



SCRIMMAGE!

Coaching a Season of Significance

By Greg Winkler, Fond du Lac High School

Over a coaching career spanning three decades, I've learned a lot about teaching young athletes and handling the different situations that present themselves during and given season. As the years went by, it became more and more clear to me that wins and losses don't determine the success of each particular team. Regardless of the talent or the age group, I realized that my goal as the coach should be to ensure that each season is a Season of Significance for all the athletes involved.

Each and every one of us have personal goals for our lives and for the teams we coach. One of my annual goals for every one of my teams is for each season to be a significant one, so memorable that they will always treasure the experience. So, what are the characteristics of a significant season?

There are three key elements needed for a season to be remembered and for that season to have a lasting impression on your team.

Element number one: The season needs to be meaningful. Did the players take something away with them at season's end? Did the players improve their individual skills or skill level? Did the players master a new team tactic? Was a meaningful relationship formed between you the coach and the team? If you can answer yes to any of those questions, you probably satisfied the first element.

Element number two: Did you make the season important to the players? A season can be important for many of the same reasons that it was meaningful. If the season wasn't important to an individual player, how valuable was that individual to your team? Each player needs to feel involved in the team goals that were set, regardless of his or her respective role within the team. For the season to be important, the team has to believe in the goals of overall mission which the coach lays out for them.

The third and final element: Was the season memorable? It could be that the team won a conference title, beat an opponent for the first time, or had their first winning record. Their achievements make the season memorable. However, if the things that go along with winning aren't accomplished, can you still have a memorable season? The answer is, of course, yes.

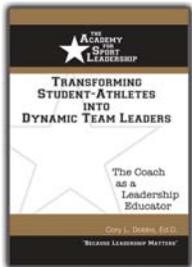
For example, you may be taking on the challenge of creating a program from scratch. It could be that you are still in the developmental years of your program, still trying to grow and gain recognition. Or it could be that your team has decided to take on a tougher schedule after previously enjoying success. While winning is definitely a goal to be achieved, it is not a necessary factor for a significant season.

About the Author

Greg Winkler began his soccer coaching career with the Fond du Lac Youth Soccer Association twenty years ago. He has been Head Soccer Coach at Fond du Lac High School for twelve years, where his teams have earned nine Regional titles, five Conference titles, and eleven NSCAA team academic awards. He has also served as Assistant Athletic Director since 2000.

Greg's book *Coaching a Season of Significance* is available www.gregwinkler.net.

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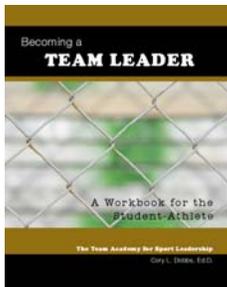


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Teamwork, Leadership, and Suffering by Patrick Lencioni

One of the most prevailing approaches to modern life, if not the predominant one, is the desire to avoid suffering. So much of our lives—and our economy—is involved in finding ways to get through our days without having to face the physical and emotional difficulties that are ultimately inevitable.

Evidence of this can be found in everything from the existence of hundreds of types of pain relievers (Extra Strength Tylenol Cold Gel Caps for Left-handed Children) to the bogus advertisements for miraculous weight loss solutions (Eat All You Want and Never Exercise!) to the preponderance of self-help books encouraging us to avoid guilt and personal responsibility for our actions by assigning blame and responsibility to a parent, teacher or family pet.

Of course this is understandable. None of us seeks out opportunities to suffer, and so none of us is immune from the temptation to avoid it. However, our inability to understand the inevitability and necessity of suffering has its costs.

When people fear suffering more than they should, they ironically experience unnecessary anguish and stress. Beyond that, some would say that worrying actually increases the likelihood that what is being feared will happen. Finally, our distaste for suffering makes it difficult for us to benefit from its effects, and from realizing the benefits that it yields when we emerge on the other side.

This is certainly true when it comes to teamwork and leadership, although a better term for suffering might be discomfort. All too often, team leaders and members operate under the assumption that success is dependent on never having to deal with a moment of interpersonal awkwardness or pain. This, of course, makes it virtually impossible—no, it makes it completely impossible—to achieve any real breakthroughs in building a team.

Every great team must suffer a little, and sometimes a lot, in order to achieve greatness. It must confront, experience and struggle with uncomfortable and relationship-threatening moments of conflict and confusion, and then it must work through those moments by demonstrating interpersonal courage, persistence and forgiveness. By doing so, it establishes levels of trust that simply cannot be otherwise achieved.

For those of us who are tempted to be skeptical about this, to continue searching for a team-building process that is painless and discomfort-free, we should look at family and marriage to give us clarity. When we realize that no great family or marriage can be formed—or maintained—without the willingness to enter the danger of interpersonal conflict and discomfort, we may begin to appreciate the importance of doing so on our teams.

Ironically, by doing so, a team will begin to diminish the level of awkwardness that it experiences, as well as the length of time that a given situation lasts. Most important of all, it will create an environment of honest, natural communication and interaction. And that is worth a lot more than the false benefits of avoiding discomfort in the first place.

About Patrick Lencioni

Lencioni, named by *Fortune* magazine as one of the “Ten New Gurus You Should Know”, is the bestselling author of eight books including *Death by Meeting*; *Three Signs of a Miserable Job* and *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* which continues to be a fixture on national best-seller lists. Lencioni is a sought-after speaker, consultant, and founder of The Table Group, a firm dedicated to improving teamwork, clarity, and effectiveness. In addition, Pat and his work have appeared in *BusinessWeek*, *Sports Business Journal*, *the Wall Street Journal* and *Harvard Business Review*, to name a few.