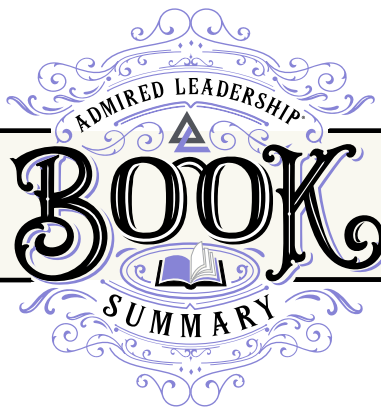




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



May 2024

Getting to Us

How Great Coaches Make Great Teams

BOOK AUTHOR: SETH DAVIS

Published 2021



Throughout his twenty-five years working as a journalist for outlets such as Sports Illustrated and CBS Sports, Seth Davis has watched and analyzed some of the best coaches in sports. Through the observation of their games and practices as well as the conduction of private interviews, Davis sought answers to not only how, but why coaches go about their jobs in the ways that they do. Despite the variety of life experiences and coaching methods, the coaches examined in this book share four personal traits in common, which Davis calls the “PEAK profile.” These traits hold the key to uniting a team as one and therefore achieving optimal success.

This book delves into the triumphs and failures of nine present-day coaches on their journeys to excellence. The diversity of personalities and coaching methods highlighted throughout the book demonstrate how there is no single formula for achieving greatness. No matter what one’s leadership style may be, there is much to learn from the experiences and philosophies of these prominent coaches. This book provides valuable insight into the minds of leaders who exhibit resilience in the face of adversity, practice consistency in their individual techniques, and model noble leadership to their players.

Key Quote

“Those great businesses out there, those great programs, they don’t plateau. How do you do that? Well, you have to constantly reinvent, reinvest, reset, learn, grow, change” (p. 264).

KEY POINTS AND CONCEPTS

The PEAK Profile

The PEAK profile is comprised of the four personal qualities that a coach must embody to turn a group of individuals into a team of “Us” (p. 2).

- **Persistence:** “Persistence is the strain of character one leans upon during those quiet moments when self-doubt creeps in. It is both tested and manufactured during childhood and early adulthood adversity. It is evinced in the day-to-day mundane routines, the unglamorous aspects that make up the bulk of the time spent on the job. Those tasks are performed in solitude when the fans are gone and the cameras are nowhere in sight. Yet they are vital. It takes persistence to get them done, and done right” (p. 3).
- **Empathy:** “Empathy requires feeling whatever that person is feeling. And so a great coach must find ways to learn about his players, taking time to acquire the critical information that will lead him to understand how that player’s mind, heart, and guts operate” (p. 3).
- **Authenticity:** “What makes them great coaches is their refusal to be something they’re not. Players can spot a phony in an instant. Trust may be an important component in any team, but there is no trust without authenticity” (p. 4).
- **Knowledge:** “We often think about trust as a synonym for integrity, but a player also needs to trust that a coach has the knowledge to justify his instructions.

Good people with good intentions can give bad advice if they do not know enough about their craft” (p. 5).


Perceiving Setbacks as Opportunities for Growth

Urban Meyer, the head football coach at Ohio State University, began his sports career playing baseball for the Atlanta Braves, but was cut from the team at the end of his first season. “As difficult as it was to accept his failure at baseball, the setback provided an opportunity to develop his persistence” (p. 12). Now as a championship football coach, he strives to convey the same message to his players.


“But coaches above all else have to be resilient [...] When we’re winning and things are going good, you don’t find out anything about yourself. When you lose, that’s when you find out” (p. 157).

Before **Doc Rivers** even began his career in coaching, he viewed major setbacks as a challenge and pushed himself and those around him to move past them. After his house was set on fire by arsonists and his wife suggested moving away from San Antonio, he insisted, “We’re not doing that, we did nothing wrong, we’re gonna teach our kids that when something bad happens, you look it in the eye and move forward” (p. 198).

Dabo Swinney, the head football coach at Clemson University, dealt with his fair share of setbacks early in life. With an abusive, alcoholic father and a brother who fell into the same pattern, Dabo was forced to grow up faster than other kids his age. “Watching his family unravel gave him a deep sense of empathy [...] he was learning some hard truths that very few people his age have to face. That knowledge about what people were like and how to handle setbacks was far more important than anything he would ever learn about the technical aspects of football” (p. 257).



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Life Experiences Contribute to Leadership Style

Each chapter weaves through the lives of these iconic coaches, from childhood to present day. Their upbringings, experiences, and hardships all contribute to who they are both personally and professionally. Their unique experiences have all impacted their coaching methodologies and beliefs in some way.

Tom Izzo, the head basketball coach at Michigan State University, prioritizes family values over all else. He “had learned from an early age the importance of persistence, which was as simple as being where you were obligated to be, on time, every day, ready to work.

He was taught that empathizing with the people around him – literally, his family – was more important than whatever goals he had for himself. He carried a deep and abiding sense of who he was and where he came from, which strengthened his authenticity. And he gained a lot of knowledge about how to work, how to run a business, and how to deal with people” (p. 49).

Jim Boeheim, the head basketball coach at Syracuse University, inherited the traits of both of his parents – his father’s competitive nature and his mother’s ability to remain optimistic despite defeat. Both parents were expert bridge players. Boeheim is described as stoic on the sidelines watching his team, “slowly pacing the sideline with arms folded and his tie askew, you can see the wheels turning in his mind. It’s as if each game, each season, were one long hand of bridge” (p. 150).


As an Italian immigrant, **Geno Auriemma** faced a myriad of challenges throughout his childhood. His role models and sources of strength were the women in his life – his mother, his teachers, his aunt, and his cousins. “From the very beginnings of his life, Auriemma understood that women were to be feared and respected, and ultimately loved” (p. 161). Auriemma is now the head coach for the Lady Huskies at University of Connecticut. “It made no difference to Auriemma that his players were women. He would coach them just as hard as he would coach men [...] He had learned firsthand that women could be as persistent as men, in many cases more so” (p. 173).

Fostering the Ability to Adapt


At age 71, **Mike Krzyzewski** “is constantly on guard against being trapped by old habits” (p. 91). “If he didn’t adapt, if he didn’t maintain his persistence and grow his empathy while staying true to who he is, Krzyzewski would be unable to continue acquiring the knowledge he needs to stay relevant – and indeed, highly successful – for this long” (p. 95). Krzyzewski has been coaching at Duke University for thirty-eight years.

“The hardest thing in coaching is to be flexible but not weak” (p. 156).

Following a mental breakdown after self-admittedly pushing himself too hard, Geno Auriemma learned that “there are a lot of things out of your control. I used to think I can control the outcome, but I learned that I can’t. I can only control how we prepare” (p. 179). This realization allowed him to expand his knowledge and therefore help his team to improve.



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Dabo Swinney persisted in using his business acumen and applied it to his role as the head football coach at Clemson University. He said, “Those great businesses out there, those great programs, they don’t plateau. How do you do that? Well, you have to constantly reinvent, reinvest, reset, learn, grow, change” (p. 264).

Maintaining a Relationship-Oriented Approach

Brad Stevens, the head basketball coach of the Boston Celtics “realized early on that if he demonstrated to his players that he possessed knowledge that could make them better, he could get them to play the way he wanted, just like they did at Butler. ‘All the good ones want to be coached,’ he says” (p. 239).

After reaching out to one of his players who was underperforming, Tom Izzo realized that building a relationship with his players gave him the ability to motivate them. He stated, “That really helped me in my career because I realized some of these kids have deep-rooted things. There are reasons for why they act the way they do sometimes. So if I didn’t communicate with them, I wouldn’t be able to have that empathy you need to be able to motivate them” (p. 52).

Jim Harbaugh, the head football coach at the University of Michigan, aimed to simplify his lessons to his players. “If his players can remember what he tells them, then they can execute it. ‘A good coach or teacher can make the hard subject matter seem easy’ he said” (p. 105).

Doc Rivers, the head coach of the Los Angeles Clippers, discovered that “the key to coaching is to get a group of players to believe there’s one agenda, and that you have the same agenda as them. If you can do that, your players are going to do whatever they can for you” (p. 197).

Dabo Swinney calls Clemson “a relationship-driven program” (p. 266). He has implemented his own unique ways to encourage communication among his players and staff, which include weekly leadership group meetings and individual meetings with each player at the beginning and end of each season.

Believing That Success Is Not Defined by Winning

Comparing his favorite game, Pac-Man, with his love of basketball, Brad Stevens says, “The pleasure is in the process. Each new game is a chance to get better” (p. 221).

After a disappointing loss to No. 2 Connecticut after Duke had spent much of the season ranked as No. 1, Mike Krzyzewski emphasized, “I don’t coach for winning. I coach for relationships” (p. 89).

Before having the opportunity to coach football at Ohio State, Urban Meyer read a novel about a coach who loses his perspective and falls into a deep depression. Reading this book elicited an emotional response from Meyer. He realized, “We weren’t here just to win games but to make impacts” (p. 34).



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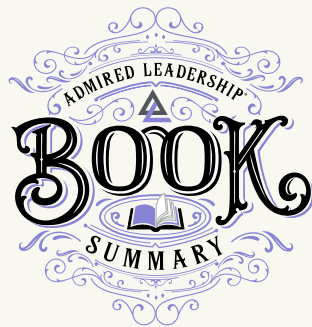
“If his players can remember what he tells them, then they can execute it. ‘A good coach or teacher can make the hard subject matter seem easy’ he said.”



When asked if sustained focus and sustained misery are important parts of the job, Dabo Swinney confidently states, “When people put winning on top, they become miserable. Even when they win, it’s a relief. We’re never gonna be like that here. We’re always gonna have fun” (p. 251). He later reiterates the same point, explaining, “I just want to have a deep appreciation for the journey because at the end of the day, that’s what you love the most. I want my players to have that, I want my staff to have that [...] The moment we won the game was great, but the best part was the journey getting there” (p. 276).

The one concept that all coaches realize is that “Getting to Us and winning aren’t the same thing” (p. 184). All nine coaches persisted through adversity, practiced empathy, exuded authenticity, and expanded upon their knowledge base. By doing so, they coached their teams to operate as one cohesive unit and therefore achieved the highest level of success.

Davis, S. (2018). **Getting to Us: How Great Coaches Make Great Teams**. New York: Penguin Press. .



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