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The Politics of Sports

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Introduction

       This thesis will examine the politics of sports meaning coaches' influence on players, players' influence on other players, and general information on leadership and what successful teams need. The area of leadership and studies on sports teams is a growing field with increasingly more areas to study. The purpose of this thesis is to find out what the best methods are for coaches and players to be able to successfully influence people to do what they want them to do. Influence on another person can range from something as simple as getting a person to make a phone call, all the way to influencing a person to desire what you want them to desire. In the field of athletics, a large sum of the research done thus far has revolved around how coaches are best able to lead a team, and the ways in which they can build their influence on players. Another widely studied area is how teammates are able to influence their teammates, especially concerning the influence of captains and leaders. Lastly, as for a more general area of study, research has been done on the understanding of what teams need and what makes for successful leadership. This thesis will show the various ways that coaches and players do, in fact, have an influence on each other in a sports team. I will show this claim by first examining the general areas of study regarding team leadership and successful leadership on teams. I will then go into the research on how coaches have previously been able to exert influence and how the perceptions players have of coaches affects this influence. Following this examination, I will go into how players have traditionally influenced other players, and the benefits of this process on a sports team.

       Following the knowledge gained from previous research and the literature review, 20 subjects were interviewed. The questions asked revolved around issues discussed in the literature review, and some areas that not much research had been done in. Succeeding this process,

themes were gathered that exemplified some of the ideas in the literature review and other themes that are new ideas. The research itself attempted to draw conclusions based on the areas of influence on a sports team and ultimately leadership. Due to the lack of research in the area of players' influence on coaches, my thesis will pursue to add information specifically in this realm. The three areas of influence on a team being coach on player, player on player, and player on coach. The ultimate goal of this thesis was to make suggestions to coaches and players about the best ways to influence others and construct a successful team in sports today.

Team leadership and Successful teams

Kleinart (2012) provides important information on specific group variables that are associated with the success of teams. The four variables Kleinert lists are cohesion, team efficacy/potency, team roles, and team leadership. Aside from leadership, cohesion is one of the most highly researched variables regarding teams. The study found that "cohesion is positively associated with team success in both interactive and coactive sport" (Kleinart, 415). Team efficacy and potency are grouped together, but do not mean the same thing. Efficacy refers to the perceptions a team has of their *task* specific capabilities; whereas potency refers to perceptions a team has of their capabilities across *tasks* and *contexts*. Team efficacy and potency are only moderately positively related to team performance. Defining team roles, which are the specific expectations for each member on the team, is important for the execution and success of individual role responsibility on a team, which can then lead to a more successful outcome. Lastly, team leadership has had the greatest number of studies performed, suggesting that having a "task-involving motivational climate is more positive for team functioning" (Kleinert, 416). A task-involving climate is when athletes perceive an emphasis on self-improvement. In this case functioning means working together cohesively and having successful results. My thesis used

this information to define general variables associated with leadership and influence on a team, and how much they can affect the team's outcome.

Hardy (2005) strengthens the idea that cohesion is "a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" and is generally thought of as an important factor on a team (Hardy, 166). The interesting part of the Hardy article is that it discusses the potential disadvantages of team cohesion. Fifty six percent of the respondents in the survey given to athletes on team cohesion indicated that there could be disadvantages to high social cohesion. Some of the strongest reasons were wasting time at practice because all are friends, difficulty giving criticism, decrease in focus, formation of cliques, and difficulty taking a friend's position/playing time on the court or field. It was valuable to compare and contrast the Hardy and Kleinert articles in terms of what positives and negatives high cohesion can have for an athletic team.

Gillet (2010) describes the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and how it relates to sports teams. SDT is a theory used to "understand individuals' motivation, its causes, and its consequences" (Gillet, 155). The main factors of SDT are competence, autonomy, and relatedness to the athlete as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This theory was used in the study to provide information on the idea that self determined motivation (intrinsic) leads to the most positive outcomes. The article identified two styles of coaching: autonomy-supportive and controlling. Autonomy-supportive is when coaches acknowledge athletes' feelings and perspectives and give them a role in the decision making process. The controlling style is when coaches use a highly directive approach. This theory helped portray how "coaches' controlling behaviors undermine athletes' self-determined motivation, while autonomy supportive behaviors

promote it" (Gillet, 156). This article was mainly useful in identifying the different styles of coaching and how although most coaches have a mixture of both, the interview process found that the most successful coaches display an autonomy supportive style most of the time.

Amorose (2007) goes into the role that motivation can have on positive outcomes. Amorose explains how athletes' participation in sport is classified along a scale of self-determination. The furthest left is amotivation (lack of intention and motivation), middle is extrinsic motivation (engaging for instrumental reasons), and right is intrinsic (for the pleasure and satisfaction). Most athletes have a combination of all three of these, but athletes experience more positive environments with lower anxiety when their motivation is on the right side of the scale and self-determined. This article displayed why certain players will have more of a drive to become the best athlete possible.

Mageau (2003) discusses the same idea regarding extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as Gillet. Mageau emphasized how both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are necessary for athletes' optimal functioning, but it is in the athlete's best interest for a coach to nurture these motivations through understanding which one each player is mainly motivated by. With an understanding of the types of motivations that each player has, a coach can be more equipped to motivate specific players. If a player is mainly intrinsically motivated, they will not need as much pressure from their coach to do what they need to do in the off season, because they will have this drive to do it themselves. Whereas if a person is mainly extrinsically motivated, they will need more of a push from their coach to complete the required tasks. Based on this information, it could potentially mean that the most intrinsically motivated players are the most easily influenced because they will listen and do whatever their coach tells them to do to become a better player. On the flip side of this, it could also mean that intrinsically motivated players are

able to be influenced the least because their drive comes from within and wanting to become better, not from what their coach is telling them. So, intrinsically motivated layers may be less easily influenced when it comes to how much effort they will put in overall because that comes from within.

Webster (2019) brings in another theory, the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET). This theory says that "athletes' intrinsic motivation can be nurtured and maintained if their inherent need to feel competent in dealing with the environment (ie, their need for competence) gets fulfilled" (Webster, 2). CET is a subfield of SDT that focuses specifically on social and environmental factors. Using what was already discussed about intrinsic motivations, this theory can be used to show what needs to be done to build and maintain this type of motivation. If intrinsic motivation can be nurtured, athletes will gain more of it and be the type of player more willing to do whatever it takes for their team to succeed. It is important to note that coaches ought to nurture a player's intrinsic motivation rather than the coach pushing extrinsic motivations onto the players because intrinsic leads to more successful outcomes (Webster, 5).

Smith (2015) uses an interview method to compare the different types of leaders. Smith asked players on teams and coaches about the best qualities of leaders and how leaders can have the biggest impact on those players as athletes. The information eventually brings out the conclusion that the best type of leader is the transformational leader. Transformational leadership is a "phenomenon in which leaders can stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes" (Smith, 1). Some characteristics of transformational leaders are inspirational, adaptable, and low ego. A leader who is able to truly inspire their teammates or players is going to be able to have a lot more respect. When people respect their leader, they are going to be more inclined to want to give everything they have for the team. A transformational leader can be

either a coach or a teammate as long as they are able to inspire the players on the team. The idea of the transformational leader will be utilized in my research in understanding what a good leader is and the best ways to actually be seen as a transformational leader.

All of these articles gave important insights on the overarching themes of leadership and what does and does not work on teams. Thus far, my conclusion would be that leaders on a team should try to nurture intrinsic motivation and take on the characteristics of a transformational leader. A leader can do these things by attempting to understand the players on their team and what motivates them. This understanding can be accomplished by creating a relationship outside of just the athletic atmosphere. Becoming a transformational leader is mainly about understanding each athlete's personal characteristics and putting that gained information into practice. By accumulating this information, I was able to understand the bigger picture of how successful sports teams maximize their leadership efforts.

Coaches' influence on players

Gillet (2010) also wrote on an important study that he administered during his research. The study found that players "perceptions of autonomy support were positively associated with contextual self-determined motivation… the more the athletes perceived their coach to be autonomy-supportive, the more their motivation for practicing their sport was self-determined" (Gillet, 157). This quote really boils down to the idea that coaches' autonomy support plays a key role in athletes' performance. A coach explicitly showing their support for their players has a major effect on player motivation and overall performance. If a coach wants to be able to get a player to do as they desire, they should support them more and prove to them that they believe in them. This style is basically what Gillet means when he talks about an autonomy-supportive style. The information provided clearly debunks the idea that yelling and highly aggressive

coaches are able to get the most out of their players. This idea is especially prominent in American culture where aggression in the realm of sports is seen as the best way to achieve the desired outcome. A major theme in many of the articles was the importance of autonomy-supportive coaches compared to authoritarian style coaching. Keeping this theme in mind, I was able to compare types of coaches described in the interviews and perceptions of effectiveness by the interviewee.

Building on the Gillet article, Amorose (2007) explicitly gives the characteristics that make up an autonomy-supportive coach. Amorose brings up that an autonomy-supportive coach provides choice to their athletes, provides athletes with a meaningful rationale for the activities, acknowledges their athletes' feelings, provides opportunity for the athletes to take initiative and act independently, provides non-controlling performance feedback, avoids overt control, and minimizes behavior which threatens ego. If a coach focuses on promoting these characteristics, they will have a much better chance of being seen as an autonomy-supportive coach. Amorose ends with what he believes needs to change in the realm of coaching. In the future, we need to "find ways to encourage coaches to exhibit behaviors that help to satisfy athletes' needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, as this should help promote self-determined motivation" (Amorose, 657). This information will be helpful in disproving a lot of current beliefs regarding the best ways to motivate athletes. One of these common beliefs as mentioned earlier is that aggression and yelling is the most effective approach to coaching. If a coach is able to find ways to encourage motivational behavior that takes each player's needs into account, the player will give more to the team and be more inclined to listen to what the coach instructs them to do. On the flip side of this, many studies have proven that coaches need to have a balance in encouraging and demanding more out of their players.

Staying on the importance of autonomy-supportive coaching, Mageau discusses that the best results from players come when a coach is autonomy-supportive. The opposite of this style of coaching is utilizing controlling behaviors and dominance strategies with one's players. Mageau discussed the same strategies as Amorose when attempting to be seen as autonomy supportive. There is an alarming number of coaches that use controlling motivation strategies which can be a result of our society in general expecting authority figures to behave in a certain way and believing that this is the best way to obtain results. Mageau also put a lot of emphasis on the coaching context. There are outlying factors that influence how a coach acts with their players; for example, the sports setting is highly competitive and could get the best of the coaches, who may feel pressure to be successful, especially if their jobs depend on it. Mageau also points out that just because an autonomy-supportive style is the best style in being able to influence players, this does not mean that coaches ought to act the same with each individual athlete. There are certain athletes that need to perceive more support from the coach than other athletes, and understanding this will be helpful for coaches. Mageau's article has allowed me to understand that various players from the same team may have a completely different view of the support given from their coach. It is important to keep in mind that Mageau is stating an opinion for certain teams, yet many of the most famous coaches of all time were indeed autonomy-supportive, but also absolutely in control of their team.

Smith (2015) reviews the effects of the type of feedback a coach gives to their players. When an athlete perceives their coaches as "providing positive and encouraging feedback both after successful and unsuccessful performances as well as not ignoring mistakes, this was associated with the athletes' perceiving a task-involving climate" (Smith, 176). A task-involving climate means that the athletes perceive the climate to have an emphasis on self-improvement,

learning, and cooperation. In contrast, when an athlete perceived their coaches as providing "less positive feedback but higher amounts of punishment feedback, they were more likely to perceive the climate as ego involving" (Smith, 176). An ego-involving climate means that athletes perceive their environment as emphasizing punishment for their mistakes. This is ego-involving because rather than molding and helping the players learn from their mistakes, it creates an environment of fear. Smith's whole study concluded with the idea that the way an athlete perceives their coaches' behaviors contributes significantly to the perceptions of their climate and sport setting. This article provides important information on how coaches should give feedback to their players, by finding a happy medium between positive feedback and helping athletes work through their mistakes.

Turman (2004) identified positive feedback as one of five leadership styles. The article elaborates on an old article in which Smith tried to figure out "What, if any, are the relationships among athletes' perceptions of their coaches' leadership behaviors and athletes' affective learning?" (Turman, 134). Turman first discussed the multidimensional model of leadership's (MML) five leadership styles/behaviors. The five styles are autocratic (behaviors coaches use to separate themselves from their athletes, often by authority), democratic (behaviors that include athletes in decision making), social support (behavior helps to satisfy the interpersonal needs of the athletes), positive feedback (behaviors that coaches use to instill a sense of appreciation), and training and instruction (behaviors that develop athletes' skills and knowledge). Often coaches use a variety of all five strategies, but one will emerge as the one used most often. Turman conducted a study that surveyed athletes and asked questions to measure athlete's perceptions of their coach's leadership behaviors and level of athlete's affective learning. Turman's study found that "athlete affective learning is positively associated with several coaching leadership styles,

including positive feedback, social support, training and instruction, and democratic leadership styles" (Turman, 136). Affective learning is learning that relates to the person's interests and emotions. On the flip side, when coaches display only autocratic styles, the players demonstrate less appreciation for the sport, their teammates, and the coach. Rather than only being a democratic or support-based leader, at times using an autocratic approach could be helpful if used in moderation. "Autocratic leadership in the presence of moderate to high levels of positive feedback may actually increase an athletes' affective learning, whereas the sole use of autocratic leadership behaviors may lead to a decline in athletes' affective learning" (Turman, 139). A coach's style of leadership must contain a variety of approaches by intermingling different strategies. The best way to go about influencing one's players is not always the way most people assume it to be. This research has been useful in attempting to figure out the best combination for successful influence by coaches.

Building on the preceding articles, Baric (2009) is an important article related to my research because it incorporates perceptions of athletes. The article begins by defining the two main types of coaches- democratic and autocratic. A democratic coach is more supportive, more instructive, and encourages and gives positive feedback. An autocratic coach is mostly concerned with results and winning and is less supportive and intrusive. An autocratic coach will make decisions for what is best for the team alone. Baric's study surveyed coaches about how they perceive themselves as a coach and used a players survey asking how they perceived their coaches. The coaches were categorized into two clusters- democratic and autocratic. "The more athlete-directed, low ego-oriented coaches were evaluated as more supportive, more instructive, and more feedback given by their athletes in comparison to the less athlete-directed, high ego-

oriented coaches" (Baric, 188). This study began a good structure for the future of research comparing coaching styles and perceptions and has given me a good basis for my research.

Chelldurai (1989) extends what has previously been discussed but broadens it to testing on both genders. The results in this study showed a major difference from what has previously been concluded regarding how much participation in decision making athletes want from their coaches. Whether it be a male or female player, the study concluded that both were inclined toward more autocratic decision making by the coaches than toward participative decision making. This research was done in 1989, and the previous articles I brought up are much more recent. This difference in date could be because players are evolving into having more of a say on a team, or overall cultural philosophy toward more person-centered outcomes. This could also be a difference between the realm of decision-making versus how the coaches actually treat the players. Another interesting point that came up through Chelldurai's research is that there is congruence between athletes from both genders in other aspects as well. In a study surveying 53 women and 46 men basketball players, Chelldurai asked the players from both genders if they would prefer their coach consult the players individually and then make the decision by themselves, consult with the players as a group and then make the decision themselves, or have the coach solve the problem themselves using the information available. The last option was chosen most often for both genders, followed by the second option, and the first option was chosen the least often. This makes the point that when important team decisions need to be made, players prefer that the coach show confidence and make a decision on their own. This contradicts what other studies have suggested regarding coaches always involving their players in decisions made for the team.

Hyun-Duck (2016) attempted to compare the perception that the players have of the coaches and their actual behavior, similar to Baric. Hyun-Duck suggested that "If a coach's leadership behavior is congruent with the athletes' perceptions about their coach, positive sport performance and satisfaction are likely to occur" (Hyun-Duck, 4). But Hyun-Duck concludes that the leadership behaviors have to be positive, democratic, supportive, and give positive feedback. Among all of these behaviors, a coach has to be able to balance these behaviors and utilize all or most of them in one way or another. If a coach is able to do this balancing, it will lead to athlete satisfaction and higher motivation levels of the players on the team.

Furthermore, Smith (2015) developed a study to get a general understanding from players about the type of transformational leadership displayed by their coaches and leaders of their team. This article was useful in both the general leadership section and this one. The Study used interviews to capture subjective meaning in contextual situations by asking questions such as "tell me about the leadership of your captain/coach" to allow for a broad range of descriptive responses. The results were organized into six themes that were brought up the most relating to transformational leadership. The first was high performance expectations. Every person interviewed provided some sort of example of their coach exhibiting this behavior, but also various examples noting times when their coach expected too much. The second theme was inspirational motivation, which basically means an inspired vision of the future. There were fewer examples of this occurring by the coach, but when it did it pertained to winning it all and instilling a belief that their team is better than any other team. The next theme was individual consideration, or giving different treatment to different players. Coaches demonstrate this by implementing different training regimens and dealing with players personally in different ways. Fourth is appropriate role modeling, or behavior that sets an example for followers. Next is

intellectual stimulation, or the challenge to followers to reexamine and rethink some of their assumptions. Coaches were perceived to do this mainly through creating an environment in which the players felt like they were empowered to decide their own fates. Lastly, the sixth theme was fostering acceptance of group goals. The main example for coaches here was administering goal setting meetings with the whole team before the season. The other side of this study looked for examples through team leaders with these same variables and will be discussed in the player on player influence section. Overall, this article demonstrated that captains and coaches play different roles in the success of the team, although they are both very important because they both can have an impact on players.

Cranmer (2014) conducted a study based on what players perceive as acts of confirmation from their coaches. Like the Hyun-Duck article, this article demonstrates that perceptions are important indicators for level of influence. The reasoning behind this study was from the idea that all humans have a need to be confirmed at some level. Cranmer studied 14 Division 1 volleyball players. From the interviews, Cranmer first identified 6 behaviors that athletes identify as confirming: "individualized communication, personal relationships, encouragement, demands for improvement, recognition, and demonstration of investment" (193). Individual communication is an understanding that each player is unique and should be communicated with using differentiated styles. Personal relationships refers mainly to the off-court relationships that the coach and players make, such as caring about other aspects of the lives of the players. Encouragement is positive words that make the player feel important in their role on the team. Improvement is ways that the coach continues to push each player to improve and never settle for where they are. Recognitions are acknowledgements of contributions to the team. Lastly, investment is the amount of time, resources, emotions, etc that the coach is seen as

giving to the team. From these behaviors, four themes were identified based on why these were confirming behaviors. The four themes identified were "perceived adversity, comparison with other coaches, athletes' roles, and timing" (193). Perceived adversity is the coach's ability to communicate through hard situations such as an injury on the team. Comparison with other coaches is how good or bad players rank their current coach compared to their past experiences. Athletes' roles also influenced their perceptions of confirmation, meaning what role the athlete had on the team ranging from captain to role player. Finally, the timing of in season and out of season and practice versus match contributed to how players perceive their coach. Players often see their coach and have stronger feelings whether they be positive or negative in their season than out of it.

The final article in this section asked 6 of the most successful Canadian university coaches of all time open-ended questions describing their experiences and tactics. Joncheray (2019) articulated that although personality may vary across highly successful coaches, they all created and maintained high-performance environments that led to success for extended periods of time. Several themes came out of the interviews with these highly acclaimed coaches, including fostering a culture of excellence, effective emotional management, and how coaching experience is overrated, until you have it. Fostering a culture of excellence were ways in which the coaches demanded a high level of commitment and excellence during all parts of their program. Effective emotional management referred to ways in which the coaches had to manage their own emotions, especially during important games. The coach cannot suddenly become a dictator and change their style during an intense match, rather they need to figure out ways to keep their players relaxed. The experience factor is an overarching theme that all 6 of the coaches interviewed admitted they were dissatisfied with their first experience at coaching in a

national tournament. The overall findings of these interviews indicated that coaches have to be in control of their own emotions and "learning how to identify athletes' emotions and how to plan and adjust routines and game plans accordingly are skills that successful coaches value and implement" (Joncheray, 510). This article is unique in that it only interviewed and studied highly acclaimed coaches who have proven that their methods have worked in the past. This article clearly has significant information on how to become a successful team and which characteristics coaches favor over others on these types of teams.

Every article discussed in this section brought a different element of influence or leadership that was helpful for my research. Much of the information overlaps and creates general themes that assisted me in deciphering themes in the interview process. Some of the most important themes that came from this section was the necessity of coaches being autonomy supportive and showing explicit support and acts of confirmation to their athletes. All of the articles touched on the importance of these positive behaviors from coaches. With this though, it is also important to understand that a variety of strategies are acceptable and needed for the different players on a team.

Players' influence on players

The last section of this literature review will examine articles that incorporate ways in which players are capable of influencing other players on their sports teams. Price (2013) conducted a study that had 412 female soccer players complete a survey based on assessing coach and transformational leadership. Price confirmed that "Transformational leaders are thought to enhance individuals' self-confidence, effort, and empowerment as well as teams' unity, cooperation, and confidence" (Price, 275). In general, coaches' leadership tended to have more of an impact in relation to individual outcome as opposed to peer leaders, but when it came to

team outcomes, both peer and coach leadership had an important impact. This is because peer transformational leadership behaviors are most commonly positively associated with task and social cohesion, which are factors seen as team success contributors. On the other hand, coach transformational leadership behaviors are most commonly positively associated with enjoyment and perceived competence.

Webster's article advanced what Price did and actually attempted an experiment on 126 male basketball players. The experiment "aimed to compare the relative impact of competence support provided by coaches versus athlete leaders on players' competence satisfaction on existing teams" (Webster, 2734). A competence support environment can be created by offering challenging activities that match with the athletes' level of ability, expressing confidence in participants' capacity, offering an effective model prior to task participation, providing encouragement and specific help during activity engagement, and the presence of positive feedback. The basketball players were assigned to one of three groups: coach provided competence support, athlete leader provided competence support, neither the coach nor athlete leader provided competence support. The athletes were studied doing identical drills for each condition. The results showed that if coaches and athlete leaders increased their competence-support, team members' performance was immediately enhanced. Regarding the athlete leaders specifically, "Teams in which the athlete leader provided competence support reported higher levels of competence satisfaction and intrinsic motivation than teams in the control condition" (Webster, 2734). Along with this, only in the athlete leader group did participants actually report enhanced competence satisfaction. As far as changes in the drill, only coaches had an effect on accuracy, but both athlete leaders and coaches had an effect on speed and effort given. All of

these results clearly show that even if it may not be as much as the coach, athlete leaders play a vital role in influencing their teammates on sports teams.

As noted above, Smith (2005) described six sections relating to transformational behaviors; the six sections are high performance expectations, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, appropriate role modeling, intellectual stimulation, and fostering acceptance of group goals. There were not too many interviews that brought up the team leader showcasing high performance expectations, but when they did it most often referred to the leader getting upset at the team for not giving enough of an effort and knowing that they can give more to their team. Similarly, there was only one interview that brought up a team leader using inspirational motivation/visions for the future. This example was when a captain gave a speech to discuss a vision of how he wanted his team to play to win the championship. The individual consideration examples were similar to the coaches in that team leaders were able to give special attention to individual differences and needs of each player. Appropriate role modeling was the one most often brought up in the interviews. All of the athletes interviewed discussed how they viewed their captains as strong role-models on and off of the field. Most examples had to do with the captain's work ethic and example setting for everyone else. Intellectual stimulation was only brought up for match scenarios. Captains were able to provide their followers with the opportunities to solve their own problems by giving players the autonomy to play the game without too much additional instruction. Lastly, captains were able to foster acceptance of group goals by holding captain meetings where they told players what is expected and needed from them on their specific team. The interviews that asked for specific examples of player leadership definitely showed how much of an impact team leaders are able to make on their fellow teammates.

Loughead (2006) begins a shift from articles comparing coach and athlete leadership to just focusing on team leaders. The article first differentiates between formal and informal leaders. Formal leaders have titled roles such as captain or co-captain, whereas informal leaders emerge with a voice on the team. There is currently a lack of definitional clarity in defining what exactly an athlete leader is. Despite this, there are several components that are central to athlete leadership. These components are that leadership is a process, involves influence, occurs within a group context, and involves goal attainment. With these as the central components, every team member can theoretically be a leader, but some athletes' influence will be more persuasive and dominant than others. Keeping all of this in mind, Loughead did a study to examine some of these characteristics, determine the amount present on interactive sport teams, and determine the stability over time. Loughead did this by interviewing and surveying 258 athletes. The results showed that out of all of the athletes on the participant's sport teams, "15% of athletes were viewed as a task leader at the team level… [of these] leaders, approximately two thirds (65%) served a formal leadership role within the team" (Loughead, 150). On a less structural leadership level, "35% of athletes were viewed as peer leaders on their respective teams. 66% of these peer task leaders were informal leaders" (Loughead, 151). These results show that both team captains and other teammates are sources of leadership, but formal leaders were more likely to actually be identified as team leaders.

Fransen (2018) also dealt specifically with athlete leaders. This article revolves around a study of 144 male soccer players. The study sought to examine whether athlete leaders can foster their teammates' intrinsic motivation (i.e., engaging in an activity for its own sake, because it is interesting and enjoyable) and performance by supporting their sense of competence and effectiveness. Fransen lists six ways in which a competence supportive environment can be

created: offering challenging activities that match with the athletes' level of ability, expressing confidence in participants' capacity, offering an effective model prior to task participation, providing encouragement and specific help during activity engagement, the presence of positive feedback and sincere praise, and the absence of critical and demeaning feedback. The study was conducted by each team being given one of two male confederates that were titled the team leader and on average six years older than the other players. At the first practice the leader acted in a neutral manner. During the second practice the leader was either supportive, neutral, or a thwarted leader. A thwarted leader was somebody who negatively influenced the team with degrading remarks. The soccer players were given a questionnaire following the second practice to determine their thoughts on the leader. The results showed that "when the athlete leader acted in a competence-supportive way by providing positive feedback and expressing confidence, his teammates became more intrinsically motivated to engage in the exercises than when the leader acted to thwart teammates' feelings of competence" (Fransen, 14). Supportive athlete leaders not only impacted their teammates' intrinsic motivation, but also their overall performance. On the flip side of this, the results showed that athlete leaders are also capable of negatively impacting their team. The teams that were assigned the thwarted leader were all affected in a negative way. A thwarted leader was somebody who negatively influenced the team with degrading remarks. When a certain player is deemed as a leader either by title or through athletes' perceptions, they can influence a team. Whether this be in a good or bad way is up for the leader to decide. This article brings new information because most articles pertain to ways in which athlete leaders can be successful leaders on their team, but this article also gets into the negative and debilitating aspect that leaders can have on a team. In interviews, I will look for any instances in which leaders potentially brought negative aspects to their team environment as well as positives.

Cruikshank (2015) brought an unusual viewpoint of athlete leadership. Most articles and people in general assume that "dark" characteristics would be fatal to a team's success. In this article Cruickshank attempts to extend the current knowledge on dark side behavior and show how in certain quantities, they can be very advantageous for a team. Some examples of dark side traits include mischievous behaviours, skeptical behaviors, social dominance behaviors, and performance-focused ruthless behavior. The study in this article used 15 leaders of teams and 7 performance directors. The results shockingly showed that mischievous behaviors such as manipulation were evident across all accounts. Skeptical behaviors such as cynical, distrustful, and doubting others' true intentions were also brought up in most interviews, but it was framed in a more positive way. By team leaders showing some skepticism, they made sure to not always take the word of their teammates and make sure to persistently check in. Another important dark side trait for teams is social dominance behavior. On every successful team there have to be starters, substitute players, and bench players. The most important part of the article was the details on how to optimize impact and minimize the risk of dark behaviors. Cruickshank writes on how a leader using dark behavior needs to have socio-political awareness. By this he means that the leader needs the ability to read the reactions in others, ensure authority without overt displays of dominance, as well as knowing precisely "why, when, where, and how 4 specific behaviors are used (and in what combination) to deliver a specific impact for a specific challenge" (Cruickshank, 30).

Conclusion

Overall, this literature review aimed to examine how the specific people on a team, whether they be the coach or players, are able to influence one another. Successful teams have

been composed of a magnitude of different types of leaders. Understanding this, there is not going to be one specific layout of how to lead and influence a team. After going over the current research, as seen in my literature review the three most prominent categories are general leadership, coach influence on players, and player influence on players. The new span of research my thesis will pursue is the ever-expanding area of players' influence on their coaches. My new research will also add more information to the other two types of influence as well as leadership as a whole. I will also explore what types of influence are truly positively motivating collegiate athletes in a Division 3 setting for the two areas just mentioned, as compared to the variety of levels seen in the resources. Times are changing. A coach who claims that they have the only say and does not accept the insight of their players will most likely not be a successful coach for much longer. Athletes have knowledge and actual game vision to add to a huddle and decision making in practice and games, and this development is what becomes exemplified through the research my thesis will broadcast.

Study Rationale

The world of sports is constantly changing. Whether coaches or athletes are prepared for or want these changes, they are happening. In every level of sport, the empowered athlete is on the rise. Players are beginning to have a stronger role in team decisions and outcomes. Many sport teams used to follow a strict hierarchical structure with the coach being at the top. Players are changing, and the future may bring an end to the overly-controlling coach.

Research is constantly being conducted on the role coaches should have on teams and how coaches can get the most successful results out of their team. The data collection will focus on three forms of influence: coach on player, player on player, and player on coach. The current problem is that literature covers how coaches should motivate their players, but my research will

shed light on how they actually motivate their players, and if that is successful. My research will most prominently advance the new and evolving area of player's influence on coaches. A common theme found in current studies focuses on the coach's influence on players and suggests that the best style of coaching is an autonomy-supportive style. This is when coaches acknowledge athletes' feelings and perspectives and give them at least some role in the decision making process. The controlling style is when coaches use a highly directive approach. Although the future of sport is going to lean towards an autonomy-supportive style, historically successful coaches have proven that a team still requires the controlling style in some instances. A coach's ultimate goal is to understand how to incorporate both styles. If a coach can walk this fine line, players have more respect for their coach and will want to listen to their suggestions.

Being currently in this time of shifting beliefs for coaches and players, it is important to attempt to recognize and understand that changes are happening and why they are in the player and coaches' best interests. This thesis is not necessarily designed to instruct coaches on what is the best way to lead their team. There are numerous studies that have already been conducted on this topic, and as my literature review has demonstrated, there is not necessarily one clear outline as to how coaches should coach. Through the interview process, my thesis will add to the best ways to lead and influence players and coaches, but my thesis is ultimately attempting to understand the evolving field of players' influence on coaches. This is simply because there is the least amount of scholarly information on this form of influence. I will pose the following research questions.

RQ1: How do coaches influence players on a team?

RQ2: How do players influence other players on a sports team?

RQ3: How do players influence coaches on a sports team?

RQ4: Who is most capable of leading on a team?

Methodology

Sampling

I focused on male and female athletes and coaches on the Division III level. I proposed to conduct a study in which I interviewed 5 collegiate Division III coaches (3 women teams and 2 men teams) and 15 collegiate Division III athletes (8 women and 7 men from a variety of years in school). The teams I am focused on are men's soccer at DePauw University, women's soccer at DePauw University, men's basketball at DePauw University, and softball at DePauw. I interviewed the head coach of all of these teams plus the head coach of the women's basketball team, and 4 players per team (3 players on the men's soccer team due to availability). I chose these specific teams for a couple of different reasons. The main one being that none of them were in season at the time and the athletes' and coaches' schedules would be more available. I was originally going to do the women's basketball team at Rose-Hulman University because of the bias issues that could occur with me doing my own women's basketball team at DePauw. Once COVID-19 cancelled all spring sports seasons, I decided that rather than going to a different university to use the women's softball team at DePauw University since they were no longer in season. The other reason was simply the relationship I have with the coaches and knowing they would be willing to participate in the interview process. I focused on team sports only because of the stronger team dynamic between players that occurs. I looked on the rosters of teams from the DePauw Athletics website for players and coaches, and then reached out to participants via email using the public Student Directory. Four senior participants were first asked because they have been on their teams the longest, and then I went down to underclassmen if four seniors were unavailable. Each subject was given a brief description of the study and the time range it should

take when emailed about participation. The subjects remained anonymous except for their age, year, gender and the sport they participate in to the reader. I conducted a qualitative content analysis, and was the only person to record and analyze my data.

Procedure

In my study, I used the methodology for the grounded theory outlined by Strauss and Corbin in their book titled *Basics of Qualitative Research*. According to Strauss and Corbin, grounded method assumes that:

> ...all of the concepts pertaining to a given phenomenon have not yet been identified... the relationships between the concepts are poorly understood or conceptually undeveloped... there is the assumption that someone has never asked this particular research question in quite the same way... (p. 37).

The methodology uses the constant comparative method of analysis of data generated directly from participants. Conceptual themes derived from the data collected are then grouped into categories, and the categories are then labeled by the general characteristics that make up that category. These categories should by definition identify the critical factors involved in the phenomenon, discuss process through and between categories, and develop a conceptual matrix for these categories which addresses adjustments in the theory which occur as conditions change (Menzel, 2008). For example, how the relationships among categories might change when we move from team sports to individual sports.

One-on-one Interviews were conducted for about 30-45 minutes, in a private room with a voice recording on. Half-way through the interview process, DePauw University switched to online classes due to COVID-19. This forced half of my interviews to be done over the phone. Participants were asked open-ended questions, with the potential for follow up questions depending on their answers. The following questions were asked:

Interview for coaches:

- As a coach, you have to be able to influence your players to do certain things. There are a variety of techniques and strategies that can be used, can you tell me some stories of times when you had to influence your players?
- In your opinion, what are the best ways for you to get a player to do the workouts in the off-season and tell me a story about a time you were successful and unsuccessful or both?
- When it's gametime, what are the best ways to give feedback to athletes in the flow of the game, can you give me an example of a time you have actually done this in a game?
- How do you go about motivating your players?
- As a coach, players are able to influence you as well. Can you think of any examples when a player has been able to influence you?
- Is there anything that you do as a coach to spark teammates influencing other teammates? What have you done and has it worked?
- In your opinion, who is most capable of leading on a team? Does it have to do with age or title?

Interview for players

- As a player on a team, you are constantly working with your teammates and figuring out what works best for the team. Can you describe any situations where you have influenced another teammate?
- Can you tell me about a time when a teammate has influenced you?
- Since coaches have to be able to influence their players, can you tell me about a time when your coach has gotten you or your teammates to do something and how they were able to do that?
- Can you tell me a time when you or a teammate were able to influence your coach?
- What do you think motivates you best by coaches and teammates, can you give me an example from each?
- Talk to me about the differences between your college coaches and your club or high school coaches, which was able to influence you more and why?
- In your opinion, who is most capable of leading on a team? Does it have to do with age or title?

If participants were only focusing on positive or negative stories, I intervened and asked guiding questions to encourage a broader range of responses.

Analysis

Throughout the interviews, the responses from the participants were conceptually grouped into categories that were labeled according to their general characteristics (Menzel, 7). Phase one, open coding, activates a stimulated recall for participants. By asking questions such as "can you name a time when…" this ideally evoked some type of reaction or memory in the participant's mind. By simply asking for the participant to share an instance that they can freely recall, no question bias or phrasing is promoting any type of response. I heard various viewpoints and recorded the answers from each of the athletes and coaches so that I could create guided questions for the second phase of the process. These questions were based on common themes I detected from the answers given.

In phase two, follow up questions were administered. These follow up questions continued to remain open-ended and general to make sure that the answers were freely given and thought of by the participant. This phase is meant to occur after specific themes have been recognized. As the researcher gets responses, they begin to coalesce into the responses into specific conceptual categories that help to define and delimit the concept under consideration. Most of the time in the interviews, the researcher may be actually hearing the same 5 to 7 ideas just said in multiple different ways. These are the ideas that the researcher must connect and group together. The researcher will then be able to ask questions and follow-up questions based on the themes that have been identified. The following stage is called selective coding. This stage focuses on new themes derived from all of the responses from the previous interviews. I will ask participants to relate the themes I have identified to actual occurrences from their own experiences. Lastly, axial coding occurs when the researcher is confident in the categorical structure. In this last phase, the researcher may go back and ask questions that will fill in the gaps

of their created model. The researcher may possibly test the structure on the interviewees, explaining to them and having them comment on the identified themes. This helps to strengthen and complete the work.

Results

Each participant in the study was asked a series of questions. Whether the person being interviewed was a player or coach, every question revolved around one of four topics: coach on player influence, teammate on teammate influence, player on coach influence, or the most capable leader. While every person interviewed gave personalized responses to each question, common themes prevailed across all interviews. In the questions asked, I used the word "influence" often. I did not give a definition of what I meant by influence to people, I simply allowed them to discuss what they believed it meant to have influence on someone or influence someone else. Every person's answers came from the definition of influence, meaning having an effect on someone's character, development, or experience. The interesting part with the term influence is that every single person initially gave a positive influence example. This is the reason that following answers to questions, I then prompted the interviewee for an example of a negative influence. The 15 players I interviewed played different sports, had completely different roles on their team, and had unique experiences in college athletics. Regardless of these differences, every interview overlapped with another in some way. One major theme persisted across every interview conducted- every single type of influence can only occur through personal relationships. I will first go through general themes found on personal relationships, then the three forms of influence, and last the most capable leader.

Personal Relationships

Without actually mentioning personal relationships in any question, every person interviewed brought up how personal relationships were the main reason they were either influenced or had influence on someone else. The ways in which this theme came out was through interviewees actually using the words "personal relationship," telling a story revolving around getting to know the person they were influencing or being influenced by, or discussing the benefits of one on one conversations.

One of the strongest stories about how a personal relationship led to the ability to influence came from a male senior soccer player looking back at his junior year. The player spoke on how he and his coach were not always on the same page his first three years. He mentioned feeling as though he did not initially get the chance that he thought he deserved, and he never knew why. Due to their unsteady relationship, there was not much trust or influence occurring between this player and his coach. This all changed during his final game as a junior. During his interview when I asked to hear a story about a time his coach was able to influence him, he responded with a story that basically described the moment he created a personal relationship with his coach. In his mind, this relationship was the most prominent moment in which he was able to be influenced because of the relationship he created. The story was told as follows,

> In the last game of my junior year, me and my coach got into an argument over a play
> that he called. I still did the play, but it ended up having a huge counter-attack on the
> other side of the field and the other team almost scored. When the play was over my
> coach yelled at me and said, "what was that?" and I yelled back "that's what you told me
> to do!" Immediately he pulled me off of the field and I didn't play the rest of the game,

and he doesn't talk to me at the end of the season. When I had my player meeting with him that year, he told me about how he lost all of his trust in me and how he thought I was going to be the next captain of the team and all of this stuff. He said that he wanted it to be that the leaders and captains all have a unified message, and when the captain and the coach are fighting in front of everybody else, that sends a bad message to the rest of the team. So he made me have to create more of a friendship relationship with him rather than a coaching relationship. For about a whole semester leading up until the next season, I had to go meet and get coffee with him at Starbucks twice a week. We wouldn't talk about soccer, we would just talk about life. He said I don't want to know about soccer, I just want to know about you. Every week, we would go and meet and talk and then he named me captain the following fall. It worked really well. It was a true statement when he said that we need to have the same message going out of the room when we have meetings and stuff because otherwise there becomes all of this conflict. So I think that relationship and the way he went about making me more comfortable around him and having me be able to talk to him about anything was a really good thing.

This story encapsulates the main idea about how a person cannot truly influence another person without having a personal relationship. An important aspect of the story to consider is the fact that the men's soccer coach refused to talk about soccer during these meetings. Oftentimes, a preliminary relationship between a coach and an athlete is created revolving around their particular sport. Although that relationship is necessary, evidently, it is not the relationship that enables influence to occur. The relationship that has the ability to influence must go beyond the field. It would seem that even if a coach is attempting to have influence on the field, that influence can only occur if they have a relationship on and off of the field. Once a person trusts

another person, they no longer question their motives because they know them on a deeper level. At the beginning of the story, the soccer player questioned the reasoning behind a decision the coach had made because he did not truly trust him. After spending weeks building a relationship, he felt as though conflict was much easier to work through and combat. It is necessary for coaches to understand that this story occurred throughout an entire semester. It is a conscious, vigorous effort to truly build this type of relationship with an athlete. Some may come faster and easier, and others may have to continuously be worked on. The convenient part about college athletics is a coach and player have 4 years to garner that relationship.

When an athlete is growing up, they tend to have the same coach for a year or two and then move up levels and switch coaches. Then, in high school, coaches often change with being on the freshman team, junior varsity, and varsity. Without having an extended length of time with the same coach, it is very difficult to create the type of relationship needed to truly be able to influence one another. A women's soccer player spoke on this when asked about the differences between her high school, club, and college coaches.

I would say most definitely all of my college coaches have influenced me in a more positive way than my club or high school coaches because they seem to care more about us as people instead of as players. It's hard because with the club and high school the coach is only there for the two hour practice and then we never see them. Here, they are always in their office and stuff so I feel like they get to know us on a more personal level.

It's not that high school or club coaches do not want the best for each of their players, they just have less time to build the bond needed to be able to influence. This emphasizes that if a high school coach desires to have the highest level of influence possible, they have to work twice as hard in the moments they are with their players to create these relationships. An aspect from her

quote that most players spoke on was internalizing the feeling that their college coaches care about them as people more than players. Of course, in a sports setting, ability and skill must be taken into account at times. Nonetheless, this does not mean that a coach should put that relationship above a personal one regardless of who the player is. When a player feels as though they can trust and be accepted by their coach no matter how they play, influence becomes possible. Another women's soccer player stated that "in college, all of the coaches I've had have had the message that I'm not just their player, they want me to succeed in life and after college as well, so it becomes a really important relationship with a lot of trust." Differently from high school, once college is over, most of the athletes the coaches have are going onto the real world and will not move on to another coach. This is the end of a long paved road to most athlete's careers. If a coach is only interested in building their players as athletes, they will not be able to gain more than a surface level understanding of their players. A sport is just one realm of a student athlete's life. Refusing to learn about and strengthen all other aspects of an athlete's life is learning about only a small part of that person. Influence comes from understanding the athlete as a whole and the only way to do that is through a relationship that is much more than just the sport he or she plays. One athlete speaks on this idea in particular by saying, "I have developed relationships with (my coaches) off of the field as well as being a player and I think that's really cool because they are able to relate with you on another level. Just knowing that my coaches care about me and knowing that they want me to get better as much as I want to." The relationship off of the field has allowed this athlete and her coaching staff to relate to one another on a higher level. Through this relationship, she has been able to believe that her coaches care about her as a person, and truly care about making her the best version of herself possible on and off of the

field. Just like any other relationship it is two-sided, and a coach also has to be able to trust and respect the player as a person.

An influential coach wants his or her players to be successful in their respective sport, but also in life. This being said, in order to create a relationship between two people, the player has to demonstrate that they care about the coach the same way that the coach must show it to the players. When asked if he believes that as a coach he has the ability to influence players, one coach responded,

> 100%. If there is that trust there. It has to come from time and experience and me being a coach that they can respect and them being players that I can respect and having a relationship where that influence actually means something not just because of title but it means something because you know that I want you to become better not just on the field but also as a person.

A key aspect in this quote refers to the athletes being people that the coach can also respect. Being a mature and responsible individual creates an atmosphere where both parties truly are dedicated to cultivating and nurturing this relationship. Through this relationship, players begin to listen and be influenced by their coach not because they are in a position of authority, but because they trust their intentions. The interviews also brought out how important one on one conversations are to building these relationships. Especially on larger teams, it is critical that coaches find ways and times to speak to players in one on one meetings. Almost every person interviewed mentioned a time in which they were able to influence or be influenced in a personal one on one setting. Every person interviewed when speaking on any of the three forms of influence (teammate on teammate, coach on player, or player on coach) at least once spoke about how a private conversation or meeting led to influence.

Coach on Player Influence

As stated before, personal relationships have to occur to be able to legitimately influence the other person. This theme holds true even in coach to player influence. Regardless of the fact that coaches are in an authority position to the player, they will not hold real influence unless there is a relationship there. Granted, a coach without a relationship can surely get an athlete to do something through using their power. The only type of influence this may elicit is negative influence, which is not going to end up being good for the coach or the player.

During the interviews, a coach was able to give an example of having a negative impact on a player because she attempted to do what she thought was best before actually getting to know the player personally. The coach was aiming to get one of her players to learn how to speak more on the field and communicate with her teammates. She decided to yell at her player every time she either did not speak when touching the ball or did not speak loud enough. Looking back at the situation during the interview, the coach admitted that after getting to know the woman more, she realized that this was not the way to get her player to begin being vocal on the field. The coach emphasized that once she built a relationship with her, she realized that "she needed that feedback pulled to the side. Whether she starts being loud or not what I learned is that she will go in a negative way if I do it in front of people in public." Building relationships with players is not only so that the coach and player can build trust and respect for one another on the field, but also for the success of the team as a whole. One of the most important aspects of the relationship is listening and learning what the other person needs. There is no single equation or recipe to be a successful coach. This is because every player is different, and their needs are completely different. This idea ties perfectly back into the necessity of building a relationship and the idea of effective leaders addressing the individual needs of each player. The second part

was addressed in the literature review and held true in the interviews. Each person's needs are different, and this can only be learned through learning about each individual person. Without a personal relationship, there is absolutely no way for a coach to truly ascertain what would work best for each particular player.

Coaches on the most successful teams find ways to influence each particular player. The difficult part is that every player needs something different. This idea is evident in the answers given by all of the athletes interviewed. When asked how they prefer to be given feedback or motivated, not a single player gave the same response. The answers ranged from being yelled at to only responding well to positive encouragement. A softball player flat out answered "for me I would rather get yelled at." A men's soccer player on the other hand answered by saying, "I think I respond better to positive encouragement if I do something well. To hear that I did it well then motivates me to do it again and again to hear that positive reinforcement." Both of these athletes are collegiate players on high caliber teams, yet they each individually need something completely different from their coaching staff. Other answers included challenging certain players and telling them that they can and have done better, and need to do that in the next play. One person answered something that is definitely less common for most athletes, but still someone said that this type of motivation is best for them. The player responded by saying, "I think I am probably motivated best by being a little bit afraid of what would happen if I don't do this right." Most athletes would not prefer to be intimidated into playing their best because this tends to make them think too much and crack under the pressure. But, since every player's needs are different, a coach needs to find what works and what does not work for each athlete, which of course brings influence back to the relationship. Looking back at the literature review, most of the articles mentioned how task-involving or self-improvement comments were the best way to

give feedback. Yet, looking through the range of ways interviewees listed, there can be more than one way that is considered best for giving feedback it would seem. A great way to begin learning more about each player is by simply individually asking them what they need and how they prefer to be motivated and hear feedback. Some athlete's responses will be what is expected, and others will be completely different than what is anticipated. Despite all of the examples above being the best ways in which a coach can motivate their players, every coach discussed how motivation cannot even begin if the athlete does not have intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation means that a person is driven by internal rewards which comes from within because the desire to become better and succeed is satisfying to the person themselves. Intrinsically motivated athletes are competing because they want to become better themselves, not because they want an external reward. Something that needs to be considered is if influence is possible at all. At a certain point, no matter what the coach does, there are some athletes who simply do not want to be influenced. This case shrinks as the age and level of athletics increases. In college, most athletes most likely have a high level of intrinsic motivation, especially Division 3 athletes. Athletes who play D3 collegiate sports do not receive scholarships, and are playing due to the love they have for the game. This translates over to intrinsic motivation in a vast majority of cases. On speaking about the internal drive D3 athletes must have, one coach said

> You have got to be willing to do the work when nobody is looking. At the D1 level, I don't think you have to have nearly the level of self-motivation to be good, but you do at the D3 level because at D1 they own you. They can make you go in there, and set your schedule to that. For us, having people that are self-motivated is the number one thing... It begins with people having motivation within themselves.

D3 coaches do not have the ability to completely control their athletes' lives. If the coach wants a player to do work in the off-season, they have to trust that they have enough internal motivation to want to get better without anyone watching. The only way for a D3 coach to have an input on what goes on in the off season is by recruiting athletes that they can trust will continue to strive to improve their game. Division 3 coaches need to ensure that the athletes they are recruiting have intrinsic motivation. One coach described this exact scenario by expressing, "I think it goes back to the type of kids we go after and if you've got somebody who has that fire inside of them and is driven and wants to be great and maybe wants to play beyond here, they are going to continue to push for greatness." An athlete can only be motivated if he or she wants to be motivated. The same way with anything else in life, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. A coach can do everything possible to motivate a player to work hard and push themselves, but if they simply do not want to get better, no motivation will work. Speaking of coaches styles, In the past, an authoritative coaching style was the norm. As we look at coaching today, an inclusive style is growing more and more popular in every realm of sports.

The idea of letting the players have a voice and changing the style of coaching for each player is largely expanding what coaching once was. Coaches must begin moving from an authoritative to an inclusive style of coaching whether they want to or not. Two of the coaches interviewed explicitly spoke on how their coaching has had to evolve from what it once was. There are a lot of reasons for the need for the changing style. One coach claimed that he believed "guys' skin was a little thicker, and they were just kind of used to it… 15 years ago, guys would just listen to what you were saying and tune out the volume and just get to the next thing better than guys do now." Oftentimes in the current generation of college athletes, players grew up being coddled by parents and coaches. Without learning and figuring out early on how to deal

with coaches yelling and demanding more out of players, they did not learn how to respond to this style of coaching. Another coach believes that a coach cannot lead by the motto "my way or the highway" anymore because "players now are smarter and they understand the game better." Athletes nowadays not only want to know what they are doing, but also why they are doing it. With players being more knowledgeable about their sport, they can add useful ideas and information to the coaching staff and team. This connects to the literature review in that it uses the idea of intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation was described as the challenge to followers to reexamine and rethink some of their assumptions. Players nowadays are challenging ideas and assumptions if they do not understand or necessarily believe in what it is saying. Granted, there is a fine line between players adding knowledge to a situation and thinking that they know more than the coach. This is one of the main reasons why it is difficult for coaches to drop their authoritative style of coaching. The Coach most likely has more knowledge than his or her athletes and truly believes that he or she knows what is best for them. A different coach gave an answer when speaking on the reasons for having an authoritative coaching style. She answered,

> I think early in my coaching career it was more of that authoritative, here's what I'm going to do, I know what I'm doing. I've learned from coaches from the past and here is what I know to be right. And here is how you should do it. It wasn't a question it was a statement- here is how we do it and here is how we are going to do it. And if you question me, you are going to run because I know what I'm doing.

Later in the interview, this particular coach emphasizes how her coaching style has done a complete 180. Although she does still at times feel as though she needs to be heard about her specific way to do things, she now learns from players and allows players to ask various

questions in order to get on the same page. Influence for coaches used to be much easier to come by. Athletes would not debate or question what the coach was saying, but simply do it. Nowadays, a coach must understand that there is a time and place for displaying authoritarian tactics, but it is not very often. It is not the most effective way to influence players. A large amount of authoritative tactics can easily lead to resentment because many players today have grown up with coaches that empower the voice of the athlete.

One final realm of coach on player influence is more of a broader aspect. Two of the winningest coaches at DePauw brought up the idea of a communal goal. Being such a high caliber coach all begins with being a transformational leader. This is a person who can get people to achieve extraordinary circumstances, like multiple successful seasons in a row. A coach has the ability to influence by bringing every athlete together and on board to the same dream. If the coach is able to get athletes to buy into the same goal, people begin to be motivated by sharing a dream. Immediately when asked the best ways to motivate players, one of the coaches responded by saying, "my brain went to thinking about dreaming big. If you dream big, you have got some lofty goals and then we set those process goals of what we want to be great at." The other Coach similarly emphasized that "the motivation is in big dreams. We want to win a national championship. So it's the end goal that's exciting." Both coaches have continuously made the national tournament and have had winning records. It goes to show that when a team is constantly thinking about and reminded of that goal they are all striving for, motivation increases in the team as a whole. Influence is not always about getting a player to do something, but rather, creating like minded individuals. It is not easy to get a group of ten or more people to buy into the same goal. Achieving a feat like that is a large part of influence in itself.

When thinking of influence on a sports team, most people immediately think of the coach influencing the players. Although this is an incredibly important form of influence, it is only one of the three forms of influence on a team. A coach can do everything right in the form of X's and O's for the game, but in-game strategy is only a small piece of the puzzle. The most successful teams have coaches that care about more than just the strategy of the game. These coaches care about the success of the team, but also the success of each individual player as not only athletes but people.

Teammate on teammate influence

The second form of influence on a team is between the players themselves. Players have to be able to positively influence other players on a successful team. A coach often begins the level of influence needed, but teammates have to complete the task. There are many moments on a team that the coach is not a part of, and in these moments, players have major impacts on the success of the team. Corresponding to what was already stated, teammate on teammate influence is only possible if relationships are built. An incoming class of freshman comes into a collegiate sports team every year. It is the job of the upperclassmen to create a relationship with every player on the team regardless of how long they have known them. It is a near impossible task to attempt to change the minds of people or to have people put their all into something if they do not know the people they are doing this for. Almost every player interviewed discussed a time they influenced or were influenced by another teammate in a one on one personal conversation scenario.

Teammates influencing other teammates can come from a plethora of ways on or off of the field/court. One player spoke on how he was struggling with not getting playing time his freshman year, and an upperclassmen privately talked to him after practice one day. The player

commented, "He would come up to me and tell me how I am right there and how I almost have it... he was telling me that I have so much talent and I can't quit now." This specific player mentioned how he did not go and ask for advice from his teammate, but what his teammate said was one of the main reasons he decided to continue playing soccer and become a great player in the years ahead. In this particular instance, his teammate did not do anything besides tell him that he is playing well and making improvements. Influence does not have to come from making amazing speeches or making outstanding plays on the field. A small one on one conversation could be the reason a teammate decided to continue to play their sport. On a similar note, a player from a different team also mentioned how an upperclassmen spoke to her personally during her freshman year, and the impact that it had on her. She said,

> I remember her grabbing my face and being like you are putting in a bunch of work and you don't even see the positive impact you are having on people even if it is not necessarily in games. That was able to flip my attitude after that and I was much more positive and wanted to power through the season and be more positive about the cards dealt to me.

Having a private conversation with a teammate and letting them know how important their role is on the team is one of the biggest influences a teammate can have. It is never easy to be vulnerable to a person that you are not close with. This is why building a foundation is so important to being able to foster influence eventually. A player specifically brought up how creating a relationship and learning how vulnerable he could be with his teammates influenced him. When asked about a time that a teammate has influenced him, he responded,

> I would say that at first when it came to interacting with team members on and off of the field, I didn't realize how open I could be with everybody. Having a specific teammate

open up to me about his mental health kind of gave me the opportunity and showed me
that there were people who struggle with that on the team and I've had personal
experiences like that. So to be able to open up about my own experiences after hearing
that was easier.

From this quote alone, it is obvious that teammates' influence extends way beyond the court or
field they play on. This specific athlete was influenced by someone being vulnerable and taking
the time to share something personal about themselves. Athletes must understand that influence
is not only about being great at your sport, but also being great at creating relationships.

Other than personal relationships, working hard and being an example was the most
mentioned way to positively influence or be positively influenced by another teammate. The
literature review states role modeling as one of the six most important themes in being a
transformational leader. This clearly showed through in the interviews when being a leader by
example was mentioned more than anything else. For any athlete who wants to be great, this type
of influence should just be a positive extension of what they are already doing. Working hard on
every possession and staying after to continue to work on various parts of their game is
something that all great athletes do without having an intention of influence. Yet, through every
athlete bringing up being influenced by seeing this dedication and example, it clearly is a large
part of how teammates are able to influence other teammates. When asked if a teammate has
positively influenced you, one player answered,

Yes. [a player] on our team is constantly working hard and she showed up to practice
early and I just became a lazy junior and I felt like I worked hard freshman and
sophomore year. But, she kept working hard, so she motivated me to keep working hard
and get out there.

Simply by seeing one of her teammates get to practice early and put in extra work, she motivated herself to do the same. By working hard and pushing themselves to get better, an athlete is not only helping themselves but also helping their team. They help their team because they are going to put themselves in a position to play at their highest caliber, and they are also pulling other teammates in the right direction. Another athlete mentioned how the example one of her teammates shows through staying level headed in a game situation has influenced her. "[This player] positively influenced me in a lot of ways as a friend and as a teammate. Her influence on the field is the fact that she can always stay so even-keel and she lets her anger turn into drive and a want to get better not a frustration that hurts her mental game." By showing strength and resilience during games, this athlete was able to keep her teammates calm. Being a positive example can come from a culmination of things. From the way that a teammate carries themselves to constantly putting in extra reps, teammates see these examples and are influenced by them. In division three, coaches are not able to be with their players during the preseason. This is one of the biggest ways teammates must influence other teammates. Without a coach's presence, athletes are expected to continue to develop and work as hard as in season. For some players, a different gear is used due to the lack of accountability of having a coach there. This is another huge area where just by being an example of working hard, teammates can drastically impact other teammates. Relating to this, one athlete talked about how she would constantly be working towards personal records in the weight room, and she convinced others to do the same. She mentioned how her lifting partner oftentimes lifted less than her, even though she thought she was able to push herself more. Due to this, she continued to motivate her partner to increase weight until they were lifting the same amount. After they got to the same weight she said, "So I felt like that was me influencing her just because we always pushed each other and we had the

same weight." Without this player continuing to encourage her teammate to increase her weight and push herself, there most likely would not have been anybody else that would have done anything. Coaches are not able to be there and other players are lifting with their own individual lifting partners. For collegiate athletes, there truly is no "off-season." If a team wants to be great, they have to constantly be getting better and working towards whatever their end goal may be. Since preseason workouts cannot technically be mandatory in Division 3, one interviewee mentioned how "you are trying to pull another guy along with you to a workout and things like that." This athlete also mentioned in his interview how teammates were able to get him to preseason workouts on days that he was not planning on going by simply reaching out to him directly. If certain teammates are not going to the workouts, reaching out to them specifically is incredibly influential. It all starts by being an example yourself and going to the workouts. Then by going every day, a teammate can begin to pull other teammates with them day by day. Positively influencing teammates by example should be one of the easiest ways to influence a teammate. A person's own passion and drive to work hard rubs off on other people. Unfortunately, negative influences also rub off on one's teammates just as easily.

After asking interviewees for positive influence examples either by them or to them, I also asked them to follow up with a time in which they negatively influenced a teammate or were negatively influenced by a teammate. When asking the person being interviewed about how they have negatively influenced another teammate, most answers were similar. Almost all of the responses had to do with being in a bad mood about something and bringing that attitude to practice. Corresponding with this theme, one person interviewed said how sometimes he would say certain things that he knew could easily bring other people's moods down with his own. Three of the examples of possible phrases he would say were, "Man, I'm tired of this," "I don't

wanna be here," or " I got work to do." Most athletes could attest that there has been a time when they just simply did not want to go to practice that day. What athletes need to realize is that a quick phrase could completely put a teammate who could have been excited about practice in the same mood.

These negative comments are usually said without much thought, but in reality they could alter a lot about the environment of a practice or game. Speaking of situations like these, another player brought up how "if a teammate was pissed off about something or upset about something maybe like the way they were playing and that came off to me in a negative way, that inadvertently could have had a negative impact on me and made me feel a little less positive in that sense." Clearly the mood of a teammate can have a major impact on the moods of other people on the team. Fortunately in this same sense, positivity and energy can also rub off on teammates. This is especially true if the player is an upperclassman. Underclassmen look up to their older teammates, and if they are being negative and complaining about the team and the coach, the underclassmen will think this is okay to do as well. To attest to this point, a senior emphasized that "It's definitely easier to influence people as you get older. People have this idea that if you're older they need to respect you more. This even happens not on a team, you're going to respect your elders." As players get older, they gain responsibility. One of these responsibilities is being an example to their younger teammates. This example can either be positive or negative.

Another repeated theme was yelling or saying something in the moment that they later regretted. One player said, "I'm sure it was accidental but I'm sure that there are times where I may have said something about the team or the way we were playing in a game that negatively impacted the players around me." This quote demonstrates how negative influence is oftentimes

an effect from competitiveness in a game situation. When speaking about how you personally have negatively influenced another teammate, it is never easy to admit a mistake that was made. Most people interviewed mentioned how it happened and they later looked back at the incident and regretted what they said or did. This exemplifies the idea that these moments come in intense situations or without thinking before speaking. A younger player spoke on an issue in this same regard. She recalled a time on the field where "[my teammate] was verbal with me and I basically yelled back at her. I know that both of us had hurt feelings, but that was definitely a negatively influential moment between us especially in the middle of season." She discussed how she wished they had worked out their issues in private and had not meant to hurt her teammate's feelings. This is not an atypical situation, especially in high pressure situations. In the end, everyone wants what is best for the team, but sometimes it does not come off the right way. This is why it is so easy to negatively influence a teammate with a quick remark that was not intended to harm.

The past examples were interviewees discussing how they have negatively influenced other teammates. When asked how other teammates had negatively influenced them, a lot of the same types of answers were given regarding negative moods and remarks. But, when asked about teammate's negative influence something intriguing was identified. Every single response given about a teammate negatively influencing was about an older teammate. This is a profound theme connected through every interview. Upperclassmen have a lot of power. Due to this, it is so easy to use their power negatively. While interviewing a senior, she recalled her freshman year to answer about a time a teammate negatively influenced her. She remarked, "freshman year our seniors were horrible, I'll just say it. And they took away my interest in soccer because they were constantly mean to me and the other freshman. It created a bad atmosphere and it made me

not want to be there anymore and it was only my first year so it really sucked." Upperclassmen tend to have more of a leadership role on a team simply because they have been in the program longer. This gives them power without truly having to earn it, other than staying in the program. The player being interviewed mentioned how this misuse of power created a bad atmosphere, and went so far as to say it made her not want to play her sport any longer. The difficult part about an upperclassmen using their power to negatively influence younger teammates is that younger players do not feel as though it is their place to go against the upperclassmen. This creates a rift on the team that usually stays unsettled for long periods of time. In this case, it stayed unsettled until the season was over and the senior class graduated. In comparison, another senior athlete from another team spoke on a similar issue. She responded,

> One of the seniors my sophomore year made all of these rules and would always say "my team" when talking to me and our teammates and that drove me up a wall. I could not stand it. I think when you talk to your team, you always say "us" or "we" and I was so mad and I talked to her and she said "last time I checked, you're only a sophomore" so I was livid.

Again with this example, a senior being interviewed went back to her previous years to answer this question. Underclassmen are definitely capable of having a negative influence, but when asked to recall a major incident or story, every interviewee talked about an older player. Not only did the teammate in this quote talk down on her younger teammates, but she also degraded the athlete being interviewed for her age when she tried to confront the situation. Athletes tend to think that when they are a senior, they get to treat their teammates however they want because they have already "paid their dues." By this, I mean that they have been in the program for three years and are finally at the top of the totem pole. The problem with this thinking is that every

person interviewed is on a team sport. There are no people higher or lower on team sports. There can be people who have more experience and are better players, but not players who have more of a right to speak down on their teammates.

A teammate giving feedback or criticism to another teammate is always a difficult task. There is a fine line between giving advice to help a teammate and acting like a coach to that teammate. If there is no foundation and personal relationship built, no teammate is going to take feedback or instructions positively. The teammate has to know that it is coming from a place of care and desire to truly help them out. Teammates need to understand that influence can be had in two very different ways- positive or negative. A player does not want to be the teammate that gets referred to as the upperclassmen who uses their power negatively.

Player on Coach Influence

The last of the three influences is player on coach influence. This influence is last because it is considered to be the newest form of influence that has emerged on a team. Twenty years ago, athletes did not have much of a voice on their teams. Since then, the empowered athlete has been on the rise. This change has begun to end the overly controlling coach, and this trend is destined to continue moving forward. Athletes today are constantly asking questions and sharing ideas about certain plays or set-ups. Coaches may not take these ideas into consideration, but regardless, athletes know more and want to know more than they used to. This can be related to many athletes growing up with personal trainers, where athletes really learn about physiology, technique, and strategy. Building off of the first two forms of influence, the most important aspect for coach to player influence is also building a relationship. This relationship allows

coaches to trust the player and believe that their knowledge and input can add something useful to the team. The main way athletes are capable of having these relationships and possibly garnering some form of influence on their coach is through one on one meetings.

Whether it be administered by the player or the coach, individual meetings are crucial for sport teams. Individual meetings create a space to not only comfortably express one's feelings, but they also encourage bonding that is needed to create personal relationships. Personal conversations also avoid the potential negative of confronting someone in public. Four athletes from each sport team but one in this study were interviewed. Only one time did every single athlete interviewed from the same team bring up the same example of player on coach influence. All 4 athletes in this case brought up a meeting between the seniors and the coach prior to the season beginning. Although this is not technically an individual meeting, it was still a smaller group with the coach. This was a unique case in that it was this coach's first year as the head coach of this team. Clearly, the groundwork of relationship building was very fresh for every player on the team. In this instance it is especially important that the coach have individual or smaller group meetings with the players. One of the four players who spoke about their initial senior meeting with the coach discussed why she felt as though this meeting led to a situation where players had influence. The player answered,

> At the beginning, she sat down with the seniors. We had sent her a list of like 30 things that we wanted for the season and what we expected the team to do. She went through each one of them with us and sometimes she would fight back and say this isn't right and we would explain to her what we meant and why we wrote it. So it was kind of like a give and take.

This meeting is a perfect example of the type of influence players can have on their coaches. It may not be in large and explicit ways, but nonetheless it is still influential. Being a first year coach at a new school, the seniors on the team felt the need to share their experiences and their expectations for the season. Although the coach did not take every single thing into consideration, she heard them all out and altered her way of thinking for certain issues. Another reason individual meetings are beneficial for player to coach influence is because players feel more comfortable expressing complaints or things that have been bothering them in a more private setting. One athlete recalled a time when she felt as though her coach was not giving her enough feedback. She felt uneasy about what was going on and told me,

> I asked her for a meeting once and I basically told her that I was told at the age of 10 if I'm not being criticized and my coach is not talking to me, it means 1. They've given up hope and don't think I'm coachable anymore, or there's nothing to improve on and that means I'm at the end of my career. So, she asked what do I mean? And I said I don't like that you haven't spoken to me. She told me that she was just giving me time to readjust. And I said I'm readjusted, I've been playing softball. I told her that I need you to criticize me. So now ever since, she watches and talks to people now and asks what their preference is if they like criticism, praise, etc. So I think that kind of gave her a reality check that not everybody is the same, and some people need criticism. It gave her a new reality check in terms of how you coach different players.

This again relates directly back to the theme in the literature review about addressing individual needs and differences. Influence in this aspect became a win-win situation. The player won because the coach listened and gave her feedback the way she wanted. As well as the coach winning because she learned something new about needing to approach every player differently

and began coaching this specific player in a way that made her play at her full potential. Individual meetings allow players to express how they have been feeling away from others and away from the field, court, or pool. A coach is constantly trying to predict what is best for each individual player, but without having these meetings and sometimes being told what is best, they may never know. From these examples, the largest form of influence players have over coaches have to do with coaching styles and personal desires. A less common way players influence their coaches through individual meetings is regarding playing time. Only one interviewee mentioned a story about how they believed they influenced their coach regarding who was playing and what was best for the team. This player said,

> I went into the coaches office and I told him that I need to be on the field. And he said
> that sounds kind of selfish, and I said you put me on the field, and we will score goals.
> The very next game, I scored and assisted that game and I started every game after that.
> So I probably taught him that I was the answer in that particular situation.

Not very often will something like this occur, but in this case it did. This player was very confident in his abilities and truly felt as though his team would be better off with him on the field. Whether the coach was influenced by his confidence and passion to actually schedule a meeting to tell him this or by realizing that he may have a point, the coach was influenced nonetheless. Other than individual meetings, another time player on coach influence can occur is in game scenarios.

Being on the floor or field during games can be very advantageous, and this allows players to have input that coaches may not see for themselves. This way of influencing is usually not as drastic because a coach can easily veto an idea if he/she does not think it is a good idea. Regardless, when a coach listens to what one of the players believes to be best, he/she is still

being influenced by a player. Three of the athletes interviewed answered the question regarding influencing their coach with an in game example. The first player said that "one of the primary ones would just be like in a game. You or another teammate sees something that they think might work like a certain set play, we bring it up and tend to influence him to call that play." A scenario like this can come up multiple times a game. In order for a coach to take a players input, they have to trust them and trust what their opinion is. Without this trust in the player, the coach would not be willing to hear the opinions of the players. Another athlete brought up a specific example that may occur in a game that has previously influenced his coach. He articulated, "During a game, if we see that a certain ball screen coverage isn't working, even though the coaches put us in that certain coverage in the scout, we just come together in the time out and tell him we want to switch this up or it's not really working out. He usually hears us out." This example demonstrates something that could happen on the floor in the flow of a game that may result in player influence. Coaches often think they know what is best and what will work best to win the game. Unfortunately, these plans do not always go as planned and lineups or schemes need to be changed. This is where players who are in the game and have a feel for what is working and what is not can influence the coach. This demonstrates a coach being "ego-less" and being concerned about what is best for the team rather than being right, a main aspect of transformational leaders. In situations where the coach may need advice or want to hear what the players think, most examples tend to come from older or higher caliber players.

Coaches were also asked times in which they felt as if a player or players were able to influence them. Out of the five coaches interviewed, two of the coaches brought up an instance when either an upperclassmen or very talented player had influence. Granted, these are obviously not the only times or people who have influenced their coach, but it does bring up a certain point

that these were the stories the coaches were able to recall on the spot. This insinuates that these are the largest moments in which a coach associates with being influenced. One of the two coaches that responded this way immediately told a story about one of the best players she had ever coached.

> A couple years ago, I was coaching one of our best players. She was an all-American, she was phenomenal, she was doing everything right. We were kind of going through a bit of a struggle during the season so I had a talk with her and I kind of clicked back into fix mode coach mode and said we need to do this and this and this. I really trusted this player and I could see she was just kind of nodding and listening to me but not really listening to me, she was just waiting for me to get to the point. And then I said do you agree, basically guiding her. And she had the gumption to say, no I do not think it is this. My answer was we need to practice more and do this, she said no we actually need some time off and our bodies are wearing and you are being too hard on certain players. So that kind of clicked in my head, oh yeah I don't always have all of the answers. I need to talk a lot less and listen a lot more. So, from that point forward I open almost every single meeting up with questions, and even on evals I tell players I want them to answer them.

Looking at this quote, the coach specifically mentions this player's accolades and how it was a player that she felt she could trust. This truly emphasizes that players that have a relationship built on trust and competence can impact a coach more than others. This player influenced her coach because she made her realize in that moment that what she was doing was wrong, and also influenced her for the future. After having that conversation, this coach mentions how she changed the way she opens meetings. She learned that players sometimes know what is best for

the team. Sometimes a coach may think that the team needs a certain thing when in reality they need something completely different that only the players could know.

The other coach that spoke on how they have been influenced by a player said,

I think that comes to trust. When a player says hey I'm seeing this in the moment and I think if we switch to something else- if we put another forward up or dropped another forward back we might be more effective in this space. So, there's a lot of trust that goes with that where and certainly it happens when guys are a little bit older and we've had that time to build that trust that they are seeing things that I can't see from my perspective that they can see at that moment.

This example ties into both influence from players being older and also influence in game scenarios. In order for a coach to switch a scheme that they had previously scouted and believed would work, they have to completely trust that their player is correct. An older player has more time with the coach and therefore more time to create this trust. A coach is more easily influenced by a player he can trust because he knows from past experience that this particular player has enough knowledge to advise him a certain direction. Teams are more successful when players are able to see and understand the game and speak on their ideas to the coach. Years ago when players did not feel comfortable giving their input, players may have seen something helpful but never brought it up.

This is one of the main reasons why the empowered athlete is on the rise. Coaches are beginning to realize how much knowledge athletes have and how much this can help a team. Coaches used to think they needed to be the know-all of their team and sport. A coach can know every aspect of a sport and team, but regardless of how much they know, they are not physically

on the court or field. Empowering the athlete not only makes the athlete feel more important, but also gives the coach more insight into what is occurring in the game. Older and more talented players may not actually have more influence over coaches, but they are the players that coaches most often recall when thinking of ways they have been influenced.

Out of all three types of influence, player on coach is by far the least studied. This is due to a variety of things. The most prominent being that the idea of the empowered athlete is a new and still evolving concept. Although it is the newest concept, every coach interviewed was very aware of this happening that it has to happen to have a successful team. After asking whether she believes if players are able to influence their coaches, one coach answered, "I've got a million examples, Syd. Let me try to think of a good one." Coaches are clearly aware of this trend occurring, it is just a matter of which coaches are going to use it to their advantage and which ones are going to refuse to change with the times. Empowering the athlete and giving them a voice does not mean that the coach is any less in charge or powerful. It simply means that the coach has enough power and knowledge to know that one single person cannot truly have all of the answers.

Most Capable Leader

The final category that each interviewee was questioned about revolved around what makes up the most capable leader on a sports team. Based on the variety of answers that were given, there is not one single way to be the best leader. Leaders have a mixture of many qualities, and are all able to influence their team one way or another. Although there is not one clear cut answer for how to be a leader, there still were some recurring characteristics and values that most leaders have. There were certain answers and capabilities that every person interviewed said is needed and some answers that differed between coaches and players. Just like the first three

forms of influence though, the most important characteristic any leader can have is personal relationships with the other players.

A leader is someone who is capable of creating relationships and making each person feel important regardless of who they are. On a college team, it is absolutely necessary to build relationships and make the incoming freshman class feel as though they are accepted as part of the team. One coach claimed this is the difference between a team who meshes and truly cares for one another and a team who never fully grows to their potential. She articulated that at the beginning of every year, the

> First thing we want to try and connect are incoming freshmen with our team so we make lifting partners. But for us, it is more like mentors. And it helps with the transition of college. I really think that the quicker you get that freshman to be a part of the team and not an outsider to the circle, you can become a cohesive team. I have watched seniors be really close and best buddies with the freshman and that's a beautiful thing to watch.

Most athletes can speak on the difference of being on a close knit team to one that feels "cliquey" and not together as one unit. A successful team is great at the sport they play, but they have also created a great atmosphere and team culture. A positive team culture begins with the relationships that are created between every player. When players feel as though their teammates always have their back, they begin to work harder and push themselves for the other people on their team.

A junior athlete talked about how there is one player on his team that he feels as though can somehow relate to each player on the team in one way or another. When asked about the most capable leader and a specific example, the athlete answered,

I have always felt like the person that is most capable is the person who knows how to

and is able to connect with everybody… There's pretty much no question that he is the

leader of our team because he is so personable and he can relate to people and empathize

with people.

The only way to be able to do this is to actually learn about people and find commonalities

between the two of you. This player spoke so highly of one of his teammates simply because he

felt as though this specific player cared about him as more than his teammate, but also as a

person and friend. This aspect of leadership is not only important in sport teams, but also all

realms of life. Whether it be jobs or school, leadership skills are always needed. No matter where

it may be, in order to be seen as a leader the first step is always creating a personal relationship

with the people who want to influence. A leader does not necessarily have to be someone that is

most expected to be the leader. This idea was extremely prevalent in one theme that came out of

this area of questions.

A large number of interviewees from both coaches and players spoke on their belief that

a captain title does not necessarily make a player a leader. The last question to every person who

was interviewed was "In your opinion, who is most capable of leading on a team? Does it have

to do with age or title?" This gave every person a chance to speak on their thoughts on who can

lead, how people should lead, and if it had to do with age or title. There was a large range of

responses, but most people claimed that they did not think that the title of captain had much of an

effect on leadership. Another point of consideration was how the captain was chosen. Most of

the athletes said that it was not actually a team vote, but rather, whoever made up the senior

class. Another athlete brought up football and mentioned how the quarterback is almost always

named captain of that team, but that is due to the position they play, not their leadership

capabilities. In response to the question posed, one athlete passionately responded, "You can be named a captain, but that doesn't mean you are a leader. I don't think it comes down to an age. I think it is your composure and how you are able to respond to your teammates." This quote in particular encapsulated the main idea of what a majority of athletes responded. Being called a captain definitely gives a person some type of power. But, this power does not equate to respect on a team.

On many sport teams at DePauw, it is rather easy to be named a captain. From listening to players through interviews, most teams name their seniors as captains. This seemed to be the main reason why people felt as though a captain title does not actually mean much in terms of leadership. Being on a team for four years allows the player to have the most knowledge and experience with the program, but this does not automatically make them a compassionate and respected leader. Another player interviewed similarly answered, "I don't think it is always a senior or captain and I don't always think it is necessarily the best player. I think it is the player that is either the most passionate about the sport or the most compassionate person in terms of supporting their teammate." Based on this quote, it seems as though almost anybody can lead on a team. An underclassman that is constantly showing desire to get better and pure passion for the game is a leader because they've created an example. Seniors or captains do not always have this fire or passion inside of them which makes them difficult to follow. The title of captain may give a player a bit of a head start to be that leader when new freshmen come in, but the player themselves still has to do the rest of the work to continue to be seen as a leader. Along these same lines, leaders must set a good example in order to truly be looked up to and able to influence.

Every single person interviewed in one way or another spoke on how the best leaders have to work hard and be dedicated to their sport. Without this key piece, a player is going to have a very difficult time being a role model for other teammates. Working hard does not always have to mean that a player is one of the best players on the team, but it does show that the player cares and is a good example. Working hard and never taking a possession off in practice can display this. Another way is going to practice early or staying after to get extra reps which unintentionally influences other people to do the same. As displayed in player and coach responses, visually seeing a player work hard is one of the strongest and most influential things a leader can do. A sophomore described who she believes to be the most capable leader as "the people who are always working and never really complaining because I think when I see other people never taking a possession off, that keeps me accountable and wanting to match myself to that type of drive." A person is capable of being an impactful leader on a team by continuously pushing themselves every day. This is something that most athletes who truly care about improving their sport and their team should not have much of a problem with. This quote emphasizes that a person at any age can be some type of leader by merely giving it their all at practice day in and day out.

When most people think of leaders or influencers on a team, oftentimes a vocal player comes to mind. This characteristic of course is a necessary component in being a complete leader on a team. One of the other necessary components however, is working hard and being an example for teammates to look up to. Another player answered along the same lines. He expressed, "I don't think that it's built on stats, I think it's built on hard work, dedication, and just doing the right thing. If people see you working and doing the right thing, then they're going to respect you when it comes time for you to tell them what to do." Even more so than the

previous quote, this quote adds the component of believing that anyone can lead on a team. By saying that he does not think that it's built on stats, he is bringing the point across that a leader does not have to be the people on the floor or the leading scorer. Whether it is a starter or the fifth person off of the bench, a player who is constantly working hard is a leader. Going a step further, a coach that was interviewed combined hard work and stats. "I think the last piece is I think really special things can happen when your best player is your hardest worker. I think that's a natural born leader." This statement does not discredit players who are not the best player in having a role in leading by working hard. It just emphasizes that if it is one of the best players who is working hard, it should motivate everyone else even more. If the player who is already getting minutes and excelling on their team is constantly working hard, it shows that they are at the spot they are for a reason and if others want to get there they have to work just as hard. Corresponding to this idea, four players brought up how they believed higher caliber players are heard more often which makes them more equipped to lead.

Of the fifteen athletes interviewed, four of them spoke on how higher caliber players tend to be the most capable leaders. This comment stems completely from the previous paragraph. The players who made this claim made the argument that the best players got that way from continuously working hard and showing dedication to their sport. The four athletes that mentioned this in their interviews are four of the highest caliber players that were interviewed. Based on awards and season statistics, all of the players who had this belief about leadership were top players on their teams. This goes to show that their answers were based off of personal experience of being respected and heard as a top athlete on their team. The strongest response came from a senior athlete. "I think people that are looked up to for what they do get respected because they work so hard. So, most of the time if you're really fuckin' good at what you do,

then people respect it." Clearly, the basis of her conclusion has to do with the main point that everyone else agreed with- leaders must be hardworking. Although many interviewees did not explicitly say what this player did, it is a hard sentence to argue with. In every aspect of life, people look up to other people who have accomplished what they are trying to accomplish. This can be anything from a doctor to lawyer to parent to athlete. If somebody is known to be great at what they do, people want to know how they did it and attempt to accomplish this feat themselves.

This is why great players may not be the best leaders, but they surely have a level of respect from teammates that other players are not capable of having. Another reason behind better players being the most capable to lead is because high caliber players also tend to be the most knowledgeable. An underclassmen who is also a great player already said, "overall, I think your ability as a player is a big part of it. You are more apt to see somebody who is really good as having more knowledge." If a player on a team has a question or wants to get better in a certain area, it would be in their best interest to ask a player who excels and has the biggest arsenal of knowledge in the subject. This allows higher caliber players to have a large amount of influence because they can share what they know with other players on the team.

Being great at what you do allows a person to have the potential to spread wisdom and advice. Although being a great athlete tends to make a person more capable to lead, in the end there has to be more than just talent to be a leader. One coach explained how it is an extraordinary circumstance when your best player is also your best leader because they have these predetermined assets to lead by others on the team. But he goes on to say, "Sometimes your leading scorer isn't necessarily going to be your best leader. It's great if they can be, but not everybody is necessarily cut out for it. I think there is a tendency to look to your older or better

players for that, and it's great if it works out that way, but not everyone is equipped for that." The tendency to look up to older or better players is because they have oftentimes accomplished something that you are striving for yourself. This is the main reason why they are most capable. Unfortunately, capability does not always translate into actually being a great leader. This is the point that the coach in the above quote is trying to get across. It is an amazing occurrence when the best player is also the best leader because they are dealt the best hand to begin with. The last area of who is the most capable leader focuses on an aspect that every coach mentioned in their interview.

All five coaches as well as four of the players interviewed brought up how in their experience seniors tend to be the most capable leaders. Coaches tend to have this idea in their heads because they have known their senior players for 3 years now and have had time to shape them into the leaders and players that are best suited for their program. Along with this, by the fourth year, players know almost everything about the program and what is to be expected. This allows coaches to focus more on other players and trust that their seniors are going to do the right thing. The players who thought seniors were the most capable indicated that teammates listen to you more and actually follow what you are saying when you are a senior. It can be very advantageous to have a sophomore or junior that is vocal and willing to lead, but the athletes who were interviewed noticed that there is a difference in hearing a player and actually doing what that player said. One senior athlete spoke of his experience being someone who was vocal and played all four years. He articulated how he considered himself to be somewhat of a leader every year, but did not actually feel as though he was heard and truly respected until he had the title of senior and captain behind his name. He continued by saying, "people say that everybody is equal on a team and all voices are equally heard, but that is just not the case in my experience.

For sure the seniors on the team are the most influential and then you move up the ladder and get to the captains." As someone who experienced all four years on their sports team, this person had the knowledge to look back on his experience every year as a collegiate athlete.

In a perfect world, people want to believe that every voice on a team is equally heard. This just does not always seem like the case. Granted, this does not necessarily mean that every player isn't treated equally or has equal opportunity, but not every player is going to be respected and heard the same. Even a player who did not play much in any of her four years spoke on how the only year she truly felt heard was her senior year. This particular player was never a high caliber player who got a lot of playing time, so never had the advantage of being heard due to ability. Even being a non-starter, she expressed that "this last season especially being a senior I definitely felt very influential, which is odd because I am a player who did not get a whole lot of playing time." This really emphasizes that whether people want to believe it or not, age lifts a person's capability to lead. A player who did not get much playing time on the field still stood out to be a leader and a voice on her team because underclassmen felt as though a senior has knowledge that other players do not. Seeing as only four players mentioned age as a large aspect of leadership, it is not as widely accepted amongst players, yet is something that was seen and talked about by all five coaches. The reasoning behind the coach's responses being seniors also had a lot to do with knowledge of the program. In a coach's eyes, the seniors have now had three full years to learn under them and be shaped into specific leaders and players. Younger teammates have not been in the program as long, so do not know the ins and outs like seniors should. One coach spoke directly on this, "I think seniors have the potential to be the greatest leaders because they are most knowledgeable about the program and they should care the most and they typically do."

Another aspect she mentioned was seniors caring more than any other class. Regardless of what happens, this is the seniors' last season to be a collegiate athlete. They do not get a next year to accomplish what they want, there is only this year. No senior wants to look back and regret not ever beating a rival or pushing themselves an extra rep in the weight room or practice. They have to leave everything they have on the floor each and every day because this is it for them. Another often forgettable aspect of player leadership is having the backing of the coach. If the coach is acknowledging specific people as leaders, the team also follows. So, if the coach is acknowledging the seniors as leaders, the team is persuaded by this. A coach discussed this topic by saying, "The senior class have always been our leaders. That's how we have always run the program. When I came in, I allowed the eight seniors to be the leaders. So every meeting was with them and I allowed them to have meetings with the team." This coach strategizes her season and team in a way that allows the seniors to have the best capability to lead. Not only does she depict this to the rest of the team, but also has meetings and gives the seniors opportunities to portray their leadership. The coach encourages the seniors to have meetings with the team led by them to show that they are the next step down the ladder after the coach. There is a common belief that seniors should be the leader on teams. This makes players who have finally made it to their senior feel as though they have to be the leader this year. At times, this can lead to seniors using their power negatively as was discussed in the section above. Or, it can turn into a strong and capable leader who is backed up by the coach and understands that this is their last chance to accomplish their goals on the field, court, or pool.

As seen throughout this section, a leader does not just have one critical component, but a combination of lots of characteristics. It clearly helps to have an age or captain title to begin with, but this does not pave the whole way. There have been seniors and captains who teammates

do not look up to or respect because they do not act like a leader. It would seem that the most capable athlete for leadership would be the player who is either a senior or captain or both, a high caliber player with a voice, a player focused on creating relationships with every teammate, and a hardworking and completely dedicated athlete to their sport. It is not easy to have all four characteristics, which is why there are all different forms of leaders. Having one or two of these characteristics creates a good leader, but all four tend to create a great leader.

Conclusion

The word politics in the politics of sports thesis has been construed to mean the ability to have influence over another person. On a sports team, there are three possible forms of influence and an ultimate layer of influence called leadership. The first form discussed is coach on player influence. This tends to be the most traditional and thought of form of influence on a sports team. The coach is the head of the team, so therefore they have the largest ability of getting the players to do what they want. This was for a long period of time the layout of sport teams and the belief for how successful sport teams operate. Although coach on player influence is an important sector of influence on a sports team, it is no longer considered to be the outright most important form. The second form of influence studied is teammate on teammate influence. Especially in a college setting, this form of influence is so important for the success of a team. Teammates have the ability to influence each other especially in settings when the coach is not around. The difficult part about teammate influence is that it could be negative just as easily as it could be positive. The last and newest influence is player on coach influence. This form of influence has been the least studied and most recent development in sports. Players ultimately have a voice on their team and are the only people on a team that can truly have opinions on in game scenarios or how their bodies are feeling. The final area studied in this thesis is who is the best or most

capable leader on a team. Leadership is a field that has been studied for decades in a variety of realms, including sports. Clearly with ever changing structures and beliefs, leadership is a constantly growing and evolving field.

After completing twenty interviews of five coaches and fifteen athletes, I was able to gather data that gave me a better insight of first hand experiences in all four of the areas mentioned. Through this extensive interview process, a variety of themes were collected that spanned across most athletes and coaches. Through these themes and what each individual interviewee spoke on, I have come up with a broad range of conclusions and suggestions for coaches and players.

All of the suggestions to coaches and players revolve around what each person interviewed stated as helping them influence others or others influence them. The suggestions are going to be based on what 15 athletes and 5 coaches believe to be true to them. This being said, it may not work for every player or every coach. There are an astronomical amount of other ways to influence people on a team that I haven't written about. My thesis aimed to gather a strong variety of some of the most prominent or important ways to be able to influence. Regardless of what influence is being discussed, there is one underlying factor that is essential to eliciting any type of influence. That factor is personal relationships. There is no such thing as influence on a sports team without first spending the time to create a relationship. This was evident in every section of this thesis as they all began with quotes of players or coaches talking about how a personal relationship allowed them to influence or be influenced. Most of these quotes came from stories about a player or coach having a one on one conversation with the person. Personal conversations allow people to truly focus on one person and build that specific relationship rather than a large group of people at practice or games. This relationship can still have the structure of

a boss/employee or teacher/student, but with this relationship athletes will want to work hard, which will help the coaches in the end. The stronger the relationship, the more a coach is able to motivate an athlete to work harder and be an example for the team. Before getting into more specific suggestions for each type of influence, it is essential to understand that the most important suggestion I can give is to continuously build relationships with every member of a team regardless of what role they have.

Suggestions to coaches on the best ways to influence players are difficult to give simply because all successful coaches have done something differently. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are not certain things that can be done that are proven to help guide coach influence. The first suggestion would be understanding that coaching is a constantly evolving profession, and this requires a coach to evolve with it. Years ago, an authoritative coach was the norm and was considered the best way to have a well-disciplined team. Today, more and more successful coaches are establishing an inclusive style of coaching that empowers the coach as well as the athletes. To counter this, is it understandable that established coaches are not going to want to change. I urge coaches to try and learn more about the importance of changing to this coaching style not only for the success and happiness of the team but also for the health of the athletes. The authoritative style of coaching is the reason certain traditions such as swimmers having 5 AM practice six days a week or coaches yelling and slamming their clipboard at the sideline of a basketball game have persisted for generations. It can be argued that these practices are simply not healthy for the athlete. Coaches need to understand that this change is what is best for the athletes as people as well as competitors. The reason that changing coaching tactics may be so challenging for some coaches is because at the end of the day, their job and livelihood

depends on winning games. Through interviews and studying this new form of coaching, I can assure coaches that embracing an inclusive style of coaching will result in even better results.

The second suggestion is simply to understand that each player is going to need to be motivated and given feedback differently. The best way to go about this is by having a one on one meeting before the season begins, and asking every player what they prefer. A coach needs to not only hear what the player says, but also implement it into how they speak to them at practice and during games. This will allow coaches to get the best performance out of their players day in and day out. Another suggestion is to have a strong common goal that every person on the team is on board with. This can range anywhere from being above .500 on the season to winning a national championship. As long as the whole team agrees that this is the communal goal they all want to work towards. Instilling this dream in players allows teammates to hold each other accountable when they are not practicing or working hard enough for what they all agreed to aim towards accomplishing at the beginning of season. It also allows the coach to talk back on this agreed upon goal when the team is not working or producing like he/she would like them to be.

The last suggestion for coaches has to do with the players that they recruit. A coach can do everything in their power to motivate their athletes, but if the athlete does not want to be motivated it is a near impossible task. In the recruiting process, a coach has to search for players that are intrinsically motivated. There has to be a fire within the athlete to want to push themselves and get better without having to be told to do so. This passion is essential in Division 3 athletics where there are no scholarships involved. There are thousands of coaches and teams in the world. Every team is slightly different from the next. Regardless of this, there are things

that every coach can do that will allow them to have a great opportunity to be able to influence the players on their team.

Next, I will outline a list of suggestions for teammate on teammate influence. Just like anything else, teammates need to find a way to truly care about one another. This can only come from having a personal relationship. It is essential for upperclassmen to immediately create these relationships with the new class on their team if they want to be able to have influence throughout their season. Many stories were discussed in the interview process regarding having a personal conversation with a teammate and how this encouraged that player to stay on the team, stay positive, or even feel more welcomed. A simple and well-known suggestion is to influence through setting a positive example. This means being that example on and off of the field. This can come from showing up early or staying after practice to get extra reps, visibly following the team drinking policy in front of teammates, or even picking up the balls after practice and bringing them into the locker room. Consistently working hard and proving how much you care was an example constantly given in interviews for leading by example. There are numerous ways to influence by example, and teammates need to understand that this goes a long way. It also goes a long way if a teammate is a negative influence by example. If an upperclassmen is constantly showing up late or breaking the team rules, this example shows the other teammates that this is okay to do. Upperclassmen in particular have to be cautious of this occurring because underclassmen tend to believe that they are allowed to do something if they see an older teammate doing this. Little observations can cause major strife in teams!

The next few suggestions are also for players, but regarding the best ways to have influence on their coaches. By far, the biggest suggestion I can make is if there's a problem or something that needs to be discussed, ask for a one-on-one meeting. Every coach talked about a

time a player was able to influence them through a private meeting or conversation. The coach oftentimes learns something they could not have figured out at practice and hears your ideas out. Again, a coach is more likely to hear a player out if they respect the player and know the player as a person as well as an athlete. It is a lot easier to fully hear out and see this side of the player for a coach if they know the person. Many coaches gave examples of how higher caliber or older players had influenced them in these meetings, but this is simply because they knew them better and trusted them more. Regardless of what age a player is on a team, they have the ability to create a relationship and have an influence on their coach. My last suggestion is for players to understand that they have a right to have a voice and make suggestions. This holds especially true in game scenarios. If a player sees a play that may work or something that is not working, coaches want to hear their input. Even if a coach believed something would work based on scouting and film, seeing something in a specific game situation could not have been scouted for that exact moment. But, there is a balance of having a voice and suggesting ideas and thinking that you know more than the coach. This has to be understood for influence to occur.

To finish out the suggestion section of my thesis, I will finally give suggestions on how to be the best leader possible. The first suggestion for truly being the most capable leader is sticking with your sport for all four years. This is because seniors and captains tend to garner more respect from the get-go and therefore have an easier time leading. This does not mean that all seniors and captains are going to be great leaders, it just means they have a very strong capability to be. The second suggestion is to continue to work hard and be dedicated. This suggestion overlaps with teammate influence, so is important for more than one aspect. Leaders do the right thing and show that they care about the team more than anything else. By being the best player they can be, leaders are giving their team its best opportunity to succeed. Working

hard and constantly pushing yourself also tends to make you a better player. Higher caliber players are very capable of leading because of their knowledge and capabilities on the field. Hard work is something that a player should want to do regardless of if it will make them a great leader or teammate. Being a great leader and teammate is just an extra perk that comes with working hard. As I said before, the data I collected from my interviews suggests that the most capable athlete for leadership would be the player who is either a senior or captain or both, a high caliber player with a voice, a player focused on creating relationships with every teammate, and a hardworking and completely dedicated athlete to their sport.

I chose to study the three types of influences and leadership on a team because the relationships and behind the scene efforts that occur on a team are just as important as the physical aspect. Outsiders only see the physical play on game day, but insiders know how much more goes into being able to get to that position on game day. Playing well with your teammates is not just from completing drills at practice, but also trusting and believing in one another. That trust takes time and a conscious effort to build that drills cannot create. The process of interviewing 15 athletes and 5 coaches was extensive and time consuming, but worth it. I learned about stories and personal examples from athletes that I could have read or learned about anywhere else. Every athlete and coaches personal experience is different, and they all have a different story to tell. The information I collected about all three forms of influence and leadership ranged from a variety of people and sources. This allowed me to draw conclusions on sport teams in general. Regardless of male or female or which sport I was interviewing, people are people and influence occurs in the same way. I look forward to seeing the ways that coaching and leadership continue to evolve in the future. The least studied area thus far was players' influence on coaches. Due to this, the idea of the empowered athlete is something that needs to

continue to be studied and examined because it is here to stay. This area of research needs to be explored in more depth because there are going to be many more ways to influence coaches than I have suggested. Coaches are going to begin to see how important empowering the athlete can be, and new ideas are going to bloom. Another area that would be interesting to research is possible connections between the rise of the empowered athlete and changes across generations. This extensive year long process has been very rewarding as a researcher to see the positive changes that have occurred over the years in sports and what the future may hold. In just a short time of 5 years, coaching has changed drastically and more and more inclusive style coaches are seen. It is now an outlier to witness a screaming, authoritative coach at a game, and for good reason. I have optimism for the future of coaching and the empowered athlete.

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