

SECTION ONE

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**A Foundation for
Breakthrough Coaching**



CHAPTER 1

Relationship—The Pathway, Not the Destination

Relationship is the key to “everything”

Since there is nothing worth talking about that you actually accomplished alone, I really do mean relationship is the key to everything.

This book is designed to support any coach in two things: impacting performance and producing the intended results.

I think you will want to put your attention and intention on building your own personal championship team. We all have personal teams, e.g., a family, which we may or may not have created. For most people our team exists through circumstances rather than by design.

When you build a team on the field, you put together the players who will accomplish your goal. Why not apply the same principle to the rest of your life? If you know what you want, why not design a team that will help you produce that?

What about your team? What can you do to impact the players’ performance so as to produce the intended results?

The first thing you need to know is that as head coach, it is your job to create a relationship with each player and coach in your program. Unfortunately, many head coaches do this by insisting everyone else adapt to them. You can keep taking that low road if you wish, but the method I will share in this book works a lot better.

*It is your job to create a relationship with each player and coach
in your program.*

Focus on your relationship with each player as a person, not just as an athlete. Sure, a big chunk of the relationship is about how they perform, but the foundation needs to be about who they are as a human being.

If your players think you only approve of them when they are performing well, they will pull away from you when they are struggling – the rapport will be broken. And then how will you turn things around on the field once the relationship is severed? It will be much more difficult to have any impact on the team’s results.

When your relationship is solid they will stick with you. They just need to know you care.

Clearly define your list of intended results of the group TOGETHER – the players, the assistant coaches and any other key people. Create that list as a group. They need to feel they are working on OUR results.

Once you have created those results as a team, have everyone commit to them. Now, you can coach them from their commitment, rather than from their circumstances, moods or personalities.

Here is a story that illustrates my point. The last year I coached basketball I was working at Taft College in Taft, CA. One of our commitments that year was to bring a great attitude to practice every day.

Because you can be in bad mood and not realize how much it shows, we picked a key word to use to bring it to the person’s attention. The key word was “jerk.”

One of our players, Jimmy Price, was a semi-street kid from Baltimore, MD, and always had things to deal with back in Baltimore.

One day we were running our early practice fundamentals drill on the full court. Jimmy was clearly pouting and dragging his butt up and down the court. As they formed at one end I just walked over to him and asked him one simple question: “Are you being a jerk?”

Jimmy didn’t say a word, just smiled and sprinted down the court. The “jerk” had left the building. On the rare occasion I needed to ask the question of anyone, the result was always the same and immediate.

Here is another tip about building relationships with your players. Notice what you talk about when you’re away from the practice

field. Most coaches focus on their technique, physical condition or academics.

That probably sounds pretty logical to you. The problem is that all of these topics are focused on performance – yes, even academics, since they have to perform well there to stay eligible to play.

I am not saying to never talk about those things. I am suggesting that you also find out about the player as a person – their family, their interests, their girlfriends. When they drop by the office or you catch a moment alone somewhere, be interested in them.

If you build your relationships with your players the way I have indicated, your players will run through a wall for you. They just want to know you care. When you take these actions you are demonstrating how much you care.

Love them every day. Even on the days you don't like them. Don't worry, you're not going soft. You can find a way to do that is appropriate to the situation, once you are in relationship with them.



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Identify Your Key Relationships

Parents

This relationship wisdom applies directly to you and your parents, and it also is true for everyone else in your life, especially your players.

All of your relationships are a reflection of your relationship with your parents. Your relationship with men is a reflection of your relationship with Dad and your relationship with women is a reflection of your relationship with Mom.

The relationships won't be exactly the same, because some people will actually fit the profile of the person you wished your parent was