

Becoming An Effective Team Captain: Student-Athlete Guide

MHSAA Captain's Leadership Development Program

MICHIGAN HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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Unit I: Introduction

“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf,
And the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.”

-Author Rudyard Kipling

Rodney was honored to be selected as his team’s captain. While Rodney felt great pride in being named captain, he was also a little unsure of what he was going to have to do to fulfill this role. The coaches did not tell him much about what a captain does other than to be a role model for his teammates. He knew that captains were supposed to lead stretching, tell teammates to be quiet on the bus, and go out for the coin toss, but he wasn’t sure how he might handle team conflict, parties the night before a game, or guys slacking in the weight room. Rodney thinks to himself, “Should I just hope that I’ll figure it out?”

Kelsey was surprised to be elected as captain. She never thought of herself as a leader. While she is one of the better returning players, she is somewhat reserved and quiet. Kelsey loves her team and really wants to have a great senior year. However, while excited about the opportunity and the upcoming season, Kelsey is a little intimidated about filling the shoes of last year’s captains, Bridget and Theresa, who did an exceptional job. She is not sure if she can be as vocal as they were. Kelsey is also concerned because a lot of players graduated last year, and she is not certain that she can effectively motivate the younger players to step it up this season in order to be successful.

Congratulations!

You have been selected as a captain or as a potential candidate for captainship on your team. If you are like most student-athletes, you view this as a great honor. After all, you have been singled out for your leadership abilities. However, as the above examples of Rodney and Kelsey show, you might also be a little concerned about assuming your new role, especially if you don’t have previous captainship experience or if your coach has not taught you what it takes.

While it’s a great honor to be named team captain, assuming this role involves much more than just wearing a “C” on your jersey or representing your team at the coin toss before the game. You must be a leader on the field, in the locker room, in the classroom, and outside of school, and an effective one at that. The honor of being selected as a captain comes with responsibilities. You will be one of the most visible members of your team. You will serve as the link between your teammates and the coaching staff, interact with event officials and maybe even communicate with the media. Most importantly, you will help your team strive for excellence both on and off the field.

Unfortunately, most athletes receive little training in how to be a leader; instead they are forced to learn to lead through trial and error. This is not the most effective way to learn. Recognizing this, the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA), your league, and your school have partnered to develop the MHSAA Captain’s Leadership Development Program. In it you will learn the roles and responsibilities of being a captain, how to effectively communicate with your coaches and teammates, ways to transform your team into an effective unit, how to motivate your teammates



and the importance of setting a good example for your peers. In addition, we will help prepare you for some of the tough issues that many captains face today—how to help motivate unmotivated teammates, ways to stay positive when everything seems to go wrong, how to deal with team conflicts and how to help your teammates make good decisions off the field.

I won't promise that by reading this guide and participating in this program that you will magically turn into an effective leader. That just won't happen. Effective leadership is a journey; something that cannot be accomplished in a single day or by reading a short book or by taking a course. However, we are confident that by receiving this training you will be better prepared to be an effective team captain and that your learning curve will be quicker. It is our hope that through your high school captaincy experience you will also develop leadership skills that you can use throughout your life.

This guide is designed to be used as part of the MHSAA Captain's Leadership Development Program. During the conference phase, speakers will present on several topics contained in this guide and ask you to complete many of the exercises. During each session, constantly ask yourself these questions:

- **“What does this material mean for me?”**
- **“How can I use this material to help our team achieve our goals?”**
- **“Can these leadership lessons be used outside of sport whether in a school club, church or in the community?”**
- **“What do I need to do to become a more effective captain and leader?”**

Because not everything in the guide can be covered in a one-day leadership conference, we recommend that you read through all the chapters on your own. You can also use this guide as a handy reference source that you may refer back to when you have a question or experience a problem throughout the season (e.g., read the communication chapter if your team is having communication problems). The key is to *use* this information—don't just attend the conference and never review the guide again. Applying the principles described in each chapter will help you to become a more effective captain and ultimately help you to maximize your high school sport experience.

Finally, recall that this chapter began with the quote *“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, And the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.”* Take a few moments to think about what this means – while your teammates (the “Pack”) depend on you (the “Wolf”) for leadership, you must depend on your teammates for strength. Remember that as we encourage you to care about your own success as a leader, we also want you to recognize that the most effective leaders are those who truly care about their teammates as well. Effective leaders work hard to put the interests of their fellow athletes above his or her own. No matter how much notoriety a leader receives as an individual, his or her success always depends on the strength of his or her teammates.

Unit II: My Role As A Team Captain

“What lies behind you and what lies ahead of you is of very little importance when it is compared to what lies within you.”

-Oliver Wendell Holmes

The first step in becoming an effective team captain is understanding your roles and responsibilities. If your coach does not talk to you about her or his expectations for you as a captain, it is important that you promptly schedule a meeting to do so. In the meantime, we will help prepare you for your current or potential captaincy by outlining some of the common roles and responsibilities of successful team captains in the past.

You Make the Call: Assessing Your Leadership Abilities

Being named captain means that you are now expected to assume the responsibilities of a leader. So, it is important that you recognize what being a leader involves. Completing the following exercise will help you do this by identifying what roles and responsibilities are associated with being a team captain.

EXERCISE 1: Captain's Roles & Responsibilities

Directions: Working in a small group, think about effective or successful captains from teams you have played on, or ones that you have read about or observed. In your group, identify the different characteristics or skill sets of these captains.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now that you've identified the characteristics of a good captain, think about the roles and responsibilities a team captains might have to fill. List as many specific duties as you can:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

As you can see from your list and the discussion that followed, there are a number of duties and responsibilities of being a team captain. These range from leading warm-ups before practices to helping your coach build team chemistry to informally dealing with teammates who may not be motivated or have made poor choices off the field.

You have probably been selected as a captain or potential captain because you have numerous qualities that can help you be an effective leader. Like all leaders, you will have both strengths and areas that you need to improve. Exercise 2 will help you evaluate your leadership capabilities.





EXERCISE 2: You Make the Grade – Profiling My Captain Capabilities

Directions: There are 4 steps to completing this exercise:

1. Using the list of captains' roles and responsibilities you identified in Exercise 1, write the most important ones on the lines underneath the columns below.
2. Next, rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 in terms of your ability to fulfill each role or responsibility (with 1 = little or no ability, 5 = some ability, 10 = high ability).
3. Now shade the boxes in each column with the corresponding number you gave yourself for each role and responsibility.
4. When you have completed coloring in your chart, study it. Which roles and responsibilities are you strongest on? Which are your weakest? Identify two areas that you would like to improve. Write your responses below in the space provided.

10							
9							
8							
7							
6							
5							
4							
3							
2							
1							

Below each column is a diagonal line for notes.

Areas of Strength: _____

Areas of Weakness: _____

Roles & Responsibilities to Improve: 1. _____

2. _____

Now that you have an idea of what roles and responsibilities captains have, as well as your leadership strengths and areas to improve, let's take a look at what leadership experts have identified as important leadership roles and responsibilities.

What does it take to be an Effective Leader/Captain?

Thousands of books have been written on effective leadership. Scientists have spent their lifetimes studying the area. While final answers about leadership are far from complete, the good news is that we have learned some valuable information on being effective leaders. Some of the more important principles are summarized below.

There is no magic style or personality of effective leaders

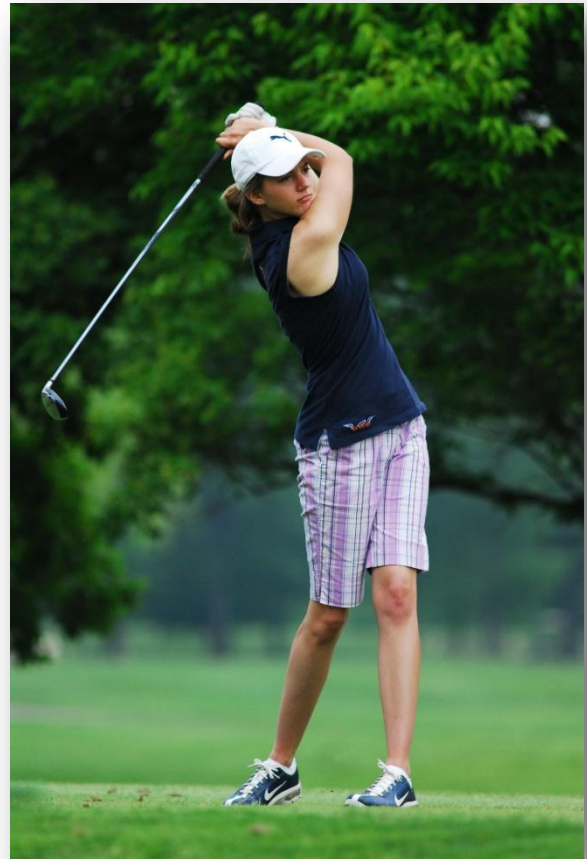
Scientists, military leaders and business experts have been studying leadership for decades, searching for the magic formula for being an effective leader. What they found is that none exists. While effective leaders adhere to key principles, they come in all shapes and sizes, and their effectiveness depends on the situation they are in. Super Bowl winning coach, Brian Billick put it best when he said, "...no single, itemized recipe for leadership exists. Not only do leaders come in a variety of sizes, genders, ethnicities, personalities, and backgrounds, the mix of traits and qualities required to lead successfully tends to vary from situation to situation and from individual to individual" (Billick & Peterson, 2001, p. 2). So the key is understanding your leadership strengths and limits and learning what situations you tend to be most effective in.

Leadership is complex

Leadership is not only affected by the leader and his or her characteristics, but also by the situation one faces, and the follower's attitudes and motivation. That is why it is so important that you take the initiative to understand each of these three components – yourself, your teammates, and the specific situation in which you will lead.

- 1. Yourself:** As mentioned previously, taking note of your strengths and limitations will aid you in recognizing your current leadership abilities, as well as your potential for success as a leader in the future.
- 2. Your Followers:** To understand and work effectively with your followers, work on improving your communication skills and make an effort to understand where your teammates are coming from and what your coaches expect. You might have great leadership qualities but won't be an effective leader if your teammates don't want to follow you and if your coach is not helping you.
- 3. The Situation:** Observe the circumstances under which you will lead. For example, what leadership qualities will you need to express when leading your team during a game versus leading your team during a practice or off-field event?

Remember, just because leadership is complex does not mean you cannot be an effective leader. Just that you will need to constantly work at it.



Different leaders are effective in different situations

Leaders often find that they are effective under some circumstance but not as effective in others. For example, in World War II, Winston Churchill, the prime minister of England, was credited with being an exceptional wartime leader. However, after the war ended, he was far less effective as a peacetime leader. Churchill did not change but the situation he was asked to govern in did. Like Churchill, you are likely to discover certain characteristics about yourself that make you effective in some situations but not in others. For example, you might find that you are a really good leader during a winning season, but not a very good leader during a losing season. Or, you may find that you are a really good listener, making you an effective leader when the team needs to voice their concerns. But, you may have difficulty giving teammates constructive criticism, making you an ineffective leader when players need your feedback to improve performance. It is important to remember that not everyone is an effective leader in all situations and that's ok. However, to maximize your leadership effectiveness, you must either recognize your limitations and work on improving those areas or ask a co-captain if she or he is able and willing to fulfill the roles you are less comfortable performing.

Leaders often shift their leadership style to match the situation

Many leaders find that in order to be effective in varying types of situations, they have to alter their demeanor, their tone, and their leadership styles accordingly. For example, motivating some teammates may require a calm and caring approach, while motivating others may require a harsher tone and lots of constructive criticism. Over the course of time, experience, and much observation, you will learn how your teammates respond differently to varying styles of leadership. In order to ensure that you are motivating your teammates in effective ways, it is therefore your job to consider their individual needs and personalities when choosing how to approach them both as individuals and as a team.



Trust is the bedrock of effective leadership

Read any leadership book or study any championship sports team and you will undoubtedly find many references to the topic of “trust.” As a captain it is essential that you “earn” the trust of your teammates. This can be accomplished by focusing on the positive aspects of their efforts and not using the “C” as a way to demean others or be a power-monger. Treating everyone fairly and not playing favorites are also critical components to developing trust. As always, be honest but constructive. Although there will be times when you have to tell teammates something they don’t want to hear, no one likes a captain who puts them down constantly. To be constructive, remember that how you communicate your message is just as important as the message’s content. Lastly, take responsibility for your own actions. Don’t fall into the trap of blaming others. You are only as good as your word, so follow through on your commitments and don’t commit to things you cannot follow through on.

A leader must be empowered by his or her followers

A common mistake that inexperienced leaders often make is assuming that leaders are entitled to boss others around. While it is true that effective captains are not afraid to make decisions, they also realize their teammates empower them to lead. A leader is not a leader without followers. As the Kipling quote (*“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf,*

and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack”) at the start of Unit 1 showed, teams need strong leaders but strong leaders also need strong teammates. Hence, as a captain you must work hard to listen to and gain input from other team members. This includes sharing any credit for victories and recognizing the unsung heroes and heroines. And, while captains hold people accountable for their actions, they also avoid public putdowns and don’t tolerate the bullying of any one team member.

These are just a few leadership guidelines. Below are some additional principles for effective leadership identified by great coaches and leadership experts. As you read through these lists, think about the implications they may have for you in being a team captain.

TABLE 1: Key Leadership Principles

Denver Bronco’s Superbowl-Winning Coach Mike Shanahan:

1. Teams matter more than individuals
2. Every job is important
3. Treat everyone with respect
4. Share victories and defeats (win as a team, lose as a team)
5. Accept criticism
6. Keep the boss (your coach) well informed

Noted author and leadership expert John Maxwell:

1. Leadership ability determines a person’s level of effectiveness
2. The true measure of leadership is influence
3. Leadership develops daily, not in a day
4. Anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course
5. Trust is the foundation of all leadership
6. Who you are is who you attract
7. Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand
8. A leader’s potential is determined by those closest to him
9. Only secure leaders give power to others
10. To add growth, lead followers. To multiply, lead leaders.

Baltimore Ravens Superbowl -Winning Coach Brian Billick:

1. Understand the essence of leadership
2. Be values-oriented
3. Be prepared
4. Be self-disciplined
5. Be knowledgeable
6. Be performance-oriented
7. Be a communicator
8. Be a motivator
9. Be a problem solver
10. Be a team builder
11. Be opportunistic
12. Be self assured
13. Be courageous

As a part of your development as a captain, we would advise you to learn from other leaders' stories. Below are personal experiences from two tremendous former captains and from legendary former UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden – maybe the best coach of all-time.

Case Examples of Captain Development & Effective Leadership

The United States won the first Olympic women's ice hockey gold medal and many, including Coach Ben Smith and sport psychologist Peter Haberl, attributed much of the team's success to their captain, Cammi Granato. In her book *Crashing the Net*, Mary Turco (1999) discussed Granato's leadership in the following way:

Cammi had the voice that each player could identify with, a voice that clearly articulated a shared vision. . . . She cared deeply about the personal well-being of every teammate. She did not differentiate between rookies and veterans. She did not play favorites. He (Coach Smith) noticed how she consistently monitored players' interpersonal relationships and their impact on the team's general spirit. When team chemistry was not positive she found ways to improve it. In the dressing room she was enthusiastic. On the ice she was constructive. And, most important, she never complained –to her teammates, the staff, or her coaches (p. 132).

Through her experiences in youth and high school ice hockey, Granato learned how to be an effective leader. She worked hard at it and realized that there was much more to it than having the "C" on her jersey.

Another example, closer to home, comes from the 2007 Michigan State University NCAA Men's Champion Ice Hockey team. The team wasn't picked to make the playoffs much less win the entire NCAA tournament, but they defied the experts and did. The team credited much of their success to Chris Lawrence, their senior captain. What makes this story so interesting is that Lawrence was not the star of the team. In fact, he was a fourth-line player and did not play as much as most captains do. However, his coaches said that he was always totally into-the-game, had a good handle on the pulse of his team and helped his fellow players whether on or off the ice. His teammates said that he would do anything to encourage them. For example, before the NCAA tournament, Lawrence handwrote individual notes to all his teammates indicating his appreciation for their efforts and how much the team needs each of them. While Lawrence received a great deal of media notoriety for writing these notes before the tournament, his captaincy involved doing little things like this all season long. He helped his teammates get the most out of themselves whether that involved printing inspirational quotes and putting them in the locker room or picking his teammates up either with a kind word when they were down or with a challenging statement when they felt sorry for themselves. In short, Lawrence was a great captain who helped his teammates achieve excellence. What kind of captain will you be?

Finally, John Wooden, former UCLA basketball coach, All-American player himself and winner of 10 NCAA championships knows something about leadership. He defines leadership as "the ability to get individuals to work together for the common good and the best possible results while at the same time letting them know they did it themselves (Wooden & Jamison, 1997, p. 27). Like a coach, a captain plays a critical role in helping the team to achieve their goals and give credit to those who made it happen. Coach Wooden has shown us that although decision-making in leadership is a difficult task because everyone has a suggestion or an opinion to consider, true leaders step up to make the appropriate decisions with confidence. He has also demonstrated that it is absolutely essential for a leader to be an excellent listener, to earn the respect of others, and to be fair. To be a successful captain, then, you must work hard to do the same.

Summary: Developing Your Leadership Abilities

This unit introduced you to the roles and responsibilities associated with being a team captain and helped you to recognize your leadership strengths and areas needing improvement. Key leadership principles were also identified. Let's finish the unit by returning to your particular situation. Below, please identify the 5 most important roles and responsibilities you think you will have as a captain on your specific team.

EXERCISE 3: My Roles & Responsibilities

My roles & responsibilities as a team captain include:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

The remainder of this program and guide is about helping you become an effective leader and team captain by meeting these roles and responsibilities. So as you work through the following units, think about your role as a team captain and improve your ability to lead!



Unit III: Effective Communication

“If you can’t communicate with people, you have dramatically narrowed your chances for success. Effective communication is the best problem solver that there is.”

-Coach Rick Pitino, University of Louisville

Defining Effective Communication

The ability to communicate with each other effectively is a characteristic that is always associated with great teams. But what really is effective communication? Is it simply giving encouragement to your teammates or relaying messages from the coaches, or is communication deeper than that?

In the book *Championship Team Building* (Janssen, 1999), effective communication is defined as the ability to send, receive, and respond to messages. Furthermore, communication is about being knowledgeable about the topic you discuss, as well as being honest about what you do not know. Communication requires being fair, reliable, and consistent in interacting with teammates, coaches, and referees. Understanding the power of positive communication and how to most effectively offer constructive criticism are immensely important tools to learn and use. Finally, effective communicators need to be enthusiastic, warm, and friendly, while maintaining acceptance and honesty.

As you can see, communicating effectively is not a simple task; rather it requires knowledge, practice, and persistence. Captains have an especially challenging role because you are the liaison between your teammates and your coaches and administrators. This chapter will give you both ideas and resources to maximize your effectiveness as a team leader in the area of communication. Let’s get started by brainstorming about ways people communicate.

EXERCISE 4: Most & Least Successful Communicators

Directions: For this exercise think about athletic, school or personal situations you have experienced. Think of someone that you felt was a great communicator (e.g., teacher, coach, teammate) and then think about someone who was not a good communicator.

What were the characteristics of the great communicator? What made him or her so effective?

What were the characteristics of the poor communicator? What made him or her so ineffective?

Keys to Effective Communication

Communication can be broken down into two key components: **verbal and non-verbal**. Most of us think of giving a speech or talking to others when we think about verbal communication or communication in general for that matter. However, equally important, but less often thought about is non-verbal communication. Just think about how you feel when someone rolls their eyes at you, gives you the cold shoulder, looks all around the room when you are talking as opposed to making eye contact, nods his or her head as you speak, or focuses all their attention on you. These nonverbal actions send powerful messages!

Take a few minutes to think about being a team captain. When do you need to be verbal as a captain? When do you need to be non-verbal? What characteristics are most important to each? The following section will give you some tips to communicate effectively in sending and receiving both verbal and non-verbal messages.



Sending Verbal Messages

“It’s not what you tell them – it’s what they hear.”

-Coach Red Auerbach, Hall of Fame NBA Coach

In order to avoid miscommunication, you should carefully construct clear messages that are easy to understand. As a captain, what you tell your teammates can sometimes be misinterpreted even when you have the best intentions behind your message. For instance, if you are talking to a teammate about the importance of communication to the coaching staff, she may think that she has done something wrong to get in trouble by you and the coach, even though you simply wanted to open the communication lines on your team. In order to be effective, keep in mind the following eight characteristics of effective verbal communication.

1. **Be direct.** You should always communicate directly with the person you are sending a message to. If you rely on someone else to deliver your message, it may not arrive correctly.
2. **Be complete and specific.** The more complete and specific your message, the less room you leave for reinterpretation. For example, when talking to the team about the unwritten rules of athletic practice, you might say something like “make sure you follow what we do.” Although this message seems clear to you, the freshmen may not understand exactly what they are supposed to do and why. Instead try to explain to them that they need to sprint out when coach calls, be the first one to carry equipment, and always respect the coach and each other.
3. **Be consistent.** When you communicate consistently your teammates and coaches will gain respect and trust in your leadership.
4. **Communicate needs and feelings.** Your message may not always be about the concrete things the team needs or wants (e.g., the warm-up routine the team prefers). Although not always easy, sometimes you might have to communicate more abstract concepts, such as what players or coaches are feeling. For example, you might need to convey to your coaches that the team is

feeling really tired because of all the exams going on at school. Or you might need to convey to the team that the coaches are getting really frustrated with them because everyone is constantly making excuses when things go wrong.

5. **Repeat it.** Often your message may not be heard or comprehended the first time. Whether you are discussing behavior problems with your teammates or practice changes with the coaches, you may need to repeat your message more than once and in multiple ways.
6. **Make it understandable.** Your message should always be easily comprehended by your teammates and coaches. Keep in mind that you may need to alter your delivery depending on your audience. For instance, you probably speak to your coaches slightly different (i.e., more formal, to the point) than to your teammates (i.e., informal, joking).
7. **Be positive.** Even if your message is inherently critical, use the sandwich method to keep it positive. That is, say something positive, followed by corrective feedback or negative information and then finish with a positive. For example, “good try, next time work on getting a little further under the ball, but I really liked your hustle!”
8. **Make it attention grabbing.** Your message should grab the attention of your audience and stay with them. For example, make a sign with a key word like “Passion” or “Commitment” and have the team touch the sign as they exit the locker room for practice each day, signifying their “passion” or “commitment.”

Sending Non-Verbal Messages

“Over the years I’ve learned to listen closely to players – not just to what they say, but also to their body language and the silence between their words.”

-Coach Phil Jackson, Los Angeles Lakers

Even though we most often think about our communication as verbal, in reality over 70% of our messages are non-verbal. Non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, acts of intimidation, behaviors of kindness, and sarcasm. The delivery of non-verbal communication is even more important than verbal communication because you may not be able to explain the true intention of your message.

EXERCISE 5: Positive Non-Verbal Communication

Directions: In the left column, list ways that you might unintentionally give a negative message to your teammates in a non-verbal manner (e.g. rolling your eyes). Then in the right column, list ways that you could communicate positively in a nonverbal manner.

Negative Non-Verbal

Positive Non-Verbal

Effective Listening

One of the most important aspects of communicating effectively is further improving your listening skills. Listening is one key to developing positive relationships with your teammates and coaches. When you take the time to listen, you learn about what is really going on within the person and show them you care about what they are feeling and thinking. Not only is the act of listening important, but how you listen is also critical. Active listening is a method of demonstrating an understanding and appreciation for what the other person is saying. You portray this by using body language (physical closeness to the person, eye contact, nodding), as well as asking questions and reiterating what the person is saying.

Some examples of active listening phrases can be:

“Let me see if I’m understanding you correctly...”

“It sounds to me like you are saying...”

“What I am hearing you say is...”

Active listening not only helps you to convey empathy and care for the person, but it also helps you to understand their message better. It will be hard for you to misinterpret others if you are repeating back key components of their message. Finally, active listening will help the person talking to understand their own frustrations. They may be able to organize their thoughts more clearly and formulate a potential plan to deal with the issue.

EXERCISE 6: How can you demonstrate active listening?

Directions: Identify some verbal and nonverbal ways you can demonstrate active listening to your teammates and coaches.

<u>Verbal</u>	<u>Non-Verbal</u>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Communicating with Your Coaches

One of the most important roles of a team captain is to communicate with the coaching staff. At times, your coach will want you to talk to him or her about the pulse of your team (e.g., how they are feeling about important issues). At other times, your coach will want you to convey certain things to the team or your teammates will want you to convey certain things to your coach. With all these different lines of communication, things can get confusing. To avoid potential conflict, it is important for you to begin communicating with your coach before any problems or tricky issues arise. For example, after being named or elected captain, set up a meeting with your coach(s) and ask him or her what is expected of you as a captain. In addition, ask the coach when he or she is available to talk in the



case that you need to communicate certain issues on behalf of your teammates, and if it is appropriate for you to do so. This will help you determine the communication ground rules of working with your particular coach.

As you increase your interactions with your coach, really focus on listening to what he or she says. Make eye contact, summarize key points to ensure understanding, and practice other active listening tips. In addition, learn to read his or her moods and recognize if there are certain times that are better than others to bring up lengthy or complex issues (e.g., during a schedule appointment versus after practice when he or she is tired and hungry). Work hard to employ the effective communication principles conveyed here—be direct, make eye contact, engage in active listening.

It is important to recognize that some coaches are going to be better communicators than others. It is certainly harder for a captain if his or her coach is not a great communicator, but if this is the case, it is more important than ever for you to keep the dialogue open. However, always remember to be respectful (even if your coach is not your most favorite person) and when in doubt proceed slowly. Start communicating about the little things so trust develops.



Putting it all together: A captain's source of effective communication

When you communicate effectively, you convey that you value your relationship with the person you are communicating with. Go slowly and think about what you are trying to say before blurting out rash thoughts or opinions. Try to understand the other person's perspective. We each experience and perceive things differently, so having an appreciation for someone else's viewpoint can take you a long way. Listen carefully to what the other person is trying to communicate — they may not be as confident or effective in communicating their points. Finally, utilize the sandwich method whenever possible; positive feedback, constructive criticism, and positive encouragement.

EXERCISE 7: Case Study Examples

Directions: In the following exercise, determine how to most effectively communicate with the person described in each example.

1. Denise is a senior on your soccer team. Lately you have heard that she has been drinking and going to parties regularly. Even though it is still preseason, it is against the rules to drink (and against the law!). As a junior captain, you are not sure how to handle the situation and still maintain a friendship with Denise. How could you communicate with Denise that not only are her actions hurting her chances of playing this season, but also hurting the team?

Some useful strategies:

- Talk to Denise outside of practice, away from other players/friends, and in a non-threatening environment (away from school or the athletic fields where people will not wonder what you are talking about)
 - Start the talk with some positive reinforcement about her sport ability and potential on the team next season
 - Illustrate that you are bringing the issue up because you care about her as a person and a teammate
 - Offer to organize team activities on weekends to provide an alternative to drinking
 - Be understanding and realize that she may not want to hear what you have to say
 - Let her know that you are a support, not an enemy
2. As captain of the basketball team, you are an important link between the team and the coach. During the preseason and early regular season, practices were challenging, technical, and fun. Now, although the team is performing well as the season progresses, the coach structures practice such that the main focus is on avoiding mistakes and receiving punishment when mistakes are made. Many of the players have come to you with the concern that practice is not going as well anymore, and that the pressure is negatively affecting the team's ability to perform. How would you talk to your coach about practice? What would some effective strategies be?

Some useful strategies:

- Come to the coach prepared with all of the points you want to bring up
- Be professional and respectful
- Take it slow—don't blurt everything out all at once because you are nervous
- Think about the perspective of your coaches - this is their job and they want to be successful
- Clearly articulate your points in a non-demanding, non-threatening manner
- Listen actively to your coach's rationale and respect whatever decision he or she makes on your points
- Be proud of yourself for representing the team in a difficult situation

Summary

Hopefully you have learned some effective methods of communicating better with your teammates and coaches. Remember that communication is only partially verbal. Sometimes it's what you do and not say that makes the biggest impact. Take your role as a communicator seriously, as you can make a big difference in the dynamics of the team just by how you send, receive, and respond to messages. Lead by example in that you are comfortable taking and giving feedback, both positive and constructive. Finally, show others that you care about them by listening actively and understanding their opinion.

Unit IV: Team Motivation

“Leadership: The art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

-Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States

One common characteristic of great teams is that they are highly motivated, both as individual athletes and as an overall unit. That’s why coaches are always talking about motivation. Think about it. You and your teammates must be motivated to physically train, to lift weights in the off-season, to keep your grades up, to concentrate when your coach is giving instructions and to maintain a positive attitude when faced with adversity and failure.

As a captain you play a key role in helping your teammates to develop, sustain and even sometimes rebuild their motivation; all while trying to stay motivated yourself. This unit will help you accomplish these tasks and to aid you in building a highly motivated team as a captain.

Let’s start by taking a few minutes to list the specific motivational duties that you must achieve as a team captain.



EXERCISE 8: My Motivational Duties

Directions: As a team captain, what are some of the specific motivational duties that you must fulfill?

Now compare your list to the person seated next to you.

1. Which of the duties were similar to those of your partner? Which of the duties were different?
2. Which do you feel are the most important motivational duties of a captain? Why?

Key Motivational Duties

While there are many specific motivational duties a captain must fulfill, we will discuss 3 general duties that experienced captains and coaches have identified. These include: identifying a common and unifying team goal, serving as a bridge between team members and the coaching staff, and helping teammates find their own motivation.

Identify a common and unifying team goal

The first step in motivating your teammates is to help unify everyone around a common objective and purpose. These can include long-term team goals such as winning the league title or short-term team goals such as executing a particular play the right way. The benefit of having a common goal is that each player is clear about what the team is striving for and can work together toward that specific objective. Having a common goal can both enhance and help maintain motivation for individual players.

So, how are common team goals created? A good way to start is by holding a team meeting and soliciting suggestions from your teammates on objectives and visions they have for the season. Be sure to involve everyone and don't settle on the first goal that is identified. List all possible goals and then have everyone give some thought to the one or two goals that everyone can rally around. Many teams decide on goals that involve winning a certain number of games or a championship. However, be sure to also come up with goals that are not dependent on beating someone else—for example, an additional team goal may be to only make positive comments during fitness drills or to play with pride. Once the team goals are set, have each team member set their own individual goals to help achieve the overall team goal. These goals should be directly within the individual's control. For example, an individual goal might be to maintain a positive attitude on the sideline or improve shooting percentage by 5%.

Be the bridge between coaches and your teammate

As a captain you play a critical role in acting as a motivational bridge between your teammates and your coaches. They have put their trust in you and believe that you will do what is best for both parties. As discussed in Chapter 3, as a captain it is not only your job to be the voice of the players in identifying the needs of the team as they strive for common goals, but also the voice of the coaches as they work to get the most out of their players.

Help teammates find the motivation within themselves

The third role is to help your teammates find the motivation or “fire” from within themselves. That is, not only are you a motivator for your teammates but also the person who helps your teammates to find the motivational fire that burns within themselves. This begins with understanding each of your teammate's goals, motives, and background. Additionally, help each teammate understand what their roles are in order to establish a sense of belonging and personal control over the team's destiny. Remember that when working with a diverse group of individuals, the goal is not to create clones, but rather to build a team comprised of motivated individuals who are working together towards a common goal.

Now that we have talked about team motivation, let's pull everything together. The following exercise will help you identify what a motivated team looks like.



EXERCISE 9: Motivated Team

Directions: Use the space below to identify words and phrases that represent what a motivated team might exemplify to you, and then, briefly explain and discuss your answers with your subgroup and identify some specific characteristics of a motivated team. How do the players on this motivated team act and behave when experiencing success? How do they behave in the face of failure or adversity?

Experiencing Success Characteristics

Facing Adversity Characteristics

After completing this exercise you should have a clearer understanding of what a motivated team looks and acts like to *you*. Now, you can better utilize the lessons presented in this chapter to help make your vision of a motivated team a reality. Below is a list of some additional common characteristics associated with a motivated team to help guide you in this process.

Motivated Teams...

- Set common goals
- Create clear and defined roles
- Maintain effective communication
- Manage conflict well
- Make sacrifices for the betterment of the team
- Build team cohesion – work together to achieve goals

The purpose of developing these characteristics is to create a group of motivated individuals that work hard and put the group's purpose and objectives ahead of personal desire.

Guidelines for Understanding Team Motivation

Knowing that a group of motivated individuals is the foundation for a motivated team, you now understand that the most effective way to motivate the entire team is to first motivate each individual player. The following section will examine what develops motivation within the individual and discuss what great teams do to motivate themselves.

Help teammates feel worthy by fulfilling their needs

Generally, people are motivated to fulfill their individual needs in an effort to feel valued and worthy. As a captain you should ask yourself what you can do to help your teammates feel worthy by fulfilling their needs, while also helping them feel important within the bigger picture of the team. This begins by understanding each of your teammates and asking them questions about their personal style and desires. For example, one teammate might be thrilled just to be part of the team while another needs to feel he or she is an important part of team success. Developing a level of understanding of what your teammates want out of being part of the team can help you mesh their style and needs into the common team goals. For example, if a teammate who doesn't play that much has individual goals of getting in good shape and having fun, maybe you can help him find his voice in the weight room, and help push those who are less motivated there. This fits within his personal goal but also has a positive impact on some of the greater team goals. Plus, it gives this player the opportunity to feel competent (by sharing his expertise in the weight room), in control (he knows his role within the big picture), and he has support from his teammates.

Role acceptance

It is not uncommon that a player will feel unclear about what his/her role is on the team. As a captain you can help this player understand and accept his/her role. Considering what the individual needs to feel motivated, it is important that they are clear on and have accepted their role in order to feel that they are making an impact on achieving the team goals. For example, the term "role player" is commonly used; however, it is rather ambiguous. Work with the coaches and the player to define that term as it pertains to the individual (e.g., Kareem is a defensive stopper in basketball and will play limited but important minutes shutting down the opposing team's hot shooter). Once the role has been clearly defined by the coach and the individual player, you as a captain can help them accept that role by showing, and getting other teammates and coaches to show, how much everyone appreciates that role. When you recognize a player fulfilling some specific aspect of their role, point it out and tell them how much it means to the team (e.g., after a win you recognize Kareem for his 3 minutes of shutting down the other teams shooter in the second half). Another method is to help the player take pride in their role regardless of the direct size of their contribution.

1,000 little things

Great teams don't do one thing right; they do 1,000 little things right every day. Successful teams heighten their focus beyond the big play or the outcome goals; rather they work to do the little things right, knowing that accomplishing the little things will lead to achieving the big goals. Former UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, whose teams won 10 NCAA Titles, emphasized to his players the importance of putting their socks on the right way. He knew that if players carelessly put their socks on, they increased their chances of getting blisters. However, blisters weren't his biggest concern. He wanted to make sure that his players understood that everything requires optimal focus and attention, even the simple task of putting socks on. As a captain you can help your players understand this by recognizing and outlining the little things within your team that will lead to the established outcome goals. This can go from properly running a route, down to how you carry yourself after a mistake. Build trust from your teammates by not only recognizing when others do these things but model them as a captain.

Focus beyond winning

Having outcome goals such as winning the game or the state championships is important; however the great teams know that they have to set other types of goals (process and performance goals) in order to achieve the outcome goals. A process goal is one that focuses on the *actions* that will lead to a good performance, such as having soft hands when receiving a pass or remaining positive in the face of adversity. Performance goals focus on achieving personal standards of performance compared to YOUR previous performances. For example, improving your first serve percentage by 10% or improving your mile time by 5 seconds. As a captain it is important that you have an understanding of these types of goals not only to achieve successful outcomes, but to also challenge and help your teammates set goals beyond just winning.

Show them you care

Your teammates don't care what you have to say until they know that you care about them as individuals. Show them you care by catching them doing the little things right. Again, people are motivated to feel important and needed. So being positive and recognizing their efforts will help them achieve this need. For example, your teammate Sarah helps out Jessica in the weight room with some technique tips, and you later point out to Sarah that it was really good of her to help Jessica. This type of positive feedback can really feed into the team cycle, in that Sarah will feel competent and more motivated to continue helping people in the weight room, which can ultimately lead to a stronger and more fit team. Thus, fulfilling process and performance goals will help the team achieve their outcome goals.

Effective communication

Although effective communication is a unit in this workbook, it is important to remember how important it is in motivation. One goal of effective communication is to know how to provide positive feedback and more importantly, how to provide negative feedback. When providing positive feedback, go beyond the standard "good job" and be specific about what teammates did right on that particular play. For example, "Nice route, Ryan! You were exactly 10 yards out when you made that cut." When providing negative feedback, speak to the individual away from other teammates or coaches and try to take out the personal aspects of feedback. Rather, work to make the feedback constructive and perhaps ask the player how their action is negatively impacting the team and/or the team goals. Then focus on what you two can do together to improve that action. For example, "Hey Kelsey, I've noticed you're struggling with your jumper and are getting really frustrated. I think that your elbow is a little out when releasing the ball. We can work on it together if you want." Negative feedback is about trying to correct an action, but it is also important to demonstrate that you are supportive of this player and will help them better the issue. Perhaps the best approach is to use the sandwich approach to error correction discussed in Chapter 3.

As you can see from this section, motivation is not always about telling people what to do. Motivating others is more than just an emotional speech. Instead, motivation is about motivating the individual by asking them about their goals and needs, helping fulfill those needs, and asking for their feedback. Too often, however, those in sport fall into the trap of always correcting others and unknowingly tearing them down versus building them up. So take a few minutes to complete Exercise 10 and brainstorm some ways that a captain could unknowingly tear a team down and then consider some ways in which a captain could build a team up.



EXERCISE 10: Team Motivation

Directions: What are some things that can tear down a team's motivation?

As you can see from Exercise 10, there are certainly a number of ways to bring down a teammate emotionally and psychologically. However, motivational experts have learned that it is more effective to build people up than tear them down. So take a few minutes and list 5 different ways that you can build a teammate up.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Putting It All Together: The Captain as a Source of Motivation

Now that we have discussed motivation in some detail, let's pull things together using some real world cases. The following are two case studies representative of what can happen on a high school sports team. Work with a partner or in a small group and read these case studies. Consider what you would do in each situation. Then, when you are finished, read the suggestions that follow on the next page.



Dan and Doug are the co-captains of their high school football team. They are both starters and very hard workers. The coaches like them because they model the work ethic the coaches want. However, Dan and Doug struggle as many of their teammates don't work to their full potential. Their teammates just don't want to work as hard as it takes for the team to be successful. What can Doug and Dan do to "motivate" their teammates?



Lashonda's soccer team has a chance to be better than it has been for some time. However, her teammates have little confidence and expect to lose, especially when competing against opponents who have been at the top of the league for many years. She really notices the negative talk of her teammates (e.g., "We stink", or "Here we go again—we're losers") when something goes wrong or when they face adversity. How can Lashonda help her team?

What are some things **you** would do in each of these situations?



Here are some of our suggestions:

- Ask your teammates what their goals are. What do they want to achieve? Why do they play football?
- Hold a team meeting to talk about the issue—get things out on the table in a general way. Ask (versus tell) the team what they will do to help change things.
- Catch teammates doing things right (working hard) and recognize them for their efforts.
- Positively challenge those not working hard (e.g., “Come on Jason, you can do it”).
- Provide individual feedback to prevent social loafing.
- Be realistic (not everyone will change) but keep trying to help those who show positive signs of changing.



Here are some of our suggestions:

- Hold a team meeting to talk about the issue.
- Be realistic by recognizing that just because you were not that successful in the past does not mean that you can’t be successful in the upcoming year. Give an example of a college, pro, or other high school team that turned it around.
- Focus on things they can control like performance (e.g., setting personal best times) and process goals (e.g., maintaining good running form downhill).
- Emphasize and model positive but realistic talk (e.g., when getting passed by a runner, don’t say “Here we go again, I stink.” Instead say “You may pass me but I am going to stay on your tail to make you pay for it”).
- Look for chances to help teammates switch from negative to positive talk.

Summary & Strategy List

Throughout this unit we have discussed the characteristics and qualities of a motivated team and some guidelines for understanding motivation. Throughout each of these sections there have been strategies suggested, as well as opportunities for you to determine what strategies work best for you and your team. The final section is designed to summarize those strategies in a bullet-list format. The purpose is to provide you with a foundation of strategies with which you can build off of and personalize.

Strategies for Building up Team Motivation

- a. **Communicate effectively**
 - *Listen to one another* – Great leaders have a keen ability to listen and understand the needs of those they are leading
 - *Have open lines of communication* – Set these early and often. Let the players know that you are an advocate for them as well as the coaches and encourage them to communicate with you
- b. **Get to know one another and bond for a common purpose**
 - *Understand each other's goals and backgrounds* – Understanding players as individuals can help you motivate them within the team environment
 - *Understand each person's motives* – The “why” is necessary before you get to the “how”
 - *Develop group connection and pride*
- c. **Understand and accept individual roles** – Work with the coaches and each team member to specifically define what their role is. Help each player accept their role by illustrating how that role is critical to the common goal
- d. **Set challenging group goals** – Remember to set goals that are realistic but challenging. Go beyond simple outcome goals and set process and performance goals
- e. **Develop a group identity** – Facilitate group activities on and off the field that will help the group form and become an identified unit
- f. **Avoid the formation of social cliques within the team** – Not everyone is going to be best friends, but the more you can help the team avoid social cliques the better off you'll be
- g. **Build one another up versus break one another down**
 - *Catch each other doing things right* – Give praise when praise is due and be specific about what he/she did right
 - *Look for opportunities to help one another* – Provide constructive criticism with the intention to help rather than hurt
- h. **Have a plan for dealing with problems and deal with them quickly** – Plan to go to the source of the issue immediately after the problem occurs
- i. **Realize every team member must be both a leader and a follower** – If the roles are properly defined and accepted, players can lead within their role and follow the roles of others

Unit V: Team Building & Cohesion

“The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.”

-Babe Ruth

As you probably already know, a team is more than just a group of people. Even the standard definition (*a group of people working together towards a common goal*) does not seem to fully capture the essence of what it is like to be a member of a sport team. As baseball great Babe Ruth’s quote indicates, putting a bunch of individuals (even highly talented athletes) together does not automatically lead to success on the field, court, track or course. In order for a team to be most effective and for its members to fully enjoy their sport experiences, there needs to be a sense of togetherness and this “group of people” needs to learn to work together in ways that help make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. This “togetherness” and ability to “work together” is often referred to as cohesion—the glue that holds a team together. Regardless of the sport you play or of the group of people who are your teammates, helping your team become more cohesive is an important duty for a captain to fulfill. This unit will help you identify the characteristics of effective teams and what you can do to help foster a sense of cohesion on your squad.

What Makes Teams Tick: Characteristics of Effective Teams

One thing we have learned from watching and studying highly successful teams is that they share many of the same characteristics and qualities. Interestingly, many of these characteristics have nothing to do with the athletes’ physical abilities, technique or game strategies. Thinking about your own sport experiences and about other groups you have been a part of (e.g., a class project group, student council, yearbook committee), you should be able to think of several qualities these groups share that played a major role in making them more (or less) successful.

EXERCISE 11: Characteristics of Effective Teams

Directions: Working in a small group, think of teams you have played on or other groups you have been a part of. In your group, identify the qualities these teams/groups all (or mostly) had in common. List as many characteristics as you can.

Effective Groups

Ineffective Groups

Once you have completed your list, put a star next to the **TOP 3** characteristics you consider to be most essential for team effectiveness

The 'Secrets' of Success

Numerous people have spent much time trying to uncover the secrets of team success, and many of them have come to very similar conclusions. From recreational to Olympic teams, from the swimming pool to the football field, teams that work well together uphold many of the same principles and can be described in many of the same ways. The following is a list of characteristics others have outlined as being essential for team success.

Successful and cohesive teams have a sense of...

- ◆ **Unity**
- ◆ **Team Identity and Pride**
- ◆ **Respect for One Another**
- ◆ **Responsibility and Accountability**
- ◆ **Trust**

Fortunately, working on these objectives helps not only encourage motivation, but create a stronger bond and effective interactions among teammates as well. The following section is a discussion of a few characteristics that have not yet been addressed in detail in previous lessons.

A Sense of Unity

"I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion." -Soccer Great Mia Hamm

Imagine what it would be like to be in the middle of a competition and to realize that every one of your teammates had his or her own personal agenda at work (e.g., to be the leading point scorer, to conserve energy by not hustling back on defense, to be the one athlete to catch the attention of a college recruiter). Or if you looked around at practice and realized that only certain people were talking to each other and everyone was merely going through the motions during drills and conditioning exercises. What a mess! When teammates do not have a shared vision and are not working together toward a unified goal, a team becomes its own worst enemy...one that is in conflict and easy to beat. Compared to the above situations, a team whose members are focusing their energy toward a common cause and who know each other well both as people and as competitors, is better able to maximize its potential (by getting everyone's talent working TOGETHER) and tends to have members who better enjoy the ride along the way (because less time is spent dealing with internal problems and more time is spent on enjoying the sport and shared success).

We've all heard it before...there is no "I" in "TEAM." Unfortunately, it can be difficult to put the team before the self at times because success is often associated with individual performances and because being recognized for personal accomplishments can be very exciting. Also, it may be more difficult for some teams to see the benefits of having a unified team because of the nature of their sport. Whereas in some sports like soccer, football, basketball, softball, and lacrosse it is clear that a team's success in competitions depends on its members interacting as a fluid and synchronized unit, for other sports like track and field, swimming and diving, golf and skiing, the benefits of team unity may not be as clear. For these more individual sports, the benefits of a cohesive team come when teammates work well together during practices to push and challenge each other to work harder and smarter than they could

alone. In addition, teammates provide each other support in terms of the information and motivation needed for each individual to accomplish more, making the team as a whole a highly successful unit.

As a leader, you can help remind your teammates of the benefits of team unity; that working as a unified team in which each member makes a significant and valued contribution often leads to better personal performances in addition to better team functioning and more enjoyment of the sport experience. Many of the team building activities we will discuss focus on this very objective: to bond a team, to help a group develop a sense of unity, and to help its members see that the team can only be successful if all the members work together, with each individual making a unique and important contribution.

A Sense of Team Identity and Pride

“Wearing the same shirts doesn’t make a team.” -Buchholz and Roth, noted athletic performance authors

Explain what the quote above means to you:

One way to help a team develop a sense of unity or “WE-ness” is to decide, honor and celebrate who this ‘WE’ is. How is your team different from other teams? What sets your group apart? And what is expected of you as a member of this team? Like the above quote suggests, throwing on your team’s uniform or wearing a team t-shirt is not going to automatically bond your team – what IS going to bring your group together is knowing what it means to wear the uniform and understanding the privilege and responsibility that comes with being a member of the team. Is your team known for its highly committed members and long history of success? Or are you better known for your “scrappiness” and hard work ethic because even against your biggest opponents, you never let down and keep chipping away, doing all the little things right until you have secured a victory? When teams take a close look at who they are and what it means to be a “Falcon” or a “Trojan,” a “Hawk” or a “Bulldog,” their members tend to develop a sense of pride. And, when athletes have pride in their team they tend to find it easier to put great effort into practices and competitions, to make personal and physical sacrifices for the team, and to persevere through challenges and adversity when the going gets tough.

One way to develop this sense of identity is to write a team mission statement. This document should be a statement of a team’s purposes (or goals) and the values (e.g., dedication, hard work, trust), actions (e.g., perseverance through adversity, quality practice) and attitudes (e.g., respect for teammates and opponents, positive approach to practicing) that are required to achieve those purposes. Because you, as a team, have worked together to outline this mission, it should be clearer to each member what you stand for, who you are, and where you’re going.

Below is an example mission statement from a baseball team, which helped pave the way for their successful season.

The mission of our team is to play smart baseball with total intensity. Showing a never quit attitude this team will give 100% and spare no effort to win. We will be characterized by our team play and killer instinct. while exhibiting good sportsmanship and class. Finally, we will make smart decisions on and off the field.

A Sense of Respect for One Another

“The basic building block of good teambuilding is for the leader to promote the feeling that every human being is unique and adds value.” -Unknown

Teams are usually made up of individuals who have many different personalities, interests, likes and dislikes; so, it would be silly to expect that every member of a team will be the best of friends with every one of his or her teammates. However, it should be expected that teammates show each other respect and appreciation for people’s various contributions to the team. By creating an atmosphere in which all teammates are seen as meaningful contributors to the group’s success, all the members will be more motivated to work WITH one another and FOR one another.

Showing appreciation for one’s teammates is basically the same idea as “showing them that you care.” This caring does not mean you have to walk around practice every day complimenting all your teammates for everything they do. Instead, you can show you appreciate their hard work by acknowledging when a teammate had a good practice, made a good play, or was working particularly hard. You can also show a great deal of respect by avoiding sarcastic comments to people who may take it the wrong way and being careful when teasing teammates who may not see it as being ‘all in good fun.’ The team can also acknowledge its members by voting on weekly outstanding individuals. For example, you can recognize teammates through a Nail Award (given to the athlete who was the hardest working or the most mentally tough) and a Glue Award (given to the athlete who most brought the team together – either on the field or from the sideline).

A Sense of Trust

Trust is a factor so crucial to a team’s functioning that without it, a team will literally crumble. If teammates don’t trust each other, they will hold back in game situations (e.g., won’t pass the ball in a risky situation), they will experience a lot more worry on the field (e.g., when an outfielder doesn’t trust the pitcher’s decisions), and they will be less likely to share valuable information (e.g., not correcting a teammate’s form for fear of being yelled at). Trust is also something that is very fragile – once you have lost it, it becomes very difficult to rebuild.

So, what can you and your teammates do to foster a strong sense of trust among each other? One way is to develop and maintain a system of open and honest communication. When people feel that they are being listened to, are not going to be attacked for what they have to say, and can freely discuss their concerns, fears and excitement, they are

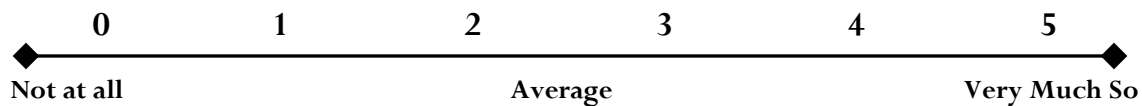


more likely trust those around them and work more effectively with others. It's also important that your team establishes a team climate in which it is okay to make mistakes. When mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities and not as "the end of the world," teammates are more likely to trust themselves to take calculated risks during practices and competitions.

Finally, one sure fire way to build trust in your teammates is to take responsibility and be accountable for your own actions as a contributing team member. When individuals carry their own weight, fellow teammates will be less likely to question their level of commitment to the team and will be more trusting of their efforts on and off the field.

EXERCISE 12: How Does Your Team Rate?

Directions: Working alone, think of the team you will be playing with this season. For each of the various attributes of effective teams we have discussed (as well as others we know to be important to effective team functioning), rate your team on how much you think it possesses and demonstrate these characteristics.



_____ Unity

_____ Effective Communication

_____ Team Identity & Pride

_____ Clear Goals

_____ Respect for One Another

_____ Clear Roles

_____ Trust

_____ Accepted Roles

Which 2 characteristics do you think YOUR team needs to spend the most time developing this season?

1. _____

2. _____

Team Building Activities

Luckily, there are many activities you can do and resources you can use to help your team work on becoming a more effective and cohesive team. And the even better news is your teams probably do some teambuilding already. In the next section we will discuss other teambuilding options available to you and your teammates.



EXERCISE 13: How to “Team Build”?

Directions: Working in small groups, think of some of the teams you have been on over the past few years and brainstorm a list of the types of activities you have done to help bond your team at the beginning and throughout the season.

Talking to captains around the state of Michigan, we have learned that many coaches and captains do activities that help develop a sense of unity and familiarity on their teams. These activities help team members spend time with each other outside of practices and competitions so people learn more about each other, see firsthand the benefits of working together, and start to form a sense of “who WE are.” Some examples of activities others have shared with us in the past are:

- ◆ Team dinners
- ◆ Team activities (e.g., community service or fundraising projects)
- ◆ Team outings (e.g., team movie night or going to watch another (high school, college or professional) team play)
- ◆ Team meetings (led by captains or a leadership council)
- ◆ Creating team mottoes
- ◆ Making team t-shirts or gear
- ◆ Carrying out positive team traditions (e.g., secret psych partners or a beginning-of-the-season scavenger hunt)
- ◆ Team building activities (at challenge courses/retreats or during preseason)

In a nutshell, teambuilding activities are activities and events that develop a greater sense of *collaboration* and *trust* between teammates through interactive exercises, team assessments, group discussions, etc. The great thing about these events is that they are fun and can help a group address and discuss many of the behaviors and attitudes that the group will need to adopt in order to be successful and have an enjoyable season. Below are some sample activities from a variety of sources that you can use with your teams (e.g., during a preseason practice, before an in-season practice, at a team dinner, etc.). There are many other activities you and your team can use, but these have been selected because they require very few (if any) materials and usually only take 15-30 minutes to complete.

Sample Activities (and their teambuilding objectives)

- ◆ All My Neighbors (*getting to know your teammates*)
- ◆ Human Knot (*managing, observing, & experiencing individual preferences toward accomplishing a task*)
- ◆ Trust Tag (*trust and effective communication*)
- ◆ Minefield (*trust and effective communication*)
- ◆ Sneak a Peek (*team problem solving*)

All My Neighbors

(from http://www.pecosriver.com/resources_3.html)

Equipment: Something to use as a place marker for each individual (a name tag, a napkin, a note card).

Objective: To break the ice with a new group and learn more about your teammates.

Set-Up:

- This activity works well in small or large groups (12-60 people).
- Ask everyone to form a shoulder-to-shoulder standing circle and then have each person take a step back.
- Give each person a place holder, which they should place at their feet.

Rules:

- The leader takes a place in the center of the circle and says something like the following:
- “This activity is similar to the game of musical chairs. As you’ll notice, there is one less placeholder than people in the group. That’s why I’m in the center of the circle. So, I’ll begin in the center of the circle, but my task is to try and find a place on the outside of the circle and have someone else end up without a place. The way I’m going to do that is to make a statement that is TRUE for me. For example, if I am wearing tennis shoes, I might say ‘All my neighbors are wearing tennis shoes.’ If that statement is also true for you, then you must come off your place and find a new spot in the circle. I could also say something like ‘All my neighbors love to swim,’ and if that’s true for you on the outside of the circle, you must move and find a new place. You may not move immediately to your right or left and you may not move off your space and return to it in the same round.”
- When you think people have had enough, simply say “OK, this is the last round.”

Human Knot

(from www.businessfundamentals.com/TeamBuilding.htm)

Equipment: None, but you need at least 8 team members for this activity to be effective

Objective: For the team or small sub-groups to work together to unravel themselves from a 'human knot' as quickly as possible

Set-up:

- Have the group stand in a tight circle with shoulders touching
- Everyone puts one hand in the center and takes one hand from someone across the circle
- Everyone puts their second hand in the center and takes someone else's hand across the circle

Rules:

- No one should be holding the hands of anyone next to them, or both hands of anyone else
- Hands may not break contact, although you may rotate your grip
- The group should attempt to unravel itself by members stepping over, under and through each others' arms

Debrief:

- Discussions should focus on how supporting, coaching, influencing and encouraging positive behaviors are all part of good team work
- Other conversations can include how your team recovers from conflict (recover from figuratively getting all tangled up), disunity, and frustration
- Occasionally you will have an overhand knot, which cannot be undone without breaking a pair of hands. It's often meaningful for a team to struggle with trying to undo an overhand knot

Trust Tag

(adapted from <http://playitsmart.footballfoundation.com/pdf/resources/Team%20Building.pdf>)

Equipment: Blindfolds

Objective: To build trust among team members through a fun tag activity

Set-Up:

- Divide the group into pairs and ask one person from each pair to be blindfolded.
- Designate an area in which the group must remain and select one pair to be "it."

Rules:

- Those who are blindfolded play the game of tag while their partners verbally guide them through the game.
- The sighted partners must keep their blindfolded partners safe and try to guide them away from the person who is "it."
- If your partner is "it" you must guide him or her towards the others.
- Only verbal guidance may be given, with no touching allowed by ANY partner pair (unless necessary for the safety of your partner or others).
- Everyone must stay in the designated playing area for the game.
- Halfway through the activity, the partners should switch roles.

Debrief:

- Did you trust your partner?
- Was it harder to be the leader or the blind person?
- Is trust important when working with others? Why?

Minefield

(adapted from www.wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html)

Equipment: Long rope or tape, materials for mines (e.g., foam balls, cones, foam noodles, large paper balls, and poly-spots)

Objective: To cross the 'minefield' (i.e., a designated area full of obstacles), with eyes closed (or blindfolded), without touching any obstacle or any other person

Set-Up:

- Create a "minefield" by roping or taping off a rectangular area about 20 feet in length (width is less important).
- Distribute "mines" throughout the minefield so that there are no clear/easy paths across the area

Rules:

- Teammates operate in pairs. One person is blind-folded (or keeps eyes closed). The other person can see and talk, but cannot enter the field or touch their partner.
- The challenge is for each blind-folded person to walk from one side of the field to the other, and avoiding the mines, by listening to the verbal instructions of their partners.
- Be wary of blindfolded people bumping into each other. The activity leader(s) can float around the playing area to help prevent collisions.
- Decide on the penalty for hitting a mine. It could be a restart (serious consequence) or time penalty or simply a count of hits.

Variation:

- The activity can also be conducted as a competitive task - e.g., which pair is the quickest or has the fewest hits?

Debrief:

- How much did you trust your partner (on a scale of 1 to 10) at the start of the activity?
- How much did you trust your partner (on a scale of 1 to 10) at the end?
- What is the difference between going alone and being guided by a teammate?
- What ingredients are needed when trusting and working with someone else?
- What did your partner do to help you feel safe and secure?
- What could your partner have done to help make you feel more safe/secure?
- What communication strategies worked best?
- How can we take this information onto the field, court, etc. to be a more successful team?

Sneak a Peek

(from <http://utahyouth.org/files/uploads/Group%20Activities.pdf>)

Equipment: Building blocks or something similar (e.g., Legos or Popsicle sticks)

Objective: To work in small teams to re-create a pre-made sculpture

Set-Up:

- Prior to the game, build a small sculpture or design with some of the building materials and hide it from the group.
 - Place the original sculpture in a place that is hidden but that is at an equal distance from all the groups.
- Divide the team into small groups of two to six members each.
- Give each team enough building items needed to duplicate what you have already created.

Rules:

- Ask one member from each team to come at the same time to look at the sculpture for five seconds in order to try to memorize it as much as possible before returning to his/her team.
- After they run back to their teams, they have 30 seconds to instruct their teams how to build the structure so that it looks like the one that has been hidden.
- After the 30 seconds ask each team to send up another member of their group who gets a chance to sneak a peek before returning to their team. Continue in this manner until one of the teams successfully duplicates the original sculpture.
- Build different sculptures for any additional rounds of this game.

Debrief:

- How did this activity involve teamwork?
- What did each person in your group do to help?
- What are some important parts of teamwork?
- How is teamwork critical to our team's success?

***** For other teambuilding activities, please refer to the following resources *****

• **Websites:**

- www.wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html
- www.businessfundamentals.com/TeamBuilding.htm
- www.deca.org/pdf/teambuildinggames.pdf
- www.pecosriver.com/resources_3.html

• **Books:**

- Team Challenges: 170+ Group Activities to Build Cooperation, communication and Creativity (Bordessa, 2005)
- The Big Book of team Building Games (Newstrom & Scannell, 1997)
- Team Building Activities for Every Group (Jones, 2000)

Summary

By taking the time to help your team become more cohesive, your efforts will not only pay off with more competitive success, but the experiences you and your teammates share on your team will most certainly be more enjoyable. It is important that your teambuilding work not only be reserved for preseason time...this is a common misconception.

In order for your team to fully reap the benefits of these lessons and activities you must view teambuilding as a season long process. As Henry Ford, the father of the Ford Motor Company once said:

*"Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."*

Unit VI: Handling Tough Team Situations

“You can’t allow difficulties to sink you. Everybody has problems. What separates the champions from the also-rans [losers] is how they react to them.”

-Lou Holtz, College Football Coaching Legend

We all encounter difficult situations in our lives whether in school, at home, or through sport. As Lou Holtz, a college football coaching legend, correctly stated, ‘Everybody has problems.’ But while some individuals allow life’s challenges to overwhelm or to ‘sink’ them, true champions see these challenges as opportunities to make them stronger.

Whether we overcome difficult situations largely depends on how well we respond to them. For example, a captain who reacts to a conflict with the coach through hostility and anger will almost indefinitely worsen the problem and weaken the coach-athlete relationship. On the other hand, a captain who responds to the same situation with a calm approach and effective communication skills (discussed in chapter 3) will have a far greater chance of resolving the problem and doing so quickly. The concept seems simple, right? But as current and future leaders who have experienced many kinds of team problems have indicated, putting this principle into practice is harder than it sounds. For example, at this point you might be asking yourself, “What are the appropriate responses to conflict, how do I know if I am implementing the right ones, and how do I learn them in the first place?”

Effectively handling common team problems begins with self-belief – trusting that you possess the ability to help your teammates bounce back from hardship. This chapter is designed to help you develop this confidence by 1) teaching you the skills necessary to overcome and resolve common team problems and 2) allowing you to strategize and practice them on your own. Since there’s no time like the present, let’s begin!

Self-Assessment

Before we dive into learning the proper strategies for overcoming common team problems, let’s first take a moment to identify what the problems are. Consider your current season or last year. Was there ever a time when:

- Your teammates didn’t get along?
- Your team went through a losing streak?
- The captains made a poor decision?
- You or another player disliked the coach?

Now think about how you handled those situations. Do you regret reacting the way you did? Was there anything you could have done better to cope with the problem? If the answer is yes, you’re in the right place for learning how to improve!

Exercise 14: My Common Team Problems

In the first column below, write down the 3 or 4 most frequent difficult situations, problems, or challenges you have faced as a captain (If you have never been a captain, write the most frequent difficult situations you and your teammates have faced during your most recent season). In the second column, take note of how you responded to those situations (e.g., threw my racquet, talked behind my teammate’s back, ignored it, discussed the issue with my co-captain, etc). In the last column, assess whether you think this response was effective by asking yourself, “Were you able to overcome the problem and did you help your teammates and coaches to do the same?” Check the

appropriate box labeled 'yes' or 'no.' Be as detailed as possible in this exercise and write as many additional notes as you like.

	Problem	Your Response	Effective?	
			Yes	No
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Now read over your completed table. Is there room for improvement? The answer is yes, there always is! Keep this chart in mind as you read the rest of this chapter. You will be asked to devise more effective ways of overcoming the same challenges that you identified above.

Basic Skills

By developing a certain skill-set, you can better handle virtually any team problem that comes your way. The following guidelines have been compiled in an easy-to-remember fashion to help you deal with team problems as effectively as possible.

Making Tough Decisions

Most people don't like making tough decisions. In fact, many try to avoid the process altogether. As a current or future leader on your team, you might be asking yourself, "How do I know which is the right choice? What if I make the wrong choice? How will my teammates and coaches react to my decision?" Decision-making is a responsibility of any leader and an inherent part of being a captain. For example, if you catch a teammate breaking a team rule (e.g., drinking alcohol), do you approach your teammate, tell the coach, or pretend it never happened? If your co-captain makes a poor decision (e.g., commits unsportsmanlike conduct during a game), do you confront them about their

behavior or support their decisions unconditionally because he or she is your teammate and friend? If a teammate misses a critical play, do you correct them as a captain even though they're better skilled than you? Fortunately, even in the most difficult scenarios we can all become more effective decision-makers with education, experience, and practice. Below are a few pointers to keep in mind the next time you are faced with a tough team decision (Adapted from Jones, 2008):

1. **Determine the importance of the decision.** Ask yourself, "How important is this decision?" Captains and other team leaders have a lot on their plate. They can't afford to dwell, stress, or use all of their resources on minor decisions. For example, while choosing a team t-shirt design is important, a captain shouldn't spend all of their time on this task when they are also being called upon to lead warm-ups, assist in drills, develop team cohesion, and provide input on how to come back from a five-game losing streak. Remember that you have to lead effectively for an entire season. So prioritize your time and save your "stress" and energy for the truly tough decisions and situations.
2. **Identify all your options on paper.** Write down all the possible options and solutions to the problem that you can think of, even the ones that seem dumb, that first appear as if they will never work, or that seem impossible to pull off. Getting everything down on paper makes our options clearer and gives us time and space to think.
3. **Consider the outcomes.** Now take your list of possible solutions and rank order them. Identify the best and worst case scenarios by asking yourself, "What are the pros and cons of each option or solution? Which options or solutions are most and least likely to work? Which options or solutions will benefit most or all involved? What are the costs and benefits of each?"
4. **Get advice.** Leaders who are too proud to ask for help are doomed to fail. As high school captains, you are not expected to know everything. Ask someone you trust to give you some practical advice (e.g., a parent, grandparent, an older sibling, your coach, or a mentor).
5. **Sleep on it.** Avoid making rash decisions. Give yourself some time to think, get used to, and feel comfortable with the solution you choose. At the same time don't become a deer in the headlights and take forever to decide on what you will do. Leaders must be decisive and at the same time avoid making impulsive decisions.
6. **Accept that it is humanly impossible to always be right.** Feeling anxious or pressured to make the right decision is normal. After all, the decisions you make as a leader are often a reflection of the entire team. But, no one can be right all the time. Rather than being reactive and putting yourself down, be proactive and accept your mistakes when you make them. Learn from your errors to improve for the future. Remember: "You can tell a lot by a person's character, not by the mistakes [they] made, but by how [they] handled those mistakes." (Holtz, 2006, p.127).
7. **Take responsibility for your failures and give credit for your success.** "The person who takes responsibility for [their] errors and does what [they] can to fix the problems [they've] created is someone you should respect" (Holtz, 2006, p.127). No one likes to make mistakes. But as highly successful coach Lou Holtz indicates, one secret of effective leadership is to take responsibility for any mistakes you make. Your teammates and coaches will respect you for doing so. At the same time, if you do something as a captain that leads to a great deal of team or individual success, acknowledge those on the team who helped you accomplish those goals.

Resolving Conflict

Conflict is an inevitable part of any organization or team. However, just because conflict exists does not mean that it has to be destructive. As a leader, ensuring that you and your teammates handle disputes appropriately has the potential to make your team even stronger. Fortunately, there are conflict management strategies that are available

and do work. On the contrary, there are also some approaches that are known to be ineffective. Below we have provided some examples of conflict approaches to use and those to avoid.

Conflict Approaches to Use. Many times when we encounter conflict we tend to react without thinking. For example, when the referee makes a bad call, our gut reaction is to yell, complain, or behave aggressively. After we have made a scene or get tossed from the game, we regret behaving so irrationally. Or as a captain, you may react to a conflict between teammates by picking sides when it would be more appropriate to stop, think, and consider the views of all parties involved. Below are 4 easy-to-remember guidelines (i.e., STAR) to consider the next time you encounter conflict either directly involving you or handling a problem between others. A specific example of each step is provided in the third column (Degelman & Hayes, 1996):

S	<i>Stop!</i>	Ask yourself: What happened? What was the conflict about? Who was involved? What events and emotions led up to the problem?	EXAMPLE: Jen, our goalie, let in a game-winning goal with ten seconds left in the third period. Mel, our defenseman, snapped at Jen after the game and made several negative comments about her playing ability both to her face and behind her back.
T	<i>Think</i>	What made you or your teammates angry and upset? What are the potential consequences if the conflict goes unresolved?	EXAMPLE: Mel is likely feeling angry because this was the last game of her high school career. As a senior, this game was really important to her and it has abruptly come to an end with one poor play by her teammate. Jen has likely lost confidence in her goal-tending ability and may have some resentment towards Mel. This may affect not only their friendship, but also Jen's performance next season.
A	<i>Act</i>	Gather all the facts and hear all sides. Remember your decision-making pointers described above: Write down all possible options and solutions and rank order them based on which solutions will produce the best and worst case scenarios.	EXAMPLE: Ask other teammates who were present at the time of the incident what happened. Approach Jen and Mel individually and hear their stories as well. Ask each of them if and how they are willing to resolve the issue. Write down the options: 1. Suggest that they work this out on their own. 2. Call a meeting and be present to mediate the situation. Rank order: Jen and Mel's personalities seem to clash enough as it is and Jen noted that she doesn't want to talk to Mel alone. Choose Option 2.
R	<i>React</i>	Offer the most appropriate solution or compromise to the problem.	EXAMPLE: Suggest to Jen and Mel that all three of you meet to resolve the issue together. Set some rules for the discussion (speak calmly and avoid hurtful words). Explain the importance of apologies and forgiveness in this particular situation.

Conflict Approaches to Avoid. While the STAR method is a great example of a conflict management approach to use, there are certainly other approaches to avoid. Handling conflict takes tact. In other words, much of our effectiveness in managing conflict is determined by how well we can talk to our teammates and coaches about the problem. In particular, we have to be careful of our tone of voice and the words we choose. Below is a list of example approaches to conflict that your teammates and coaches will *not* respond well to:

Approach to Avoid	Example
<i>Advising</i>	"What you should do is..." "I will tell you what I would do..."
<i>Commanding</i>	"You go and tell her you are sorry."
<i>Judging</i>	"That was a stupid idea."
<i>Lecturing</i>	"How many times have I told you..."
<i>Discounting</i>	"It can't be that bad, Cheer up."
<i>Preaching</i>	"If you were honest, you would..."
<i>Threatening</i>	"This is the last time I will..."

Exercise 15: Testing Your Basic Skills

Scenario 1: You are in your junior year of high school and a captain of your varsity track team. You have recently found out that Emily, your senior teammate, has been getting high before practice. While her drug use has not seemed to negatively affect her performance, using illegal drugs on or near the athletic facilities is prohibited and so you've thought about telling the coach. Plus, you have heard that Emily has tried to get some of your freshmen teammates to get high before practice as well.

Emily is one of the most well-liked athletes on your team and she is a star runner that could break several school records this year. Deciding to tell the coach could result in her being kicked off the team, which would be an extremely unpopular decision to the rest of your teammates. But if the coach ever caught Emily and then found out that you knew about her behavior from the start, your willingness to keep it a secret would result in a poor reflection on you. Using your decision-making guidelines and the STAR method, how would you effectively respond to and manage this difficult situation?

Scenario 2: You are a captain of your varsity soccer team. You are quickly approaching the first playoff game of the season and John, a fellow senior and teammate, has been making major passing errors in practice for the past two weeks. John is not a captain, but he is a starter. While you know you don't possess the same physical skill as John, you do know the game and you are expected to provide feedback to teammates. So you approach John and give him some constructive feedback on how to improve his passing before the upcoming game. But John snaps at you, says "What do you know about it?!" and walks away. As a captain, your confidence in your leadership ability declines and you're not sure if you should ever give feedback to anyone again. Using your decision-making guidelines and the STAR method, how would you effectively respond to and manage this difficult situation?

Handling Tough Team Situations

Have you ever had to deal with a tough loss or losing streak, to confront a teammate about their poor behavior, or struggle to help a teammate make good choices off the field? If you haven't, you probably will at some point as a current or future leader of your team. Below we have outlined some ways for handling these specific team problems.

Dealing with tough losses and losing streaks

Let's face it. Nobody likes to lose, especially when you're expected to win. As a captain, you have a responsibility to help your team bounce back from hardships like these. But how can one person help an entire team to start winning? After all, it wasn't you that let in the game-winning goal that ruined your playoff chances last year. Nevertheless, you are a vital part of your team's success and your fellow teammates will look to you for guidance because of your leadership position. Below we have outlined several suggestions on how to handle tough losses and losing streaks based on the experiences of athletes and professionals we have worked with and other captains like you:

- **Identify what went wrong and implement a plan for improvement.** Losing is only useful if you learn from the mistakes that led to the loss. So it's important to develop a routine for analyzing what went wrong and how to improve. For example, consult with the coach. Suggest that you hold a weekly team meeting to assess the previous game and the practice performances leading up to that game. Gather input from all team members and devise a solution together by setting *realistic* and *specific* short and long term team goals. Remember to start small and work up. For example, in the short term you might suggest that your team strive to make accurate passes in practice by focusing their eyes on the target. In the long term, you might suggest that your team strive to make accurate passes in games. Next you might focus on short and long term goals to improve shooting and then on-field communication. The key here is to avoid overwhelming your teammates with too many goals at once. Setting and achieving goals is a well-thought-out, step-by-step process.

Commit to these goals by writing them down and putting them in a place where every team member can read them on a daily basis (e.g., locker room). Remember that what you achieve in games is largely determined by what you accomplish in practice. So encourage your teammates to start working towards these goals in practice everyday. Hold your teammates accountable by letting them know that you care and that you notice them. Give positive feedback when you see things progressing and constructive criticism when you see a need for improvement (refer to the feedback sandwich learned in chapter 3).

- **Recognize what went well.** Losing doesn't mean that your team is all bad or that your season is completely ruined. So even if you lost the game, was there something that the team, the coach, or an individual player did well? Point it out and offer praise. Focusing on the positives will build confidence and increase the likelihood of success in the future.

- **Change your team's definition of success.** Winning on the scoreboard isn't everything and neither is losing. So if the outcome isn't all-important, then what is? Remember that even if you're looking at a losing season, that doesn't mean your team was unsuccessful. For example, is your team having fun and do they still enjoy the sport? Is your team improving from game-to-game even though they're still losing on the scoreboard? Are your teammates developing friendships, getting along really well, and enjoying being part of a team? Winning is important, but so are all the other components of sport, including camaraderie and friendship, school and team spirit, enjoyment, physical fitness, and learning life lessons. Still not convinced? Consider the following quote by Tony Dungy, head coach of the 2007 Super Bowl champions:

"We're not all going to reach the Super Bowl or the top of the corporate ladder, but we each have a chance to walk away from something saying, 'I did the ordinary things *as well as I could*. I performed to the full limits of my ability. I achieved success.' Under that definition, a 5-11 team might actually be more successful than a 14-2 team" (p.150).

How can coaches like Dungy claim to have a winning team and not win than many games? It comes down to his definition of success. For them, a successful team was bred through hard work, belief, and a persevering attitude. What is ironic about adopting such an attitude is that doing so often leads to winning more games.

- **Accept that you can't win them all.** Even the Patriots, who in 2007 had a record of 18-0, lost the Super Bowl. A perfect team simply does not exist. But there are teams that are better at coping with loss than others. An important part of coming back from major losses or losing streaks is changing your team's focus. Stop dwelling on the games you lost and start strategizing on team improvement, personal bests, and the games you want to win.
- **Boost Morale.** Ok, so you lost the game *again*. You've gone over what went wrong, thought about your personal and team mistakes, and came up with ways to fix them. Now it's time to cheer up. There's no use 'crying over spilled milk' and there's definitely no use staying upset over the outcome of a game that you cannot change. After all, you'll never win another game again if your mood is low and your attitude is poor. Start livening up the atmosphere, boost morale, and provide some inspiration. Here are some suggestions you may consider as a team leader:

Boosting Morale: Joke Jar

1.	Instruct your teammates to write down their favorite jokes, experiences, or team memories in a jar.
2.	Screen them. Ensure that these jokes are appropriate, acceptable to coaches, and respectful of your teammates and others who may hear you telling them (e.g., bus driver taking you to away games, opposing teammates or coaches, athletic director, parents). Skipping this step may lead this exercise to backfire.
3.	Place the jokes in a jar.
4.	Talk to the Coach. The goal of this exercise is to pull a joke from the jar and tell it whenever you sense the team is getting down. But some coaches like quiet bus rides and others want a serious locker room environment at halftime. With the coach, explain the purpose of the exercise and designate appropriate times to use the joke jar (e.g., pull one joke on the bus ride and then refocus, or use the joke jar only in the locker room after practice). Cooperation is key.

Boosting Morale: Halliwell's Hockey Stick

1.	Find a piece of equipment related to your sport that is old or out-of-use (e.g., hockey stick, jersey, baseball, soccer ball, relay baton, tennis racquet, etc).
2.	Every team member is to write their most inspirational role model on the chosen piece of equipment. For example, an ice hockey player might write the name of a famous coach (e.g., Coach Brooks), a family member (e.g., Dad), or a professional athlete (e.g., Mario Lemieux), whomever gives that person the utmost inspiration to improve and perform well in ice hockey.
3.	Every team member is to share who they have chosen as their role model and why. Conducting this exercise allows the piece of equipment (e.g., ice hockey stick) to become a storied representation of everyone's contribution to the team.
4.	Designate one player each week to be in charge of "protecting" and taking this piece of equipment to all team functions – locker room, home and away games, practice, etc. This symbolic equipment piece serves as a constant reminder to strive despite the many obstacles you face as a player and as a team.

Constructively challenging teammates

As a captain, certain situations may require you to provide feedback, give criticism, or confront a teammate. For example, other captains like you have had to confront teammates on issues such as stealing from the locker room, coming to practice high or hung-over, throwing sport equipment after a bad play, disrespecting the coach, and retaliating against opponents, fellow teammates, or referees during games. As a leader, it is not only important that you do not engage in the same misbehavior, but that you also address those who do. As one Michigan high school captain stated, "Like to be a captain, I think they have to be able to have good communication skills with their peers and the coach. So they have to be comfortable talking about emotions and talking about things and confronting people." The key to effective confrontation is to do so constructively. Below are some useful guidelines to consider (Adapted from Martens, 1987):

- **Show You Care.** Do not publically embarrass your teammate. Instead, confront him or her individually. Make eye contact, give them your undivided attention, and respect them the way you want to be respected in return. When they show improvement, let them know you've noticed a change and offer praise (e.g., "Hey Jim, I've noticed that you haven't been getting as angry during games, and it's really made a difference in improving team morale. You're really a positive and important part of the team").
- **Strive to Understand.** Listen to their stories carefully and intently. Rather than interrupt, let them express how they feel, answer their questions, and ask them to describe their viewpoint, thoughts, and concerns.
- **Approach Tentatively and In Control.** Although you might want to yell, complain, or insult this player, composure is key. After all, you want to model the type of self-control you would like to see in them. When you suggest more constructive behaviors for them to consider, do so in a calm and caring tone. Recall the ineffective approaches to conflict described earlier in this chapter and avoid them. Watch your body language. While your tone of voice might be calm, holding up your fists sends a message of anger and hostility and will cause your teammate to become defensive.

- **Express Feelings Constructively.** Of course it is also important to let your teammate know how *you* feel. It's never good to let your emotions bottle up inside. To express these feelings constructively, make sure you are specific in describing your emotions and let them know why you feel the way you do (e.g., "I am disappointed because..."). Remember to attack only the behavior and never the person (e.g., "I am disappointed because you threw your stick and yelled at the ref in a playoff game" versus "I can't believe you were stupid enough to throw your stick and scream at the ref!"). Lastly, use "I" statements rather than "you" statements. "I" statements place the focus on how you have responded to the behavior (e.g., "I wish that you would not interrupt coach when she is giving a pre-game speech because it is a distraction to other players") while "you" statements place the focus on negative judgments about the person (e.g., "You are such a distraction to other players when coach is trying to talk").

Helping teammates make good off-the-field choices

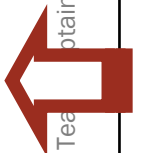
- **Be a good role model.** You can't control what your teammates do outside of practices and games, but you can increase the likelihood that they will make good off-the-field choices by setting the proper example. As one Michigan high school sport captain stated, "I think [captains] need to remember that even if they're not playing [their sport], their decisions are still affecting everyone. You're supposed to be a role model for your team on and off [the field]. So if it's ok for you to go and drink, it's ok for the other eleven players to go drink." Another Michigan high school sport captain similarly noted, "I just think that [other captains] have to know that they are the standards by which others define and measure themselves." Even in professional sports, coaches are relying on their captains to set appropriate examples. As Tony Dungy, former head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and present coach of the Indianapolis Colts, said to his captain: "Hardy, your response to a situation is always critical, but it's especially critical when you're on the field as a Buc, because you're one of our captains...If I can't get the captains to respond appropriately and show the leadership I expect, how is anyone else going to respond?" (p. 159). Be the change that you want to see in your teammates and stick to the rules set forth by your coaches and your school.
- **Offer guidance.** Help your teammates to see the consequences of their actions before they engage in the misdeed and show them alternatives ("Sarah, I know you really want to yell at Coach right now, but she will probably yell right back and make you sit the bench. After the game, let's approach Coach together and calmly resolve the issue).

What do I do if I mess up?

As a captain there is pressure on you to lead and to lead well. You might be asking yourself, "What if I mess up?" Everyone makes mistakes, and it is important that we acknowledge and own our errors when we make them and accept the consequences. The good news is that we can recover from our mistakes, even the big ones. First, change your outlook. Rather than viewing your leadership mistakes as disastrous, see them as opportunities to improve. Now is your chance to show your teammates how to overcome similar errors in their own lives by modeling a good recovery. Second, go back to the basics. Review the principles outlined in this chapter and devise a plan for avoiding the mistake in the future. Simply stated, don't dwell on it; learn from it!

Exercise 16: My Common Team Problems Revisited

Recall the conflict situations you wrote in the first exercise at the beginning of this chapter. Copy them in the first column below. In the second column, devise and outline the best plan possible for handling each of these challenges based on the material presented in this chapter. Remember the decision-making principles, the STAR method, the conflict approaches to avoid, the practice scenarios you have rehearsed, and the ways to handle the common team problems that we have already reviewed.



	Problem	Plan
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Now read over your plans and rate them by asking yourself the following four questions:

1. Did I utilize what I learned in this chapter to create my plan?
2. Do I have the resources to implement this plan?
3. Does my plan consider the best interests of the parties involved (e.g., my teammates and/or coaches)?
4. How confident am I that I can carry out my plan effectively in response to a real world conflict situation?

Conclusion

The types of team problems we encounter as leaders are numerous. For example you might be wondering, how do I deal with teammates who don't seem to care? How do I deal with less than perfect coaches or intra-team fighting? What if my teammates resent me for something I did? And what do I do if I play poorly as a captain? Unfortunately, we cannot address all of these problems in a single chapter. But, all of the principles outlined above can be applied to virtually any difficult situation you face as a team leader. With the basic skills under your belt and the confidence that you can use them, you'll be prepared to handle the majority of issues that come up in and out of season.

As Vince Lombardi, an NFL coaching legend, eloquently stated, "The strength of the group is the strength of the leaders." Your high school sport experience will undoubtedly challenge you. But your ability to handle common team problems and to build a strong team will come from your resiliency as a leader. Taking the information provided here seriously is one way to start building that strength.

Unit VII: Using What You Learned

“It ain’t over until it is over!”
-Yogi Berra, Baseball Great

Congratulations! You are just about finished with the conference portion of the MHSAA Captain’s Leadership Training Program. However, your journey as an effective captain is only beginning. The challenge before you is to now implement what you have learned today into your own life and to learn how to incorporate what you have been presented in ways that will help you, your teammates and your coaches have a great scholastic sports experience.

Taking Stock of What You Learned

Let’s begin by taking stock of what you learned by completing Exercise 13.

EXERCISE 17: What I Learned Today

Directions: Take a few minutes to review what you learned during today’s sessions. In particular, look through the units that were covered and the exercises completed, while thinking about your own particular school and team. Next, list the 3 most important lessons you learned about being an effective captain. Then, beside each lesson, try to identify a specific way you can use that information with your team.

Leadership Lesson Learned	Specific Way I Will Use This Lesson
Example Lesson. <i>The importance of getting to know each of my teammates.</i>	<i>I will try to sit with teammates I don’t know very well at lunch each day or on the bus to away-games to get to know them better.</i>
Lesson 1	
Lesson 2	
Lesson 3	



Now that you have identified some key leadership lessons that can help you be a more effective captain, make a commitment to take action on these. To be perfectly honest, too often people come to workshops like this, but never make a commitment to act. So, we encourage you to take the next step and put your plans into action.

Generating Your School's Student-Athlete Leadership Plan

While individual leaders can surely make a difference, it is much easier to be successful if your school develops a positive culture of support. Schools vary in terms of their cultures of support for student-athlete leadership, but all schools can function better if the student leaders help the teachers, athletic directors and administrators know what they need. Exercise 14 will help you determine what you, as leaders, need in terms of support from your school.



EXERCISE 18: Student Athlete Leadership Needs

Directions: This exercise will be done in two parts. Each part will be given to your school athletic director with the expectation that it is used in your school's athletic program.

Part 1 – Guidelines for Captains. Find and form a group with other student-athletes from your school. Select on student-athlete to be the recorder. While working within your group, identify and write down specific roles and responsibilities for all of your school's team captains. Break these responsibilities into categories: things to do in the offseason, things to do at practice, things to do during games, things to do with teammates, things to do with coaches, things to do with the student body, things to prepare yourself, etc. When you are finished with this list, your athletic director should be able to type your notes, and hand out to all team captains before the season starts.

Part 2 – Advice to Coaches and Administrators. Now that you’ve determined what the student-athlete needs to do to be an effective team captain, let’s focus on the adult leaders of your teams and school programs: your coaches, teachers, parents, school athletic director and other school administrators. What can these adults do to help make you a more effective and successful team captain?

Summary: Where To From Here?

We hope you have enjoyed your participation in this captain’s leadership training conference. In it, you have learned about the roles and responsibilities of being a captain, effective communication, ways to motivate teammates and ways to team build. Not only did you learn from the experts that led these sessions, but hopefully you learned a great deal from interacting with other current or future captains as well. So, when you return to your school, we urge you to support each other as leaders. Make a pact to keep things confidential, but feel free to use each other as sounding boards and ask each other for advice if you are met with a challenge on your team that you are not quite sure how to handle. Know that you can have an impact on making the sport experience more enjoyable and successful for both you and your teammates. With your help, your school’s teams can create and live a culture of excellence. Take the lead!

Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and in actions.
- Harold Geneen

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