

# Into the Mind of Coach Kevin Sutton



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## Great Coaches and Leaders

Great Coaches and Leaders:

I. Know how to manage and lead different personalities well:

- A. They create an atmosphere where opinions are welcome.
- B. They allow for ownership of the team to be shared without sacrificing the whole for its parts.

II. Know that their egos must come last:

- A. They understand the importance of the proverb “A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle, but creates twice the illumination.”
- B. They know that when one person on the team has success, we all have success.

III. Are great at communicating:

- A. They have an understanding of the many different forms of communicating: verbal, non-verbal, written, email, twitter, facebook, etc.
- B. They have the ability to clearly and consciously articulate the mission, vision, objective and strategy of their program or company that will lead to success.

IV. Treat their staff, and everyone affiliated with their program, with respect and dignity:

- A. They take the time to get to know their people on a personal level.
- B. They foster a family atmosphere.

V. Have a thirst for knowledge, for learning and for teaching:

- A. They are willing to learn different ways to do their job better and experiment with new methods, even if their old ways are proven to work well.
- B. They are constantly asking questions.
- C. They try to stay on the cutting edge in their profession.
- D. They use every opportunity to teach. “Teachable Moments” are when they shine the brightest.

VI. Have a tremendous “feel” for their profession or craft:

- A. They know whom to play, when to play them and for how long.

- B. They understand and embrace “the moment.”
- C. They respect the past, are “present” in the present, and are eager for the future.

VII. Are innovative thinkers:

- A. They embrace “outside the box” thinking.
- B. They have the ability to read the “tea leaves” and make appropriate changes while anticipating situations several moves ahead.
- C. They are a part of governing bodies that are changers of their game, business, or industry.

VIII. Have a philosophy for their coaching and leadership style:

- A. They develop philosophies over time through trial and error. The philosophies are created by years of experiences and through the observations of other programs and organizations.
- B. They analyze the strengths and weaknesses of previous programs or organizations they have worked for to create their philosophy.

IX. Nurture and grow new leaders:

- A. They create an environment where growth can and must occur.
- B. They often will play “devil’s advocate” to teach a person how to define their belief on an issue, idea, or rule.
- C. They don’t want all “yes men”, because they are confident enough to know that they are not always right. They understand that other people have great ideas too.
- D. They understand the theory of “secure vs. insecure”. They understand you must share your knowledge freely to train the leader who will eventually succeed you (Moses trained Joshua, Elijah trained Elisha).

X. Build up instead of tear down:

- A. They create a “safe environment” where asking questions to seek clarity is encouraged and taking risks to inspire growth is applauded.
- B. They live by the proverb “give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime”.

<https://kevinsuttonbasketball.wordpress.com/2012/06/22/great-coaches-and-leaders/>

## Leadership and Fellowship

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My father was my first coach and he would tell me quotes and saying all the time to help teach me. One of his best quotes on leadership was, “A good leader can step on a person shoes without messing up their shine”. That quote has always meant, that a leader knows how to motivate and get their teammates to perform, without demeaning their self-esteem.

Leadership and Fellowship go hand in hand. They are interdependent. In order to have great leaders you must have great followers.

Leadership as we all know comes in many forms: Vocal, lead by example and I would like to add “combo leader”. The “combo leader” is the person whom is both vocal and leads by example. I believe that all successful teams and business have these 3 type of leaders which makes them successful.

I also believe in instilling in my players that leadership is an “ALL TIME thing”. Not a “some time” thing. For example: I will lead tomorrow, or I will lead on the court.

A true leader is a leader all the time and everywhere, unless it is their time to “follow” when the roles have clearly changed and have been articulated. In which case they now must become a “follower”.

A leader must realize and accept that BEING RESPECTED is more important than being liked or popular. This is not easy!

### **How are LEADERSHIP and FOLLOWSHIP developed?**

1. Rotating your leaders throughout different activities (weights, stretching, drills etc). The coach gives all of their instructions/expectations are given through our leaders of those activities. The success and/or failure will be determined by the leaders performance and his ability to motivate his teammates.
2. Challenge your student/athletes to join clubs and take leadership positions in the clubs and school. Ex, student government, Kiwanis.
3. When we travel we have “room captains”. It is the job of the room captain to make sure everyone in his room is: on time, keeps the room clean, makes curfew, is properly dressed etc. At the end of the trip the coaches decide who has the best room. A handsome prize is given to the winning team.
4. Everyone is given the opportunity to lead and to follow. This allows the staff the ability to select the best leaders for our team.

During my coaching career, over 15 alumni have gone on to become CAPTAINS of their college teams.

Remember, don't take LEADERSHIP and FOLLOWSHIP for granted! Preach it, teach it, model it and develop it!

**If you are a player, does getting leadership roles make you work harder? As a coach, how do you help your players learn the importance of Leadership and Followship?**

## **How to keep non-starters motivated?**

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I was asked this question by one of my former players (Nate James) who is now an assistant coach at Duke University recently. I thought that the question was very interesting and intriguing. This question has many different layers to it and The best way to answer it is to be as honest as I possibly can.

First and foremost, we must understand that the goals of the team come before and supersede the goals of the individual. I am a believer that once that has been established then we can start to address the wants and needs of the individual.

All “players” want to play. In fact, they want to play a lot! However it is the job of the coaching staff to assemble the best team, and play the best group of individuals that play well as a team. It is the job of the coaching staff to define roles. What the coaches know through experience is that roles can and do change throughout the course of a season. Coaches look at the season as a marathon and while the players sometimes look at the season as a sprint.

Here are a couple thoughts I have on How to keep the non-starters motivated?

1. You must recognize where the player is coming from emotionally and psychologically. They are coming from a ”me” perspective.
2. You have to redirect their thoughts of their needs back to the overall objectives of the team.
3. You should illustrate to them that practice is available for them to prove they deserve to play more in the games. However they will need to judge themselves based on the criteria used by the staff and not the players.
4. You will need to build their self-esteem, their self worth, their value to the team and the ultimate goals of the team.
5. You will need to “sell” them on the idea of being a STAR in their current role.
6. The staff needs to recognize what the importance, the value and the responsibilities of the”non-starters” are to the overall success of the team.
7. You will need to cite examples of the value of “the 6th man award”. Past winners, teams that win championships often have great players that do not start.
8. You will need to make sure that the players are being honest with themselves.
9. You will need them to accept their roles. But not become satisfied in their roles.
10. They must “believe in”, “trust in” and then “buy in” to their role.

Role acceptance requires maturity. Role acceptance requires humility. Role acceptance requires sacrifice. Role acceptance requires a player to realize this is my role now, but roles can and do change.

Role acceptance is making yourself invaluable to your team.

The individual must understand the African proverb that says, “Every tree has its’ own time to bare it’s own fruit”. They must also realize that they should work and prepare themselves for THAT moment. Because if they are not, the moment will come and go.

The cheers after the game ends are louder than the cheers before the game begins. Translation: I would rather finish a game than start a game!

# Positively Impacting Kids Lives

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Positively Impacting Kids Lives

Written by Kevin Sutton

Assistant Coach at George Washington

Positively Impacting the lives of the Student/Athlete should be a primary focus of every coach. The role of the coach is to take an interest in the development of his players in the following areas:

1. Academically
2. Athletically
3. Socially
4. Spiritually

The constant challenging and encouraging of them to reach their full potential in all of those areas. Give them the opportunity and the platform to share their dreams, and their goals. Hold them accountable to do the work necessary to pursue and hopefully reach their dreams and goals. Through the relationship that is developed the student/athlete can becomes a positive representation of your program. A “living trophy” which is far more important than the trophies that sit in cases.

Team building will occur through constant communication in all forms. The clear articulation of the program goals; expectations, standards and affirmations that are vital to create the necessary “buy in” to be successful. The Head coach must develop individual relationships as well as collective relationships with the players so that they can develop an understanding, which will lead to trust.

The formation of the team will take place through shared experiences and the understanding that in time the program will be bigger than the individual and that they are apart of the something special.

A Fellowship of Believers will be formed through:

1. Shared ownership
2. Shared suffering
3. Individual responsibility
4. Team before self
5. Collective Pride
6. Holding teammates accountable
7. Acceptance of roles
8. Belief in the overall success of the program

The bible passage Act 2:42 says, all the believers were together and had everything in common.

Winning is the by-product of consistently doing the right things over time. Consistency is always about staying true to your core values and principals. How you lead your life should speak volumes to others as to who you are and what you stand for. Consistency is the cornerstone of all successful programs/organizations.

# Abilities of a Player

**The ability to play hard for a sustainable amount of time is what separates the above average players from the average and below average player. The things that make it possible for the above average player to be successful is:**

1. Their ability to handle and deal with adversity
2. Their ability to compete at a high level with consistency
3. Their determination/drive to be the best
4. Their ability to deal with and conquer boredom
5. Their ability to play through lapses/lulls in the game
6. Their ability to handle early success
7. Their ability to handle failure
8. Their work ethic and attention to detail
9. Their preparation/approach to all task related to their game
10. Their WILL

**The simplicity of the game becomes complicated when players:**

1. Lose their focus – due to lack of concentration
2. Are confused (information overload)
3. Fail to listen with their ears and learn with their eyes
4. Simply are not talented enough
5. Too selfish
6. Too stubborn – not coachable

**Consistency can lead to compliance in others because:**

1. Your effort is taken for granted.
2. Expectations start to become the norm
3. New people enter the picture with no frame of reference of what it has taken you to build your program. They also start to offer their opinions without respect of and for the past.
4. Perception growth becomes the reality that a change needs to be made.

## Advice For Life

My advice to all of you is very simple:

1. Be true to yourself and your personality. Teach to those two talents.
2. Dream big, but set obtainable goals.
3. Write them down and place them where you can read them daily. Give them life by speaking of them to yourself and others.
4. Learn the art of networking.
5. Identify people you respect in your field and study EVERYTHING about them.
6. Read as much as you can and take notes on what you learned.
7. Develop your speaking skills and communication skills by using them.

8. Don't be afraid to fail.
9. Create your own opportunities
10. Stay focused through the good and bad times.
11. Share your ideas, thoughts and questions with people you respect.
12. Develop a relentless desire/work ethic to be SUCCESSFUL.

## **Ten key things that an Assistant Coach can do to help their Head Coach be the most Successful**

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By Kevin Sutton – Assistant Coach at Georgetown University

“Think like a head coach, but act like an assistant coach” – Tommy Amaker Head Coach of Harvard University.

That quote says a lot! A good assistant must always have at the forethought of their mind: they must do everything they can to help the head coach be successful. Plain and simple the more successful the head coach, the more opportunities the assistants will have to advance in their careers.

Here are ten things that an assistant can do to help ensure the head coach is successful:

**1. A good assistant develops a relationship with the head coach that is built on the following:**

- Trust,
- Loyalty,
- Mutual Respect,
- Dependability,
- Accountability,
- Responsibility
- A mutual desire to build a successful program.

**2. A good assistant must be a Great Communicator with the:**

- Administration of the school

- Athletic administration

- Players

- Support staff

- Community

- Media
- Entire coaching staff
- Admissions office
- Housing
- Security

**3. A good assistant must help to establish “Buy in” and promote the culture/philosophy of the Head Coach:**

- This must be accomplished in written form (writing), verbal form (spoken words) and non-verbal forms (actions) both internally and externally in the program.
- The direction and the pace of the advancement of the program must be articulated by the head coach to the assistants clearly on a regular basis.

**4. A good assistant must make the head coach look good at every opportunity including but not limited to in front of the:**

- Team
- Recruits
- Alumni
- Boosters
- Coaching peers

**5. A good assistant must be a BUCKET FILLER”:**

- Exhibit positive energy giver
- Explain what the head coach saying
- Have a positive attitude
- Never have a bad day

**6. A good assistant must know their craft/profession (Continuously getting better):**

- Know the rules of the governing body for your profession.
- Be on top of the trends in the profession
- Recruiting
- Technology
- Ability to manage the following relationships: Head Coach-Assistant Coach, Assistant Coach-players

**7. A good assistant must limit the distractions that the Head Coach has to deal with by having relationships with the necessary people on campus:**

- Academic support team

- Training staff

- Campus security

- Housing department

**8. A good assistant helps to promote the brand, create brand awareness and brand identity:**

- Acting professionally

- Dressing professionally

- Being visible in the community

- Being a spokesman for the when asked to speak publically

- Properly using Social Media.

**9. A good assistant must have a tremendous work ethic:**

- Exhibit an attitude of “No job is too big or too small”:

- Be willing to do whatever to help get the job done

- Understand that there are only beginning hours never ending hours.

- Do whatever it takes ethically to make the head coach and the program a success

**10. A good assistant must be consistently unified with the head coach:**

- No “YES MEN”. Have an opinion. Be able to articulate your opinion and recognize that you offer suggestions, but the head coach makes decisions.

- You can disagree in private but you MUST ALWAYS agree in public with the head coach.

- Assistants make suggestions and the Head Coach makes decisions.

The quality of the staff is a direct reflection of the head coach and their leadership/management style. Synergy amongst the staff is so important. The top level programs understand that, they embrace that and they live that. That is way they are successful.

## Basketball IQ the NEW Talent/Skill!

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Basketball IQ the NEW Talent/Skill!

- Have you watched a basketball game lately and the game just left you wondering what happened? Or why did that player take that shot? Or why didn't the team call timeout? or Why did they foul?
- Have you ever wondered why so many time outs are called late in the game to diagram a play? Why doesn't the team have a play for that situation?
- Why do games just end with no strategy employed?

For that very reason, I have come to realize that the new talent/skill in the game of basketball is BASKETBALL IQ! I define talent/skill as the ability to do something easily and quickly that sets you apart from others and makes you unique.

Examples of talent/skill in the game of basketball are:

- Dribbling skills - Chris Paul
- Passing skills – Jason Kidd
- Court vision skills - Steve Nash
- Shooting skills – Ray Allen
- Scoring skills – Kobe Bryant
- Rebounding skills – Kevin Love
- Defensive skills – Dwight Howard

I feel that basketball IQ is:

1. having the ability to process information at game speed
2. reading the flow of the game and determine if it needs to be changed
3. the understanding of the importance of time and score
4. the understanding of shot selection
5. the understanding of his teammates strength's and weaknesses
6. knowing and developing an understanding of the scouting report/game plan
7. developing a relationship with the coaching staff so to better understand the system
8. knowing your opponents
9. watching tapes of your team, of yourself, of the opposing team and the person you will defend
10. listening to knowledgeable people, reading about the game, studying the game.
11. having the ability to understand what was drawn/discussed in the timeout, execute it on the floor and being able to make the proper “basketball reads” if the play isn’t there. This is especially important in late game situations.

I really believe that college coaches need to place an emphasis on recruiting BASKETBALL IQ just as much as they recruit the other 7 skills that I have listed above. The teams/programs that find those players that have high basketball IQs are going to be the teams/programs that will consistently win the close games. When games are close a players basketball IQ thus becomes the real talent!

## 12 Components of a Championship Team

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### 12 Components of a Championship Team

1. **They have balance on offense.** The points are spread around to several players vs a large amount to just one or two players. The balance in the offense also comes from ball movement and player movement. A balance of inside and outside productivity. A balance between the productivity of the starters as well as the nonstarters.
2. **They play tough defense.** The tough defense that is being played is from both a individual defense standpoint and more importantly from a team standpoint. Close out defense enables a team to be in rotations instead of scramble situations. Proper one on one defense does not allow for dribble

penetration (which can and does lead to short 2 on 1's) or pass penetration (which leads to the team digging the ball out of the post or doubling it).

3. **They rebounding:** Is such a hugh component. The team that owns either glass or both usually wins a high majority of their games. Rebounding is a tone setter! Rebounding sends the message that the possession of the ball is so important! The controling of the ball increase the number of possession that a team has. Subsequently the team that has more possession has increased their number of opportunities to score.
4. **They get productivity from their bench:** The productivity of the bench effects the team in a positive way. The productivity of the bench comes in all forms. Productivity must be positive. The minutes that the bench plays is a direct reflection of how productive their contribution is to the success of the team.
5. **They make their free throws:** First and foremost, they get to the free throw and then they make more free throws than their opponents. Free throws puts a tremendous amounts of pressure on the defense. By attacking the rim, the defense has to make adjustments, they often get the defense into foul trouble, it becomes a very easy way to score while not be defended. Finally, the close games come down to a "Free Throw Shooting Contest"!
6. **They make tough shots late in the shot clock:** These types of shot are demoralizing to the defense. These types of plays are energy boosters.
7. **They know how to close out games:** They have the confidence and belief that they will win. They never panic. They play with a sense of poise. Experience make these types of situation more managable.
8. **They know how to with stand runs:** They never panic. The game of basketball is a games of runs. The team that does not handle this type of adversity will find themselves in a deep whole. These runs can be momentum shifters. Composure is so important to both teams when dealing with a run. Believe it or not, an offensive run can be a negative thing. Because the shots are falling, it is invariable that the flow of the offense will suffer. Players will start to look for "theirs", take bad shoots, quick shots, stop doing the things that enabled them to get on the run in the first place.
9. **They make fewer mistakes than their opponents:** plain and simple. Championship teams do not beat themselves. Mistakes either forced by thopponent or not are not acceptable. The elimination of physical and mental mistakes increases the teams chances of winning.
10. **They impose their Will on opponents:** The imposing of the will of the team is so important. A great example of imposing will is dictating the tempo of the game. When to run, and when not to run. Another example if imposing a teams will is on the defensive end. Being "legally physicals" when a player cut through the lane.
11. **They get easy baskets:** In transition they run the floor, they get early post u, they move the ball(no ball stopping), they get shots off of their defense, they get second chance points off of the offensive glass.
12. **Best player has to show up:** Best player must show up and play like the BEST PLAYER! They have to make their teammates better. They need to rely on their teammates. Not many championships are won without the contribution of teammates.

## Team Mental Exercise

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Coach Bobby Knight said it best when he said,"Mental is to Physical as 4 is to 1". He further went on to say that you must motivate the mind 4 times as much as you body. I totally agree with Coach Knight. With that in mind, throughout the year I am always challenging/motivating my players 4 times

as much mentally than I am physically. This past week I gave to my players the following documents, which were a three part assignment:

\* **Part One** – we had them complete a pre-season self evaluation and character assessment then tally their score and rate themselves. We also had them do the same assessment after the season, so that they can hopefully grow and develop.

\* **Part Two** – we gave them 15 words that we felt were the most important “one word philosophies” that define our program. Then with the words they had to place them in a 15 block pyramid with the most important words making up the foundation. Then as a team we discussed and comprised our own collective “Pyramid of Success”.

\* **Part Three** - they had to rate their teammates in 10 basketball related categories. They had to pick the top 5 on the team in each category. The purpose of this exercise was to help define roles and also give them an accurate depiction of how they are perceived by their peers.

***Kids rarely focus on the mental aspect of any physical activity that they participate in. It is our job as coaches to make them aware that it is as important to train mentally as it is physically.***

**Below is the character assessment we use.**

Montverde Academy Men's Basketball Team Character Assessment

Read each of the qualities and explanations listed. Rate the degree to which you believe you posses that quality by circling a number from 1 to 10. 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest score. At the end of the season, you can mark the survey again, using a different color pen, and see how you've grown.

**QUALITY EXPLANATION RANGE**

Drive Highly motivated 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Perseverence Sticking to tasks or goals 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Risk Taking Willing to take chances 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Organization Life and school in order 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Confidence Sure of yourself 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Persuasiveness Able to convince others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Honesty Open, Truthful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Competitiveness Eager to win 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Adaptability Coping with new situations 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Understanding Empathy with others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Discipline Able to stick to schedule 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Vision Able to think long term 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Players Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first self rating: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of second self rating: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

These 15 words represent the building blocks upon which this program is built. Much like the great pyramids through history no one block can stand alone. With strategic placement of these blocks the success of our program is dependent. Embrace them and allow them to become apart of the fabric that is you. For each one of you help to define the success of OUR program.

Exercise: Draw and 15 Block Pyramid and Place the 15 words into the Pyramid where you think they should go to ensure that the Pyramid is most stable/successful.

1. Collective excellence
2. Team Accountability
3. Respect for program and self
4. Unselfishness
5. Maturity
6. Integrity
7. Commitment to Development
8. Poise
9. Honesty
10. Trust
11. Loyalty
12. Responsibility
13. Open lines of communication
14. Success
15. Academic Commitment

And the rating system we use: **Montverde Academy**

## **BASKETBALL WHO ARE OUR BEST?**

Write down 5 names for each category.

- I.Shooters
- II.Passers
- III.Screeners
- IV.Rebounders
- V.Defenders
- VI.Listeners
- VII.Workers
- VIII.Teammates
- IX.Free Throw Shooters
- X.Leaders

# How did you build successful basketball programs

As I enter into my 8th year at Montverde Academy, I am often asked two very interesting questions?

1. Why would you leave a “basketball hot bed” like the Washington DC area, one of the best conferences (Washington Catholic Athletic Conference) to come to a “football state” like Florida?
2. How did you build your basketball program into one of the top programs in the country in only 7 years?

Interestingly enough I followed the same format with all three programs that I built: Montrose Christian – 1999, Bishop McNamara – 2001-2003 and now Montverde Academy – 2003 to the present. In this blog I will describe the process I used in the terms of Phases.

## **Phase One: Crawl before you walk:**

In this phase, it is very important that you do INTROSPECTION. Look inside yourself and at yourself. Here is the list of things that I did to help me successfully build all three of my programs:

1. I had to define myself as a coach. My principals, my beliefs and my expectations. What I would and would not compromise.
2. I had to define what Success was to me. “I feel that success is the byproduct of doing right things, making good choices and decisions consistently over time”.
3. I asked myself, how important is longevity? Did I want my program to be a “flash in the pan” or a program that was good “year in and year out”.
4. What are the criteria I look for in a prospective student-athletes?
  - a. They must be serious about THEIR academics. They have to want to be educated.
  - b. They must be young men of Character and not boys who are characters
  - c. They must be passionate about the game of basketball
  - d. They must be a good teammate
  - e. They must be coachable

## **Phase Two: Walk before you run:**

After my initial Introspection, I started to develop my plan of action to help me fulfill my dream of building my programs:

1. I developed my Mission Statement. A statement that says who we are and what we stand for.
2. I developed my Vision Statement. A statement that says where we are going and how we are going to get there.
3. I developed by Mantra (tag line if you will) for my program: Luke 12:48 – To whom much is given, much is expected.
4. I developed my three year plan for success. This plan became my road map to which I follow. This gave me tangible things that were important and essential to us becoming a successful basketball program.

## **Phase Three: Run before fly:**

This phase is so important. Everything that you do in this phase is a direct reflection of your ability as a leader/mentor and coach. During this phase your every move will be under scrutiny by the administration, by the parents, by the players, your fellow educators and your opponents. This is the phase where you must do the following:

1. Select your staff
2. Make hard decisions
3. Carry yourself with professionalism
4. Internally and externally within your school community you must develop and maintain relationships
5. Become the salesman of the program. Create “buy in” and excitement.
6. Change the “culture/mentality”
7. Start to develop your talent
8. Start to develop your talent pool, feeder program(s) varsity jv. freshman, middle school
9. Start to develop your philosophies/identity as they pertain to the teaching and running of your system( ex. transition game, man and zone offenses etc)
10. Start to put things in place that forces others to take notice of what you doing.(ex community service.

Phase Four: Fly before you are able to SOAR!!!!!

In this phase perceptions/opinions and labels will start to be thrown around about you as the head coach, your staff, your players and your program. You will have successfully navigated your way through the first three phases. The following terms will be helpful to set you apart as a head coach from the masses:

1. accountability
2. responsibility
3. flexibility
4. teacher
5. communicator
6. visibility
7. tough minded
8. fair
9. caring
10. trust worthy
11. knowledgeable
12. winner....

..... with consistency and time your program will become SUCCESSFUL!

“First come thought; then organization of that thought into ideas and plans;

Then transformation of these plans into reality. The beginning, as you observe, is in your imagination” – Napolean Hill author of Think and Grow Rich

What steps do you take to build a successful program?

## **Characteristics of a Good Defensive Team**

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Written by Kevin Sutton Georgetown Men’s Basketball

Good Defensive teams have these 18 characteristics in common.

1. They recognize their opponent’s offensive actions/tendencies while they are in the flow of the game.

2. They play defense with their voice, their eyes, their brains, their chest and their feet.
3. They are excellent in their rotations and avoid putting themselves in scramble situations. Rotations are intelligent movements in relation to the offensive players and ball movement, Whereas Scrambles are panic movements made in reaction to the ball movement, usually after there has been a defensive breakdown. Scrambles are inevitable but they can be lessen by executing rotations properly.
4. They are constantly communicating throughout the entire possession. They are active listeners as well. This brings about a high level of trust which leads to a collective confidence.
5. They give “multiple efforts”, giving the appearance that there are ten guys on defense. Examples of ”Multiple Effort” can be: close out on the ball and then doubling post, or closing out and taking a charge as you help your teammate that has been beaten off the dribble, or hedging on a ball screen and securing the defensive rebound etc.
6. They finish every stop with a rebound.
7. They defend without fouling
8. They understand and believe that there is no such thing as “50/50 balls” . They believe that loose balls and errant passes are “100%” theirs.
9. They execute their coverages/slides based on the scouting report.
10. They take pride in stopping their opponents.
11. They wear their opponents down mentally and physically with their commitment on the defensive end.
12. They force the offense to start further from the basket than the offensive team wants to and/or is used to.
13. They keep the ball on one side of the floor. They limit the number of times the ball is reversed. They know that ball reversal hurts their defense. They “load” to the ball(mid line in college and 2.9 in the nba). Loading is a term used to describe the actions of the help side defenders. Loading also helps to shrink the floor. Limiting the operating area for which the offense has to work.
14. They do not allow “paint touches”. They know “paint touches” hurt their defense.
15. They are very good in their “late shot clock” defense. They are disciplined to complete the stop. They are calm and their communication increases.
16. They don’t give up Transition baskets. They understand and execute the 4 parts of Transition Defense:
  1. Sprint back with their chin on their shoulder.
  2. They locate and get the ball controlled.
  3. They communicate to “load ” to the ball
  4. They run down rebounds.

17. They play with their hands up. Average defensive teams play with their hands out. Bad defensive teams play with their hands down.
18. They develop and chart stats that reinforce the most important elements of their defensive philosophy. These stats are talked about constantly with players and visible for the players to see and embrace their importance.