



PLAYER DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

WRITTEN BY DOUG SOCHA

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Introduction

Do you want to take your team to the next level? Your position group?
Your office? Your unit?

Are you sure you are willing to call your people out in your organization
and raise the level of everybody around you?

Thank you for joining me on this never ending, always evolving thing
called **LEADERSHIP**. As long as I can remember all of my coaches
challenged me and my teammates to be leaders when they asked us
"who are the leaders?"

The first problem is that those coaches did not equip us with enough
information. Too many coaches challenge their players about leadership
but give NO direction! I am guilty of this early in my career. I started
coaching in 1997, it took me 15 years to be confident that I had developed
a plan when it came to leadership in my organization. I now have a clear,
proven vision of LEADERSHIP in my program and I will lay it out for you to
help you develop leaders in your organization. As I look back to the early
1990's when I played HS football and baseball, so much has changed; but
cell phones and technology are the most obvious (the thought of just
having a cell phone at that time blows my mind). But the one thing that I
really believe has not changed is **LEADERSHIP!**

Leadership is a broad topic so I will tell you what I mean. I truly believe
the majority of young people are scared to LEAD. Why? So many
different reasons; But it boils down to the fact that for a 15, 16 or even a
20 year old to make unpopular decisions. Couple that with the pressure
these young people feel from their peers especially with social media,
and you have an example of how leadership eludes players. This has not
changed since when I was a football player in high school. My highschool
varsity football team lost to a cross town rival and there was no way we
should have lost.

Introduction

I know it sounds like a glory days memory but this is why we lost. One of our best players absolutely did not show up to play. The whole team knew he had smoked before the game and not one of us said or did anything about it. Why? We were scared! We talked about it, thought about it, but did nothing about it.

Now It would not have changed the outcome of the game but could have changed the outcome of leadership on the team if someone had been equipped enough to emerge as a leader.

So you want your team led by the players? You must develop leaders on your team. You must define what a "Leader" in your organization looks like. You must define what leadership is and means to your organization. You must empower and equip them to hold your standard and hold their teammates to the standard. I take it a step further in thrusting guys into roles that are uncomfortable for them. There are many tools needed to be an effective leader but communication skills have to be near the top. Throughout this book you will see examples of how we do it.

Whether you take exactly what we do or tweak this to suit your program, I do believe our tactics in developing leaders is cutting edge and we put a huge emphasis on it. After all, one of our main objectives in our program is to develop young men for life after college and football. We want young people to leave our program better than if they didn't attend our university. What kind of life? An above average life. Can I define it? It's different for everybody, but I do know that we want our guys to rise a level above their generation and their peers. We want them to be aware and educated so they can navigate the real world of jobs, salaries, benefits, 401k in order to influence the next generation.

In this book you will read about how I develop Leaders through the topics: Standards, Leaders, and Influencers. Player Driven vs. Player Run, Elevating the Standard, Not Leading By Example, and how to implement PDL.

Chapter 1

What is LEADERSHIP?

Leadership=Influence

Leadership simply defined is:

The ability to lead a group of individuals towards a common cause. Now in our program we have a set standard. So our leaders are expected to not only live the standard but defend it.

Who can be a leader in your program?

Most talented Players? In some cases yes because people want to follow these guys and emulate what they do. I would love for our most talented players to drive our leadership. But this is not always the case.

We need players/leaders to influence the vision, and standard, and this drives our culture. You will also need to know who the influencers are. We all have them. They have leadership qualities such as communication skills but may not quite live the standards within the program. You need to identify and keep these individuals close.

To witness these individuals watch and learn the expectations of our leaders, and then at some point just come out of their shell is probably the most satisfying effect of being a coach.



A quarterback (LG) in our program is a great example when I think about how players have grown in our program. LG has been with us since we started our program here at Keiser in 2017. He really isn't a great player, however over time he has developed into a good leader and influencer. He is an awesome kid that everyone loves to be around. When I am finally able to put him into games to get some action, I am really excited because we are up by a lot and the game will be over soon. But seriously he has grown so much as a young man in our program. When we talk about living our standard within our culture and defending it, he comes to my mind. Every year we bring in new QB's and they all think they can win the job. Its competitive. They all want to be the QB but they must function in our meeting rooms as teammates and help each other. Every year theres always the QB who really doesn't fit in our meeting room. Our guys are tight. They love each other and they know that only one guy can be the QB. We work together on the field in drill work and the meeting room is a fun place to be. So that one guy will have a tough time because LG does not care about anything else within our Quarterback world other than we have a standard of how we do things in the meeting room and on the field. If you don't comply he will confront you. As quarterbacks in our program we all play different roles. If your not in the actual practice than you might be signaling plays to the offense. So the one day a QB said he wasn't signaling, LG took care of it and let him know this is what we do. That is LEADERSHIP! And it was powerful. We all need more teammates like LG. Holding others to a standard and handing out consequences for sub-standard behavior. You can't want to be LIKED and be a LEADER. We have a mission and a vision and we need leaders to help us execute this.

Leadership in our Program

1. LTS- Live the Standard (Academics, work ethic, practice, etc.)
2. Must be vocal! Effective communication skills
3. Hold teammates accountable to our standard.

We will now go into more of our standards.

Chapter 2

The Standard (Pie of Life)

So, what's this standard all about? You hear people say "we have a high standard" all the time. What are they talking about? Can they define the "standard"? It doesn't matter if you're running a football team, volleyball team, or managing a steakhouse. You have to define your standards. You must communicate your expectations until the standard is met. Where do they come from? They come from your values and you believe will give you the best results. In any organization there are many standards. Just to name few in my program, I would start with our Academic Standard. Our standard is that you are committed to education and you will do your best to achieve. I tell my team all the time, do your best! If a 2.2. GPA is your best, then that's what it is.

Work Ethic Standard= Your BEST Effort= Success in Life

The **BEST EFFORT** can vary individually. We will equip you with resources to achieve. The expectation is you will give your **BEST EFFORT**. Accountability to the program in these areas:

Academics

Some of the processes we have in place are: Weekly Grade Checks, Mandatory Study Hall hours, Access to Tutoring help (writing lab, math, etc.). Each player depending on their assessment has an academic success plan to be followed. If requirements are not met than they will be held accountable.

Off-Season

We have a very rigorous program that entails strength training, speed/agility, and conditioning. This program is meant to take you out of your comfort zone. 100% Mandatory Attendance is expected while giving your BEST EFFORT.

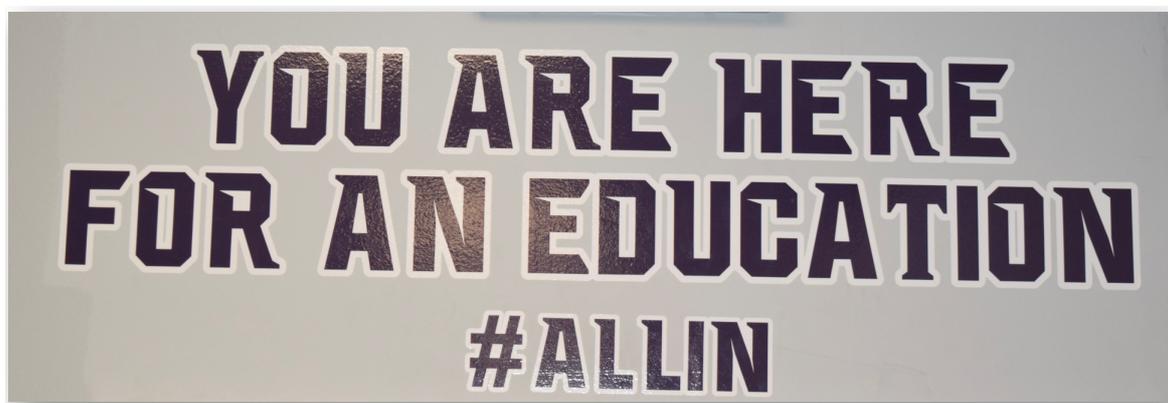
In-Season Preparation

The football season comes with a lot of challenges with the in-season schedule of academics, strength and conditioning, and game planning practices. This requires us to prioritize and LIVE the **PIE OF LIFE**. We strive to be the best prepared team and it requires sacrifice, discipline, and commitment to the standards of our program.

Life Ethic Standard=Your Value System=Success in Life

Family/Team-We have players from all walks of life. With different family dynamics. Some players carry a heavier burden than others such as working jobs, paying rent, difficult family situations. No matter the situation our players will be at an advantage by following and prioritizing their PIE OF LIFE. We expect our players to respect each other and their family.

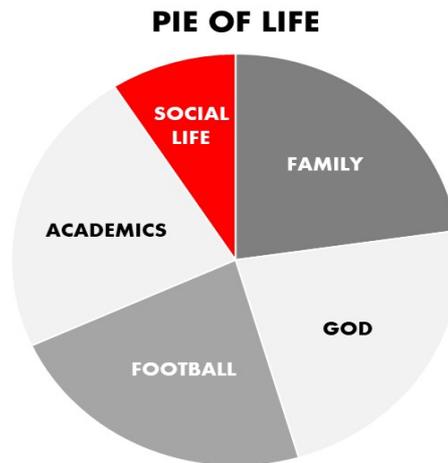
Social Ethics- This all starts in recruiting. We put a huge priority on character. We get to know our players during this process. We meet their families, talk to coaches, and often check their social media. This is not all encompassing but hopefully helps us avoid potential issues. Our social standard is a ZERO TOLERANCE DRUG POLICY and we frequently drug test. We educate our players about social behaviors and what is acceptable. The bottom line is for our players to MAKE GOOD CHOICES (MGC) in social settings. All decisions our players make must be made with the team as the priority.



~Sign leaving the lockerroom towards campus

Player Driven Leadership

I developed this PIE OF LIFE after realizing that a player who is part of my organization can simplify their life into 5 parts. Helping players to understand/visualize how to prioritize those 5 parts led me to develop the PIE. We all have one PIE (life) and visualizing how we prioritize aspects of it helps us live those more fully.



GOD, FAMILY, ACADEMICS, FOOTBALL, SOCIAL

My vision is to have a football program that produces young men to be equipped with the skills to be successful in life after football and graduation. We want our players to be positive contributors to society, good husbands, fathers, and role models. The college degree will be very important but the skills learned and emphasized in our program such as work ethic, commitment, and discipline will lead to a successful and productive life.



-Sign leaving the lockerroom towards the practice field

God- We believe that this should be part of each player's life. We give opportunities for FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) and we player led team prayer. We respect each team member for their own walk in regards to spirituality. I believe we all answer to a higher power who has set the highest standard of morality which help in every aspect of your life.

Family- Families are the cell of society. It's very important to prioritize family and relationships. This crosses over to our team family as well. As a team we are a family. Families care about each other's well being, look out for each other, and want each other to succeed.

Academics- In our program you will value education. We often say you are here first for an education and second here to win championships. Our goal is for each player to graduate and be ready for the next phase of life.

Football- Yes! Football is really important in our life. Players in our program love football. The process of development teaches necessary tools to be successful in all things. And its fun!

Social Life-This one needs to be limited. If you are going to achieve at a high level in our program, then players must sacrifice this in their life.

What is Culture?

Culture is the word for the way groups of people do things. Attitudes, values, and goals are shared by a group. At the core of any culture, everybody is making decisions for the culture. With our demanding environment and high standards, we expect decisions to be made based on our culture.

Chapter 3

Leaders and Influencers

Ability to Influence

Leadership is influence. Some people can naturally take over a room and captivate a group. Why is that? They have something we want or they are someone we want to emulate. We also talk about how influencers can damage a culture. The bottom line is you will have players that can influence but refuse to step up and use their platform. We have several guys in our program that are the best players, do well academically, and overall high achievers, yet they do not say a word. I have had several conversations with guys about how powerful they could be. I also tell them these skills will pay off in the long run when it comes to their career. You must identify these guys and put them in situations to develop their vocal leadership.

Live the Standards of the program

Leaders LIVE all the standards in our program. Remember **WE DO NOT ACCEPT LEAD BY EXAMPLE.** The Standard is the minimum your culture will accept. Our leaders meet the standard and often times exceed in each and every one of them.

Most Achieve at High Level on the field

Most of our best leaders do play at a high level. I think it is natural for those guys to be a strong influence because human nature draws people to them. We do have some players that I absolutely love that do not play at that level. But are ALL IN when it comes to our Culture and defend it. They both can be powerful leaders, but overall I would say that the ALL AMERICAN that chooses to lead can be the most powerful. Sometimes I feel like I am spinning my wheels in the mud with some guys (who just are not comfortable with leading yet) but I know its worth the effort because at some point their impact on our culture will be powerful.

Emerging Leaders

Emerging leaders is a term used for those individuals that just all of the sudden start leading. Stop waiting for this to happen! We want consistency. In my career I have never seen this happen. We do hear players trying to be vocal, but is it true leadership if it is not consistent leadership? I believe in our program, the leaders that “emerge” are because they are developed in our Player Driven Leadership Culture.

Developed Leaders

I believe leaders are developed and can be developed at a young age. All organizations have leaders that develop others as leaders. In most organizations where you see people climbing the ladder or getting promotions, these people are often those leaders. They achieve at a high level and have been put in these positions because of their ability to influence. When you create a PLAYER DRIVEN LEADERSHIP CULTURE then what you will see is those leaders developing leaders and creating more of them. We have to equip our leaders with our vision in order for them to lead our culture.



Influencers

In any organization there will be "influencers". We would love for all influencers to be "positive" leaders. This is not always the case. There will be some people in your organization that can influence a group negatively. The influencers are liked, they are popular and can often be damaging to your culture. Every team and organization has them. I can remember back to when I was playing college football and one of our best offensive linemen was an absolute mess. He was a "freak of nature" meaning that no matter what he did to his body (alcohol, drugs, lack of sleep, etc.) he could still perform at a high level for our team. Imagine if he didn't abuse his body? He was popular and well liked and could influence a bunch of teammates to go down the wrong path. He is an example of "toxic influencer". They are damaging. You must keep these "influencers" close because we know influence=leadership. The goal would be to transform these players to our Culture or your Culture will be compromised. Sometimes you have to move on from these guys and dismiss them.

Leadership is Influence. So while developing leaders your vision must be clear and believable by telling them WHY without justifying it. I often allow our leaders to speak their minds in our meetings. I learn a lot from our players. I learn a lot from our influencers as well.

Equally important is to listen and watch. Walk into your weight room or boardroom and examine the body language of your team or work force. This often tells a story about your culture.

What's happening in the Locker Room?

You should concern yourself with what is going on in the lockerroom. The conversations, the vibe, positivity, negativity. I want the locker room to be a special place. I want to leave these guys in there and they can grow stronger together by developing bonds. On the flip side the locker room can be toxic. You have to have excellent leadership because the human nature of complaining, blaming, and making excuses can spread. You must be aware of this and stop it. Your leaders must stop this. They must not accept it. Your leaders must demand a high standard in the locker room for keeping it clean and not allowing cliques. One of the best things I see often in our locker room is a bunch of guys playing cards. The one thing I notice is that the group often changes from day to day. That tells me we do not have cliques of guys staying to themselves. Like most teams our players love music and dancing. I often hear it from my office and it turns into a dance party. I LOVE it! I want our team to be close. Our standards are high and our environment is demanding. It's not easy to be in our program. We must make some room for fun. But I also know that a team must struggle together (off-season program) because in this sort of environment they will stay together. Our off-season program has to take them out of their comfort zone often. I love to see our guys interacting with each other after 12 gassers and some guys are not making their times. What's happening at this time? It needs to be the same as when your down by 14 in the 4th quarter.

The lockerroom was the foundation of our culture which I saw come to life in the 2019 season in games we played from behind. The belief in each other was incredible. The team played for each other. The underlying factors were that our culture had high standards and our leaders were driving it. 4 of our 9 games in the regular season we played from behind in the second half. The combination of our demanding environment, high standards, and leadership lead to this.

Whats going on in the coaches office?

I've seen it everywhere! People want to complain, blame, and make excuses. I've worked in regular jobs (coaching is not a regular job) and it was unbelievable. It is a human condition. I have worked coaching jobs where the entire coaching staff was completely divided by offense and defense. Ive seen an entire offensive staff divided. It was like everybody was an independent contractor. The players see this. They see everything so if you expect your team to be together the coaching staff is the first example your players will look to. It is not a healthy environment and is difficult to win like that. Coaches, workers, and people in general complain about everything. Stop and listen to conversations in your work environment. There is no perfect work environment but if you emphasize a "NO COMPLAINING" environment than you will get closer to that. People waste time in their offices complaining instead of fixing it. These are the cliques I was talking about. It all stems from bad leadership which leads to a toxic culture. The leadership at the top must have a clear vision that is shared for a staff or unit to be unified but also must be willing to listen and air out differences. Strong leaders cannot be afraid of conflict and confrontation.



No Clear Vision

Let me give you an example of when leaders do not express their vision. In 2009 we started the season 0-3. Now I purposely scheduled heavy on the front end to challenge my team and I knew it would be very tough. As a young coach you may not realize some of the challenges and outside factors that come to play when running a program. We had a purpose to do scheduling that way but my vision was not communicated clearly to all involved, from the HeadMaster, to parents, to kids, and even my own staff. Everyone was doubting what I was doing and how it was going to improve or finish. After the challenging games we improved and we won 11 straight and the State Championship! My plan was very sound but the vision was not shared. Now I do believe every organization will have doubters and I really do not care what people think but when it came to affecting our culture, I cared a lot. For about 3-4 weeks it was very difficult and winning fixed it. We were the same team as we continued to improve from week to week but the human nature of doubting affected our culture. Communicate your VISION CLEARLY!

Chapter 4

Player Driven vs Player Run

The topic of player Driven vs. Player Run has been on my mind for a long time. I often think about the kids we recruit. Again, this can apply to any sport team, organization, business, the list goes on. So many kids that we bring into our program come from some great places. An equal amount come from places with no standard or very low standard. What do I mean? Absolutely no accountability for actions and no structure from the organization. Basically what I'm saying is a lot of organizations lack a vision or have a difficult time communicating it. I hear stories of how certain players can act a certain way at a school just because they are the top player. We all know that goes on but it will not pay off and it does not benefit the young person.

I am striving to have a Player Driven team. That means that our players or top leaders defend our Culture, make tough "peer" decisions, and hold people accountable for sub-standard behaviors. Our coaching staff has to drive the culture and vision too and our leaders must work with us to ensure we are getting the desired outcome. Is this for good players only? No, but most of the time your best players make the most impact. I do have players in our program that does not have a very big player role but they are all in. They defend our Culture at a very high level and other players respect them for that.

What happens in player-run programs?

Sub-Standard Achievement

Oftentimes on teams that players basically run the program, you will see a team that does not achieve its potential, poor practice and preparation, and an overall toxic environment. I have seen this many times in programs I have worked in and places I have visited. In reality these programs do not have standards. Players are unable to set the standard that will achieve success because they are not equipped to do so. The vision of the program needs to come from the head coach.

Coaches Defend and Make Excuses for Players

I have seen this many times. I have fallen into this category a time or two in my career. The environment allowed me to make excuses or defend my players. When I look back on this it was easy to do. It was a human-nature thing to do. Now there are times that you must defend your players based on circumstances. When it comes to standards there is no room for that. Now I always call my coaches out and challenge them on defending their players. They hate it. We all must understand the difference between a "reason" and an "excuse". You have to have a strong Culture within your coaching staff to have these discussions. Basic rule of thumb would be do not ***BLAME, MAKE EXCUSES, or COMPLAIN.***

What happens in player-driven programs?

Players empowered to lead in program (developed)

You have to be committed to empowering your players to lead. You have to be committed to developing leaders in your program. You must share your vision with your entire organization. There must be discussions of the "Why" behind how we do things. You have to be exactly on the same page with your staff. This can be difficult because people have come from so many different situations. I am very clear with my staff on how we are going to do things. They do not always agree at first but I share the vision and the "Why". For example, we do not make exceptions for anyone in our program when it comes to discipline and academics. We have had a couple of situations where our players have made some bad choices. I tell our team that we can overcome some mistakes but there are a few that are non-negotiable. We have had to kick off some of our best players because they made poor decisions that fell under our non-negotiables.

Player Driven Leadership

Let me give you an example. We preach all the time about the teams standards on social behavior which includes a zero-tolerance policy with drugs. We random drug test and our players are held accountable. When a player tests positive regardless of any circumstances he is dismissed. There is absolutely no gray area with this. We have had several players in my tenure break this and believed their talent would overcome this policy. I remember a player once said "if coach tests me than he doesnt care about winning". He was absolutely right! I do not want to win by compromising our standards.

I have had players and coaches really question this policy but over time they have witnessed how holding people accountable has strengthened our culture.



Players defend the Culture (hold teammates accountable)

When this happens your program will go to the next level. It is definitely a process getting to this point. Your program must develop leaders and empower them to enforce the culture. Now I hear it all the time when guys are getting on each other during a conditioning session. Yes we want that. But is it true leadership? I would say no. True leadership would be holding the entire unit to the standard and starting that session over. This is hard. This is the unpopular decision that a **TRUE LEADER** must make. Our first year at the new program in 2018 the only one holding anybody to the standard was our strength coach. We had a bunch of guys trying to survive on their own. As we progressed and players were put into some leadership situations we began to see it happen slowly. Once we played and some players had success, then those guys had credibility. The challenge is getting young people to be a **TRUE LEADER** in the sense of what we believe. They have to make hard decisions. They are expected to make hard decisions. Getting to this point is the key. When players start calling each other out and taking action. For example, our conditioning program is at the foundation of our development as a team. The off-season conditioning program challenges every single player. Many of our methods have a standard to meet such as a "Gasser Circuit". This circuit has time requirements that must be met by all players by position groups. If not met, then they repeat. This forces players to call each other out and encouraging one another. You learn so much about your team when they are struggling together. Can they stay together? I love getting our team to this point. We have witnessed players physically pushing each other and carrying each other past the line in time. We have even started a circuit over because our leaders did not like the effort and execution. Very unpopular decisions.

Chapter 5

Elevate the Standard

Leadership is the Key

Developing leaders that can in turn develop more leaders which will continuously share and defend our culture makes me 100x's more impactful as I would without them and drives the culture forward. As I mentioned before not all leaders are star players and leaders come from all depths of the team. This drives the culture. There are a few traits that all of these leaders have in common. I will share a few here.

Vocal

Our leaders are vocal. There are **NO LEAD BY EXAMPLE** (more on this in chapter 6) guys in our program. So our players use their voice and platform. The expectation is constant communication happening in our program. If they are in the weight room, meeting room, or even in the library. We expect our LEADERS to be vocal. This skill like any other skill must be developed.



They exceed the minimum

Our leaders hold themselves to a higher standard and constantly exceed our expectations in every aspect. I really have to vet who my leaders are. They MUST achieve academically, practice at a high level, and socially live right. Now I know this is not a perfect science but they need to be pretty damn close to perfect.

Defend and Confront Sub-Standard

Our leaders must defend our culture. Anything that we have declared we value must be defended. This can be one of the hardest things to develop. When you can get your team leaders calling out guys and raising their level for not working to our level of expectation, acting right, or practicing at a high level than you have something great. I tell our leadership council that they are more powerful than me if used correctly. For example, I know college athletes partake in activities that are not the best for them. I tell our guys all the time about the Pie of Life. There are only so many pieces you can have. I preach rest, nutrition, and hydration on a daily basis during the season. If our guys go out on thursday night it can absolutely ruin everything we just did all week. To win at a high level there must be sacrifice. If we can get guys to raise that standard of expectation and defend the culture and expectations it becomes very special.

Elevate by Assessing

How do we assess our standards? Self evaluation is the only way to assess how our players are living up to our standard. Self evaluation is only beneficial when you are honest about a situation. For example, while assessing our academic standard, we look at the team's quarterly or semester grades. Do the grades reflect that the systems we have in place are working? Are they sufficient or do they require additional transparency from our players? What I have seen over time in several of our standards is that our system produces results if it is working. For example, if players follow our academic plan they WILL reach their goals. Along the way we are constantly assessing their performance vs. our system. We also want to make sure that players are thriving in our program by being challenged on a daily or weekly basis. We need to continue to create opportunities for our players to be challenged. Our off-season training plan is a great example of this. Every player is challenged in this program.

It doesn't matter what aspect in our program we expect CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT and GROWTH. I believe you must remind young people constantly what the expectations/standards are. Before any of this can happen you must lay out your vision for whatever standard your setting. Your staff must understand it and be unified in expressing the vision. This must be constantly assessed.



Setting the Standard with my 6 year old son

My son Kolbe plays soccer and absolutely loves gameday (as every 6 year old does), loves putting on the socks, the jersey, and being with his team, and scoring goals. Pretty much every kid on the team only cares about scoring. I watch all the parents and all they care about is if their child scores goals. My son at one point only measured his games by if he scored and if he did then it was ok. He's 6 and it is an unbelievable feeling to score and look over at your parents for reassurance, I get it we are all human, we want and crave reassurance.

But just scoring goals is not the message that I want him to get. So, I asked him one day do you think I care if you score? Now all he sees and hears are parents screaming and yelling score, score...These kids are brainwashed into believing that if you score then it's good enough. Most of these parents have not been coaching and around team sports and striving to get teams to play together like I have for 23 years. So his answer was "yes". I told him all I cared about is if he plays hard for his team and has fun. He's 6! If I help him focus on a core element that makes his team successful than the exercise works. I shared my vision/expectation with him and he bought in. He still really wants to score but now he looks for me on the sidelines at his game after a good defensive play or high effort play where he knocked the ball away from a potential scorer. He even asks me after games if I saw him make a great pass or defensive play. He knows the expectation is that he will play hard. He is in total control of that and now he knows that. This example illustrates how instilling a standard can change your team or organization.

Accountability

Do you really have standards if there is no accountability? The answer is NO! We could talk for hours on accountability. If your team understands your standard/expectation then there is no surprise when they are held accountable. Going back to academics, if a player misses a class, doesn't achieve at their best level (usually has to do with effort), then they are held accountable. Oftentimes we as coaches discipline these guys but it will be 100x's more powerful and effective when the leaders do it. When the leaders call out a teammate it sends a message. Make the leaders of the team wake up at 5:30am to organize and administer the discipline. We often make these guys do this on our weekly "Discipline Club" and it seems to be paying off. No team is ever going to be perfect, but what we want to see is effective leadership changing behaviors and habits. We want to see less players in this weekly club and no repeats.



Chapter 6

Lead by **EXAMPLE: I DON'T THINK SO!**

This may be one of the most important chapters in the book. We all have this thought of what leadership is and how it should be executed. I have outlined our expectations for what a leader is in our program. Developing leaders is a big part of our program. I believe it is powerful and will lead to Championships. If we continue to follow our model of recruiting highly talented players (earth shattering information) and high character individuals and our program develops leaders this will happen. We put a premium on character. The things that character encompasses is what attracts us to these individuals. We do not compromise off of this model. So lets get into this Not ACCEPTING LEADERS BY EXAMPLE.

For many years we have all heard this. Little Johnny is amazing. He works hard, no discipline issues, loves practice, good teammate, and the list goes on. I was once told on a youth hockey team that the team should be like me. "Doug plays hard and never says a word." That sticks in my mind from many years ago. I love the "plays hard" part but "doesn't say a word?" That's the problem right there. That coach accepted that behavior. If everyone saw that I played hard and was a decent player then I could have been an influencer or leader. We do not want "LEAD BY EXAMPLE" people. Now don't get me wrong we love having hard workers that do everything that is asked. But we demand more! All those things that my hockey coach described me as playing hard, listening, practicing well, and few more is just the Standard. It's what we should expect from every player.

It was my job and it's your players job to do that. However, Player Driven Leadership takes it a step further because we want leaders. We want guys to defend our Culture, be vocal (it's a must), and hold teammates accountable. We have several guys in our program that are top players that basically do everything right and what we ask for but do not say a word. This is not acceptable in our program. We are going to thrust players into a leadership role/situation and get them out of their comfort zone to become leaders. We are trying to develop leaders.

Player Driven Leadership

If a player is doing the standard that just is the expectation. The standard is the minimum our Culture should accept. This is a challenge and that's where the developing leaders is key. Have a plan to develop leaders. You must first outline what a "Leader" in your program or organization should look like. The number one obstacle is the communication skills and the part of making un-popular decisions such as holding peers accountable for sub-standard behavior. So you have to have a plan to develop that. Player Driven Leadership is not what players do inherently, you have to develop it.



Chapter 7

Developing Communication Skills

Communication Skills

This is one of the main things we focus on when it comes to leadership. Obviously this is a skill that we want our players to take with them the rest of their life. With today's cell phones, texting, snap chat, messaging apps, or whatever it is making it harder and harder for young people to truly communicate. I often make our team eat lunch or pre-game meals without technology just so they can talk to each other. It drives me nuts to walk into the locker room and see 8 guys sitting near each other and all on their phones. Communication skills are a must when it comes to leadership. Our coaches, support staff or whoever is dealing with our team must communicate clearly. Some people naturally can speak to a group or entire team and feel comfortable. I feel I am a prime example of developing communication skills. I can remember absolutely freezing up in class when called on. I may have known the answer but my ability to articulate it clearly in front of people was my challenge. Like anything else it take reps! My communication skills really got put to the test in my last few years in college. Not on the field but in the classroom where I had professors challenge me on my positions. It was uncomfortable especially in front of my peers but over time I gained confidence and it got easier. I had to continue to find opportunities to challenge myself with interviews, discussions, coaching clinics, and much more. This skill has proven to be very valuable in my career. I want our players to have these experiences much earlier than I did (so much wasted opportunity as a player) and take it to all areas of their life. You have to create opportunities for your players to speak to the team or a small group.

Player Driven Leadership

We need to provide opportunities to develop leadership and communication. Like anything else this will develop confidence.

The first example I can give is one of our players has a lot of TIK TOK followers. He's obviously very knowledgeable about this subject. I started off easy with this guy. He's smart, one of our best players, and can be an influencer. I had him talk to the team about TIK TOK and his passion was obvious. Since then I have encouraged him to be vocal about other things with the team. My point is the type of LEADERSHIP we want in our program is PLAYER DRIVEN and that means that the players will help drive the culture and standards while holding people accountable. Very difficult thing to do with young people. So it is a process in developing these leaders. You first must lay out your vision for leadership. This player is probably tired of me calling on him and making him uncomfortable. However, you do not grow unless you are uncomfortable.

Other Ways can include:

Leading a Workout: Often in January and February during our off-season workouts we have players lead the whole workout from the design of it to the implementation. We film these sessions of our players leading the team. We review these afterwards and discuss with feedback.

Enforcing a Discipline Workout: If a player is sub-standard in any aspect of our program there is a consequence. Every Wednesday morning at 6am we have discipline runs. These are for players that may have missed a class, study hall, or professor meeting. We often have our leaders wake up for these sessions and implement them.

Introduce yourself to the TEAM: We often start a meeting with players introducing themselves and sharing a unique fact about themselves. This makes players speak in front of the whole team. Practice makes perfect.

Film Review: We often ask players to act as the coach and correct or critique during a film session. Another great way to develop communication.

Chapter 8

How to Implement PDL

Over the course of this book I illustrated what PDL looks like for a TEAM. I have shown you how to encourage your players to become Player Driven Leaders. So where do you begin to implement PDL into your program or organization?

Step #1

Define Vision and Set Standards

This a great opportunity for your staff to meet and discuss the VISION of the organization. We as leaders often do not express and share our vision clearly. This is what makes great organizations separate themselves. There must be constant communication and a clear expectation set forth. What are my values? What is my belief system for success in this organization?

Step #2

REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT

I really believe you must continue to preach your standard and remind your team on a daily basis of what your TEAM standards are. I also believe you must communicate with your team examples of when sub-standard behavior happens. We want a family environment and transparency is important. What they constantly hear and do becomes habit.

Step #3

Identify Leaders and Influencers

Who fits your criteria for LEADERSHIP? Who can influence? Who meets/exceeds standards? I would also start with players that play at a high level. Their influence will be stronger. But there may be some players that don't quite fit that criteria and can still lead.

Step #4

Develop Leaders and Empower them

Share your vision on Player Driven Leadership. Set the expectations and outline what they should expect. There is **NO SUCH THING AS LEAD BY EXAMPLE!** Show them how you will empower them to LEAD in your program. Give them opportunities to improve Communication, Influence, and Accountability.

Step #5

Let's Go!

Just start implementing PDL! There is no magical place to begin. Start in a team meeting, weight room, team activity, or wherever you see fit. Your team needs to see that your vision and leadership style will be implemented through their team mates.

In conclusion, my hope is that this book will inspire you take a good look at your program standards, raise your expectations, and the overall success of your team. I also hope you and your staff empower your team to become the best leaders they can be.



About Coach Socha...

- *Currently the Head Football Coach at Keiser University (NAIA)*
- *Current Record: 22-5 (2 Conference Championships)*
- *Sun Division Coach of the Year 2019 and 2020*
- *23 Years of Coaching Experience*
- *NFL-Buffalo Bills*
- *Division 1, JUCO, and HS Experience*
- *48-10 Overall Head Coaching Record*
- *1 State Championship, 2 Independent Championships*

THANK YOU



**PLAYER DRIVEN
LEADERSHIP**

WRITTEN BY DOUG SOCHA