INDIVIDUAL TRAITS: THE SECRET OF A CHAMPION TEAM

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Champions are not built overnight. It is a long process of close supervision and administration of factors that builds a champion team. The teams’ performance depends on the trait exhibit by individual athlete. Each one of them is unique in their own way and has characteristics differ from other team mates. There are traits that had to be developed over the whole process and duration of the preparation for the sports competition. Various strategies must be applied and employed in the training. It should be varied with the goals and objectives of the team. Integrated training to develop these traits must be included in the training program of any team event. This will enhance the performance of each individual athlete for the team.

As a part of motivation that has to be shared by both coaches and athletes, each member of the team must develop a “can do” attitude. This attitude could make them look at all things positively. If every member of the team has this attitude, they will treat all the situations manageable. This will surely eliminate doubts and fears among athletes especially when they are in the crucial part of the game wherein they need to make correct decisions, adjustments and actions. If an athlete looks at the situation negatively, this could bring the team to the possibility of losing the game. As an essential part of athletes’ development, the coach must include activities that could develop this vital trait among athletes in order to contribute to the team’s progress in terms of overall performance. This is vital in developing athletes’ attitude of not giving up until the game is finally over.

To ensure the team’s tough performance, coaches must develop “confidence” among each member of the team. This could be achieved through mastery of the game and all the small things involved in the sport participated by the athlete. Athletes must be always prepared for the battle but never arrogant. Confident athletes never look at the score and never stop competing until the winner is being declared and athletes supremely confident they will prevail when the game is over. Being confident also means trusting oneself and showing no hesitation and fear particularly during crunch time and critical situations. It is one of the key factors that could make a champion team if every member possesses it. This attitude makes the athletes perform beyond their
capabilities with precision and accuracy. Showing no hesitation during the competition can make them strong in all aspects of the game whether they are up or down. A confident athlete is believed to make less error than those athletes who are not sure of what they are doing during the proper game. Lack of confidence might lead to confusion that might lead to unproductive performance and can make athletes create mistakes and unforced errors. The only secret in making this possible is by making athletes master all the necessary skills needed in their sport and by exposing them to every situation that might occur the proper competition. This could be attained through tune-up games wherein their skills and decision making will be tested when time gets tough and they have to get going. Assessment and evaluation of their performance will surely help the coach to design a program that will resolve the problems involving lack of confidence during the game.

Being a tough athlete doesn’t mean that he/she is always in a hurry or beating the time. Important trait that one athlete must possess is being “relaxed” even he/she is under pressure. This trait comes along with confidence. An athlete would be relaxed if he/she is confident on his ability and capability that he/she can deliver appropriate actions for different situations. This trait is commonly exhibit by team captains or leaders for the reason that this trait might influence and affect the mentality of each member of the team. If the leader shows fear and doubts, the whole team would probably collapse. It is not about not doing what they have to do during the game but instead, performing their task in a smooth and well-executed game plan. Playing confidently under pressure gives an edge to athletes, this could be possible if they trained to do whatever it takes to win game under difficult circumstances. The only key in making this happen is to make them feel comfortable with the situations. Preparedness plays an important role in making the athletes feel relaxed during the game. A tough team can find ways or solutions on every problem that may arise in the playing field during the game when they are oriented to manage their emotions and control the game based on the tempo that they want.

Each team has goal and purpose; these are the immediate task at hand. A team must anticipate all the possible problems and prepare possible solutions and this could be done through game planning for different game situations. Internal and external distractions are always part of the game; this could sabotage the team’s success. One way of eluding these distractions is through using motivated and “focused” athletes. This trait must be developed among athletes as they prepare for the real battle. Internal distractions would be easily eliminated
through preparation. This distraction includes doubts, discomfort, fear, low self-esteem and lesser self-confidence. All of these could be terminated through enough preparation. Athletes must overcome any form of distraction during the game and coach has a great obligation in reminding the athletes to stay focus and divert the athlete’s internal distraction into confidence.

The other distraction is called external distraction; this is common in every game. This kind of distraction is not easy to handle because it involves crowd and all the people or even things surrounding the game venue. The athletes’ focus could be affected if they are not determined to overcome it. This distraction could be terminated by teaching the athletes to stick with the team’s goal and objective and to treasure self-pride. The main task of the coach is to always remind them of the team’s goal and objectives, this will surely help the athletes focus on the game and not on the distractions. When the situation gets tough, the more focused athletes have the higher percentage and probability of winning the game.

There is no “I” in team. It is composed of different individuals but it can move as one if a team is motivated and trained to become one at all times. Each member of the team should be willing to sacrifice and do whatever it takes for their team to succeed and reach their goals. The initial training must focused on designating each member to their role, in this manner, they will function as well-oiled machine. One should support one another unconditionally. Roles of each member must be done with great pride and passion excluding the perception of being the team’s superstar. If each member of the team serves as a serious “player of their role”, the team will be able to execute the game plan easily and precisely. It is not necessary to make a team composed of all superstars. A team must be composed of regular players with different roles to play. We can compare a team to a simple machine. Each part is important and plays a vital role in delivering the output involving every part in the performance that helps the machine perform its function. A game is not only about offense, there are lots of factors that have to be given attention. Playing each athlete’s role contributes to the success of the team no matter how big or small this role could be.

Sport gives load of pressure in every game. If the team did not handle it, they might lose the game. Each athlete of the team must play loosely and “have fun” at the same time. This attitude could be a result of confidence gained through experience. One key to win game is by playing with passion and joy; laughing at mistakes made shows an attitude of being confident that they can make it up before they reach the final stage of the competition. Passionate athletes
never look at the score; instead, they keep themselves cool, calm and treat crucial situations manageable. The team that has this attitude among athletes easily dominates the game regardless of the point deficit. The game is not over until it’s over. Pressure during the game lessen the confidence of the athletes, they must be taught how to handle each situation accordingly and this could be done through having fun and not feeling the pressure at all no matter how tight is the situation. Making mistake is common in the game but making up after a mistake is a great factor that contributes in winning games. An athlete who enjoys the game create a condition wherein his or her team mate gain confidence from him or her, therefore, this will make them enjoy every moment of the game and helps them deliver the skills and performance without thinking of mistakes and errors that each one might commit when pressure is rising.

Being “relentless” could be the main factor in winning. The team must always on attack mode from the very first moment of the game not considering the strength of the opponent. If each athlete from the team always looks for the big play, they will get a high percentage to dominate the game. Putting the attitudes together, they will put pressure on defences and plays aggressively on offense. They will sense momentum and when the victory is in sight, they go even harder to finish off their opponents. The team will keep on coming, chasing the victory and not waiting for it. The team’s performance must be consistent from the very beginning. They must not base their performance on the capacity and capability of their opponent. A strong team must give their all no matter how big is their lead. This is the perfect time to practice, master and execute the plays during the game. Every game is vital to their development and progress; this will make them play comfortable during every game. Letting the opponent chase the team’s score is a bad attitude. This might lead to a disappointing result in the end game.

Members of the team must be “aware of their ethics”. Athletes must constantly strive to improve their weaknesses and turn them into strengths and play with great desire. It is true that this trait could not be taught in training but could be triggered by appropriate motivation by the coaches and athletes for themselves. If all the athletes work harder to improve or enhance all the aspects including mental, physical, emotional, social and even moral and spiritual aspect, the team will be hard like a stone wall because of the strength of its core. To motivate the athletes, they must always look at the team’s goal every time they feel tired. The bar for effort should be extraordinary and voluntarily given by each team members. The main player in the team is the athlete himself or herself, the coach can motivate them but only the athletes can make their
performance more improved by motivating themselves to make necessary corrections regarding their mistakes and weaknesses and make immediate adjustments as they discover their weaknesses and strengths. The will to excel in one sport depends on the goal of the athletes; success is possible through the joint effort of the coach and the athletes.

Learning is best achieved and acquired through experience. It is best to remind and teach the athlete to always make room for learning and improvement. Aside from their game, there are different media that can help the team master their sport and think of a better strategy to be applied in their game. Observing the game could be one effective teacher for both coaches and athletes. No matter how long they played, still, they must be “students of the game”. Watching their own taped game and game of other teams could help them analyze and evaluate their performance. From this activity, they can formulate new strategies against their opponent. This technique is used to look for any “edge” that will get them to the winner’s circle. Through close observation and analysis, the team could diagram a better play for the next game that could surprise their opponent. Willingness to learn can make an athlete perform beyond the expectation. This is the time when athletes try to experiment and formulate their own methods and strategies not defying the instruction of their coach. Once they have learned from experience, the athletes can easily innovate and modify strategies and techniques needed in each particular situation. The only key in making this happen is by putting in their mind that “we don’t know everything”. There are always room for improvement and learning no matter how much we knew about a thing.

During the game, the athletes might experience tough situation and play with extreme noise under pressure. This could make distraction to an athlete or team if they are not prepared for that. A team could overcome this pressure if they look forward to pressure games and pressure game moments before they proceed to a game. A team or each member must be trained how to be “poised”. This could be possible if they are relaxed, confident and focused to have everything under control. Regardless of the game situation, they will play at a consistent peak level that assures their success. Composure during the game gives an edge to the team especially during tough situations like close and tight game. Being poised in the game makes an athlete deals with the situation easily. This could help them make tough and appropriate decisions when there is a need to take charge and control during crunch time.
Athletes and teams share one common trait, which is “extreme preparation”. This could be achieved if both individual and team skills are fully developed. A member of the team or the team itself should recognize the critical importance of devoting substantial time towards the development of their mental game as well as their physical game; a more prepared team exhibit extreme will power to prepare their selves to dominate the game. With sufficient preparation, a team could execute the game plan effectively and efficiently all throughout the competition and minimal error will be created but they would find it easy to handle. Preparations should not only be done in the court, each athlete must develop a habit of preparing themselves inside and outside the playing field. Mental conditioning and maintenance of physical attributes are examples of preparation prior to the game. Drawing in the mind what to do before the competition might help the athletes plan accurately and will lead to a precise execution of the plan. The more prepared the more ready to win championship.

Teams of different sports must develop that trait called “big picture thinking”. All members of the team including coaches, athletes, parents and all related personnel must employ this trait. They should recognize that mastery of their sport takes time and couldn’t be achieved overnight. The trait includes seeing mistake and game failure as a great opportunity and challenge to get better. This could be done through serious analysis and evaluation of the result. The team must also enjoy the journey of becoming a champion by focusing on the process and the effort rather than solely on the result of the previous games. There must be a program supporting the development and progress of the athletes and must be employed and implemented with continuity in a year-round basis. Total support of all involved institutions and even stakeholders must be consistent to achieve the common goal of developing competitive athletes and teams.

If these traits are fully inhibit by the athletes of a team, changes and improvement will be visible and imminent in the next stages of their careers. Coaches and trainers must not focus only on the skill development of an athlete or a team, it should be a whole package and must be included in the training program to make athlete of the team effective in executing their roles, duties and responsibilities to win games and become “champions”.