

March Madness – Lessons in Leadership

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By the time this article reaches you the Final Four in college basketball will be completed. But I have to say, what a great example this whole “madness” process represents in intensity – and leadership. This great series started in 1939 and the intensity has steadily grown until it’s a modern day sports mega phenomenon.

I am fascinated by it, first because college sports are my favorite, but perhaps even more because of the reminder of what leadership, through focus and intensity, can create. I can’t think about the Final Four without thinking about John Wooden’s coaching leadership at UCLA. Coach Wooden lead UCLA to 10 National Championships during his coaching tenure at UCLA. At 99, the “legend” remains a reminder of the kind of leadership that inspires commitment. This quote in particular stands out for me as one of the most meaningful insights into Coach Wooden’s genius:

*A player who makes a team great is more valuable than a great player.
Losing yourself in the group, for the good of the group, that’s teamwork.*

So, in honor of a coach that brought so much to the game – beyond the sport itself – we wanted to share with you this month some of Coach Wooden’s contribution to leadership. His famous *Pyramid of Success* contains 12 great leadership building guidelines (see his web site). The one guideline that I bring to your attention in this article is:

*Self-Control - Control of your organization begins
with control of yourself. Be disciplined.*

The above two quotes really are mutually supportive and in fact are essential for exceptional performance, be it sports or business. Teamwork, that all important phenomenon that enables results beyond individual effort, starts with individual effort – self control. It’s the kind of self control that enables you to prepare to contribute to the team to (a) bring your best self to the game, and (b) bring out the best game in others. To get to the BIG games, Coach Wooden might ask each of us these questions:

- What are you doing to bring your best self to the game?
- What does your preparation regimen look like?
- How hard are you pushing yourself – stretching or coasting?
- What do your actions that bring out the best in others look like?
- Are those actions predictable and effective?

And then Coach Wooden might say...

Get some feedback and look for what else you can work on.

Not bad advice, whether you are playing forward, guard or senior manager.

Be sure to check out the Coach’s web site: <http://www.coachjohnwooden.com/>