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Eyes on the Prize

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For Everyone

Core Lessons

- There are subtle signs when a Locker Room is broken, but even the best coaches may miss those signs.
- The pressure to win should not be allowed to blind us to the needs of our team.

Chapter Summary

Coach Smitty is a well-respected coach with a winning team that could go all the way to a championship. But Coach Smitty has a problem: one of his star student-athletes has made racially offensive comments that were recorded and ended up on social media. Now everyone in the community and school is upset. Coach Smitty decides not to handle the matter in public, which causes further problems that he is not yet aware of.

Deep Dive Teaching

In the story, Davey is not held to the same standard as his peers. The problems with this are pretty obvious from our armchairs, but what about when we're faced with such a situation in the real world?

In reality, it can be all too easy to take the route that Coach Smitty did by relaxing the standard for

the sake of a win. In this example, both Coach Smitty and Davey have allowed talent to outstrip character.

The Standard Is the Standard The standard exists as a benchmark. Not everyone will have the same talent or skill level, but everyone can meet the same basic standards of integrity, fair play, and work ethic. These are zero-talent skills that every single person on the team can develop.

But the standard only matters if everyone is held to it equally. If the standard is one thing for the star quarterback and another for the water boy, then it's not really a standard at all. No matter who violates the team code, the standard must remain the standard.

Talent Cannot Be Allowed to Outstrip Character Of the most successful people, the ones who make the greatest impact on their teammates and the world at large aren't necessarily the most talented. Instead, they are the ones who have the greatest character. Talent sets the floor, but character creates the ceiling. Or put another way, talent gets you in the door, but character determines how long you're welcome to stay.

When we place more emphasis on talent than character, it creates problems such as teammates held to unequal standards or "smaller" contributions

to the team being discounted. The most talented players must be held to the same standard as the least talented players. When talent outstrips character, the entire team pays the price in a lack of unity and trust.

For the Individual

My Key Takeaways

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Journal Questions

1. What signs have you missed that may indicate something is wrong with the culture of your team or family?
2. How would you have handled the Davey issue?
3. What similar crises have you had to handle in your life?
4. How can you work to be more aware of problems simmering beneath the surface?
5. Have you ever made racist comments? How did the response to the jokes or comments make it seem like an okay or not okay thing to say?

Exercise

Be a Journalist for a Day

- Bring a notepad and pencil to practice.
- Write down as many details as you can about the people, the location, and what you actually do.
- Think about what details you would give if you were going to explain this locker room and practice setting to someone else.
- Look beyond the big picture to find the unique minor details about the people and location that would bring it to life in a newspaper or magazine article.
- Ask Who? What? Why? Where? and How? questions to help you see beyond what you *expect* to see, so that you can appreciate what is really there.

For the Team

Discussion Questions

1. What can go wrong if you focus too much on winning?
2. What are some signs that winning has become too important to the team?
3. Why is it important to balance goals so that winning isn't the only focus?

4. What is broken about your Locker Room? What are the indications?
5. Are you willing to work together to fix what's broken?

Exercise

Agree/Disagree Circle

- Have the group stand in a circle around some central point.
- Read the list of words and phrases included here one at a time (include or substitute your own words, too!). If a team member believes that the word or phrase is more important than winning, they step to the center. If they believe it is *not* more important than winning, they take a step backward.
- After each word or phrase, have one person explain why it is more important than winning and/or why it isn't more important than winning. Then have everyone return to the original circle.
- The goal is not for everyone to agree initially. The goal is to see where there are differences of opinion, so the team can have a discussion about priorities.

Selected Terms

Respect

Loyalty

Friendship

Individual achievement

Video games

Family time

Trophies

Character

Teamwork

Physical fitness

Mental health

Prejudice

Fishing/hunting

Homework/studying

Politeness/courtesy

Being tired

Being hungry

Losing a loved one

Integrity

Anger

