

# Shared Leadership

## The REAL DEAL

If you ask your team, “How many of you consider yourselves leaders?” what would they say? Instead, if you ask, “How many of you are able to work well with others and get things done together?” how would they respond?  
What is a leader????

## Western cultures struggle with shared leadership. Why?

- So much emphasis on seeing only certain qualities associated with leadership (command functions, decision-making, charisma, performance success)
- Other great leadership skills are not viewed as important (nurturing, mediation of conflict, collaboration skills)

# What is needed?

- \* Recognize the value of many different leadership styles within a group.
- \* Hold frequent discussions to build consciousness and awareness of the various leadership strengths and styles of each person.
  
- Some have defined shared leadership as the vision of leadership needed for the 21st century.
  
- Both staff at community organizations and personnel managers of both big and small companies now identify shared leadership as the #1 quality that they look for in college graduates that they hire.

Shared leadership is the ability of a person to work well with others - as part of a team. Shared leadership requires strengths and abilities not normally associated with the patriarchal version of leadership.

- **Characteristics of Shared Leadership**

- Solid communication skills
- Bringing out the best in others
- Ability to mediate conflict
- Quality to express empathy and compassion for others, and educate others about the importance of these feelings
- Ability to respect different viewpoints while upholding team core values and covenants

**Shared leadership** is an alternative concept of leadership where a group functions collectively with multiple leaders, each able to contribute specific skills such as:

- Serving as spokesperson (speaking & writing)
- Representing group to coach or others
- Developing strategies for team goals
- Fostering intra-group harmony and the concept of teamwork
- Managing tasks (out of season options, website, conditioning programs)
- Fostering a culture that promotes learning, player development, and fun



# Demystifying Shared Leadership

- Myth #1: Having shared leadership means not having captains
- Myth #2: Captains are being banned from Lincoln-Sudbury Regional H.S. sports teams
- Myth #3: Having shared leadership means having no leadership, and less of a competitive edge.
- Myth #4: Motivation behind shared leadership is to keep everyone happy, “give everyone a trophy”

# Demystifying, continued:

- Myth #5: Another motivation for shared leadership is because there are so many problems with traditional captains
- Myth #6: Traditional captain system is flawless - no need to revise or revamp. "Leaders are born, not made" WEEI comment
- Myth #7: Motivation for shared leadership is to please parents
- Myth #8: Student who would be captain suffers
- Myth #9: There is one shared leadership blueprint for all

## Comments and Feedback from L-S Coaches & Students

- Initial reactions with field hockey: confused, frustrated, apprehensive, struggle.
- Solid communication and guidance from coaches helped students turn the corner.
- End of season sentiment: Wouldn't trade a thing, coping, unique and great first year, could not be divided, no hierarchy, bonding.



# More comments:

- Season so alive, increased confidence, not intimidated, seniority important, respect enhanced, “my” vs “our” team, strong building year to learn concept.
- Feedback from underclass students: good stuff - council has spectrum of skills, not just 2 girls leading - more options, outsiders don't know the real success.

# Tips for Making it Work

- Set up a safe environment where students understand how to discuss feelings and disagree.
- Listen when others speak, teach active listening (checking for understanding).
- Withhold judgement about other's values, respect individual differences.

# Tips, continued:

- Express using “we,” “us,” “our,” vs. “I” or “me.”
- Everyone contributes, no one dominates.
- Establish consistent meeting times with leadership team.
- Action-oriented approach: solve issues, correct mistakes, move forward.

# Learning Activities

- Voice of past leaders: invite former captains to speak to team and share their leadership experiences.
- Mix up drills, activities so everyone gets to know others. Run team building activities (community service, visit college game, etc.).
- Give many a chance to present or lead.

# More Learning Activities & Assessment

- Role play - What do I do if? Situational problem solving.
- Review, preview, assess, evaluate, plan ahead.
- Who needs to improve team commitment and how do we make it happen?



# More on Assessment

- Who needs to improve effort and how do we make it happen?
- What are we doing well as a leadership team and what can we do better?
- How do we raise spirit and energy on our team?
- How can we better model covenants?

# More on Assessment

- How can we improve communication among teammates, team leaders, and coaches?
- On a scale of 1 to 5 (1-never, 2-seldom, 3-sometimes, 4-frequently, 5-always), measure the following:
  - Team leaders understand & model team covenants.

# Measure 1 to 5, continued:

- Team leaders are respected and followed.
- Team leaders enjoy working together.
- Team leaders can disagree and still function.
- Team leaders know when to follow.
- We can openly share ideas in meetings.
- Team leaders deal with problems.

# Measure 1 to 5, continued:

- As leaders, we are good listeners.
- We work collaboratively.
- We accomplish alot.
- We work well with our coaches.
- We communicate effectively in and out of practices.

# Resources

- Student Leadership Training Booklet,  
Professor Glenn Omatsu, California State University
- Professor Joe Raelin, The Leaderful Fieldbook,  
[j.raelin@neu.edu](mailto:j.raelin@neu.edu)
- Bruce Brown, [www.proactivecoaching.com](http://www.proactivecoaching.com)
- Cory Dobbs, The Academy for Sport Leadership,  
[www.sportleadership.com](http://www.sportleadership.com)
- Jeffrey Marx, Season of Life



# Summary Points on Shared Leadership

- Coaches should have clear idea of why this is desirable, and what this will look like on their teams.
- Competition can be just as fierce under shared leadership. There can now be more cooperation/accountability within the team. More students contribute special talents.
- Be the first to serve, last to be served.

# More summary points

- Shared responsibility for problem identification, solutions, and action taking.
- Greatest barriers: breaking tradition (student resume?), inability or unwillingness to take risks, fear of the struggle. Struggle is healthy and part of the process.
- The shared leadership transition requires courage, conviction, faith, and trust.

# We Are Educators

- The primary role of interscholastic athletics is to promote learning.
- How many of you teach leadership?
- The shift in the leadership model from emphasis on the patriarchal, formal leader to a shared model is subtle, powerful, and is needed now. The designated leader can not do it all.