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Leadership in Sports

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LEADERSHIP IN SPORTS

By

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I/ Introduction

Leadership is critical in no matter what situation throughout life such as governing a country, running a company or even coaching a sports team. It is imperative that a leader acquires the skills necessary to adapt and lead a variety of groups. Currently, there is a lot of research was conducted on this topic and it grows every day. Unfortunately, there is no secret sauce or standard way to become a great leader. It is all about doing it and learning from your mistakes. However, many studies performed try to find a method of becoming a successful leader in order to help others get to where so few have arrived, exemplary leadership.

One study that I analyzed is called *Legacy 15 Lessons in Leadership* by James Kerr. I am on the beach volleyball team at the University of South Carolina and my sophomore year my coach made the team read this book. It examines how and what the All Blacks (New Zealand rugby team) can teach us about the business of life. The book reveals the importance of sports and the lessons we can learn from doing and studying them. It also illustrates that we learn so much from being on sports teams and as a result these skills that we develop translate right into real life. The skills we acquire will help us become more successful in life in no matter what we pursue for our careers. Therefore, it is significant to analyze leadership in sports because there are numerous extra benefits then just winning a game or being fit.

From a young age, my life always involved sports from my older sister playing on her softball team to my dad always watching the grand slam tournaments in tennis. All I wanted to do was get out there and try it myself. I had this unstoppable energy to try a sport until I was good at it. I wanted to be the best in whatever I practiced. Slowly over time I realized I was drawn to sports so much because of the opportunity it presented itself to me. It gave me the chance to learn from leaders and then become a leader myself. Growing up I was heavily involved in sports because it was my one true outlet to develop my leadership skills. With

hard work and discipline, I was the captain on the volleyball and basketball middle school A team in eighth grade; as well as the eleventh, and twelfth grade varsity teams. Through each team, I used my leaders as role models in order to learn from them to be able to implement what they did well when I became a leader. It was not until I made it to college that I realized I naturally lean towards a leadership role and it is a position I thrive in. When people ask me what my passion is, I confidently answer leadership.

As a result, this is how I received inspiration for my thesis topic. Being an international business major and a player on the beach volleyball team, the topic of leadership intrigues me and is very prevalent in my life. Therefore, the goal of my thesis is to analyze leadership in sports across a variety of coaches and sports. As I explained previously, sports are such a huge part of my life and have shaped me to become who I am today. Being able to research leadership in sports from different coaches' perspectives would allow me to learn from their experiences as leaders, as I did in high school and middle school. Even though I do not plan on pursuing sports after college, this could then help me later on in life seeing as though leadership skills are transferable. Moreover, the skills leaders develop in sports are leveraged just as easily in a business environment. It is important, therefore, to learn the necessary skills needed to be successful as a leader and I hope to learn and extrapolate this information from the coaches during the interviews. Therefore, I embarked upon this journey of doing my own analysis and research of leadership in sports at my university.

In order to structure my thesis I will centralize it around the book *The student leadership challenge* by Kouzes and Posner. It is a book that outlines 'The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership' that are common when leaders are able to make amazing things happen. The goal of the book is to demonstrate how any person can be a leader regardless of age and experience. Therefore, another goal of my thesis is to investigate how much some of the top coaches in USC athletics use this model whether implicitly or explicitly for

themselves and the leaders on their team. The questions will force the coaches to use examples from their past and present experiences. They will also make the coaches think and reflect about their careers in regards to their best moments, what they have learned the most and what they can improve upon. My decision to interview coaches was due to the fact that they have had the most experience with leadership personally but also with inspiring it within their players. Therefore, I thought they would have an interesting and unique view on the subject in order to ask these leadership questions. Additionally, I feel as though I can learn the most from them because of their lengthy careers as coaches and I want to learn the most possible about leadership so I can apply it in my life. Finally, being a student athlete allows me to have a certain access to some of the best coaches USC has to offer so I wanted to take advantage of this privilege.

II/ Leadership Model Theory

James Kouzes and Barry Posner define leadership as “the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” (p.2). The two authors sought out on a journey of more than 30 years to conduct original research all over the world to find exceptional leaders. Through this research they learned that leadership has no prejudice to race, gender, ethnicity, age, culture or even religion. Leadership begins when a person or people seize the moment about something they care about (p.5). Therefore, leadership is not innate rather it is a skill that develops over time. This skill is enhanced through coaching and practicing although one does not have to wait for this formal training to start leading. Kouzes and Posner argue that all the training and practice in the world will not amount to much unless the leader has the passion (p.6). In essence, leadership is about channeling one’s passion and goals into actions. Furthermore, they established a fundamental principle of leadership that anyone can be an exemplary leader and this person can be found anywhere around the globe (p.9).

After collecting and analyzing many leadership experiences, they deduced that many people despite their various backgrounds followed a similar path (p.9). They were able to find similarities in each person's individual story across their behaviors and actions. As a result, the authors then created The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership which include:

1. Model the Way
2. Inspire a Shared Vision
3. Challenge the Process
4. Enable Others to Act
5. Encourage the Heart

The best part about these practices is that they are not privy to a certain demographic or type of person. Anyone can undergo these five steps on the journey to becoming an exemplary leader. The authors explain that leadership is not about popularity or personality (p.9) but rather about behavior. The five practices are available to anyone who has the courage to take on the challenge and move beyond the ordinary to the extraordinary no matter their circumstances. Included in the five practices are the ten commitments to leadership as well. These ten commitments help to explain, understand and illustrate how extraordinary leaders at their best, get things done.

Practice 1: Model the Way

The first step toward exemplary leadership is discovering who you are and what you believe in. However, leadership is more of a dialogue. Therefore, leaders must have shared values with the group, community or organization they guide. A leader must find a way to build unity and not force it (p.21). As in every situation, actions speak louder than words. As a result, the leader builds their credibility by leading by example and gaining a consistency between words and actions.

Commitment 1: Clarify Values by finding your voice and affirming shared values

As mentioned, the first step in this process is figuring out who you are and what you are going to represent. One way to accomplish this is to establish your personal values, ethics, standards and ideals in order to be clear on what matters to you. This will allow you to better navigate difficult times because these principles will help guide your decisions and actions (p.24). Finding your values is crucial to the process because another element of this commitment is establishing shared values. Most of the time, leaders are not just speaking for themselves but for a group of people. Therefore, the group and the leader have to be on the same page with their values and hold people accountable to them (p.25).

In order to find your voice, you have to explore what gets you up in the morning, what makes you want to take action, or even what defines you. “You can only be authentic when you lead according to the principles that matter most to you.” One thing to avoid when setting out on this journey is to fake it and sound like someone else. Someone that you do not represent (p.26). Leaders become that much more effective and influential when they “find the voice that represents who they are.” (p.27).

It is critical to the process to align your values with the people that you lead. Shared values are essential to productive and genuine working relationships. This is not to say that a group of people all have to be the same person. Rather, a good leader will cherish the uniqueness in the individuals but also emphasize the fact that they share common values (p.33). Shared values allow the group to have a certain expectation among others and allow them to support and count on each other. As a result, this will create commitment and community among the group as they share a common vision (p.38).

Commitment 2: Set the Example

Exemplary leaders understand that what you do speaks more loudly than what you say. It is an opportunity for you to show the others what you are committed to and what your

values are. Kouzes and Posner argue that this is easier said than done, “sometimes the greatest distance you have to travel is the distance from your mouth to your feet” (p.42). A person’s credibility increases immensely when they lead by example.

It is important to remember that you have to be consistent in your values. One way to do this is to look at how you spend your time every day and see if it aligns with your values. Another method in remaining consistent is watching your words and what you say. Words set a standard for how others need to act and think. Another critical part is seeking feedback from others. It is hard to judge yourself therefore it is useful to see how others perceive your leadership style. This is a risk leaders must take but the returns are far greater because it gives the leader a chance to grow.

Practice 2: Inspire a Shared Vision

The future can be a very daunting thing for most people however for exemplary leaders it is something they look forward to and it excites them. They see the many possibilities and they envision what can be. However, leaders are also realistic in the fact that they know they must share this excitement for future possibilities with others in order to create organized movement (p.65). It is not enough to have the leader envision the future. Leaders serve as a guide to “show others how their values and interests will be served by the long-term vision of the future.” (p.65). However, it is important that what a leader sees is also something others can see.

Commitment 3: Envision the Future

Forward looking is a characteristic found in great leaders and allows them to fight through difficult times. The process of finding your vision is exactly like that of clarifying your values. It is a matter of thinking about where you want to take others by “reflecting on

your past, attending to the present, imagining the future and feeling your passion” (p.71).

Primarily the goal is to find something you are very passionate about.

Once you have set your vision, it is then your task to impart this vision on others and how they fit in this vision. Inspiring a shared vision through common ground will allow them to feel a part of the process (p.79). This does not mean this is a hierarchal decision (top down) but more so a sharing process where everyone expresses ideas no matter their role. The more you hear and listen to what is important to your group, the better equipped you will be at voicing the shared vision. Listening is a human ability and a skill every leader should acquire because it will lead to great results. A shared vision sets the agenda and gives direction and purpose to those involved (p.86).

Commitment 4: Enlist others

In order to get support from people, it is important to show them how they will make a difference and impact on others. You need to create a connection between their goals and the common vision. Also, allowing them to see the bigger picture and the positive effect on the quality of work when people join together is helpful (p.93). To retain group members it is important to continually communicate why your group’s vision is unique and different from the rest. It makes the work they do that much more special and meaningful. In the end, a leader must connect their message to that of the values of their audience.

Practice 3: Challenge the Process

Another unique characteristic of exemplary leaders is they do not accept the ordinary and do not like maintaining the status quo. In other words, they embrace challenges and do not step back from them. Challenges are a way for a leader to test their abilities and how far they can take them (p.113). When innovating it is important for leaders to look everywhere

especially to those closest to the work. However, they understand that change comes in small doses at a time. Despite the challenges along the way, they persevere with determination.

Commitment 5: Search for Opportunities

The best part about taking on challenges is that this is where greatness is born. The work of leaders is about change therefore it is no easy task. Their role is to inspire others and themselves to new possibilities (p.117). Leaders must become proactive in order to change the norm and need to avoid being reactive or worse, inactive. Of course, this adventure is not done alone, it is important for a leader to encourage initiative in others. The team is a great source for creative ideas and suggestions for improvement.

Attitude is a huge factor in being able to stay open to new ideas and possibilities because it can hinder your insight (p.125). Furthermore, passion allows you to conquer fear and reach the next step on this adventure to innovation. You need to understand what gives meaning and purpose to your work in order to get the best from yourself and your group (p.133).

Commitment 6: Experiment and Take Risks

Achieving the extraordinary is no easy feat and must be done by taking many risks. A leader must be willing to experiment and do things in a unique manner. Typically when you try to do something that no one has ever done then you start from zero and this can be quite daunting. As a result, it is important to break down the process and take it step by step to create small wins. This will allow you to not get demotivated and not even start before it can begin. As always however, your attitude must be right as well. Kouzes and Posner define psychological hardiness as “how you think and act in terms of commitment, control and challenge” and that this is an essential skill to develop (p.147).

On the leadership journey it is important to know that mistakes and failures will occur, it is inevitable. Once you do however, the best way to come back from them is to learn from them. Do not make the same mistake twice, rather grow from it. If you have the perspective that failures are a learning experience than the journey will not be as daunting and you will become more resilient (p.148). Embracing the challenge will allow you to develop a growth mindset and will make the journey a lot more enjoyable.

Practice 4: Enable Others to Act

When talking about a leader's journey it is rarely just about him or her, rather it is about a team that the leader was able to influence and motivate. A skill every leader should have, however, is the ability to give power to the people they lead and allowing them to feel valuable within the group (p.163). The impact of this will build trustworthy relationships and a cohesive team. This family environment facilitates cooperation, collaboration and respect among members. As a result, the group is better equipped to stay together in the long run because individuals feel like they add value and are in control of their lives.

Commitment 7: Foster Collaboration

All exemplary leaders know that leadership is no solo pursuit but a team effort (p.166). Teamwork is the key to success in a group and helps to get through the challenges and obstacles on the adventure. In order to foster teamwork, a leader must define the needs of the members to do their work, ensure the team is clear on their purpose, and have mutual respect. When this is accomplished the philosophy naturally changes from an "I" to a "WE". Trust is a huge component to this transition and is necessary in all teams. If there is no trust then how will people follow you and create a connection with you? In order to begin the process of building trust, it is typically the leader that has the courage to open up first and be

vulnerable. When the members feel that their leader trusts them they will begin to perform at a high level (p.169).

Leadership is a relationship that needs nurturing (p.174). To be successful, members have to know they need each other and can count on one another. It is a lot more inviting to achieve the extraordinary with a group than all by yourself. As a result, people have to be on the same page and create collaborative goals. Higher collaboration will occur when the members can identify with the group. For example, fraternities and sororities do this through handshakes, Greek letters, ceremonies and rituals (p.178). The creation of cooperation occurs when the leader structures projects where the payoffs are created by working together than individually. The best incentive for people to work to achieve shared goals is the knowledge that you and others will do the same, a sense of reciprocity (p.183).

Commitment 8: Strengthen Others

Strengthening others requires a leader to build an environment where people are fully engaged and feel in control of their own lives (p.188). It is important for a leader to empower her members to develop their abilities and to make them feel strong and useful. Members show little commitment to the group when they feel controlled and no support for their actions (p.191). Leaders must set a standard and hold people accountable however they need to give freedom to let members make their own choices of how they will get the job done. They want members to have enough independence to where they are proactive and not always asking the leader “What should I do next?” Accountability is a great principle that allows the group to be more invested and work more collaboratively (p.197).

Character building is vital in any group setting however members need the knowledge and resources in order to get the job done well. On top of that, confidence is key in order to better be able to use the resources and information provided to them (p.199). An exemplary

leader must generate self-confidence in the members so they can push ahead into unknown territories. Not only do they have to trust the leader but they have to trust themselves as well. However, you need to keep in mind that there is a direct connection between self-confidence and competence. This is when leaders become mentors for their followers which enable them to give constructive feedback, ask probing questions, and give thoughtful coaching (p.205).

Practice 5: Encourage the Heart

The road to the extraordinary is long with a lot of obstacles and requires a lot of hard work. Leaders are there to inspire others with courage, hope and optimism to keep going on the arduous road (p.211). In order to encourage the members' hearts, leaders recognize and praise them for their accomplishments. They let them know how much they mean to the team. Love sustains a leader and gives them courage. Exemplary leaders are in love with their members and the work they produce.

Commitment 9: Recognize Contributions

Leaders need to recognize contributions to the team because humans need encouragement to function at their best and to persist when the work is hard and times are challenging (p.214). Making members feel valuable and that they make a difference is a leader's job. Research shows that people act in ways that are consistent with other's expectations of them. As a result, when leaders have strong faith in their members' capacities this will improve their performance. They are able to push the boundaries and get the best out of people. Goal setting is an important task in this process because it helps people keep their eyes on the vision and reach their goals (p.220). During the process it is critical for the leader to give feedback because it allows the person to learn and grow.

One reason a leader should build relationships with their followers is so that they can know what type of recognition would be meaningful to them. The biggest complaints about

recognition is that it is highly predictable and impersonal (p.224). In order to give out more recognition, a leader must be creative about incentives. The power of positive and appreciative comments will nurture more extraordinary achievements and productivity. One simple and easy positive comment is to just say “thank you” and this will go a long way in sustaining high performance (p.230).

Commitment 10: Celebrate the Values and the Victories

Having a leader display gratitude reinforces the essence of community and commitment within the team. Celebrating someone’s achievement is not just about having fun and partying. It is more to prove and demonstrate what the group stands for, what they believe in and what they are proud of (p.237). Leaders need to not let these opportunities pass because it provides a role model that embodies the shared values of the group who sets the example for the rest.

Leaders must be personally involved in order to attract members and to get them to believe in something and behave according to those beliefs. To build and maintain a culture of excellence, leaders have to recognize, reward, reinforce and celebrate exceptional efforts and successes (p.246). Leaders are an example so if they start to encourage then they will see this attitude grow throughout their team. As a result, it proves that encouraging the heart is something everyone should do (p.253).

III/ Logistics

To begin my research I first had to identify candidates that qualified for my topic of leadership in sports. Given that I am a student athlete I have special access to many coaches so I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity and limit my candidates within University of South Carolina (USC) athletics. I thought about coaches that had significant success in their careers but also coaches that emphasized leadership on their team. Furthermore, I also

had to establish what was feasible in my time frame. After discussion with my director, I decided that around four interviews would be my goal for this project.

Through word of mouth and doing my own research on USC coaches I came up with a list of potential candidates to interview. It includes:

Ray “Coach” Tanner – Former head baseball coach and now USC athletic director

Coach Tanner played baseball at N.C. State from 1977 to 1980. After his playing career he decided to begin his career in coaching as the assistant coach at N.C. State from 1980 to 1987. Following this, he got a promotion to the head coaching position at N.C. State from 1988-1996 where he is ranked second for most wins in school history. Finally, he ended his coaching career at University of South Carolina where he stayed for 15 years. To list a few of his accomplishments while coaching at USC and the most notable ones: he won the NCAA national championship back to back in 2010 and 2011, he led the team to the College World Series tournament six times where the Gamecocks were runner-ups for two of them and out of his whole career at USC he ended with a 70 winning percentage with 738 wins against 316 losses game record. Finally, Coach Tanner also had the honor of being an assistant coach and head coach on Team USA as well as an assistant coach for the U.S. Olympic team in 1996 and 2000.

http://www.gamecocksonline.com/sports/m-basebl/mtt/tanner_ray00.html

Kim Williams – Former head volleyball coach and now involved with SCFCA

Coach Kim Williams, formerly known as Coach Hudson while at USC, is from Amarillo, Texas. She played collegiate volleyball at University of Texas at Arlington from 1977 to 1980. While there she picked up a couple of awards such as most valuable player (1980), athlete of the year (1980) and she was also team captain. Coach Williams began her coaching career at the high school level in her home town and then gradually moved her way up to

coaching college level at West Texas State University and Northern Arizona University. In 1993 she entered the SEC as head coach at South Carolina. She was there for 11 years and ended her coaching career there but not without leaving a legacy of competitive achievement. While at USC she led her team to six NCAA appearances and finished with a 64.5 winning percentage with 214 wins and 118 losses game record.

http://www.gamecocksonline.com/sports/w-volley/mtt/hudson_kim01.html

Moritz Moritz – First head beach volleyball coach

Coach Moritz Moritz began his coaching career in 1996 at the club level in California. After, he transitioned to high school for one year and then began volunteer assistant coaching at Colorado State from 1998 to 2002. Due to unforeseen circumstances in 2004, Coach Moritz became the interim assistant coach at Colorado State. This position then led him to earn an assistant coach job at Idaho for four years. In 2011, he then made his way to University of South Carolina to become the assistant coach for the indoor volleyball team. Little did he know, he was then presented with the opportunity to become the first head coach in South Carolina beach volleyball history for the 2014 season. Year after year the Gamecocks have improved their season record in wins and ended their 2016 season ranked 20th in the nation by DiG Magazine.

http://www.gamecocksonline.com/sports/w-svolley/mtt/moritz_moritz_842151.html

Beverly Smith – Head softball coach

Coach Beverly Smith played softball at the University of North Carolina (UNC) from 1991 to 1994. After, she was the head coach for a high school team from 1996 to 1998. In 2005, she earned her first coaching position at the collegiate level at UNC as the assistant head coach where she then transitioned to the associate head coach in 2008. Then, in 2011, she made her appearance in the SEC and became the head coach at the University of South Carolina. Coach

Smith is currently the head coach at USC and has earned many accomplishments in her six years at USC. In the past six seasons, Coach Smith has led the Gamecocks to four NCAA tournaments. She is named the second winningest coach in South Carolina softball history. Currently, Coach Smith has a 55.87 winning percentage with 195 wins and 154 losses game record.

http://www.gamecocksonline.com/sports/w-softbl/mtt/smith_beverly00.html

As one can find in the coaches biographies, they each represent many leadership accomplishments through athletics. They also have very unique situations of leadership that I thought would make them great candidates to interview for my thesis. I thought I could learn a lot from their experiences as coaches given their diverse backgrounds. My goal is to ask them challenging questions that make them reflect on these past experiences when they were in coaching or leadership positions. Furthermore, my objective was to also push them to define their leadership style and to make them look toward the future and see what is to come in their careers as leaders. In the end, I concluded that these candidates had the right backgrounds to tackle my questions.

In order to choose a leadership model to base my questions I did my own investigation online but also referred to my senior thesis director, Dr. Kirk Randazzo. He told me about a leadership book that he uses in his teaching. The book is called *The Student Leadership Challenge* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner. Even though the book talks about leadership opportunities in general I knew I could easily relate it back to athletics. Given the structure of the book, I could easily generate questions from reading it based off each leadership practice. As a result, I thought this leadership model would be the best way for me to create a framework for my interviews.

My plan was to first read the book and develop questions as I read each section of the model. My goal was to have around three to five questions for each practice. These steps are things that leaders do when they are at their best which is to model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart. So it was important to have questions for each section that encapsulated the principles of each practice. After reading the book, I had created a list of questions for each of these practices. Then, I drafted a template of the questions and the order I wanted to ask them in, in order to help guide me during my interviews. (See appendix 1)

After finalizing my questions and the structure of the interview, I then began scheduling interviews with the coaches. In order to set up the interviews, I would e-mail the respective coach by giving them a small introduction to my thesis and ask for their availability to conduct an interview with them. I was able to acquire emails through my coach and other sources in athletics.

Once the coach and I set an interview time, I would make sure to bring my template and my recorder with me. Before starting an interview I would set everything up and receive confirmation from the interviewee that it was acceptable to record their interview. Luckily none of them had an issue with me recording. By the end of the fall semester, I was fortunate enough to conduct four interviews with Coach Tanner, Coach Moritz, Coach Smith and Coach Williams.

During the interviews, I would begin by explaining the structure of my interview which was by the five best practices of an exemplary leader. When I would transition to a new practice I would tell them and then give a brief explanation of it. While asking questions, I would adjust which ones I asked depending on how the interview was going; whether it was taking longer or faster to get through the sections. I would only ask for an hour of their time

and wanted to respect this limit. As I said, I created three to five questions for each practice and for the sake of time, I would pick and choose which ones to ask. After recording the interview, I would then upload it on my laptop and transcribe it using software downloaded. Even though this took considerable time, I thought it would be an important objective in order to best be able to study the coaches' responses.

Finally, after transcribing all the interviews I then printed them out in order to read them and annotate them. My goal for this was to try to find similarities and differences in their responses based off each practice. This allowed me to find themes across their answers and develop insightful comments to put in my thesis report.

IV/ Interviews

1. Model the Way

Leaders and teams must first establish who they are and what they want to represent. This process begins through discovering what the leader and teams values are and ensuring they are shared. When the coaches answered if team values were important to them they all responded by saying it is everything and a very important part of any team. Values go well beyond just a sports environment and impact your daily lifestyle as well. They help dictate what decisions you make and actions you take. Even Coach Moritz says that centralizing the component of his players becoming better people is more important than the sport. He believes it is more important to focus on becoming better people which will then allow us to become better athletes. One slogan he will always tell the team is "better people make better gamecocks." Once this occurs it will even enhance the sport itself. Coach Williams believes the values were a cornerstone in order to ensure that players were on the same page of what they thought it took to achieve success. She also emphasized how for the values to be impactful, all the players have to align and share the same values. This will create the best

results. For Coach Smith, it was her first priority when she earned the head coaching job at USC. She thinks team values show what the program stands for, the type of players they want in it and the qualities they find important. No one recruited is perfect and therefore it is a process of daily work to strive towards those values and represent them well. Coach Smith concludes with “You are always striving for excellence and these are the things we think help you get there.”

As a result, Coach Williams and Smith both agree about the impact of the values and that team values are what constitute success. Furthermore, Coach Tanner alludes to the fact that values are very much influenced by the way you were raised. “I grew up where it wasn’t about you” and this mantra is evident in what he emphasized the most on his teams in regards to values. He believes team values are paramount on any team such as ownership and sticking together through wins and losses. All the coaches mentioned how these team values will go beyond their sports careers. The values can apply to any setting in life such as a team, a company or organization. Values allow you to understand what is important in order to achieve success and keep you grounded and humble when you do get to that point. Tanner reiterates “you want them [the player] to deemphasize who they are and pass credit on to their teammates.”

Coach Moritz thinks the team values are about who we are as people and how we treat each other. The players are a direct reflection of the program not by virtue of only creating the values but by embodying them because we are the example for the people around us. The beach volleyball team values were created by the players and for the players. His team had to come up with what they wanted to represent the team and create definitions of the values. It was a team effort.

Coach Williams organized a retreat every fall for her team so they could do team bonding activities that would help to break down barriers and allow the players to become more vulnerable. Then the girls would come together and create a mission statement illustrating who they want to be and how they want to act. Recruiting was a big challenge for her because she had to target the girls that were most aligned with the team values. The coaching staff had their own set of values they looked for when recruiting. It is interesting to mention how physicality was not one of the top ones because they valued other aspects of the players' characters more. This just shows how you could be the best athlete in the world but if you do not live by a set of values then you will not be very successful.

Coach Smith talked about how she hired a leadership consultant with a military background and he told her "If you're organization can't recite your core values, then you don't have them." She agreed and therefore she got the team involved to create values they could remember. They determined their values and funneled them into four categories: H.A.R.D. (heart, accountability, ruthless competitor, and discipline). She said it was important for them to keep these values a visual around their facility so that hopefully it would serve as a constant reminder of what they represent. Coach Smith reflects how it is crucial for a leader to be adaptable and accept change. She was able to start her values with a clean slate and receive input from her players. Finally, she also refers to the values as something much bigger than just sports and her team. She sees them as a bigger picture and as qualities that her players will realize that they will help them in life as well.

Following the discussion about team values, I asked the coaches their opinions on leading by example and how they do it. In the Model the Way practice, it is important for leaders to practice what they preach and align what they are saying with what they are doing. All of the coaches agreed that leading by example is very important. Coach Williams begins with asserting that if she asks her players to step outside their comfort zone then she has to be

willing to do so as well. She accomplishes this by leading a lifestyle that is more of a visual for the team. Coach Williams makes the conclusion that when leading by example you have to be patient because it has more pronounced long term effects than short term. “You can tell people one thing and you will get quick results but over the long haul they will see you are not living it out.” This is crucial for any leader in sports and helps to be able to establish their credibility and to generate a following. Coach Smith also brought up how if she has to hold someone accountable it is critical that she displays consistent behavior. This will alleviate a lot of confusion and will create a strong foundation that the players can look up to. Coach Moritz recognizes that being a leader is not always about who can talk the most or the loudest rather leaders lead by example through their work ethic and embracing the core values. Coach Tanner explains how it is good to know your priorities first so that all your actions can go towards fulfilling those priorities. In his job as athletic director he iterates, “Our student athletes are our number one priority and that is my walk.” He further describes how there is a limit to how much someone can talk before they have to start walking the walk. Eventually it will catch up to the leader who does not lead by example and this will ruin him or her. The most effective leadership in sports is leading by example so that your players are all in and ready to give the leader their all.

Lastly, every coach has their own unique style of leading their team based on the values they set. However, an important feature to have as a coach is to seek feedback from others on your leadership style. Leaders fear this exposure because it is a risk however the benefits of receiving this feedback far outweigh the negatives. Self-awareness is critical to becoming a better leader and I wanted to see if the coaches sought out feedback on what they were doing with their teams.

All of the coaches recognized the benefits of seeking feedback however it varied whether or not they actually did it. Coach Tanner spoke more about his current role as

athletic director of USC athletics and began by saying how he loves when people question him, in fact he encourages it. He realizes that he does not have all the answers and leans on others for feedback on his actions. He welcomes criticism and conflict because at the end of the day they make things better. The more people you get involved, the better chance you have at getting things right and letting people grow in the process by giving them the freedom to give the leader feedback. There is a common goal on the team and everyone is just working hard in order to achieve it. Therefore, criticism is not personal as Coach Tanner says. “This is the coach in me but T.E.A.M, together everyone accomplishes more.” This just reiterates how the skills we learn through sports such as seeking feedback from others are transferable to the real world such as in a working environment. Both Coach Moritz and Coach Smith see feedback as an opportunity to learn and grow professionally. Coach Smith says she is the type of person who is always seeking constant growth however, she has not asked recently for feedback about herself. Although, she ensures that her players receive feedback from the coaching staff and their own teammates so they can grow. Furthermore, Coach Smith argues that leadership is not natural and these skills are not innate but rather can be learned.

Another common theme throughout the coaches’ responses is that there is a necessary level of humility required in order to receive feedback from others. In order to truly benefit from the feedback process a coach has to let their pride go; “it is the only way to grow whether they like it or not” as Coach Moritz says. Coach Tanner says that people with egos do not have it as easy as he does because they are not as open to receiving criticism. This question of pride really resonated with Coach Williams and her experience coaching. Now being able to look back on her coaching career, she believes that receiving feedback is what separates the good from the best. She continues by saying when people are able to lay down their pride and bring people in to evaluate their program, this is when you will experience the

biggest impact. She even says that if she could go back and do it again she would have done this process more.

In the end, it is evident that the role of a coach is critical to the development of a player's character. According to the *The Student Leadership Challenge*, the first step for any coach is to Model the Way. All the coaches took their own approaches of establishing team values in their programs. However, one similarity is that they understand the values they implement on the team have a bigger effect than just being successful in a sports environment. These practices spill over into life and will greatly impact the players after they are done with their sport. As Coach Smith said it greatly, "I do feel like we are giving student athletes the tools to handle life because there's no difference. Softball is like my classroom for what they are getting ready to face." A coach's leadership impact is not just reduced to how many wins and losses they had but more so on how they impacted the players' lives and how they helped them become better people through sports. For a coach to have the biggest impact, throughout the process they must swallow their pride and ask for feedback from others. This creates a checks and balances system that will be sure to benefit everyone in the program.

2. Inspire a Shared Vision

The second practice brings up the fact that the future is uncertain and anything is possible. For most, this is daunting and scares people from attempting any challenge. Great leaders are there to guide people through this unknown and inspire them to reach goals they never thought they could. One of the main questions I asked for this practice was how did the coaches envision the future for their team and what was it? This is to invoke that leaders have a unique skill to be able to sense what could happen if every player works together and fulfills their role on the team.

All of the coaches agreed that winning is not everything and it is not their ultimate goal for their teams. Of course, every coach and player's dream is to win the national championship, the ultimate achievement of saying you are the best in the country. A lot of people aspire to it and most fail. It is interesting to think about how everyone works so hard to achieve this difficult reward well knowing that only few actually earn it. Therefore, the coaches go deeper and talk more about what they want to achieve on that journey towards trying to win a national championship.

Multiple coaches referred to a vision of having the team be the best students they can and best representatives of the program and community. Coach Williams says "Our goal was to be a good representative of the university." However, she went a little further and explained that good did not mean being good people but rather good defined as competitive. I thought this was interesting because usually when I think of having to be a good representative of a program I think about the activities done outside the sport. Although, here she alludes to the intensity and school pride a player must have when they step out onto the field, court or whatever it may be. The pride that comes from being able to compete for your university.

Coach Moritz goes on to talk about how even though winning a national championship is extremely difficult, "if it is not on the horizon somewhere then we are doing something wrong." The future is unknown yes but one thing that is certain is you will never achieve your dreams if you do not try at all. One time I attended a leadership seminar where the speaker mentioned a quote by Theodore Roosevelt that reminded me of what Coach Moritz was inferring.

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who

strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat." - Theodore Roosevelt, 1910

This quote encompasses how the person who tries and works towards her goals every day is far braver than the person who is too scared to even begin. The person who tries but fails will at least have the glory that she had the courage to achieve what she thought was impossible. This mentality disseminates all throughout athletics. The player who attempts to win the highest achievement is more respectable than the ones who quit. Coach Williams, through her coaching experience, recruits the players that know how to win because they know what it takes to reach that point. Another important part of the process that she mentions is the players and staff understanding their roles and giving them freedom within these positions so they can make a significant impact. Moreover, Coach Tanner adapted his mindset in order to create a freer and more open facility where players did not feel afraid to take a chance or a gamble. "And then when you fall, it is ok. You get up and go again." He elaborates by saying it took him a while to embrace this ideology with his players but as he evolved as a coach he became much more positive and optimistic.

Although winning a national championship is on the minds of all coaches and players, the way all of the coaches envisioned the future for their team was well after their sports career. Coach Moritz views it as a source for a lot of feedback and wants to know how the player is five or ten years from now. He wants to know if the player had a positive experience while in his program or if he made an impact at all on their lives. Furthermore, he states how this is also one of the challenging aspects of being a coach because humans in general love

immediate gratification from people. However, this process takes much more time and once they receive praise for how they impacted a player's life then it helps the coach validate what they do. As a coach, Coach Tanner wanted to put his players in a position where they could succeed on and off the field. This same principle is a priority in Coach Moritz's program as well because he says he spends a lot of time trying to figure out what players are going through and how he can improve the experience for his student athletes. Even Coach Smith alludes to this same idea that the future of her team is her players getting the most out of their time at USC in her program.

In short, the coaches are more concerned with the bigger picture and the long term effects their programs have on their players. The legacy of the coaches for the players is one way they will be remembered and valued.

Knowing that a lot of these sports seasons in college are very long, it makes it feel like a marathon. In order to perform at a high level, they must stay focused for this long amount of time as well. Leaders are able to see all the possibilities however they must translate this excitement to their players. Therefore, I then asked some of the coaches how they ignite passion in their players and how they maintain it. Coach Smith found that she relies more on the players for this sustainable passion throughout the season. She justifies this because the coaches cannot play for the team rather it is the player's responsibility to have the energy and passion. Although, the coaches have the responsibility to prepare the players for this feat. Coach Moritz is similar in that he leans on others to ignite the passion in his players. However, he leans more on his staff than the players themselves. He knows it is important for him to have staff members that counter balance his leadership style. As a result, they can all contribute to the greater whole and help to teach, guide and mentor the team together. Coach Moritz accepts that his inspiration will not be the common form of getting excited and loud however it is more in the form of appreciation. He will emphasize whenever he can to his

players that they GET to do this and that it is an opportunity of a lifetime. This same idea of inspiration is seen in Coach Tanner's program where he states that winning is not everything even if it is disappointing to lose, the players can still thrive in the opportunity they had to compete. Coach Williams's response was more unique in that it was a combination of things for her to ignite passion in her players but the thing that was overlooked the most was rest. She argues that not taxing the players to a place where they cannot and do not feel passion anymore because they are worn out physically, mentally and emotionally. One of the challenges of this is knowing that coaches always are going to want and demand more from their players to get the best out of them. Although, it is important that they recognize and respect the off days of athletes for them to restore their energy.

3. Challenge the Process

The third practice is based on the fact that greatness is born from challenges. Nothing great will happen if everyone sticks to the status quo, only mediocrity will sustain. In order to push the limits, leaders must challenge themselves. To find these innovative adventures leaders listen, take advice and learn from everyone and everywhere. Once embarked on this adventure, leaders take success in baby strides and persevere despite how tough the obstacles are. It is critical that a leader understands that she must learn from her mistakes when she take risks. It is always possible to learn and improve from any situation.

When leaders and members are challenging the process, ideally, some of their best leadership experiences occur as a result. Therefore, I asked the coaches what were their personal best leadership experiences to see if they went through the same process. Coach Smith begins by saying how she loves the opportunity to be able to find connections between her and her players. Her biggest concern is to ensure the girls understand they need to rely on their support system during the difficult times. She approaches them by trying to show them a

new perspective which I think is one of the ways a leader can be the most impactful on a person. Coach Moritz began by saying that “this whole experience is not [his] experience” but that it is his players. Similarly to Coach Smith, Coach Moritz finds his most impactful moments to be when the players can connect to each other and feel a sense of genuine joy and happiness. Coach Tanner explains how he was a leader that was well prepared and was an extremely hard working coach. However, his best leadership experience occurred when he received some perspective from a fellow player that said he was the best coach of the year but the team needed to have more fun. Coach Tanner reflected and thought about how he could change but that it would be gradual. This references the same idea that Coach Moritz wanted his players to be happy. Coach Tanner was trying to let his players have more fun so the process is more enjoyable for them. As a leader, Coach Tanner demonstrated adaptability and implemented specific changes in order to have more fun on the team. He admits, “Sometimes we think we are doing the right thing and we are not. (...) I realized I needed to lead differently.” In Kim Williams’ interview, this theme appears as well that even if winning a national championship is great, no player will want to do it again if the journey was not enjoyable.

Another important aspect of challenging the process is to be able to inspire change within a group of people. Coach Smith relies on her personal strength of always seeking out continual growth. Just like Coach Tanner she demonstrates adaptability in her leadership style. She will try new things out with her team by listening to other coaches, reading books and even talking to athletes. If the new idea does not work she says they will just move on and try something else. Coach Williams describes how inspiring change depends upon seeing the good in people and recognizing their strengths and improving them. Overall, she says the way to inspire change is “by believing in people and giving them the resources and your

time.” Also, she notes it is not about expecting praise in return either, this is not the goal of inspiring change.

Coach Williams also alludes to this theme that has been seen throughout the interviews of wanting to create not only well rounded players but also people. Her biggest impact on the volleyball program was giving her players a wide range of opportunities in order for them to gain the complete student athlete experience. She talks about how coaching is a life time and a huge sacrifice. This was surprising because I think players tend to forget how much time coaches take to ensure they have a great experience throughout their athletic career. Coach Moritz even says the players are the most important thing because they are the reason that the coaches are here.

One important characteristic of a leader is being able to take risks. Coach Smith talks about an upcoming risk that she took. She scheduled her team really difficult this year because that is the team she believes she has. In order to accomplish the team goals they had, she explains, this is the way she had to schedule to prove they were at this caliber. It was a calculated risk. In order to better equip her team to take on this risk they made some changes within their program such as with the fitness test requirement. The team focused a lot on their relentless team value in order to prepare for the tough season. I think this risk taken by the coach also shows the amount of trust she has in her players. She is putting herself on the line and being courageous because she knows her team is capable. Coach Moritz speaks more in general terms about a risk he takes on a daily basis to challenge his players to their limits. He pushes them to be more adaptable with the conditions they are given. The nature of the beach volleyball sport forces them to do this given the outdoor weather conditions. Coach Moritz makes a point to not let these uncontrollable conditions affect the way his players play and insists to get comfortable being uncomfortable.

Finally, one of the most important things a leader can do is self-reflect and evaluate whether they are learning or not on their journeys of leadership. Coach Moritz states it simply, “humility”. He says this culminates back to everything he and his players do on the team such as with their core values. Being humble is the only way to learn to grow Coach Moritz asserts. When faced with challenges or failures it is how we respond to them that matters the most. Coach Williams echoes a same thought that Coach Moritz had earlier when she was asked what the most important thing was she learned while head of her program. She says, “It is not about me, it is about them.” Furthermore, unlike Coach Moritz, she says the best way to learn is through loving and listening to each other without judgement. She concludes by saying “the feeling like you have to be justified by others is so captive.”

4. Enable others to act

The fourth practice encapsulates the principle that leaders know they cannot achieve extraordinary goals alone. The role of the leader is to form groups that are like family. They ensure that each member has the independence to make decisions for the betterment of the family. In order to achieve this, the leader will create collaborative goals and ensure that there are strong relationships where everyone treats each other with respect. Leaders will make their members feel strong and capable to do anything they set their mind to.

“It is essential”, “It is critical” are some of the few remarks received from the coaches when asked to what extent they thought teamwork and trust were a part of their program. Coach Moritz begins by explaining how a coach needs to be comfortable enough allocating different tasks to their staff. If a coach micromanages then it is to the detriment of their staff because they will not have the opportunity to learn by doing it themselves. He then talks about the career of a coach and how it involves a lot of new experiences. A coach needs to be able to rely on their staff and support system to better handle the “things [they] have never

seen” before. So immediately Coach Moritz addresses this concern of giving his staff the autonomy to function in their roles and grow from it. Furthermore, Coach Tanner, similarly, argues that “he does not want to run the shop for [them].” If he does then what is that person’s purpose? As a result, in general, it is important to collaborate with people that are more knowledgeable than you in a specific area.

However, Coach Williams and Coach Smith both refer back to the core values of the team and how trust and teamwork are engrained into it. All players have to be aligned on the same page and be a cohesive unit to have the most success. Coach Williams reminds me of the reality “you are only as strong as your weakest link is the truth.” Therefore, these values help to build the cohesiveness on the team. Both coaches also describe how in order to build teamwork and trust, it requires dedication and constant work towards it every day. Coach Smith recognizes the importance of these qualities and gives her players constant communication and information to build them up on her team. She understands that trust comes from establishing strong relationships and this is something that can be improved on a daily basis. Similarly, Coach Williams repeats how trust and teamwork needed to be incorporated daily in everything the team did. Furthermore, both of these coaches also brought up the theme of accountability and how this helps to foster trust and teamwork. Coach Williams states “Every day, if you do chose it is about me and I want to do what I want, it has consequences and it is going to affect the ‘we’”.

Collaboration is another key characteristic to have on a team because it is a factor to success in any endeavor. Coach Tanner fostered collaboration on his team by creating ownership which really resonated with what Coach Moritz spoke about when talking about trust. He explains how players grow through ownership however it is important to figure out the balance of how much to give them. Along with this theme, Coach Tanner discusses that one of the things that helped him the most to establish collaboration is telling his players that

“it is not my team anymore, I brought you in here and we’ve been working and preparing now I’m out.” At a certain point it is time for the players to come together and achieve their goals. The coaches will be there for support but it is up to the players. From this experience, Coach Tanner has seen a lot of leaders step into their roles and evolve. Coach Moritz reflects the same idea that it is the players that own the experience and the legacy of the program and this is based off what the players create.

Coach Williams agrees with Coach Tanner and Moritz in that collaboration is born from everybody knowing and understanding what their role is and giving them the power to exist and move within their role. Coach Moritz illustrates the idea with the image of wanting to be a leader that stands among his members as opposed to the leader that stands in front of his members. Although, an interesting point Coach Williams made was that the leader needs to know how to stop talking and listen. This allows the leader to empower their members and give them a voice which is essential in the fourth practice of the leadership model. Once this is done, it is critical for them to feel like their voice is being heard. She justifies that this is how people encourage to collaborate more.

Finally, another important aspect of enabling others to act is whether or not the leader develops fellow leaders and how they do it. Coach Williams believes it is part of the process in that they had to think a couple of years down the road. She did not want to find herself vulnerable because they did not invest time and energy in raising the younger players into leaders. However, she also counters that within this process, leaders naturally are born as well. She states that a leader’s role is to be good at being comfortable in uncomfortable situations which is similar to a point that Moritz made earlier. For example, the leaders have to have the courage to keep their teammates accountable such as not allowing them to complain during team activities. Complaining helps no one and is destructive to the team

chemistry. As Coach Smith mentioned earlier, Coach Williams agrees that leadership skills are not innate but they are learned skills.

Coach Moritz talks about how leaders have different strengths and qualities, there is not one typical leader. He reiterates how this allows “to bring perspective to everybody that everybody has different qualities that they can learn from.” Therefore, the best way for him to create leaders is to give them the freedom to lead in the ways in which they are comfortable to lead. This allows the player to lead within their natural strengths based on their character. In this sense, the question then arises how do the players continue to evolve? It is important to recognize that everyone has something to add within their capacity that people can learn from. Coach Moritz finishes with the point that experience is not the only factor worth considering in terms of leadership but it certainly helps. Just like Coach Williams, Coach Moritz believes that leadership can be taught but it is a matter of humility on whether or not the leader is open to learning from others. He concludes by asking, “Can we be humble enough to absorb the teachable moments so that we can learn and adjust to do ultimately what is best for the team?”

Coach Smith describes how she develops leaders based on the team she has each year. She received inspiration from the leadership academy she went through at UNC Chapel Hill but made adjustments to make it her own. This highlights how important it is to be adaptable as a leader. What works for one group will not necessarily work for another. Therefore, a leader must adjust her strengths and leadership style in order to be more effective for their members. Coach Smith finishes by saying “So I am not locked into one system to choose who our captains are.” Although, she does the same thing as Coach Williams in that she invests in the younger players to ensure they will be ready to lead when the time comes. She does so by mentoring the young players on a weekly basis and choosing some to attend the USC leadership academy.

5. Encourage the Heart

Along this journey to achieve extraordinary goals many obstacles and challenges come up. It is within the leader's role to encourage and rally people together to continue on the journey. They inspire others with hope and optimism to not give up on their goals. One way in which they can do this is by recognizing people's contributions to the team. Additionally, leaders also find ways to celebrate accomplishments in creative ways. The one thing that encourages the leader is love, by loving what they do and who they lead, this is what keeps them going.

From a player standpoint I think it is very effective when coaches recognize their players for their accomplishments. Therefore, I thought it was important to ask the coaches their opinion. Across the board the coaches all agreed it was important and I can even find similarities in the ways in which they do it as well as the reasons why they do it. Coach Tanner does it because he believes it can portray the program, department or family. When a player achieves at a high level with success it can reveal who they are as a person and their character strengths. The journey to the accomplishment, for example, can prove that the athlete is a relentless hard worker. Furthermore, once an athlete receives recognition their character is also tested and portrayed through how they handle it. Coach Tanner insisted that his players who are recognized in the media give credit to their teammates whenever possible. As illustrated in the fourth principle, no leader can succeed without support and the same applies in sports, no leader can succeed without their teammates. Athletes spend a lot of time and effort building their legacy and relationships on their team throughout their careers. Coach Tanner warns it is important to share the success on a team or else it could hinder an athlete's legacy. Moreover, Coach Tanner mentions an important aspect that overall the players understand the recognition is not why they try to achieve extraordinary goals. It is not why they do it, it is more of an added bonus.

Coach Moritz, along with Coach Tanner, believes it is important to recognize success because it represents high quality behavior and great work ethic. However, he also mentions how there is value in recognizing improvement towards an accomplishment. Even when an athlete makes a mistake it does not mean they are a bad person it just means they are trying to reach their goals. Although, Coach Moritz concludes his answer by saying he prefers to recognize the team over the individual, “knowing full well that without the individual we do not have the team anyway”. As a result, some players contributions are not see as much as others and therefore it is important to highlight consistently throughout the team.

Coach Williams states that recognizing accomplishments are important because it helps set the standard of performance on the team as outlined in the leadership book. Another aspect that she outlines is that when someone reaches that standard of success they are now a visual of what the coach is looking for in her players. Coach Williams clarifies that these are not just volleyball successes but also extracurricular or academic goals as well. Similarly to Coach Moritz, she also mentions how it is critical to avoid a coach’s bias or the coach picking favorites among her players. She reasons that usually the people who hit the standard are the favorites. However, the solution is to look for players who make strides towards the improvement to the standard of performance because that is an achievement in itself. Both Coach Moritz and Coach Williams look out for this among their players and try to recognize these efforts.

Coach Smith discusses a new thought of how athlete’s confidence levels are fragile for the most part and how they tend to hang on to bad thoughts. Therefore, she also thinks it is critical for coaches to recognize players because it serves as a reminder to them of how well they are doing. Coach Smith implemented two ways to build confidence and recognize accomplishments among her players. One way is called ‘Proud of’s’ where everyone pairs up and says something they are proud about for themselves but also for their partner. The second

method is called 'Chips' and she does this before games or practice. Everyone pairs up and says a quick sincere thought about their teammate. The effect of these activities helps to build relationships and allows the players to have honest conversation between them. She finishes on an insightful comment, "the girls do not care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Another important aspect of encouraging others to act for leaders is being able to give feedback to the people they are leading. Coach Moritz elaborated a lot on this question and he talks specifically about the difference between the feedback point and the application point. There has to be enough time after the coach gives feedback for the player to create the change based on the feedback. If not, then there could be a lot of information to process if the coach just keeps giving criticism to the player. Plus, all players are unique in the way they approach and interpret feedback is always different. Coach Moritz explains how it is up to the players to figure out what works best for them depending on the advice from the coach. He then ties this back into a previous point he made about the fear of failing and making mistakes. It shows a lot of character and growth to be able to receive constructive criticism and then try to apply it immediately.

Coach Smith does a lot to ensure that her players and staff are receiving constant feedback. She changed it up recently to allow the players to meet with a different coach every week on a rotating basis. Coach Smith recognizes and understands that her players like and want more feedback. It also allows them to express any concerns, comments or questions. She determines they are in a mode of constant evaluation and dealing with problems with this new system she started.

V/ Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that everyone can learn something from researching and investigating about the leadership skills one develops in sports. Coach Tanner, Coach Moritz, Coach Williams, and Coach Smith exemplified this through their responses by giving concrete examples from their past experiences as coaches. One theme across the board was that the coaches understood that the players' time at USC was not just to become great athletes but great people in society as well. They wanted to be able to influence how they grew and developed their characters in a positive way. It was their ultimate goal as leaders to their players. Ultimately, the coaches knew that there is life after sports and that the skills improved upon on a daily basis as athletes helps them immensely. The skills they develop are easily leveraged in real life settings and not exclusive to a sports environment. This is why it is so critical to analyze leadership in sports especially from a coach's perspective because they have so much influence and practice leading their players.

The book I used to structure my question, *The student leadership challenge* by Kouzes and Posner, really helped to bring out significant answers from the coaches. Throughout the questions for each practice outlined in the book, I could find themes and similarities across the coaches' responses. As a result, this allowed me to identify the most important lessons we learn from playing sports and the benefits of being on an athletic team.

In the first practice from the book, Model the Way, it centers on the idea that every leader must establish shared values within their group. Therefore, all the coaches made it a point to create these values within their teams. They all agreed that the values represented the program and the players so it is important to embody them on a daily basis in order to achieve success. Furthermore, all the coaches also mentioned how these values will go beyond their sports careers. The values they learn now make them better people and build character in order for them to grow outside of sports. The discussion about the values I found to be very important because throughout the interview the coaches would always bring their answers

back to the values asserting how important they are on any sports team. In a team's highest and lowest moments, they must rely on their values to stay true to who they are and what they want to represent.

The second practice is all about inspiring a shared vision which on a college sports team is pretty common, winning a national championship. However, the coaches all recognize that this achievement is sought by many but only one team earns it. Coach Moritz affirms that if winning the ultimate achievement is not on his team's horizon then they are doing something wrong. This statement eludes to the fact that no team should fear the goal of winning a national championship but despite all the challenges must try hard to earn it. Additionally, an important aspect of their responses that I gathered in this section is that they also talked about what they want to achieve on this journey of winning a national championship. This is significant because it dictates how well the experience is for the player during their time in college. For all the coaches, ensuring that their players had a positive experience while in their program is more important than whether or not they won a national championship.

Challenge the Process is the third practice in the book and one important aspect to mention is how when I asked the coaches about their personal best leadership experience it was never truly about them. Rather they cared more about how they affected their players and the impact their actions had on them. All the experiences related to how the coaches made the players experiences more enjoyable and happy which relates back to the second practice mentioned earlier. Kim Williams encompasses the idea with winning a national championship is great, but no player will want to do it again if the journey was not enjoyable.

In the fourth practice, Enable others to Act, the coaches were asked how important teamwork and trust were a part of their program and how do they establish it. Again, across

the board the coaches all agreed it was critical to the success of their season. Coach Williams and Smith agree that in order to build this trust, it goes back to their team values. A team is only as strong as their weakest link and the values help to align all the players and force them to grow together. However, it is interesting to mention how it is not just within the players the coaches are talking about. Coach Moritz and Tanner talk about how they also need to create this environment within their staff too because without their support it would be very hard for a coach to lead. Finally, a theme heard from all the coaches is that it is important to delegate tasks out and not to micromanage everything.

The final practice of the book is called Encourage the Heart and it focuses on how leaders motivate their players and reward them for their efforts along the journey. All the coaches agreed and admitted that they like to recognize accomplishments on their teams. Coach Williams argues that it helps create a visual of what the high standard looks like for all the other players. Furthermore, Coach Tanner and Moritz agree that there is value in recognizing improvement towards an accomplishment. It is ok to make mistakes as long as the player keep making efforts in the right direction. Coach Smith brings up the point of how recognition of accomplishment directly impacts a player's confidence level. Therefore, there are many benefits when leaders make a point to acknowledge achievements within their groups because it encourages the players to keep going.

Overall, it was an amazing experience to be able to talk to the coaches about their leadership styles and their past experiences leading teams. All the coaches have proven that they have what it takes to lead very successful teams which made the interviews that much more intriguing. One could argue that what they say is credible by looking at the records of the teams and the personal accomplishments of the coaches. Another one of my passions is learning about different people's career paths because I love how there is not one standard way to become successful in life rather everyone has their own unique path. Although, the

skills and effort needed to get there remain fairly the same. Therefore, I learned a lot when hearing about the coaches' career paths and how they got to that point and how they managed it once they became head coach. I cannot wait to see what skills I am able to leverage into my career as I leave my sports career behind at the University of South Carolina. Forever to thee!

Appendix 1:

Senior Thesis Questions:

1. Model the way: Leaders establish principles concerning the way people (constituents, peers, colleagues, and customers alike) should be treated and the way goals should be pursued. They create standards of excellence and then set an example for others to follow. Because the prospect of complex change can overwhelm people and stifle action, they set interim goals so that people can achieve small wins as they work toward larger objectives. They unravel bureaucracy when it impedes action; they put up signposts when people are unsure of where to go or how to get there; and they create opportunities for victory.
 - a. How important is it having team values in your opinion? Did you establish them or did the team? Are there shared values?
 - b. How did you express your values to your team?
 - c. What do the values of your team represent in your opinion?
 - d. How often do you talk about values with the team?
 - e. How do you build a common vision on the team?
 - f. To what extent is leading by example important on your team? And in your leadership style?
 - g. How do you lead by example?
 - h. Do you seek feedback from others on how they respond to your leadership style?
2. Inspire a shared vision: Leaders passionately believe that they can make a difference. They envision the future, creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become. Through their magnetism and quiet persuasion, leaders enlist others in their dreams. They breathe life into their visions and get people to see exciting possibilities for the future.
 - a. How did/do you envision the future for your team? What was your vision?
 - b. To what extent do you think being "forward looking" is important for the success of your leadership and team?
 - c. How do you ensure you stay on path according to your vision?
 - d. Do you ask your players what their goals are for themselves and the team?
 - e. How do you ignite passion in your players and how do you maintain that?
 - f. P.104 They say emotions make things memorable, would you agree with this?
3. Challenge the process: Leaders search for opportunities to change the status quo. They look for innovative ways to improve the organization. In doing so, they experiment and take risks. And because leaders know that risk taking involves mistakes and failures, they accept the inevitable disappointments as learning opportunities.
 - a. Tell me about a time you took a risk with your team and how did it pay off? What'd you learn?
 - b. In your opinion, how have you made the biggest impact on the program? How did you create change for the program? Or rather ask tell me about your personal best leadership experience? P. 117
 - c. What was your biggest challenge and how did you overcome it?

- d. How do you inspire change in others/your program? Where do get inspiration for change?
 - e. What is the most important thing you learned while head of your program? What did you learn during your process of change?
4. Enable others to act: Leaders foster collaboration and build spirited teams. They actively involve others. Leaders understand that mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts; they strive to create an atmosphere of trust and human dignity. They strengthen others, making each person feel capable and powerful.
- a. To what extent do you think it's important to have teamwork and trust a part of your program?
 - b. Collaboration is a key to success in any endeavor, how did you foster/ build collaboration? P. 167
 - c. How important do you think trust is in your program? How did you build trust among your coworkers and players?
 - d. How do you promote/ inspire cooperativeness/trust in your players? P. 183
 - e. How important is it to you to develop fellow leaders or strengthen others? How do you do it?
5. Encourage the heart: Accomplishing extraordinary things in organizations is hard work. To keep hope and determination alive, leaders recognize contributions that individuals make. In every winning team, the members need to share in the rewards of their efforts, so leaders celebrate accomplishments. They make people feel like heroes.
- a. To what extent do you think recognizing people's successes in your program is important? P. 229
 - b. How do you recognize/reward contributions with players or staff? How do you show them their value?
 - c. How important is it to you to give feedback to the people you're leading? Do you do this? Constructive criticism. P. 222
 - d. How do you encourage your players? How did you construct your locker room speeches? How do you fire up the team?
 - e. Why do you think it is important to celebrate people's accomplishments on the team?