



# Episode 196 Sean Keating – Building a Selfless Culture | Part 1

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**Guest: Sean Keating** is a head basketball coach at St. Peter HS in Minnesota. Sean attended the TOC Coaches Retreat in 2019 and has been a part of the TOC Mentorship program since then. Sean is also a co-host of [“The Eternal Student” podcast](#). You can find Sean on [Twitter](#).

## Highlights:

- Sean’s unique journey into coaching
- Building relationships with players
- Connecting with each other

## Episode Notes

### Sean’s Journey

- Played a couple of years of college basketball
- Masters Degree in Microbiology Immunology
- Worked as Researcher for Biotechnology company
- In late 20’s transitioned to coaching as an assistant coach for a local high school program, while also obtaining his teaching license



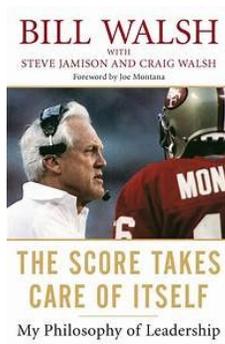
- Was an assistant coach for 4 years
- Has been the head coach at St Peter for 8 years

## Early Coaching Challenges

- Feeling behind due to being detached from the game, felt inferior to other coaches, but this created a motivation resulting in a great work ethic
  - Consumed John Wooden books
  - Traveled across country working camps one summer
  - Went to see Don Meyer speak three times
  - Spent two years “learning” from other coaches
  - Didn’t know what I didn’t know

## 2019 TOC Retreat Experience

- Had already been a head coach for five years
- [“The Score Takes Care of Itself”](#) by Bill Walsh had a huge impact



- Annual routine of going off by himself for self-reflection or an educational opportunity to meet with another coach
- Changing of environment to reflect and learn has a positive impact
- Felt isolated on the “Changing Culture” front, the opportunity to be surrounded by like minded coaches seeking to learn more about it was intriguing

## Impact of the TOC Mentorship Program

- Having a “cheat code” not only to strategies, but practical things our team can implement



- Integrating additional tools and concepts into our already existing activities to strengthen them
- On court impact by implementing focused tools in practices
- Being able to share with a community of like minded coaches who understand what we're going through – this helps with the “I’m on an island” feelings that can come with coaching – it is comforting knowing I have the support of the TOC community

## Mental Toughness

- “Mental Warrior” mindset – give players the tools to deal with all of the pressures they face today off the court
- It is important for players to understand it is ok for them to be “themselves”; we don’t force them to conform; spend a lot of time allowing players to express themselves, we want them to find value in who they are as a person
- Implemented “Mental Health Wednesdays”
  - Culture of upperclassmen being with underclassmen
  - Giving a freshman the opportunity to be heard by a senior changes them
  - Parent feedback from parents of those freshmen has been positive; those freshmen are impacted because senior players they look up to want to have a conversation with them
  - Connection builds confidence
- Everything we do at St Peter is trying to build confidence within our players, we are trying to build them up

## Lecture Hall

- Comprised of entire program, freshmen through seniors and parents
- Seniors were onstage
  - What they learned



- What they wished they had known as a freshman
- Challenges they had to overcome
- Q&A time
  - Audience could ask questions
  - Incredibly impactful
- Players feel good when they are heard
- Players appreciate the opportunity to share their stories
- Studies show in the classroom teachers talk 80% of the time, coaching is likely similar, this provides our players a venue to tell their story, our way of being intentional in providing them the opportunity to share and connect

### **The St Peter Identity**

- The players understand it is about family
- Character matters
- Its more about listening to your teammates and being aware of what they are going through
- Empathy – put yourself into someone else’s shoes
- We don’t focus on wins or the scoreboard, those will take care of themselves
- We didn’t win a lot of games this year, but we didn’t have a bunch of disgruntled kids; we have players who felt like they had a valuable experience and felt like they were heard ... “the best experience of their high school career”

### **St Peter Shocking Standard**

- Cleaning up after the game
  - Taken from Don Meyer
- Not only pick up around our bench after games, but also the opposing bench
- Players and coaches also clean the bleachers after games, even in opposing gyms
- This has resulted in feedback from people outside of the program; this feedback is shared with program families via weekly newsletter
  - Spends an hour to an hour and a half writing weekly newsletter on Sunday morning



- Great way to publicize our program to our parents each week
- Highlights evidence what is happening in our program on a daily basis