

Shared Leadership

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If you look at the most successful teams in any sport, you will find a common bond within the team. Sometimes, it is called chemistry – as if just the right mix of chemicals has created a special new formula. Other times, it is postulated that there was strong leadership provided by key players and everyone else responded favorably to their lead or “charisma”.

I believe there is merit to the leadership issue – with one notable exception. If a team begins to heavily rely upon their selected or anointed leader – they become dependent upon the leader for their overall performance. While great leaders are necessary and very helpful to raising performance standards – true leadership for high performance teams is shared leadership.

Let me explain...when a team has “a” leader, the team becomes dependent upon the leader for their confidence and most importantly – their “will” to win! This is fine as long as the leader is focused, injury-free and having a good game. However, if the leader is unprepared, loses self-confidence or is just having a bad day – the team usually suffers and can lose – even when they have more talent.

This is the point of shared leadership – interdependence! At the pinnacle of long term team success is the principle of shared leadership. Every member of the team is taking ownership and responsibility for the overall performance of the group. No one panics or becomes negative at the first sign of adversity. In fact, teams with shared leadership strengthen their resolve and focus at the first sign of adversity and unite as one. They support each other and take care of their own responsibilities to insure the success of the team. Excellent teams know that each person has an assigned duty or role for each play. Personal pride can override fear and indecision, while moving each individual within the team to carry out the assigned duty.

Good teams rely upon individual leadership while great teams share the leadership. Everyone takes individual responsibility for their actions and results. This explains why some teams have started the season playing as champions behind their leaders – only to fall back into the pack after a key injury to their designated leader. Great championship teams unify together, sharing the leadership role and the responsibilities and the accountabilities for high performance standards.

The real question for you – Does your team share the leadership role or depend upon one or two individuals to provide the energy, passion and discipline for the winners edge?

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