

COACHING NOTES FROM COACHING CULTURE

EPISODE 72 - HOW TO GET PLAYERS TO EMBRACE THEIR ROLE



Every player must know exactly how they contribute to the team's overall success.

Jocko Willink, former Navy SEAL Commander and author of the book *Extreme Ownership*, says it this way

*It is paramount that senior leaders explain to their junior leaders and troops executing the mission how their role contributes to big-picture success. This is not intuitive and never as obvious to the rank-and-file employees as leaders might assume. **Leaders must routinely communicate with their team members to help them understand their role in the overall mission.***

The team must understand that every player has a role, both on and off the court, that is essential for the team to perform at its best. As Bill Belichick says, we make decisions that are best for the TEAM and not necessarily the individual, and that is often going to require some sacrifice from every individual.

Going into your season it is key to communicate to individual players, "This is where you are..."

One way to communicate a player's current position on the team is to use objective data - whether that's an elaborate grading system of their off-season play, or a means for tracking their commitment to the team's valued behaviors - coaches should make every effort to remove subjectivity from their assessment of a player's role.

Have a "Ladder Talk" where each player's role is explained in detail to the entire team.

During this presentation, coaches could

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- Explain how playing time and rotations will unfold
- Highlight the value of each role to the team - every single role can help us win a game
- Share stories of former players in a various roles that made dramatic contributions to previous a team's success
- Describe the challenges associated with each role. For example...
 - Your best shooter might have an unrestricted license to shoot - but will feel the pressure when her shots aren't falling
 - Your 12th man may not appear in many games - but has to watch film of their prospective match-up knowing that there is little chance they will actually play

Give players an opportunity to reflect on what is most challenging about their current role, and what they find most rewarding. Have them share these in front of the team so others can empathize with the difficulties and rewards of each role. This transparency, and vulnerability before one another, allows players to realize everyone will struggle with something in their role. This empowers them to be more supportive of each other as each individual strives to their job to the best of their ability so the team can play to the best of its ability.

Explain how players can climb the ladder during the season. How do you get promoted from one job to another? It is healthy for players to be somewhat dissatisfied with their current position. They have a responsibility to do their job, but should also harbor some ambition to take the job of the person in front of them. We want to encourage the kind of competition throughout the season.

How does a player get promoted?

- Be outstanding in your current role.
- Players must display the ability to perform the increased responsibilities of the next job - just because they are an outstanding back-up does not mean they will be an outstanding starter.
- It must be obvious to everyone that you are better than the player in front of you in order to take their position from them.

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When players ask about what they can do to get more playing time - emphasize specific things that they can do to help them improve. However, players must also understand that their playing time is not completely under their control.

Commit to having ongoing conversations with your players throughout the season where you can discuss their roles. We will have a series of scheduled meetings with players in 1v1, 2v1, and 3v1 groups to check in on how they are doing in their current role. In small groups (2v1, 3v1) have players explain to each other exactly what their roles are as a player and a teammate. Then revisit the questions from the Ladder Talk and have players share what has been most challenging about their role, and what they have found to be most rewarding.

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