Perspectives on Team Culture, and Defining Success

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Overview

Why “Team culture”

My story

Learn - Build - Sustain

Defining success
Why “Team Culture”

Google definitions...

- Shared values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors
- How people work together towards a common goal
- Perception of dynamics between athletes, coaches, campus community and outsiders
My Background

➔ **Wheaton Warrenville South HS (Wheaton, IL)**
  ◆ Team: XC 40, TF 100 girls
  ◆ DuPage Valley Conference

➔ **Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI)**
  ◆ Team: XC 50, TF 100 combined
  ◆ Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Assoc.
2006 “Muddy” Nationals
My Background

➔ Bowling Green State University (Ohio)
  ◆ Team: XC 30 (combined), TF 40 (women only)
  ◆ Mid-American Conference
  ◆ DI vs. DIII research

➔ Frostburg State University (MD)
  ◆ Team: XC 18, TF 60 (combined)
  ◆ Capital Athletic Conference
  ◆ Intern/Distance Coach
My Background

→ Xavier University (Cincinnati, OH)
  ◆ NCAA DI
  ◆ Sprints and distance

→ Olivet Nazarene University (Bourbonnais, IL)
  ◆ NAIA
  ◆ Distance and home meets

→ Aurora University (Aurora, IL)
  ◆ NCAA DIII
  ◆ Head XC/Distance
Learn (6-12 months)

- University’s principles and priorities
- Meet athletes face-to-face
- Team traditions
- “Chameleon” coaching
- Wise decisions
- Embrace the quirkiness
- Develop a plan to share
Build (1-4 years minimum)

- Invest in current athletes
- Invest in future athletes
- Training tweaks
- Early Season:
  - Camp
  - Leader development
  - Volunteering
  - TIME
Build (1-4 years min)

- Inclusion
  - Every athlete has a role
  - Everyone gets coached

- Accountability
  - Being on time
  - Little things

- Buy-in
  - Coaches cannot want something more than the athletes themselves
  - Snowball effect
  - Those that don’t get it cut themselves from the team
Sustain (5+ years?)

“It’s even harder to stay at the top in sports than it is to get there” - Babe Didrikson Zaharias

- Critical mass of athletes who are bought in 100% of the time
- Does learning and building ever stop?
- Gone is the “that’s the way we’ve always done it” mentality
- Added benefit of tradition
- Success breeds success
- Athletes are your greatest recruiters
- Never settle

"It's even harder to stay at the top in sports than it is to get there" - Babe Didrikson Zaharias
“Championship teams achieved at the level they did because of what they, the student-athletes, did. A spirit from within the team drove success. We the coaches created the standards, the environment, facilitated the learning, coached everyone and watched that grow not via our will but via the will of the athletes. We all know that does not happen every year but when it does, it is a beautiful thing to witness.”

- Dr. Dale Luy

Need to define success of your program by a different measure other than results!
Themes from Coaches’ Perspectives

What was the culture of your program when you started coaching there?

How was the culture transforming when I was competing or coaching for your program?

What did you try to do intentionally to improve the team culture? Did it work?

What does a team need for a successful team culture?

How does it grow?

How much do team dynamics influence team success on the course/track?
You probably cannot control...

*The Culture of your Institution*

- Athletic administration’s support and goals for programs
- Recruiting pressures
- Budget constraints
- Type of student most likely to be on your campus
Three C’s to define your culture

1. Community
   a. Elements of a big family
   b. Leadership, leadership, leadership!

2. Consistency
   a. Athletes - year-round dedication
   b. Training

3. Commitment
   a. Support
   b. Athletes, coaches on the same page
   c. Buy-in, individual and team goals
“Every coach that takes over a program at some point finds themselves in the forest. There are so many trees (issues) around you at all times that you can only see about 100 ft down the trail. It’s not until you reach the top of the mountain and look down that you’re able to see what lies ahead.”

- Coach Ryan Orner
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Questions/Feedback?

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Thank you!