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Leadership Development in Student Athletes

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Leadership Development in Student Athletes

Abstract

"Our society needs strong leaders whether it's in the workplace, families, church, or general community."

Posting about growth in all areas of a student's life from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/leadership-development-in-student-athletes/>

Keywords

In All Things, leadership, students, athletes, ability

Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Leadership Development in Student Athletes

 [all in allthings.org/leadership-development-in-student-athletes/](https://allthings.org/leadership-development-in-student-athletes/)

Jeff Schouten

Coaching does not just include developing practice plans, recruiting student athletes, conducting strategy through games, etc. These aspects of the job are very important and are generally assumed as the main responsibility by people from the outside, but our main responsibility centers on developing our student athletes as whole people. When looking at growth from a whole person perspective the focus shifts to how we, as coaches and players, can grow together and bring out our best spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally.

This past year the baseball team focused on a theme called “Personal Best for Team Success.” This theme was centered on Proverbs 27:17 which reads, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” It was our focus throughout the year to give our best at all times, in those five areas, to bring glory to the Lord. As we went throughout the academic year it was visible to see how players were able to further their leadership skills when working in small groups within the team or leading the entire team throughout the year.

Our society needs strong leaders whether it’s in the workplace, families, church, or general community. Many of the examples I witnessed from our players show me that they will continue to learn and build on their leadership strengths. For some players it was easy to lead a team devotional, pray before the whole team and encourage someone who was emotionally spent, or push someone to get through a 6:00 am training session. Some led by their words and some led by their actions, which I feel are both effective. I am convinced that the “college years” can be a testing and training ground to foster leadership strengths and parlay them into the workplace. In a college community we need to take advantage of the opportunities to train student athletes as leaders because there are many correlations when working together on a team and also working together in the workplace or community.

A paycheck in coaching is to be able to see how former players are using their gifts in God’s kingdom. I have been able to correspond with many former players who often talk about how competing in a college sport has helped them in their current calling. Terms like self-discipline, accountability, teamwork, and fun. Yes, fun. When teams work together and hold each other accountable it gives all involved a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment which often leads to all involved giving their “Personal Best.” I have heard stories from former players who are now in roles such as: member of US Coast Guard in Virginia, manager of a bank division in Washington, director of ticket sales for minor league baseball team in Texas, teacher/coach in Florida, and lead pastor for a church in Denver. All mentioned that the leadership skills they use now remind them of what it was like to be a part of a college team. They now have the opportunity to lead, encourage, support, and build an enjoyable culture where others are free to bring about their best with the skills and gifts they have been given.

Leadership is a hot topic in our society and in the area of higher education. An important part of athletics is developing the leadership strengths of our many student athletes so they may continue to impact others beyond their years on campus for work in Christ’s kingdom. As a coach and professor, I cherish the opportunities to further my leadership strengths by learning from others, reading about leadership principles, and watching others lead in their own respective ways.

Developing student athletes within their respective sports is a big responsibility as coaches at all institutions. Where I coach, I see that importance, but also see the importance of having our student athletes grow in all areas of life so that they can bring their best to the place the Lord calls them when their time in college is completed.