
LEADER'S DIGEST

Volume XI, April 2008

A big thank you to Tina Syer, Associate Director at PCA, for leading this month's Leadership Roundtable call on Selecting Captains. Tina's years of experience as a Division I coach and athlete provided great perspective and insight into how organizations and leaders can go about selecting and motivating captains.



THOUGHTS ON SELECTING CAPTAINS

Mental model for captains (job description)

- In his book, "The Fifth Discipline," Peter Senge talks about how mental models shape people's views of the world and their role in it.
- PCA has the "Double-Goal Coach" coach model (winning and teaching life lessons).
- It's important to have a framework for what captains are and should exemplify, as well. *Triple-Impact Competitor (TIC)* model is perfect for this; captains should embody TIC characteristics:
 - 1) Make themselves better... 2) their teammates better... 3) the game better
- Coaches should introduce TIC at the start of preseason/tryouts, so players get used to it; and when coaches select captains, players are familiar with the criteria.
- Example of a Triple-Impact Competitor: Candice Wiggins at Stanford
 - Scores a ton of points/hardest worker
 - Constantly cheering for her teammates when she's not in the game
 - Helps up her opponents
- We talk about captains as "leaders"; we define leadership as making teammates better
 - Jack Clark, Cal Men's Rugby Coach – 17 National Championships
"We define leadership as the ability to make those around you better and more productive. This is accessible to everyone - not just the most charismatic or the best player. This definition is about how you carry yourself. It's a requirement on our team that every player possess some leadership and try to make those around him better."
- It's important for captains to share the leadership role with teammates.
 - Invite teammates in to help lead warm-ups/stretching/pre-game pep talks.
 - Captains reach out to others with whom they have little in common. They should be approachable, good listeners.

Training your captains

- Give your captains a job description (warm ups/cool down, leading activities outside of practice/games, communication with officials, etc), but allow for creativity.
- Be sure to maintain a focus on training/checking in/self assessment. Maybe meet with your captains after practice one day a week.

What age is appropriate for the role of captain to begin?

- You can begin having captains at early ages (7 or 8 years old), but be creative with it.

- Rotate captains
- Have captains meet with officials before the game AND help out during the week so that captains can help with practice (carrying equipment, etc.)
- Keep coach involved with stretching during practice to ensure safety
- For traveling teams and tournaments (all ages)
 - Rotate captains and be thoughtful about pairings

Methods for selecting captains

- What type of athlete to select
 - Choose Triple-Impact Competitors, people who lead by example (not always the best athlete, who can sometimes be arrogant or shy/reserved).
- When to choose captains
 - One idea is to wait until the end of preseason to see who comes back in shape, works hardest, and demonstrates leadership during preseason/tryouts.
- Should you let players vote?
 - Have voting inform your choice, but not make it -- don't set the number of captains you will choose ahead of time. Once your athletes vote, you can decide if you want to choose one, two or three captains based on the results.
- Try to create diversity among captains in terms of their positions and playing time.
- Examples of how successful teams/coaches have chosen their captains:
 - John Gagliardi, Head Football Coach, St. John's University, has all of his seniors as captains.
 - Princeton University Softball (early '90s) – went to the World Series
 - No named captains... happened after a captain quit
 - Leaders rose to surface (many younger)... more cohesive leadership

Dan Doyle's "The Encyclopedia of Sports Parenting"

- Dan founded the Institute for International Sport in 1986 at the University of Rhode Island and is now forming the Center for Sports Leadership
- Keys passages in "The Encyclopedia of Sports Parenting" to review:
 - Chapter 21 - Will Sports Help Your Child Develop Leadership Skills
 - Table for when to select captains by sport season
 - Captain Candidate Evaluation Chart
 - 21 Non-negotiable Responsibilities of a Good Captain
 - Other leadership opportunities
 - Respect for non-athletes

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM CALL PARTICIPANTS

QUESTION/COMMENT:

Jenny Pagliericci, Chilliwack Youth Soccer – British Columbia

After weekend games, they decided who was the top player and they got the **"Top Dog Award."** This person became captain for the week.

QUESTION/COMMENT:

Ron Nocetti, PCA Trainer & Dir. of Championship Events for the CA Interscholastic Federation

Ron was formerly the AD at Jesuit High School in CA. Wanted his **captains to be leaders on and off the court.** They had a Student Athlete leadership council that talked about issues on their teams and within the athletic department in general. This group did a Student Athlete leadership workshop, ropes courses, etc., which made captain's job more sought

after. This group supported each other more -- 90% of football team went to cross-country meet. Overall, the council held kids accountable for more off-the-field stuff.

QUESTION/COMMENT:

Ray Lokar, PCA Lead Trainer – Southern California

When you **have underclassmen as captains**, how to get others to accept them? Always liked having multiple captains with at least one underclassman so that they were ready to assume a more prominent leadership role as a senior.

Ron Nocetti's RESPONSE:

Having a big brother/big sister program on your teams allows for bonding between seniors and underclassmen. Having individual meetings with players about their role on the team allows the AD to get info about potential captains. Ron chooses two seniors and one junior, which helps bridge gaps between seniors and underclassmen. Ron has a fourth captain who rotates based on weekly goals and is selected by the coach and three captains. This gives kids who weren't selected as team captains a chance to be leaders.

QUESTION/COMMENT:

Robert Hale, Little Leaguers of Kenosha, WI

Previously their rotations have just strictly been for a game... but likes having **captains for a week** so that the emphasis isn't just on the game, but also weekly responsibilities at practice.

Jim Thompson's RESPONSE:

Mike Dunlap, Asst Coach at the Denver Nuggets, asks captains to each plan a practice. He gives them a week to think and throughout that week, during every moment at practice they were analyzing everything that went on. The practices the players ran were tight.

QUESTION:

Jim Cauthen, Triad Youth Lacrosse – NC

League is U11-U15 and has multiple teams per level. Right now they have no **league policy about captains**: the framework is left to the coaches. Should they have a formal policy?

Tina Syer's RESPONSE:

It's great to have guiding principles... allows people to know what to expect throughout the league. A lot of youth coaches don't have models to follow. League can have a general policy for the various age groups, but the actual selection of captains is up to the coaches. Choosing captains is personal to each coach.

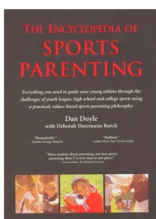
QUESTION/COMMENT:

Ray Lokar, PCA Lead Trainer – Southern California

Likes the idea of a **"bench captain."** Dedicated player who wasn't going to contribute on the court, but the coaches really loved his leadership during practices. He was aware of his role: to get guys on the bench into the game and keep them focused.

RELATED RESOURCES:

The Encyclopedia of Sports Parenting, by Dan Doyle & Deborah Doermann Burch
<http://www.amazon.com/Encyclopedia-Sports-Parenting-Dan-Doyle/dp/0977624013>



*We look forward to continued participation from you and other
PCA Partner Leaders in future Leadership Roundtables.*