you do to continue to motivate/involve those who may not be getting as many minutes in games?**

**Are there techniques a coach can use to make sure the athletes who may be getting little or no playing time are on board with the team vision?**

**20. Self-Assessment-**

**What can a coach do if his/her team is not living up to the program expectations when working toward on court goals (e.g.- Free throw %, practice intensity, effort, defensive commitment, etc.)?**

**Give a couple examples of weaknesses you have identified with previous teams, and steps you took to improve.**

**21. Character-**

**How will you deal with individual athletes who are not working to their potential or on board with your expectations?**

**At what point is a player removed from the team for negative behavior or attitude?**

**What coaching techniques can be used to help teams and players overcome adversity/difficult situations?**

**What can adversity communicate to you about an individual's' character?**

**22. Building-**

**Does a coach change his/her method of delivering his/her message/expectations as the season progresses?**

**What coaching techniques could be used to try to ensure that your team is playing their best basketball at the most important parts of the season?**

**Chapter 5-The Final Push-**

**23. Roles-**

**Is there a point in the season where roles are clearly defined and will not change much?**

**Do you consider player character/personality when deciding on players that will start, versus those who will come off the bench?**

**How do you communicate these roles to individual athletes?**

**Chapter 6-Conclusion**

**24. Reflection-** Culture Builder iMovie reflection.

**Reflect on the documentary footage. Do you feel that the 2008 Golden Bears Basketball players met Coach Horwood's expectations?**

**What effective techniques did Coach Horwood use to build the team as the year progressed?**

**In your opinion, what were some perceived ineffective techniques or shortcomings of the coaching staff?**

**Would you consider the Golden Bears' season successful? Why?**

**Can a team have a successful season and not meet its ultimate goal?**

**25. Post Season Reflection-**

**What personnel decisions will coaches make in the off season?**

**What is appropriate off season training at your level?**

**How will you ensure players are doing what is asked of them?**

**What topics/issues need to be re-evaluated after a season?**

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**Extra: *Insider Perspective-On the Line Summary-by Chris Horwood***

In September of 2008, in the Main Gym at the University of Alberta, surrounded by championship banners, head basketball coach Don Horwood assembled his last team. Going inside the locker room and using the natural progression of a single season, *On the Line* explores the psychological and physical demands required for a team to be successful in competitive sport as well as the relationships between the players and one of the last coaches from the old school.

I made the decision to make this film when I learned that my dad was about to retire. Although I had never made a full-length film before I felt I knew the subject very well and my dad's retirement was compelling enough. I had been through numerous seasons with the program so I could understand the players' perspective while doing the film I quickly got in line with the coaches and the view from the other side of the clipboard. I became a part of all of their meetings (some on tape and some not) so I could gain an understanding of exactly where things were headed and why.

I assembled some equipment and began by recording the first day's physical tests in September 2008. Then, I just made sure I was at every practice and game for the rest of the season. It wasn't until the final game ended in Calgary that I came up with the idea of how to present the film. Edmonton radio legend John Short also came onboard the project very late in post-production. After a few weeks I had the trust of the players, who knew I was one of their own, and they began to show excitement that their season would be documented for them. It became apparent to me that there would be some turbulence between the coach and some of the players as different personalities and mental commitments clashed. I always appreciated my dad's honesty and openness in our interviews. I guess he trusted me with how I would deal with his frankness. Many of the players eventually found this trust as well. The coach knew he was documenting his feelings and perspectives on the players and relating his own energy compared to what it took to lead a successful team. It was refreshing for me to know he was at peace with what he was doing and even now he doesn't regret a single bit of how he went about it.

Finally, it was the interviews and some of the footage I had compiled during the season that dictated how I dealt with the players in the film. The coach emerged as an excellent source of perspective on the team, the league, and his own career. Justin van Loo was so important to the success of the team, but required so much work to get to the point where he was consistently contributing. His background was a big surprise to me when it came up in the interview process. He was the perfect symbol to have on the free throw line at the start of the film. The natural grit and leadership of Harvey Bradford was an easy contrast with Justin's physical gifts. The free throw fiasco was indicative of the mental commitment of the players that led the team and the culture in the locker room. It was also an excellent example of the psychological makeup of the

players that were so integral to the program. It was natural to compare the trajectories of Eric Casey and Pat Maloney.

### **Activity D- Goal Setting Session**

Read through the appendices that enhance this activity(**Appendices B, G, and H**), and take some time to review the videos and materials provided below. This following section is intended to help coaches set up a team goal setting session, and also help coaches prepare a format for the type and manner his/her specific team will set goals. Experienced coaches are encouraged to share exemplars of past documents and potentially reflect and update their current material. The videos provided are intended to be used as teaching points and inspiration during a goal setting session. These videos can be used in this coaching education setting, but also as visuals for their specific team's use. Coaches are encouraged to use other materials as well, and share personal inspirational stories amongst their group to encourage an appropriate team vision and set of actions to follow.

**Appendices B, G and H** are exemplars and materials previously used in goal setting situations in actual competitive coaching situations. Coach are encouraged to edit or borrow them to suit their needs.

#### **Activity:**

**Option A- 20-40 minutes:** After reviewing the material and and sharing thoughts with your group, it is now time to start building a document for your own personal use. The final product should be a document you could use with your team in a goal setting situation. You may also choose expand this document by including pieces that help shape team guidelines and/or share player perspective. **Appendices B, G, and H** allow for players to help shape and influence team guidelines and goals. The document you create should aim at being usable in a team retreat/classroom setting. The video links below are intended as motivational and informative pieces to show to your teams as you get ready to set goals both individually and collectively.

**Video 7:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxsdiusm1NQ>

**Video 8:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXEjevXrLSc>

**Video 9:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWoIYqNMJ9s>

**Option B-10-20 minutes-** Review the material in appendices **B, G, and H** and take a look at a couple of the video links provided. Engage in a classroom or group discussion on what and how would be an appropriate manner to document, formalize and support strong goals for a basketball team. This would be an appropriate time to create a personal list of the areas you would like your team to set goals in the upcoming season. You should finish this activity with some ideas and thoughts of how you will guide and support your team in their pre-season goal setting session.

### **Extras-Inspirational/Team Building Videos**

**Instructions-** The following video links are provided as extras for coaches to use at their discretion. They are intended to enhance team building activities and goal setting sessions,

but can definitely be used anytime throughout the year when adverse situations arise, or a little extra motivation is needed.

Video 10: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rdx9vkApc-o>

Video 11: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mtaqb\\_6BaRE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mtaqb_6BaRE)

Video 12: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kxSrPD\\_BA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kxSrPD_BA)

Video 13: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51umej5SvXc>

Video 14: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dg2wI4GoxOY>

### **Activity E-Final Reflection-Course and Instructor Evaluation- Team Culture**

**Instructions-** Please take a few minutes to provide some feedback, both on the instruction itself, and the course delivery and content. Please do not include your name. This feedback is confidential and intended to be constructive for future refinements and improvement.

1. **Were the team culture building activities beneficial? Please provide some specific examples of what you found beneficial or not.**
  
2. **Did the video links and visuals enhance the course experience? Why/why not? What were the best videos and why?**
  
3. **Reflect on *Activity C* (Culture Builder-iMovie-documentary clips/visual/questions). Was this activity beneficial and well structured? Provide some specific examples of what you enjoyed and any improvements you feel could be made. Topics of interest: length, value, engagement, clarity, etc...**
  
4. **Did the instructor provide strong commentary, perspective, anecdotes and structure so the course was interesting, beneficial and well organized?**
  
5. **Rate your experience from 1-10, and offer any other comments or suggestions you wish.**

**Appendix B- Pre-Season Team Building Document-Sample**

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**TEAM NAME Goals 20XX**

1. **Ultimate Team Goal-** What is possible if we stretch ourselves to the limit and play our best basketball as a unified group this season?  
*If every team member pushes themselves to the limit and plays their best basketball this season we can.....*
  
2. **Building Goals-** What other specific goals do we have as a team that will help build toward our ultimate team goal? (e.g.- tournament championships, make playoffs, league finish, etc.)
  
3. **Defensive Goal-** How many points per game should we aim to keep other teams below? What actions are we going to commit to make this happen?
  
4. **Possession Goal-** How many turnovers should we aspire to stay below each game? What actions are we going to commit to make this happen?
  
5. **Academic goal-** As a team, what academic standards should we aspire to maintain as a group this season? (e.g. - overall avg. team GPA, minimum GPA per player, attendance, etc.) What actions are we going to commit to make this happen?
  
6. **Free throw % Goal-** What % as a team should we aspire to make? What should we commit to work toward this goal? What actions are we going to commit to make this happen?
  
7. **Behavioral goals-** Are there any areas where we want to set a team goal in terms of our personal conduct as a group? (E.g.-pre-game conduct, being a good teammate, punctuality/attendance, community work, community involvement, etc.)

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**Team Member Information-TEAM NAME Basketball 20XX**

1. **Why do you put in all the work necessary to compete in competitive basketball?**
  
  2. **Why is winning important at our level of basketball?**
  
  3. **What areas in the game of basketball would you like to improve personally? (Can be mental/statistical/academic/effort/etc.)**
  
  4. **Individual goals- Set an individual goal (or goals) for yourself? (can be statistical/mental/academic/effort/long term) How will you know if you are working toward achieving this goal?**  
**Goal 1:**  
  
**Goal 2:**
  
  5. **What is your free throw PSR (Pre-shot Routine)? (provide your physical and mental routine e.g. cue words)**
  
  6. **How can your coaches support you in having a great finish to the year both individually and as a team?**
  
  7. **What values/beliefs/priorities do you think your coaches see/enforce as extremely important as a member of the TEAM NAME?**
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**Team Name 20XX-Team Building Activity**

**Instructions-** Complete *the following questions and be prepared to share your answers with your teammates. This activity is designed for you to share a little bit of yourself with your team. Only share information you are comfortable talking about. The information is intended to provide your team a glance into who you are and the road you took to this point in your life.*

- 1. Provide a brief history of your basketball career and some of your highlights/best moments. Include when you started playing and the teams and coaches you played for before joining this team.**
  
- 2. Write a short summary of your family history and cultural background. (e.g.- how many brothers and sisters do you have? What was your family like growing up? Where did you grow up? Who are the most important people in your life?)**
  
- 3. Share a couple examples of some challenging times in your life and how they have affected your life and the person you are today. Make a few notes, and we hope you are willing to share with your team.**
  
- 4. Who are the most inspirational people in your life and why?**
  
- 5. Who are your favorite athletes of all time?**
  
- 6. Who are your favorite artists? (musicians, actors, writers, poets, etc.)**
  
- 7. What are some strengths/positives you can bring to our team?**

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**The Banquet Exercise-TEAM NAME Basketball Retreat Assignment 20XX**

*Reflect-* Imagine that at the end of your grade 12 school year, you are selected as the top athlete at your school. This award was given to you because of the type of athlete/player you were on the court, but also because of the type of person you were within the school, amongst teammates, with coaches, and in the community. To honor you, there is going to be a special presentation at the athletics banquet. Many of your friends, teammates, family members and those closest to you are going to be in attendance. Some of your teammates and coaches are going to stand up and say a few words about you as an athlete, basketball player, and person.

*Assignment-* spend some time visualizing this moment, and then write down key points you would like the speakers to say about you that would make you feel that your career was successful, rewarding and worthwhile.

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## Appendix C

### Coaching Article

#### Building a Basketball Program

By James Gels, from the Coach's Clipboard Basketball Playbook, @ <http://www.coachesclipboard.net>

This article discusses some thoughts how to build a basketball program for your school and community. This is not the same as building a college program, which involves many other things not discussed here, such as recruiting, fund-raising, program promotion and others.

Before taking on that new head coaching position, ask yourself these questions:

- How will it impact my family?
- Will I have the support of the school's administration, faculty, and the community?
- Do I have a passion for the game?
- Do I have the energy, the desire, and good health to take this on?
- What will I get from doing this? How will this benefit me?
- What can I give to others by doing this?
- What are my priorities and goals? What's important?
- What is my coaching philosophy?

These questions are not meant to scare you away! We need dedicated coaches willing to help young people down the right path, while teaching the game of basketball. But these are things you should consider.

#### Taking over a program

First, make sure you have the support of administration. Hopefully, they feel that what you want to accomplish is important for the school and their students.

Taking over a successful program... perhaps the old, beloved coach just retired. You are the new guy or girl in town. You may feel more pressure to win in taking over this kind of a program.

You may feel more strapped into following a certain style of play... the style that has been successful here for the past number of years. I know of a nearby town that won the State Championship over 30 years ago, playing 2-3 zone defense. Well, the 2-3 zone has been played there every year since then, and I think if a new coach tried man-to-man defense, he'd be run out of town (not unlike the movie "Hoosiers").

Of course the advantage of taking over such a program is that much is already in place. Talent is there, community pride and support, and that winning attitude are already on board. Players know what it's like to work hard, and will work in the off-season.

Taking over a winless program... in this situation, usually there is less pressure to be immediately successful, and you can insist on being in charge of things. But the school and community must know that things do not improve in one season (usually), and that you need a time commitment of several years to bring the program along.

**Having a "system"**

Here we are talking about your basketball coaching philosophy. How do you want to play the game... fast tempo, full-court pressing, or more of a slowdown deliberate style. Or are you willing to completely change from year to year based on the talent you have?

Whatever is your style, you must have your own "system". Teach this system all the way through your program, including at the junior varsity and freshmen levels. But don't be overbearing. Allow your other coaches to put in some of their own plays too.

**Selecting coaches, assistants, creating your organization**

Hopefully your school's administration will allow you to have major input in selecting the junior varsity and freshmen coaches, and will allow you to select your own volunteer assistants.

A very large part of developing a successful basketball program is surrounding yourself with good people who share the same coaching philosophy, the same passion for the game, are knowledgeable, and above all, are loyal to you and want to help you succeed (see "The Assistant Coach"). You certainly don't want an assistant or a JV coach who tries to undermine you and your authority, in hopes of getting your job. Such a person should be gotten rid of immediately.

You are the leader of the program and must provide that leadership. Tell people what you want, what you expect, what type of basketball system should be taught to younger players, etc. But don't try to do it all yourself! You would be surprised how many people are willing to help you as volunteers.

Use your resources, involve others. You need assistants, managers, and statisticians. You will probably need a person who films games and will edit them for you. You need someone to run the clock and the scoreboard, and someone to do the scorebook. You need an announcer, and someone to organize the music at games. Who's going to sell the popcorn and pizza?

Get your middle school coaches on board and involved. Meet with them before the season starts and point out some things that you would like taught to the younger kids. But don't stifle their own coaching creativity. Part of the fun in coaching is putting in a few of your own plays and strategies. So don't be overbearing and take that away from them. In fact, be open to ideas and you might learn a trick or two from them.

There will be some knowledgeable parents who want to help. Oftentimes, they will be willing to help in coaching youth teams in your community. Meet with them and explain what you would

like the kids to learn. Put on a coaching clinic to help them. Don't worry about them teaching the wrong things... just getting the kids in the gym and playing is helpful. If you acknowledge these youth coaches as important to the success of the program, you will make them feel that they are a part of the team, and they will be less likely to become your critics instead.

**Developing talent and work ethic**

It starts with teaching fundamentals and having a good work ethic. In youth and middle school practices, probably 80% of practice time should be devoted to learning fundamentals. As kids get older, the percentages change a bit with more time spent on team skills. But even at the varsity level, we spend at least 50% of our practice time working on fundamentals. Planning practices is vital.

Each player (and coach) owes it to the others to practice and play as hard as he/she can. Players must be willing to work in the off-season. Players must develop the discipline to do every drill in every practice the right way, and to compete every day in practice. Of course this doesn't always happen... but it's a goal.

We start with little kids clinics, 2nd-4th graders (boys and girls). We run 90-minute sessions every Saturday morning for six weeks during the season, teaching fundamentals. A few of our varsity players come in and help. This is good for our varsity players to "give something back", help kids, and to be involved in building the future.

The young kids benefit from their instruction and example, and of course, there is the "hero-worship" thing too. Being around their heroes, they want to become basketball players. The campers all get to play at the halftime of a JV or varsity game, and this is fun for them, their parents, and the fans.

Summer camps, team camps, individual camps are all important. We encourage the kids to just get out in the driveway and practice outside when the weather is nice.

**Changing attitudes**

A team that loses a lot expects to lose. Winning teams expect to win. When taking over a program that has not been winning, attitudes have to change... and this can be a huge obstacle. Changing attitudes involves many things and takes time. Losing will no longer be "accepted", but something to learn from.

Players, parents, and the community must believe that with hard work, learning fundamentals, and good coaching, things can and will change. There must be a dedication to the cause, a belief in the "system", a commitment to the "team" (rather than the individual), and a singleness of purpose. Use motivational quotes if you find that helpful. Celebrate victories, large or small, team or personal. Impart a positive, upbeat approach. Be someone the kids like being around. Have fun. Make everything competitive... games, practices, drills, etc.

Develop pride in your system and your school. We call ours "Rayder Pride". There is pride in representing your school and community. We expect all players to exhibit sportsmanship, respect others, be of good character, and follow the rules. Kids make mistakes, but that's what we strive for.

Dressing up for games is important. We have our boys varsity players and our coaches wear our school sweater vest with logo, a white shirt and tie, and khaki slacks. It's an honor to wear that sweater vest. Players feel a sense of pride when they dress up for games.

Each player also gets his own shooting shirt with his number. I have been told by an opposing fan that we always look very "professional" when we walk into a gym. Our girls varsity teams also dress up with skirts and logo-ed polo shirts.

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Building a "legacy"... after you begin achieving some success and have a few winning seasons, you want to promote this from year to year and keep it going. We talk about developing our legacy... not just one or two good teams, but good teams year after year.

Former players will come back from time to time to watch a game, or to practice with us, or scrimmage against us. They are encouraging and helpful to our players, and help instill that sense of pride. Sometimes they give us a good laugh and tell stories about the time coach did this or that, etc.

### **Setting goals**

Set challenging goals for your program, your teams, and individual players. Then have a plan to accomplish each of these goals. These goals will depend on where you are with your program. Winning the state championship...maybe not. Winning the conference... maybe. Winning over 50% of your games this year, conference title next year... yes! Whatever they are, have something you are looking to achieve.

### **Communicate**

Rumors and suspicion oftentimes start because of poor communication. Let people know what you are thinking (in general, without a lot of specifics).

Communicate with your players as a group and one-on-one. The coach-player relationship is a vital aspect of your entire program. Players need to know that you care about them, not only as players, but as individuals. Maintain an "open door" policy. Before the season starts, meet with each player individually about goals, expectations, etc. Have occasional team meetings to discuss "issues". Ask players for their input.

Communicate with your coaches and assistants. Encourage them to offer their ideas, but not to be offended if you stay with your own thoughts. You don't want "yes men"... you want assistants

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who come up with ideas, but at the same time realize that what the boss says goes, and are willing to support you and accept your decisions.

Communicate with your school's administration and athletic director. Keep the faculty informed and gain their support. Ask them to inform you of players not attending class or not completing assignments. A motivational talk from you and a few extra sprints and lane slides, or some bench-time, can help revive a student's classroom attitude.

Get the student body involved by speaking at pep rallies and student assemblies. Let them know how important their support is to the success of the team... they are the "6th man". But reinforce the importance of good sportsmanship.

Keep the lines of communication open to parents. We have a parent meeting just before the start of every season, and a banquet at the end of the season. At the initial meeting, coaches are introduced, expectations, goals, policies, rules, etc are discussed. We explain that the only thing that is not "on the table" is discussing playing time, because parents can seldom ever be objective in this regard.

95% of parents are good people who care about their kids. Always respect that, and try to be on good terms, always showing concern and caring for their child, whether he/she is a great player or not. Unhappy parents can make you unhappy.

Keep the community informed. If you are asked to speak at a local service organization, do it. Don't ignore the media. Before or after a game, radio commentators often want an interview. Make yourself available. Keep all comments positive and upbeat, even after a loss. As you become more successful, television reporters may come knocking on your door. Do the interview. It's an opportunity to promote your program, school and community. If they want to interview a player with you, allow it. It's a good learning experience for the player on how to respond "on camera", and this interview may give him/her some exposure, especially if a college scholarship is a goal.

### **Maintain balance**

The late coach Al McGuire once said, "Don't let coaching become your mistress." In other words, maintain balance in your life and don't always choose basketball over your family, and everything else.

Also remember that at the high school and middle school levels, kids and parents may not be as fanatical, or "gung-ho", about basketball as you are. It's not like a college program where players must "love it" or hit the road. I have seen a young coach come on so strongly and intensely, that he frightened away several good athletes, and they opted to play other sports instead. Allow them to be kids and have balance in their own lives.

### **Dick Bennett's Advice For a Successful Program:**

- Surround yourself with good people.
  - Surround yourself with passionate people.
  - Surround yourself with people that believe in servanthood. The "Road To Greatness" says, "I have very little ability to finish anything on my own but if we get together, we can accomplish much."
  - Do not allow anyone to come in and break up the family unity. A TEAM must be protected and nurtured.
  - Think about whom you are and what you want to do and STAMP IT!!
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## Appendix D

### Don Horwood Interview- December 2015

#### 1. What defines success in team sport?

There really is no way to define success in a team sport because it depends on the level of the team, the age of the players and the definitions of success. First of all success at the pro level is more easily defined, winning is the primary goal. But even at that level there are still levels of success. Take this year's Eskimos and Oilers. The Oilers are definitely not successful but if you were to ask anyone if the Eskimos were successful despite losing the conference final most would agree that they had a successful season. Bears football is another example, they had not won a game in several years and this year they finished 3-5. They missed the playoffs but again most people would agree that they had a successful season. So the level of play and the specific circumstances of the individual team is the only way to determine successful. Another case in point would be your final year with the Bears. We lost the Final in overtime to St. Mary's and at the time we were very disappointed but on any level we had a very successful year. Of course for 10-11 years olds etc. success is an entirely different measure. At that level you want the kids to improve and learn how to play the game and have fun. That should be the only determinants at that level. *Problems arise when some parents have a different definition of success.*

Certainly by high school age players and coaches have a pretty good idea whether or not their season has been successful and it is especially important for the coach to realistically aid that process.

#### 2. Is winning important in competitive amateur basketball? Why?

As with the last question, the answer depends on the age and level that you are coaching. Younger players should not be overly concerned with winning as the primary outcome. However as players get older and move up the competitive ladder, I feel winning becomes more and more one measuring stick of success. Note I do not sat THE measuring stick but ONE measuring stick. For me by high school age winning should be a major measuring stick. Not winning at all costs but the pursuit of winning as a measure of excellence. I have never bought into the "just do the best you can" philosophy because it is so abstract and a player never has to be accountable. If they are not putting in enough effort, they can always say "I'm doing the best I can". Also striving to win is a motivator or can be and I always wanted my teams to strive to be the best. When winning is a goal the work required for success is easier to understand at the level of the player. Interestingly competitive players themselves realise when they need to work hard to accomplish a goal and will lose respect for a coach that doesn't demand maximum from all players. Some coaches are conflicted about the importance of winning or having winning as a goal and as a result will not make the demands on players that are needed for success. I believe that does a disservice to the team in that they are denied the opportunity for success. Winning is a worthwhile goal but at any level less than professional it should not be the only goal. Teaching discipline, striving for success, setting goals and not giving up despite setbacks and obstacles are all important lessons for amateur players. Coaches and players who are not driven to win will often sell themselves

short by accepting less than maximum effort. If winning is not important why try hard. Why keep working when it looks like you are going to lose anyway. Why try hard in practices. Why even have practices. Setting goals around winning can be a strong motivator and will help push teams to the level they may not achieve otherwise.

Many respected coaches have said that they never emphasise winning, but I believe they are deceiving themselves. One of the most famous is John Wooden. Anyone who has read anything about John Wooden, knows that winning was very important to him and his team. He may not have used the words but his actions and the way his teams competitive shown us otherwise. If winning wasn't important how come many of his bench players never got to play? The story of him not emphasizing winning is a nice try but it is far from true.

## **2. From a head coach perspective, what are your top criteria/priorities that you consider essential for success in competitive amateur basketball?**

Number one criteria for me has always be the attitude of the player. I have found that a player who is coachable, hardworking and committed can be counted on to compete at his best all the time. Whereas un-coachable players are a drain on the coaching staff and the rest of the team. Often, coaches will focus more time and energy on a disruptive player than they are worth even if they are very good. A coach needs to weigh very carefully the pros and cons of keeping such a player. It has been my experience that it usually works out to the detriment of all concerned. So attitude is number one.

Athletic ability is number two. A very good coachable athlete can be taught the skills and team play. Even if they aren't a great player at the beginning they can develop because of these traits.

Of course in basketball size is also a consideration. A tall player in first year high school should be given every opportunity because as the saying goes "you can't teach height". If the player is willing to work hard and is committed to improve then it is worth working with him even if he is not particularly good.

This addresses individual characteristics. There are a whole number of other considerations for team success once you have chosen the athletes. I'm not sure a short response can address these but I will mention top priorities.

**1. Common goal**-- players/teams need to have a common goal in order to pull together and work for its accomplishment. If there is a belief in a common goal and that it is attainable then it is much easier to get player to "buy" in. Without an attainable goal, then players can question more readily why they have to do some of the things that a coach might ask them to do. In order to accomplish worthwhile goals it will be necessary to work extremely hard. Competitive athletes understand this and are prepared to reach reasonable demands without complaining, (ok, without too much complaining).

**2. Systems** need to be adjusted to the personal unless of course you can recruit the players to fill the system. What you emphasize on offence will depend on your personal, what your strengths are. The same is true for defence. Your systems must compliment your personal. Many coaches make the mistake of try to run systems that their personal are poorly suited

for. An example would be a coach running a full court man press with a team of slow athletes. Obviously for such a team if you press at all it should be a zone press. Finally to answer this question with regard to the **coaches personality**. The coach must be committed and project that attitude so that players will feel and believe that the coach believes in them. There are many ways to coach and many successful coaches but usually at the upper levels it is not possible to fool players into believing in themselves if the coach does not genuinely believe in them. Passion and commitment from the coach will go a long way to giving the team its best chance for success. This is a tough question to answer because there are so many factors and many are essential. They are so intertwined that as circumstances change, so must coaching decisions. I hope this helps.

#### **4. What should high school coaches be doing to better prepare and develop players for the next level?**

Well the very first thing in my opinion is length of season. The basketball season is way too short. Start late November and go to the end of February if you don't make playoffs. And in that time you have Christmas break and exam break in late January. How much actual practice time is there? There just isn't enough time to teach the skills and have the kids practice them. When you have 12 year old gymnasts and swimmers working 2-3 hours a day on their sport how can basketball players develop with the very small amount of time in a high school season. And don't even get me started on junior high. Any athlete at international level in any sport is practicing much longer than Canadian basketball players especially if they rely on the high school system for their training. Can you imagine a hockey player in Canada only playing for about 2 1/2 months and being told they can't start practicing until the end of November. And Canada is the best hockey playing in the world--arguably! Much more time must be spent teaching individual skills. How many high school coaches spend most of the time working on individual skills. With the short season and all the systems they need to teach there just isn't enough time to teach and practice individual skills. Also coaches don't make enough demands on their players. I believe they need to understand better conditioning and demand that players work harder in practice. Coaches often let players get away with less than maximum effort and that is doing a disservice to them from the point of view of getting them to understand what is possible with maximum effort. Allowing players to be late for practice and go through the motions teaches them that lack of effort is not important.

#### **5. In your time coaching CCAA/CIS in Alberta, what were your observations of the overall quality of coaching high school athletes were receiving in basketball?**

I think the quality of coaching is as good as anywhere in the country now. I felt in the 1980's when I first came to Alberta that BC coaching was better. I don't believe that is so now. A lot of good dedicated coaches have come into the coaching ranks over the past 15-20 years. As I have stated before, I believe the biggest drawback is the short playing season and thus lack of time to spend on fundamentals. I do believe that the club teams in the spring help address this issue but most of those teams probably spend most of their practice time on team systems. The key time for fundamentals is when kids are 10-13 years of age but unfortunately most of

those kids are taught by parents who often have little or no background in the fundamentals of the game.

**6. What would be the key differences in the experience of an athlete who plays for a successful program vs. an athlete who plays for an unsuccessful program? Does one athlete gain more from their experience?**

This is a great question and I am not sure that I can answer it. As you know each player's experience is different. Usually players want to win and playing for a successful program should enhance their experience especially while they are playing but that is not always the case. A bench warmer on a successful team may not feel that his experience was very good, whereas the star on the losing team may have loved his experience. However, teams that have won championships often have reunions but rarely do unsuccessful teams. That is because there is a shared accomplishment with a focal point. Our 1994 team has had several reunions but no other team has done that. Even the 2002 team did not celebrate the 10 year reunion. There are always many reasons but the 2002 team was superb athletically but they did not seem to share much off the court and that is probably why they don't celebrate that success. You played on successful teams throughout your whole career and you have been involved with the game pretty well ever since your playing days ended. So clearly your success has motivated you to stay involved. Would that be the same for a person who played on unsuccessful teams? It is hard to say and certainly individual character traits would play a role. I believe that players on teams that have some degree of success do have a more enjoyable experience just because it is more enjoyable to win rather than lose!!

**7. What are your top criteria you look at when recruiting athletes?**

I believe that I touched on this in an earlier question.

**1. Attitude**, I really tried to stay away from players with bad attitude. Sometimes I made a mistake and tried to correct it and sometime I lived with the mistake which was also a mistake. In my 41 years of coaching I had very few players with what I call a bad attitude. In every case where I did not deal with it immediately it cost the team in many ways. One of which I deal with in #5 above. A player with a bad attitude can make the experience very unenjoyable for everyone else on the team. In my experience, I have cut most players with a bad attitude but some players slowly develop that attitude over a number of years and you often want to give them the benefit of the doubt. In cases where I have not cut that player it always ended badly and I have always felt that I made a bad decision. I often made the decision for good reasons but it still ended up hurting his teammates and the success of the team. I know you know some of those examples but there were others throughout my career that I am not happy about. Sometimes you keep a player to try to help him and maybe that works once in a while but it wasn't my experience. So ATTITUDE is huge.

**2. Athletic ability**, if a player has good athletic ability and a good attitude you can usually teach him the skills so that he can be successful. That is less so at University (skills and habits are often too ingrained to change) but definitely so at high school level. Even though it is less so a University level you have 5 years to help him so it is usually worth the risk. If he has a good attitude and is willing to learn.

**3. Size**, you can't teach height. In basketball you will often take a big guy even though he is not skilled because in 5 years you would hope that he would develop into a good player. That is often the case in Canada because there are so few big guys that most high school coaches don't spend a lot of time ( see previous rant) working on post fundamentals so a big guy usually comes out of high school with very limited skills. As you have seen some of those workout and some don't but you still have to take a chance because you can never be sure.

**4. Position**, at the college or University level you will often recruit by position. For instance, you will not have ten 5'11" guys just because they are the ten best players. You will need a mixture of posts, forwards and guards. At higher levels you recruit for position as well as for the other reasons stated above.

## Appendix E

### Spouse Interviews

#### **1. What were the biggest impacts (both positive and negative) your partner's involvement in competitive coaching had on your family?**

##### **Sandra Sir-Wife of Paul Sir-Basketball Alberta/Concordia University College**

The biggest positive was the collaborative effect we experienced with both of us being coaches and educators. We could combine teaching concepts, and sports needs, translate it all into great breakdown drills to come up with some really good learning sequences and concepts regarding coaching kids. The negatives would be the preoccupation with the planning, preparation, recruiting, scouting, etc. that goes with coaching. The time commitment throughout the season can be a strain. Taking preseason, season and post-season activities into account it can be a year round activity. Being sensitive to the coaches' need to do a good job without compromise means they need to be focused on their goals year round.

##### **Cynthia Pottinger- wife of Clayton Pottinger-Red Deer College/University of Alberta/Douglas College**

The impact of my husband's coaching on our family has been of a positive and negative nature.

Positively speaking, we have **met some amazing people** (athletes, coaches etc.) and their families over the years and they have in turn become a part of our extended family. They have bonded with our children, make a point of staying in touch and sometimes seek advice/references long after leaving coach's program. We have been devoted to being a positive impact in their lives and that is awesome responsibility hold!

The negative impact is on **Family Time**. With the demands of coaching at such a competitive level it makes next to near impossible to set uninterrupted, mentally and emotionally undivided time aside for quality time with wifey and with children. Even when coach is home he is rarely really "home". Coaches receive calls at all hours, texts, and emails, from other coaches, regulators, officials, admin staff, conveyors, athletes (their parents and family), and recruits; he even has training, recruiting, and PD to further occupy his time in the off season.

##### **Colleen Dunkley-wife of Ryan Dunkley- University of Alberta/Grant MacEwan University/M.E.LaZerte High School**

I found there to be many positive aspects when Ryan was coaching. I would definitely say I felt a high level of pride as his wife to see him become a successful coach. It was very rewarding for me to get to watch him chase his dream and do so with integrity and success. We shared a common goal because I wanted equally for his team to win; I too was investing a lot of time and making personal sacrifices.

A coach's family is provided unique opportunities and I really found that to be beneficial for our kids. They got to experience trips, hours of playtime in a gym and met so many young athletes who often took an interest in them. An undeniable benefit of coaching in the number of great friendships and relationships that are made, and this was true for every member of our family.

Our children only know their dad as a coach which has been a tremendous, affirmative life-lesson for our kids. They get to see firsthand that he is a leader and that he has a passion he shares with others.

A significant negative impact that I watched coaching have was the level of stress it brought to Ryan's life. During the games portion of a season, he was distracted at all times...and I assumed it was because he was mentally planning, preparing, strategizing, etc. I wished he could turn off his coach's brain and relinquish those responsibilities once he was home – but I quickly realized that competitive coaching was all-consuming. I also believe it had an actual physical toll on his health, which made me worried that the stress level was too high and if he could sustain that type of commitment.

### **Jill Horwood- Wife of Don Horwood University of Alberta**

As long as I have known Don, he wanted to coach basketball. Three years after we were married he returned to University – in Edmonton - in order to obtain a Master's Degree in Sports Psychology. We rented our delightful seventy years old home in Victoria, BC, - the house in which Pierre Berton had grown up and of course, the whole family began a new adventure in Edmonton, Alberta. Chris, our oldest son was three years old and Kelly was one. That year we lived in married student housing and slept in sleeping bags on the floor. The only one who had a familiar, cosy bed was our youngest, Kelly, who slept in his crib, the only piece of furniture we brought with us. Don enjoyed his year assisting the Head Coach, learned a lot and looked forward to being a coach himself one day. I happily took care of the children.

One afternoon, four years later and we were still living in Victoria, in another potentially beautiful seventy year old home, a stone's throw from the Pacific Ocean. We were in the middle of renovating our new - old - house ourselves - and a former student of Don's was in the midst of building beautiful kitchen cabinets for us. We were quite excited. The phone rang...

...and I still remember the telephone conversation - or as much of it that I could ascertain. Don answered the phone and all I heard was, "Really... really... really". When he hung up he told me that the University of Alberta wanted him to accept the job as Head Coach of the Golden Bear Basketball Team. This was Don's best dream coming true! We were both thrilled!

The next day Don flew to Edmonton where he was officially hired as the head Basketball Coach of the University of Alberta Men's Basketball Team. The next day we solicited a realtor, a For Sale sign was sitting on the centre of our front lawn and we were sorting things we would take and those we would leave. We left behind the kind of good friends that a mother makes in a neighbourhood, the friends who know each other well, who walk together with friends who are also walking with their four year olds and possibly pushing their younger children or infants in strollers. We left behind a beautiful house - in the midst of its renovation. I left behind an exciting part-time teaching offer in a prestigious boy's private school.

For Don it was a dream come true... and it was a special time for me too - I had encouraged him in every way and was happy for him. Together we anticipated good times ahead. I accepted the terrors of the first week, that is, not knowing anybody, the huge snowfall during the first week of September, our new house with a decrepit basement – really decrepit – that is, unfinished, leaking, dark, horrible . In that dreadful basement I found a package of cocaine – we presumed it was cocaine - all rolled up in a piece of paper. Don called the police and they came over and identified it and took it away with them. For a while, it left an uncomfortable feeling in the

house. I accepted Don's hours - two days a week practicing in the late afternoon (4pm until 6pm) and two hours a week practicing in the evening (6pm until 8 pm).

I accepted game nights and the anxiety attached to them, and I accepted that Don would be out of town every second weekend playing in out of town gyms.

As we settled into our new house the best thing that could have happened, did happen. Edmonton is a friendly city! Edmontonians are energetic, positive, involved and they look out for each other. Perhaps the climate has instilled the practice of caring for each other. I really don't remember feeling sorry for myself and for all the things I had left behind. People were friendly and outgoing from the beginning.

## **2. What were the biggest relationship challenges being married to a competitive coach?**

### **Sandra Sir-Wife of Paul Sir Basketball Alberta/College Coach**

The spouse of a coach has to be very independent, have personal interests and social connections beyond the coach/spouse. Having children in preschool or school years means the spouse needs to provide the evening and weekend needs when the coach is busy or away. The demands of parenting can be hard to accept while coach is investing time with what seems to become a quasi-family of players and assistants. He or she has to be a major supporter of the team and the individuals on the team. Often, issues and concerns with individual players have to be discussed. Being empathetic and understanding of the details in the players lives is necessary to offer helpful input if issues arise. Providing a supportive, adult voice for the players is helpful. Hosting players in the home and extending help to those who need it seems to go with the role of spouse, so getting to know the players is a bonus. Enjoying their connection to you and understanding their development throughout their time on the team is a positive.

### **Cynthia Pottinger- wife of Clayton Pottinger-Red Deer College**

The biggest challenges being married to a competitive coach are: staying grounded personally, staying connected as partners, and seeing the big picture.

Often, I have lost track of my own life and goals while tending to the coach and his goals because our entire life is engulfed by this thing called coaching. We have moved several times, uprooted our family, relocated to cities with zero connections outside of the program and therefore my own career has been sacrificed for this greater good.

Maintaining a *life after coaching, life after this season* attitude has helped me keep focused for everyone.

### **Colleen Dunkley-wife of Ryan Dunkley- University of Alberta/Grant MacEwan University/M.E.LaZerte High School**

When Ryan was at the height of competitive coaching, our family was very young so I was alone with our children a lot. I often found that very hard. His schedule meant so much time away from the family - weekend evenings were basketball games for 4 months of a year. A Friday night grew to have different meaning and rather than being a night to relax and stay in, he was often rushing to leave the house, distracted or out of town. Many of those Friday and Saturday nights I wanted to be spending time with my husband, but couldn't.

Ryan's coaching commitment had to be first priority in terms of scheduled events therefore it was difficult to do things that were important to me without really planning ahead or asking someone outside our immediate family for help. There were many times when I felt on the bottom of Ryan's list of priorities – hopefully because he knew I was cognizant of the fact that the team schedule was highly fixed so my personal pursuits – work, exercise, leisure – were flexible. Securing babysitting and child care, etc. was my sole responsibility and it was a lot to balance for one person.

I have learned that Ryan's true calling in life is likely to be a coach on some level – so despite the stress and sacrifices it involves, I would always encourage and support him to coach.

### **Jill Horwood- Wife of Don Horwood University of Alberta**

Don was always good at leaving his coaching job at the University, that is, when he came home he was actively there with our boys and he was good at helping out at home. Saying that, he was at Golden Bear night practice twice a week and coaching every weekend, Friday and Saturday nights... so that was still four nights away. Those are the times that the boys needed to be driven to or from some sort of practice or night game and helped with homework - and when they were younger, put to bed, etc. I just did it . We also had lots of friends and between all of us we shared the coming and the going to night practices or games. I think that because I knew that Don would help whenever he could it made me happy to do what I could.

Later on, when each of the boys had one or two basketball games on a Saturday and perhaps two hockey games on a weekend and Don was out of town, many people helped me out and by the same token I was always happy to help others out. ... I helped all day Saturdays, just as other parents did – we all helped each other. (That is a great thing about Edmonton... people really do help each other out!)

A bonus because of sharing driving, etc. is that you get to know the other kids, you get to have fun with them and to simply enjoy yourself. I met the nicest parents in cold hockey arenas and sitting on long gymnasium benches. (Of course, you get to meet the worst hockey or basketball parents too and if possible you try to not get too chummy with them.)

### **3. What advice would you pass on to other coaches' families, couples?**

#### **Sandra Sir-Wife of Paul Sir Basketball Alberta/College Coach**

The time commitment coaching demands requires partners give up a substantial part of coaches' time. Having a strong sense of independence is needed, a good sense of personal investment in the coaches' support and enjoying following the team are the three ways I'd suggest.

Communicating clearly with the season schedule and additional commitments was helpful. Being supportive worked best when the coach understands that limits need to be self-imposed. A recipe for disaster exists when there is no intrinsic control on the part of the coach and everything becomes a must-do. The coach him/herself has to realize the point of overdoing it and simply comply with agreed-upon limits with time.

#### **Cynthia Pottinger- wife of Clayton Pottinger-Red Deer College**

To assist with the above statement; it is important to have a **good support system** (lots of friends and family to assist with the day to day hustle and give mom a break from time to time).

Make it a priority to **connect with your coach partner** when there is a bi/weekend off (the long stretches of disconnection are very trying).

Stay on top of the coach's **calendar** and the family calendar so that you know what to expect, you can plan accordingly and avoid getting overwhelmed when schedules change from week to week.

Finally, the BEST advice I can give another coaches partner is to **give your spouse SPACE**, mental space, physical space, emotional space, during the season; especially after a major loss or team hiccup. They need to think, to plan, to think some more. Learn not to take that internal work that they do in silence personally...they just need to do what they do: figure out how to win!

**Colleen Dunkley-wife of Ryan Dunkley- University of Alberta/Grant MacEwan University/M.E.LaZerte High School**

I think it is difficult to provide advice because the situation for all families can be different.

Communicating well is important so that the needs of both people can be met, knowing that the partner of the coach needs to accommodate the team schedule.

Something I think we should have instilled or tried was to arrange a day or window of time every week where the coach cannot be contacted by his players. Otherwise the role of the coach is all consuming with no down time. For me, I felt that the players' needs were getting increasingly higher so establishing some boundaries would better safeguard the health of the coach's family if the coach can set aside his responsibilities for a brief, but scheduled period of time.

One thing I wish I had focused on more was to really enjoy the experience and focus on all the positives. It doesn't last forever!!

**Jill Horwood- Wife of Don Horwood University of Alberta**

Two working parents, especially with one of them working all week and every second weekend out of town requires a lot on the part of the parent at home. I was always tired on Saturdays too – BUT – so were lots of other parents. I actually loved Saturday mornings... in various arenas we bought each other coffees, we shared chocolate bars, we laughed, I didn't yell – but many of the parents did yell... it was all a good time. They had nice kids – I knew most of them because when they weren't playing hockey they were playing Community League basketball, or they were in each other's basements playing whatever the attraction might have been at that friend's home. Through our boys we got to meet their parents and so it was a social gathering in the various community skating rinks or community leagues for the parents too.

## Appendix F

### Sample Team Guidelines

#### TEAM NAME Basketball Team Guidelines

Welcome to the Team Name Basketball program. This is a program that expects excellence. You will learn many things from your time in our program, such as the value of hard work and commitment, goal setting, teamwork, loyalty, dealing with failure and success, being the best you can be, and many other life skills that will make you be a better person and athlete. As a member of this team you are expected to strive to be your best.

*“Winning is not a sometime thing; it’s an all the time thing. You don’t win once in a while, you don’t do things right once in a while, you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.”*

- Vince Lombardi

*The following guidelines are intended to help you through the season and also help you understand what is expected to be a member of this team.*

#### Punctuality and Practice

1. All players ***must be at all practices and games on time***. If a player will be away from a practice/game due to illness or other serious situations, he must communicate with Coach PRIOR to the commitment. (555-1234)

- Players must be in the gym **1 hour before all games**. The team will meet 45 minutes before scheduled home game times. Any player who is late for this meeting will not play in that game and must sit in the stands.

- Players must be changed and on the practice floor when practice starts.

- Players will sit out a minimum of one half for being late for a practice, unless it is pre-arranged with the Coach.(e.g.- class conflict).

- All players must attend their scheduled workout times with their assigned groups. Missing a workout will result in a game suspension. If you have to miss a workout, you need to let your coach know **ahead of time** and arrange a time to make it up.

***“You can’t fool people on game day; your preparation will be obvious in your performance”***

#### Personal Conduct

1. You are a representative of your school, teammates, family, and coaches. Take pride in that, and make decisions with that in mind. ***“Discipline yourself so others don’t have to discipline you”***

2. Players are expected to follow all CCAA rules for illegal substances/performance enhancing drugs/medication. Ask questions if you are not sure. Players are subject to team discipline even if they are not tested. Excessive use of alcohol or the use of illegal drugs, will result in suspension from the team.

3. Player discipline issues will be handled by the coaching staff, and player/team appropriate consequences will be determined as the situation warrants, with fairness to all parties as the major criteria.

4. Be a good team member. Talk positively about your teammates and coaches. We all need to pull in the same direction and “buy in” so we can maximize our potential.
5. Treat your teammates with respect and dignity. Put downs (even in fun) can have an overall negative effect on the team. Players also should not partake in negative talk behind teammates/coaches backs. We are all working toward the same goal. Work together and communicate maturely! If a player is not pulling his weight, talk to him directly or bring your concerns to coaches or captains.
6. Leave the high school jacket at home. You are a college athlete. Most athletes in this institution were stars at some point in their playing careers. Promote our program.
7. Be loyal to your coaches and teammates. You will only be at this institution for a short period of your life, but your reputation and relationships will last much longer.
8. Be responsible with technology. (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) What you think is private and appropriate online, may not be the case. Everything you post on the internet is PUBLIC. Be careful!

***“Be more interested in character than reputation”***

### **Playing Time**

1. Court time is earned through performance in practice and games. Each player must realize that he is an important part of a team. This means that, at times, there will be individual needs not met, because the team takes priority over the individual.
2. Players can see the coach and receive honest feedback if they are concerned about their playing time. If players are not comfortable approaching one of the coaches, he needs to see a captain, who will bring his concerns to the coaches.
3. Every player, on every team I have ever coached, has played an important role in a win during each season. All players are extremely valuable. Play hard for your team, and practice even harder to make your teammates better. We need to play against game quality defense all the time. TEAM!

### **Education**

***“Basketball ends, your education doesn’t”***

1. The reason you are at MacEwan is to obtain an education. Don’t waste the opportunity. Players will miss classes due to basketball. **Do not use basketball as an excuse!** It is your responsibility to your teammates/coaches, school, and self, to be a good student. Players who are struggling are expected to notify coaches, so help can be arranged. Seek help before the problem gets too big to manage. There are many supports/tutors that students have access to. Be honest with yourself and your team. ***It is mandatory to be a STUDENT ATHLETE, if you are on this team.***
2. Players must earn a minimum of **9 credits per semester** to be eligible to play. You must also have at least a **2.0 GPA to receive any scholarship money and above a 1.7 GPA to remain eligible to play.**
3. Get to know your teachers. Introduce yourself and create a positive relationship. You may need a favour one day.
4. Use your spare time wisely. Don’t let stuff pile up.
5. Treat all staff at our school and others with respect. It looks bad on the program when athletes are not good students and school citizens. When you are part of a recognizable group, one player’s actions affect more than just the individual.

6. Enjoy your time in college. There are lots of great people here. Treat them with respect and kindness, and they will probably support our team more.

### **On the Road**

1. All athletes are expected to strictly follow any curfews set in place by coaches. A missed curfew will result in a suspension from games.
2. Athletes are responsible for any extra charges in their hotel room.
3. Athletes must sleep in their assigned rooms and are responsible for their behavior at all times. Make sure the room is in condition where it can be easily cleaned when we check out. We want to be welcomed back.
4. Only members of the team are allowed in team hotel rooms.

### **Dress Code**

1. Any player who is not dressed for a game must at least be dressed in a collared shirt and dress pants on the bench (no jeans). Any player or staff who does not meet the dress code will not be allowed to sit on the bench.
2. All players who are in the stands prior to our home games should be dressed appropriately. This means a nice shirt and pants, or in team gear. If you are not dressed in an acceptable manner, you must go directly to the locker room upon arrival at the game.

### **Team Room/Gear**

1. The Men's basketball team room is a privilege for student athletes, treat it as so. Players are expected to keep it tidy and presentable. The team will receive two official warnings if the team room is not being kept in good order, and failure to maintain the team room after the 2 warnings, will result in a suspension of privileges. This means that the team will use the public locker room for a period of time.
2. Each team member is responsible for the security of the room. Lock the door when you are not in there, and always return and lock the locker that stores the key.
3. Uniforms and all team gear is to be treated with respect. It should be maintained and hung nicely, not just thrown anywhere.
4. All team uniforms and team equipment is property of the college and must be **returned at the end of the year**. This includes uniforms, basketballs, equipment, and anything else that is the property of the college or program.
5. Prior to the games, the team room is a quiet area for guys to focus. If you want to be talking, warming up, etc., please do so outside of the team room.
6. Player cell phones are to be turned **off** 45 minutes prior to games.

### **Basketball**

**“Strength lies in our differences, not our similarities”**

1. Take the time to enjoy your teammates and the great sport of basketball. A very small percentage of society gets to experience competitive athletics. It is a fantastic experience! It is worth all the work.
2. Each player is expected to **shoot a minimum of 100 free throws on his own time each week**. It is your responsibility to budget your time and fulfill your commitment to the team. If

you shoot below the team goal on a weekend of games, you must shoot double the following week. (200)

3. Players are also expected to attend and push themselves at all workout/weight room sessions. These workouts are NOT for you to pick and choose what exercises you want to do. Do the assigned workout. If you have an injury that needs to be taken into account, see your coach/trainer.
4. Spend time on your own, working on your weaknesses, and refining what you do well. Play/train as hard as you can all the time, and expect the same of your teammates
5. Accept criticism. Coaches have the best interests of the team and each team member in mind. Coaches want the best out of every single player. It is never personal. Keep your head up and don't sulk.
6. Build your confidence by developing your skills to a point where they are second nature and "automatic". REPETITION! REPETITION! REPETITION!
7. Team success is #1. Let's chase our goals with everything we have! Very few people get to call themselves a national champion.

### Quotes

**"The minute you start talking about what you are going to do if you lose, you have lost." - William A. Ward**

**"Show me a guy that is afraid to look bad, and I'll show you a guy you can beat every time" -Lou Brock**

**"If you chase two rabbits, both will escape"- Anonymous**

**"A ship in the harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are built for"-Anonymous**

**"Obstacles, like fears, are often just illusions" -M. Jordan**

**"Difficult takes a day, impossible takes a week"- S.Carter**

**"Pain is an invitation to the next level"- H. Rollins**

**Appendix G** Red Deer College Sample Retreat Document



**KBB TEAM RETREAT 2013**  
**Edmonton, Alberta**

- 4:00pm Task #1 Groceries
- 5:00pm-6:00pm Meetings start.... Bring a Pen, Drinks, and Snacks

**AGENDA**

**Team Rules Expectations**

Lates?

---

---

Attire at games and practice?

---

---

Water bottles

---

---

Conduct on Bench and in the bleachers

---

---

Conduct in general (alcohol, drugs, etc)

---

---

Techs

---

---

Anything Else?

---

---



## Goals and Goal Setting

### 1. Academic goals

JC requires 2.0

Nobody fails out??

Team Cumulative GPA of \_\_\_\_\_??

### 2. Basketball Goals

**OUR MISSION THIS SEASON IS TO:**

---

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---

---

### 3. Game Goals (outcome based)

#### Defense

“Invincibility lies in the ~~defence~~ the possibility of victory in the Attack.”  
Sun Tzu

Points against

---

---

---

Rebounding

---

---

---

OTHERS?

---

---

Mistake Free



---

---

### Offence

'There is nothing that a good defense cannot beat a better offence.' In other words a good offence wins."

Bobby Knight

FT line

---

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---

Fast Break Points

---

---

---

FT and Shooting Percentage

---

---

---

Turnovers

---

---

---

Other??

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#### 4. Practice Goals

---

"Practice means to perform, over and over again in the face of all obstacles, some act of vision, of faith, of desire. Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired."  
Martha Graham

Intensity

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Lines

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---

---

Attitude

---

---

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Russian 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Mistake Free D \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER?

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-----Break @ 6:00. Depart For game @ 6:30-----

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-----Continental Breakfast @ 8am Sharp-----  
-----Meetings Resume at 9am-----

**ROLES**

**5. Roles explained/Who's who???**

**6. Primary Role** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Secondary Role** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADOPT-A-Player**

**8. funding goals**

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**9. Arizona**

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## Appendix H

### Canada Basketball CP Mental Training Document

Mental Training Document



Every team is made of individuals. The strength of the team comes from how focused and committed its members are. A part of your role on this team is to be committed to making yourself a more valuable member. You must develop goals and be committed to achieve those goals. The following work sheet will help you to set and attain your goals.

Be **"SMART"** when setting your goals. Set goals that are:

**S = Specific:** set goals that are precise. Do not set a goal to win rather set goals that focus on the process to win. An example of a specific goal would be to remain in a defensive stance the entire 30 seconds of a defensive possession.

**M = Measurable:** understand how you are going to evaluate your goals. Apply percentages to each task and focus on improving each percentage.

**A = Accountable:** make your goals your own. Make a commitment to doing your best and share your feelings with others. Remember to always write your goals down.

**R = Realistic:** set goals that you have to work extremely hard to master but are not impossible.

**T = Timely:** set specific time limits. How much time are you going to dedicate to your goal [daily-weekly], and how long will it take you to accomplish it.

*BE COMMITTED,  
GO AFTER YOUR GOALS.*



*"Those who have invested the most are the last to surrender."*

## Mental Training Document

*Sample Goals List***General**

1. To maintain an excellent self-image as an athlete.
2. To maintain an excellent self-image as a person.
3. To fully understand all the rules of the game.
4. To fully understand game strategy.
5. To be resourceful and creative.
6. To learn quickly and totally.
7. To enjoy the role of a leader.
8. To be able to stand up for my beliefs.
9. To adjust in a positive way to changes: e.g., climate, altitude, jet lab, playing away from home, sudden changes in planes, locations, etc.
10. To truly enjoy all the aspects of my sport.
11. To be adept at reading the opposition's moves.
12. To know and understand the use and maintenance of my sports equipment.

**Mental**

1. To have complete self-confidence in myself.
2. To have excellent concentration.
3. To be able to relax at any time.
4. To be self-motivating.
5. To fully accept coaching and teaching from my coaches.
6. To be able to accept constructive criticism.
7. To be able to handle unfair criticism in a positive way.
8. To not be intimidated by anyone on the court.
9. To enjoy playing at "away" games.
10. To be able to effectively deal with the press.
11. To be able to handle negative and harsh press.
12. To be able to adapt to any situation.
13. To be in complete control of my emotions at all times.
14. To be able to effectively deal with poor or questionable officiating.
15. To have an excellent memory.
16. To always exhibit excellent determination.
17. To accept responsibility for my mistakes and my successes on the court.
18. To never be affected negatively by bad calls, bad breaks or mistakes.
19. To be able to play through the bad breaks, calls, etc.
20. To be mentally tough at all times.
21. To develop and strengthen my decision-making skills.
22. To never allow myself to be "psyched-out."

**CANADA***"Those who have invested the most are the last to surrender."*

## Mental Training Document

Goals List Cont.**Team**

1. To have excellent rapport with my teammates and coaches, trainers, etc.
2. To help build and share in an excellent team self-image.
3. To always give praise and always encourage my teammates.
4. To be able to accept the authority of coaches, captains, etc.
5. To be a team player at all times.
6. To put personal ambitions in a second position to that of the team.
7. To trust my teammates and coaches completely.
8. To have a tremendous amount of pride in my team.
9. To be a catalyst for team unity and loyalty.

**Ability**

1. To master the techniques of my sport, e.g., shooting, dribbling, passing, rebounding, defense, etc.
2. To improve my shooting average this year by \_\_\_\_\_ percent.
3. To improve my defense in these areas: \_\_\_\_\_
4. To improve my offense in these areas: \_\_\_\_\_
5. To set and achieve, and maintain my high athletic goals.
6. To be more aggressive in my play.
7. To improve my quickness and reaction on the court.
8. To be consistent in all phases of the game.
9. To work hard in the off-season to improve all areas of my game.

**Conditioning**

1. To fully enjoy practice, conditioning and drill work.
2. To give maximum effort (110%) at all times.
3. To have excellent stamina.
4. To recover quickly from injury through rehabilitation.
5. To keep a positive attitude at all times during periods of injury.
6. To be able to control the threshold of pain.
7. To be able to speed up recovery time after an injury.
8. To practice mentally and physically every new drill until it's perfect.

**Personal**

1. To always conduct myself in a Christian manner with high levels of moral integrity and ethical behavior.
2. To have excellent relationships with the members of my family.
3. To have a healthy self-esteem.

**CANADA**

*"Those who have invested the most are the last to surrender."*

Mental Training Document



APPENDIX 2.1 GUIDELINES TO COMPLETING YOUR GOALSET SHEETS	
<p>1. Your <b>MISSION STATEMENT</b> should embrace your overall goal(s). It may be made up of multiple <b>GOALS</b>... means for helping you accomplish your mission statement and keep you motivated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine closely what you need to change.</li> <li>• Do not be constrained - listen to your feelings.</li> <li>• Be creative, and dream about what you can achieve.</li> <li>• Focus on <b>GOALS</b> that are relatively difficult versus easy.</li> <li>• Map out the direction you want to take and draw upon all your experience in reaching your destination.</li> <li>• Specify how you will measure and monitor your goals.</li> </ul> <p><i>Discover what you want - this can be a revelation in itself!</i></p>	<p>2. <b>PERFORMANCE</b> - Consider all factors that can affect performance, state your performance goals for each competitive event.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge yourself but be realistic.</li> <li>• State your performance goals very specifically, while at the same time allowing a window frame for success.</li> <li>• Remember it is often the performance process that is important and not always the performance outcome.</li> <li>• Daydreaming is useful only if it inspires <b>ACTION</b>.</li> <li>• Don't settle for less than you are capable of achieving.</li> <li>• Identify clearly what you want and what you need to do in <b>TRAINING</b> to get what you want in <b>COMPETITION</b>.</li> </ul> <p><i>Focus on all the possibilities that lie within you.</i></p>
<p>3. <b>SKILL</b> - Focus on key technical points related to your stroke(s) and be prepared to use your technical strengths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Probe your needs technically and commit yourself to improving your skills at every opportunity.</li> <li>• Consider details related to starts, turns and takeovers.</li> <li>• Establish <b>CUE WORDS</b> to remind you of what to do.</li> <li>• Build in self-recognition and self-reward as you practice and improve your skills.</li> <li>• Monitor all progress and congratulate yourself when you feel you are improving your skills.</li> </ul> <p><i>Water your seeds and not your weeds!</i></p>	<p>4. <b>ATTITUDES</b> are habits of thought - habits that will make or break you as an athlete. Tease out the important ones for you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think positively to help your performance.</li> <li>• Remove all disabling attitudes.</li> <li>• Developing the right attitude means thinking positively to produce the ideal training and competition state.</li> <li>• Aim to both energize (stimulate the flow of positive energy) and control attitudes (control the flow of energy in a positive direction).</li> </ul> <p><i>Aim to craft reality with thought and thoughts into reality.</i></p>
<p>5. <b>Goals can direct your BEHAVIOR.</b> Behavior goals reflect your attitudes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider no more than two critical behaviors that require change.</li> <li>• Focus in on the present - the here and now.</li> <li>• Examine the precautions you need to take to safeguard your performance.</li> <li>• Once you have made a <b>COMMITMENT</b> to change, do not build in any excuses.</li> </ul> <p><i>Control and overcome those parts of yourself that can sabotage your intentions.</i></p>	<p>6. <b>STRATEGIES</b> are important and provided they are well rehearsed, they will help you to focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <b>CUE WORDS</b> to help you focus on the task.</li> <li>• Think - under the circumstances - what is the best way</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always allow for a little creativity and improvisation.</li> <li>• Use a <b>STRATEGY SHEET</b> to develop the race details.</li> <li>• Strategies can help you solve any <b>PROBLEMS</b>.</li> </ul> <p><i>Follow your own road map - it will get you there if you have the right direction.</i></p>
<p>7. To improve your performance you may have to plan on doing something extraordinary. Be prepared to take a <b>CALCULATED RISK</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider very carefully with your coach what risk(s) you might take to distinguish this performance as a great one.</li> <li>• Link the calculated risk with your strategy.</li> <li>• Use both your intellect and your intuition.</li> <li>• Prepare now - (practice taking the risk in <b>DAILY TRAINING</b>).</li> <li>• Be ambitious yet objective. Seek self-approval.</li> </ul> <p><i>If you know what you are going to do and have rehearsed it carefully, then a potential source of <b>UNCERTAINTY</b> is eliminated.</i></p>	<p>8. Outstanding athletes really know themselves and can accept themselves for what they are as much as for what they would like to be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you fail to reach a <b>GOAL</b> don't hold it against yourself as a person.</li> <li>• Be honest with yourself and always identify what you feel you need to improve further.</li> <li>• Examine any setbacks carefully. Nobody predicted that the road to success is without perils and distractions.</li> <li>• You should aim to be constructively critical. Anything less will be damaging to your self-esteem.</li> </ul> <p><i>My future is in my own hands. What I accomplish as well as what I fail to accomplish is the result of me - and my effort.</i></p>



CANADA

"Those who have invested the most are the last to surrender."

Mental Training Document



Training Goal Sheet

My mission statement or long term goal for this CP season:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Self-evaluation                  Score

V. Poor                          V. Good

**Skill goal(s):** State a skill goal and 3 things you will do to help you reach that goal.

To: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Goal(s):** State a physical/conditioning goal and the means of reaching it.

To: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Preparation goal(s):** State a goal that focuses on behaviors outside the CP that will help you be a better player and ultimately reach your mission statement.

To: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

**Mental Goal(s):** State a goal associated with the mental aspect of performance ( and in our case of performing during each session)and the means of reaching it.

To: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 \_\_\_\_\_



CANADA

*"Those who have invested the most are the last to surrender."*

## Appendix I

### Culture Builder iMovie key/leader support

***Instructors Resource- Below are some potential topics and reflections that may emerge within the task. Be prepared to offer some prompts when key reflections may not emerge from the activity or discussions within your classroom. It would be beneficial to have a few impactful anecdotes prepared to share with the group on some of the topics you feel you have had experiences that can be shared as learning moments. Topics and experiences such as the ones in the following questions will continue to offer fresh perspectives, be prepared and open to hearing new reflections and thoughts. The following “answers” are just for support. There are many more opinions, thoughts, experiences and coaching tactics that will emerge through discussion.***

**Canada Basketball LTAD link: <http://www.basketball.ca/files/LTAD.pdf>**

**Introduction:** This section is intended as a 10-15 minute reflection to help you brainstorm, formalize and reflect on the values that you want to shape your team culture. Watch the introduction of “Culture Builder” and write down some thoughts and beliefs that you have in the following areas of coaching and building team culture. Feel free to discuss your answers and thoughts as a group or with an elbow partner to gain further perspective and insight. You may find as your progress through the activity you might want to add to or adjust some of these expectations/thoughts. This is a working document, and working back is encouraged.

***1. List some key words that you feel summarize what you stand for/believe in as a coach:***

- hard work, respect, class, team, coachable, sportsmanlike, ethical, leadership, community leaders, thankful, winning, growth, unity, intensity, citizenship, character, passionate, nastiness, sacrifice, ruthlessness, competitiveness, drive, looking to improve, love, brother/sisterhood, playing the right way, tactical, fundamental, etc.
- these key values and many more will probably be shared-these keywords should be part of the foundation of a coaches program culture

***2. When others look at your program and your team play, what do you hope they see?***

- similar answers may appear from question 1-a difference worth discussing may be that what a coach thinks or attempts to display, may not always be what others see
- hard work, respect for all others involved, sportsmanship, winning, class, team play, playing the game the “right way”

### *3. What are some of your expectations as a coach for?*

- **Character?**

-honesty, selflessness, respectful, coachable, citizenship, trustworthy, drive, hard work, sincere, hardworking, competitive, tough, sacrifice,...

- **Being a good teammate?**

-trustworthy, respectful, leader, role players, selfless, “buying in”, coachability, hardworking, tough, sacrifice, friend, supportive, push others, role model...

- **Work ethic?**

-committed, consistent, pushing boundaries, body on the line, battle, tough, pain tolerance, priority, non-negotiable, multiple efforts, relentless, passionate...

- **Academics?**

- meeting institution standards, non-negotiable, respect for teammates, your future, excellence, priority #1, attached to goals, mandatory, attached to team guidelines, attendance, attached to scholarships, eligibility, respect for teammates, respect for self ...

- **Fitness?**

-team/program standards, priority, coaches role, players role, painful necessity, commitment, age appropriate, a potential advantage, as punishment?, testing, off court demands, ....

- **Commitment?**

- mandatory, late policy, attendance policy, academics, off court dedication/demands, consistent through adversity, trust, “show don’t tell”,

- **Behavior?**

-policies, drugs and alcohol, lates and absences, institution rules and regulations, role modelling, leadership, community involvement, perception, optics, effects everyone on the team, team rules and guidelines, consequences...

- **Communication?**

- on court, off court, player coach relationships, avenues for support, team captains and leadership, team vocabulary, team actions (standing on subs, jersey pass, helping

teammates up, etc.), mentors, body language, team culture, positive vs. negative, appropriateness, individualized, ...

- **Accountability?**
- fair across the board, late policy, academic policy, commitment , other teams policies (dress, behavior, etc.), consequences, selfless perspective
- **Team Play?**
- Team system, shot selection, goals (turnover/assists), body language, team roles, selflessness,...
- **On court conduct?**
- communication with officials, team procedures (huddles, helping players up, standing for subs, timeout format), player-coach communication, body language, point guard responsibilities, echoing plays in game, body language, language, trash talk, shot clock communication,
- **Shot Selection?**
- team first, get the best shot, make the extra pass, 3 's off kick outs, know your shot/role, time and score, etc.
- **Community Involvement?**
- team guidelines, leadership, team commitments/goals, how often, time commitments, community partnerships and connections,...
- **Interacting with officials?**
- policies, coach philosophy, captains roles, team guidelines and regulations, technical foul rules/guidelines, optics
- **Social Media?**
- permanent, not private, ethics, team guidelines/rules, institution rules, time management, potential benefits, lifelong repercussions, interpretation, optics, respectful, nothing negative about team, respect inner circle of team, ...
- **Got Rituals?**
- traditional chants/cheers, practice procedures, practice set up, pre-game routine, Pre-Shot Routine (PSR), from documentary (Sask. mohawks)
- **Got Traditions?**

- community links, senior nights, midnight madness, program traditions, pre-game speeches/procedures, bench traditions (e.g.-Coach K-standing for subs), Notre Dame Football (slapping the sign), NHL hockey (playoff beards), from documentary (retreat,blazers)
- **Other- \_\_\_\_\_?**

**Chapter 1 -Pre-Season-** Watch the next section of the video. After watching the video and reflecting on your own practice and values complete the next section of reflection questions. Some question will ask you to comment on what you see in the video clips, while others are seeking personal reflection and commentary. Pause the video when prompted and provide some perspective and opinion where you can. Once completing each chapter of the activity, it is recommended to take up the questions as a group or with an elbow partner.

### **Reflection Questions- Chapter 1**

#### **4. Competitive Level-**

**How important is winning at your level of coaching?**

- connection to LTAD (age appropriate, level appropriate)
- institutional commitment
- personal philosophy
- commitment required
- coach's time constraints/family obligations
- plan/strategies to improve
- realistic
- situational challenges/limitations/barriers/road blocks
- plan season/short term/long term
- winning vs. success
- Winning vs. Development
- peoples jobs/livelihood on the line

**How might this influence coaching decisions, demands, expectations and communication?**

- time commitment
- off season demands and roles
- recruiting/player development
- additional support
- financial requirements
- time of year/importance of game

#### **5. Training-**

**How much training is appropriate at your level of coaching?**

-refer to LTAD specifically for specific recommendation, the train to compete, learn to win and train to win phases is direction and audience this project is aimed at

-signs of overtraining, fitness as punishment, fitness goals, team specific standards, team guidelines, off-season commitments,...

### **How do you know if you are properly training your athletes?**

-coach knowledge and education, signs and symptoms, season planning, LTAD Chapter 10-12, coaching manual, group discussion

### **How do you adjust training as the season progresses?**

-season plan, LTAD Chapters 10-12, practice to train ratios, player role, injury status, monitor minutes, keep fitness levels of all players,

## **6. Communication- How will you communicate your expectations for your program/team?**

- refer to team guidelines and preseason material Appendix XX, CP, and RD
- On the Line retreat concept
- tradition, recruitment, leadership, expectations and demands, practice procedures, coach conduct and motivation, alumni, team rituals, every day in every drill, hold players accountable, ...

## **7. Tradition-What traditions will your program incorporate, maintain, or already have?**

-On the Line Video examples

-popular well known examples in sport (e.g.- Haka, Detroit octopus, playoff beards, Senior Night, cutting down nets, etc.)

-participant specific examples/group discussion

-Coach K (fist, stand for subs, help teammates off floor)

**Chapter 2-Foundation**-Play Chapter 2 and then pause and reflect on the following questions. This section should take 15-25 minutes to complete and discuss. There are 2 appendixes that should be reviewed and discussed in this section.

Participants should at this point direct themselves to the sample team guidelines and team building documents provided as exemplars as Appendix CP and RD. There are 2 examples. The first document (Appendix CP) is an example of a document that could be used in a retreat type situation, where the team vision and guidelines are coming together. **Appendix CP** is a document used by Clay Pottinger at Red Deer College at his annual team building sessions with the men's basketball program. **Appendix RD** is a sample document that was used in 2007 for the MacEwan University Griffins Men's basketball team. Again, it is suggested to share thoughts and perspectives with colleagues.

### 8. Communication-

**What are some strategies and techniques that you will use to set the vision for your team?**

- Clear expectations and guidelines, Documentary retreat examples, Appendix

-some e.g's standing for subs, helping teammates up, conduct with officials, being reliable and communicating with team, traditions and alumni, history of winning, coaches reputation, Coach K-Fist vs. hand=5 together or 5 apart,

**How will your players know what you stand for?**

-I will tell them every day, team guidelines/retreat, it will be an expectation every day in practice, it will be reflected in everything we do, will only recruit people that fit and accept right from recruit stage, veteran example, alumni reinforcement

### 9. Leadership-

**How will you select your team leaders?**

- Coaches choice, vote for captains, combination, everyone represents a form of leadership with their role, allow it to evolve naturally, set number of captains, ..

**What characteristics are you looking for from your leaders?**

-natural leader, charisma, reliable, hard work ethic, confidence and poise under pressure, vocal, respected by peers, strong communication skills, best players, athlete who is on board with culture and expectations, many forms of leadership,...

**What will their roles and responsibilities be?**

-team specific examples

-player rep at meetings, responsible for communicating between players and coaches, not letting anybody "fall off", inclusive to all

**How will you encourage different forms of leadership from team members?**

-share forms and actions of leadership

- e.g's- working hard, extra training, vocal, supporting teammates, bringing team together off the court, positivity and support on bench, body language, helping teammates up, finding and embracing a role, preparedness, commitment, following team guidelines,...

### 10. Growth-

**What methods will you use to strengthen team chemistry?**

- participant/group examples

- Attitude expectations, intelligent and informed recruiting/team selection, off court/team building activities, accountability(team rules and consequences), everybody is equal, monitor and coach body language

### **How can you strengthen player-coach relationships?**

- know each other as people, honest open and consistent communication, captains/player representatives, clear expectations, second chances, smart recruiting, building trust

### **How do you build trust within your team?**

-honesty, developing relationships, knowing players as people, showing support and interest outside of basketball, consistent communication, always maintain your values, don't concede values to win, role model, respect

### **Who else can help strengthen your team?**

- captains, alumni, parent groups, assistant coaches, trainers sport psychologists, professors/teachers, administration,

## **11. Vision-**

### **How will you know the potential of your team?**

- experience, tough to tell-"don't want to limit potential, work ethic assessment, skill assessment, level of opponent, players beliefs, players actions, leadership, athletic potential, team specific situation (injury, level attainable

### **How will this help you guide your team to set appropriate goals?**

- S.M.A.R.T. goals, coach guidance, captains guidance, past experience, previous year's results, league status/strength, maturity/age of team members, program tradition/expectations,

### **Is there danger is goals too big, or potentially not big enough? (Potential beliefs-more should emerge)**

- if players see goals as out of reach/in attainable they lose motivation
- players won't do the work if they don't see potential for success
- 

## **12. Goals-**

### **How/who will you set your team goals?**

-coach guidance, players only, depends on level/age of group, captains guidance, team retreat situation, team meeting,

### **How specific will they be? Do they include a plan of action?**

- goals need to be specific and the plan of action/work needed needs to be coach enforced
- goals with emerge naturally, no need to formalize

### **How will you ensure that the players are working toward these goals?**

- frequent check ins, hold team and individuals below the goals accountable with extra training, post goals, discuss certain goals in game every game (e.g.- ppg/ppq, free throw %, etc.), high standards and practices focused on goals, promote and encourage self-discipline, create team guidelines around the goals (e.g.-100 extra free throws/week for those below team goal),

### **13. Growth-**

#### **Can you teach players to work hard?**

-group discussion

-No, players' character doesn't change

-players can mature and become more committed and hard working

-players will adopt the culture of the program

-some players have never been pushed

-if you have to teach him that, he shouldn't be on the team

#### **Can you make players tougher mentally and physically?**

-group discussion

-players will mature and some will learn to work harder and be more committed

-No, players rarely change who they are

-soft players will never become tough but everyone can improve

-adversity and experience can help players develop

-challenging players everyday will help develop mental toughness

### **14. Detractors-**

#### **What if some players are not on board with the goals and vision?**

-player/captain meetings, 1 on 1 meeting with coach, figure out a way to get him on board, remove the player from the team, connect that player to a team leader, find a way to motivate that player, be open and honest and if it doesn't change suspend or remove

**Can a few players not on board, derail the entire team culture?**

-group discussion

-definitely, players pulling in the other direction are dangerous

-coach must stamp it out quick, if you lose the dressing room, success is almost impossible  
-cancer spreads

**Chapter 3- Regular Season**

**15. Motivation-**

**How will you get maximum effort out of your team?**

-group discussion

-recruit/select hard workers, team culture, high coaching standards, coaches pushing players beyond perceived limits, hold every player equally accountable, don't baby the players expect max effort, keep the game fun, have everybody buy in, have hard working captains/leaders, stay positive within adversity

**What are appropriate techniques and communication when motivating players?**

- answers/opinions will vary/group discussion
- use of goals
- holding players accountable to goals
- yelling when necessary, too much yelling gets blocked out
- supportive and positive coach
- strong relationships among players and coaches
- different for each athlete
- knowing players off the court

**List some techniques you presently use to help motivate and push athletes.**

-recruit/select hard workers, team culture, high coaching standards, coaches pushing players beyond perceived limits, hold every player equally accountable, don't baby the players expect max effort, keep the game fun, have everybody buy in, have hard working captains/leaders, stay positive within adversity, compassion, build trust, strong relationships, support system, have program standards for fitness, aim high, honor and appreciate every role on the team

**Does the level of play influence coaching techniques and coach behavior?**

- coach behavior must accommodate and change for younger ages and level of competition
- there are still lines that should never be crossed
- playing time must be appropriate for level
- state/age/strength/maturity of team will affect coach behavior
- look at LTAD and coaching manual

**16. Individualization- Will you coach/communicate with each player differently? How?**

- group examples/discussion

**17. Adversity- How do you change/react to an underachieving team? How will you guide a team through adversity?**

- documentary and group examples
- stay positive
- push them to work through it as a group
- encourage captains and others to step up
- take some time do some team building

**Chapter 4-Forward then Back Again-****18. Playing time-****What is appropriate for sharing playing time at your level?**

- refer to LTAD/level dependant
- group discussion
- players should know their situation/role
- all based on performance at certain levels
- based on work ethic and production
- honest communication

**How will you communicate when game time/playing is concerned?**

- open and honest, depends on player and level,

**At what level are parents involved/not involved in the communication and decision making process?****When does winning a game surpass individual player development?**

- refer to LTAD
- it is part of the development
- group discussion

**19. Motivation-**

**What can you do to continue to motivate/involve those who may not be getting as many minutes in games? Are there techniques a coach can use to make sure the athletes who may be getting little or no playing time are on board with the team vision?**

- group discussion
- set practice goals
- reinforce the importance of their role and work ethic
- give them a taste/look now and then so they can show improvement
- encourage them
- they must understand that minutes are earned through performance
- use captains/team buddy system
- talk to their parents
- recruit character
- communicate clearly
- encourage them
- push them
- praise improvement
- find minutes where you can
- check in frequently

**20. Self-Assessment-**

**What can a coach do if his/her team is not living up to the program expectations when working toward on court goals (e.g.- Free throw %, practice intensity, effort, defensive commitment, etc.)?**

- have team guidelines in place
- allow team to decide
- run them
- assign extra reps
- step up practice time and intensity
- encourage them and stay positive
- ask questions
- find out why?
- are the appropriate steps being taken
- adjust unrealistic goals

**Give a couple examples of weaknesses you have identified with previous teams, and steps you took to improve.**

- class examples
- movie examples

**21. Character-**

**How will you deal with individual athletes who are not working to their potential or on board with your expectations?**

-group discussion, team guidelines, school guidelines, removal from team, suspension from team, benching, extra tasks or work, apology to teammates,

**At what point is a player removed from the team for negative behavior or attitude?**

-group discussion  
-team guidelines  
-black and white policies on certain issues  
-school policy  
-last chance?  
-criminal consequences  
-when steps for change have been taken and improvement has not occurred

**What coaching techniques can be used to help teams and players overcome adversity/difficult situations?**

**What can adversity communicate to you about an individual's character?**

-group discussion  
-adversity reveals character

**22. Building-**

**Does a coach change his/her method of delivering his/her message/expectations as the season progresses?**

-group discussion  
-break'em down, build'em up  
-depends on situation  
-stay consistent with message  
-read players and team situation  
-each situation has to be handled uniquely

**What coaching techniques could be used to try to ensure that your team is playing their best basketball at the most important parts of the season?**

-group discussion  
-taper training hours  
-reduce overall practice intensity  
-positive confident attitude from coach  
-stay consistent with expectations and message  
-practice becomes less about learning and becomes more tactical

- have the roles set and consistent
- maintain composure and help reduce stress
- more opponent prep

### **Chapter 5-The Final Push-**

#### **23. Roles-**

**Is there a point in the season where roles are clearly defined and will not change much?**

- group discussion
- depends on the situation/team (injury, unexpected performers, pressure performers)
- roles should be fairly clear at this time
- performance=playing time
- stay with the guys that got you there

**Do you consider player character/personality when deciding on players that will start, versus those who will come off the bench?**

- group discussion
- find the best personality and team fit for every role
- do what is best for the team
- depends on team situation
- use as a carrot and teaching tool
- know your athletes

**How do you communicate these roles to individual athletes?**

- open and honestly
- echo team first values
- be encouraging
- use player leadership (captains)
- use assistant coaches

### **Chapter 6-Conclusion**

#### **24. Reflection-**

**Reflect on the documentary footage. Do you feel that the 2008 Golden Bears Basketball players met Coach Horwood's expectations?**

- personal response/group discussion
- he told them he was "as proud of them as any team he has ever coached"
- they never met his work ethic expectations
- they grew as people and a team but still weren't at the level he expects

**What effective techniques did Coach Horwood use to build the team as the year progressed?**

- pushed them to meet expectations
- father figure
- tough love

- showed passion and commitment
- had the resume
- solid coaching staff
- strong motivator
- strong pre-season set up
- communicated honestly
- broke'em down and build em up

**In your opinion, what were some perceived ineffective techniques or shortcomings of the coaching staff?**

- poor pre-season tactical plan
- poor recruiting year
- didn't do due diligence on eligibility checks
- veterans still hadn't adopted culture or lacked work ethic
- language

**Would you consider the Golden Bears' season successful? Why?**

- group discussion
- they definitely overcame adversity and improved=successful but not the ultimate goal
- there were definitely individual successes
- Coaches were proud
- did they achieve their goals?
- did they improve, grow, commit and work their hardest?
- lots of teams ended up behind them and Calgary was a top team in the country that year
- with the roster they ended up with and obstacles in the year, they overachieved

**Can a team have a successful season and not meet its ultimate goal?**

- group discussion
- competitive athletes want championships but there can be countless successes in any sporting season
- to say only the champion had a successful season would be ridiculous
- most teams don't meet their ultimate goal-a lot has to go right

**25. Post Season Reflection-**

**What personnel decisions will coaches make in the off season?**

- who is leaving, who needs to go, what do we need to bring in, how is recruiting going, coaching staff changes/improvement, trainer staff changes/improvements

**What is appropriate off season training at your level?**

- refer to LTAD

**How will you ensure players are doing what is asked of them?**

-off season communication, off season camps/fitness tests, trust among group, team training plan, team training sessions, trainers, camps,

**What topics/issues need to be re-evaluated after a season?**

-personnel, team weaknesses, improvements that can be made, tactical changes, injury status, academic issues, off season expectations and training, recruiting, time off/down time, recovery, off season player communication, community opportunities,