



**FOLLOW**

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**FIRST**

**QUOTES OF THE WEEK:**

**MONDAY:**

"Well, the first quality of being a good leader is you have to be able to follow. See, a good leader can't just be the leader all the time; I have to be able to follow."

Lisa Leslie

**TUESDAY:**

"He who cannot be a great follower cannot be a great leader." Aristotle

**WEDNESDAY:**

"Followership, like leadership, is a role and not a destination." Michael McKinney

**THURSDAY:**

"The world is moved not only by the mighty shoves of heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker." Helen Keller

**FRIDAY:**

"When you remember what it was like to follow first, it will make you a better leader." Coach Mackey

# WEEK 30

## FOLLOW FIRST CONTENT OVERVIEW



### COACHES

**Hold** everyone to the same standards.



### CAPTAINS

**Remember** how to follow first.



### ATHLETES

**Lead** even as you follow.



### FAMILY

**Follow** first to be a better leader.



### THREE E'S

One of the greatest leadership myths is that once you become a leader, you no longer have to follow. This is a lie because the best leaders remember what it was like to follow first.

You may think that your strength as a leader comes from your talent, from your star power, or from your position. But the truth is, your strength as a leader does not come from any of these things; it comes from your ability to bring together and work within the team. And to do that, you have to be willing to follow.

What do we mean by that? When you remember how to follow, there are two main things that you do. Let's take a look.

**You recognize the strengths of your teammates.** When you get too caught up in being a leader, it can be uncomfortable or even scary to praise and appreciate the strengths of others. This is especially true when they have strengths that you lack. But when you let go of the idea that a leader has to be good at everything, it gets easier. Your teammates bring things to the team that you can't. Don't be afraid to embrace that.

**You put the team first.** As a follower, you get that the team is more important than the individuals on it. But there's something about a leadership position that can push that to the back of your mind. When you follow first, you stay in that teammate mentality. A great example of this is NBA hall of famer Manu Ginobili. He could have been a starter, but it was better for him to lead the second rotation onto the court. He led by following first.

When you remember what it was like to follow first, it will make you a better leader.

# WEEK 30

## FOLLOW FIRST FOR COACHES



### THREE E'S: FOR COACHES

We want our student-athletes to become great leaders, both on the team and in the wider world. But to do that, they've got to follow first. One way that we help them remember that is by making sure we hold our team leaders to the same standards as everyone else.

There are three reasons for this, and each reason is guided by a question. Let's look at each.

**What does our team value?** Often the best athletes end up filling our leadership positions. If we let them have a different standard due to their talent, that sends a clear message of value to the team: that we value talent and winning over all else. But when we hold everyone to the same standard, it communicates that the team matters most. It communicates that nobody is above the standard.

**What example are the team leaders setting?** We want our team leaders to set the tempo for their teammates. But if they are allowed to let the standards slide, then that's the example they'll set.

**Why are the leaders here?** Holding leaders to the same standard as everyone else also reminds them that they need to follow first. When we have the same expectations for them that we have for the rest of the team, that emphasizes that they are still part of the team. It's a reminder that the team comes first. The leaders are there to help the team achieve its goals—not the other way around.

When our athletes become leaders, it's easy for them to lose sight of what it means to follow. But great leaders remember what it was like to follow first.

### THIS WEEK, BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR:

1. **Opportunities to REITERATE the team values.** Even if the team values are plastered all over the walls, they're worth going over again. It doesn't have to be revisited all at once. Pick one value per week, and use it as a theme for that week's practices.
2. **Opportunities to EVALUATE the example team leaders are setting.** Most of the time, it's not fair to judge someone based on another person's actions. This is an exception. Leaders are accountable for how their followers behave. It goes with the territory. Look at both what your leaders do, and what their team does. If there's a mismatch in what you see, it's time for an encouraging call-out.
3. **Opportunities to BUILD team unity.** Regular practice and games set the foundation for team unity, but that's not always enough to get a team on the same page. Try incorporating team exercises that are specifically intended to put everyone on the same footing and headed in the same direction, whether they're a leader or not. (Hint: There's one in the More Resources section this week.)

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# WEEK 30

## FOLLOW FIRST FOR CAPTAINS

### **C** THREE E'S: FOR CAPTAINS

As a team leader, you're going to leave a legacy when you graduate and go on to the next big thing. The underclassmen who follow you now are going to remember you when they become the team leaders. What example do you want to have set for them? What do you want them to know about leading the team?

The answers to those questions point you in the direction that you should be focusing. And in most cases, that direction is towards following first. Why is that? Let's look at three reasons.

**Every leader is also a follower.** No matter how high you rise, or how good you get at what you do, you will never stop being a follower of someone or something. Whether it's a person or a concept, leadership involves leading others to follow who or what you follow. For example, as a team leader, you're leading your teammates to follow your coaches and the team goals.

**Followers know that the team comes first.** The team is more than any single person because it's made up of many people. Sometimes, leadership can go to your head, so that you start to think "I matter most." But when you remember what it was like to follow first, you remember that your goals and dreams matter, but the team goals matter more. It's not about you.

#### **Leaders and followers have to work together.**

Leaders don't get to just sit back and let the underlings take care of the hard work. That's not leadership. If you're going to be a leader on your team in more than position title, you have to be on the ground with them getting sweaty and dirty and tired. Even if the only reward for your efforts is that the field looks nicer.

The legacy you leave after leading the team is up to you. But whatever legacy you want to leave, there's a good chance the way to do it will involve following first.

### /// CAPTAINS' LOG ///

"LEADERS ALWAYS LEAD"

What kind of leader did you want to be before you became one?

What did you see in others that you liked or didn't like as leaders?

How can you do those in your own way, in alignment with your personality?

Why didn't you like certain things and what do you want to do to keep from becoming that?

What do you want to leave behind for the underclassmen?

# WEEK 30

## FOLLOW FIRST FOR ATHLETES



### THREE E'S: FOR ATHLETES

If you're not a team leader, you might be wondering what this lesson has to do with you. You're already a follower, so what is there to know about following first?

The truth is that even if you don't have a position as a leader on your team, you are a leader for someone. Just like everyone follows someone else; someone else is always following them. Maybe it's just one person. It might be your best friend or your younger sibling. Or maybe it's your position group on the team. Maybe it's your classmates in the hallways.

Regardless of whether or not you have a position of leadership, you are a leader. But, you still might be wondering how you're supposed to lead without the authority that comes with a leadership position. Here are three short suggestions.

**Set the example for others.** The standards of the team don't belong to the team leaders; they are for everyone. When you live up to the standards, then you are leading by example.

**Stand up for what's right.** This is sort of an extension of the first suggestion. Doing what's right includes things like standing up for someone who's being bullied or calling out a teammate who's not doing what they should. And that willingness to speak up sets the example for others. When you stand up for what's right, you are leading.

**Encourage others.** One of the main things a leader does is to encourage their teammates. You don't have to be a leader to do this. Just make it a habit to look for people who need a pick-me-up. Then use one of the five types of encouragement (words, belief, support, example, and confrontation) to help them out.

You are a leader, even if you don't have a title. Even as you follow first, don't forget to lead.

### ATHLETE'S EXERCISE:

1. Who do you lead? Why do they follow you?
2. Who do you follow? Why do you follow them?
3. What do you like about following your leaders? What do you dislike about it?
4. How can what you've learned as a follower help you to be a better leader?
5. What kind of leader do you want to be?

# WEEK 30

## FOLLOW FIRST FOR FAMILY



### THREE E'S: FOR FAMILY

Our society values leaders. And that's good! But sometimes we forget that it's also important to be followers. We all follow first. Before we ever take any steps in leading, we have to learn how to follow first. Following helps us learn the skills that will serve us well as leaders.

Let's look at two ways that following first helps us to be better leaders.

#### 1) Followers recognize the strengths of their teammates.

Our teammates bring things to the team that we can't. As followers, we usually aren't afraid to embrace that because it's not a threat to us. If they get better, then it makes the team as a whole better.

When we become leaders, it can be uncomfortable or even scary to praise and appreciate the strengths of others. This is especially true when they have strengths that we lack. But the best leaders recognize and appreciate the strengths of their teammates because they know that the team is stronger because everyone brings something different to it. They remember what they learned as followers first: the team is stronger than the individuals.

#### 2) Followers put the team first.

As a follower, we get that the team is more important than the individuals on it. But there's something about a leadership position that can push that to the back of our minds. When we follow first, we stay in that teammate mentality.

A great example of this is NBA hall-of-famer Manu Ginobili. He could have been a starter, but it was better for the team that he lead the second rotation onto the court. He led by following first.

Leadership is important; there's no doubt about that. But in valuing leadership, we must also value followership. The best leaders remember what it was like to follow first.

### /// BEST 5 ///

#### THE BEST FIVE MINUTES OF THE WEEK

What are some of the strengths of your friends, teammates, or coworkers?

Is it easy or difficult for you to recognize and praise their strengths? Why?

Why does it matter if we put the team goals first? What would happen if no one put the team goals first?

Who is someone that you follow? Who is someone that you lead?

What have you learned as a follower that will help you to lead well?

# WEEK 30

## FOLLOW FIRST

What's More Important than Winning? (Team Building Exercise)

### What's More Important than Winning? (Team Building Exercise)

#### Instructions

- Have the group stand in a circle around some central point
- Read the list of words and phrases one and at a time (include or substitute your own words, too!). If the 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 say 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. The goal is to see where there are differences of opinion, so the team can have a discussion about priorities.

#### List:

Respect

Loyalty

Friendship

Running

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

#### Additional Resource:

For more team building exercises, check out [The Locker Room Playbook: A Practical Guide to Heal Hurt, Overcome Adversity, and Build Unity by Stephen Mackey and Damon West. \(Amazon\)](#)