

Ten Qualities of Leadership

Can a club train a coach to become a leader? Can a person develop leadership abilities? The answer is a resounding YES. Leadership is a combination of specific personal qualities. It begins inside a person and relies as much on philosophical approach as it does on learned skills.

COURAGE

Have the courage of your convictions, is a familiar saying. Leaders must have a strong belief system to boldly meet soccer's challenges and maintain the courage of their convictions. Believing in their own physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual standards and values enables them to apply all their resources and creative energy when faced with problems or overwhelming odds.

BIG THINKER

Leaders have the ability to see things in a larger perspective, and also to see things better than they are. *Curiosity* is essential! Many leaders have "divine discontent." They challenge tradition. They are not afraid of idealism, and are eager to create and bring out the best in others. Coaches have clearly defined their personal goals and have the ability to help others expand their thinking and imagination.

CHANGE MASTER

Leaders move people and things in directions more beneficial to all. Coaches not only have the ability to create change, but they also accept, handle and succeed during times of change. Change is welcome since they learn from the past and let it go. Leaders don't burden themselves with old ideas, prejudices, habits or processes. The inspired leader looks for the opportunity in change and tries to understand it even if he/she doesn't like it.

PERSISTENT AND REALISTIC

A leader sets realistic goals and sees them through to completion. Even when under pressure they remain committed to those goals. Current struggles are acknowledged as essential for future achievement, and coaches will sacrifice immediate satisfaction for future gains. They also help others overcome obstacles because they realize that patience is a good measure of persistence. Leaders do not quit!

SENSE OF HUMOR

It is said, "If you take yourself too seriously, no one else will." A sense of humor is the key. Coaches know that life and soccer are no joking matter, but they have the ability to keep things in perspective. They are self-accepting. They can laugh at themselves. They have enthusiasm. Leaders are spontaneous and can express their feelings. Their ready wit lightens the load of all those around with whom they associate. When stress and pressure become a problem, the leader's sense of humor gives everyone a momentary "emotional vacation" so that the task or situation can continue with balance and clear direction.

RISK TAKER

Taking risks is a vital part of leadership. Leaders have the courage to begin while others are waiting for better times, safer situations and assured results. They are willing to take the risk because they know that over cautiousness and indecision are robbers of opportunity and success. They are willing to fail in order to succeed. Coaches know that no one wins all the time and winning is not always the goal. They take initiative, are independent, and are not unduly influenced by others. Leaders allow themselves and others to grow by making mistakes and not expecting perfection.

POSITIVE AND HOPE-FILLED

Eighty percent of success in life is having a positive attitude. Coaches have the ability to see the good in a bad situation, to see hope where others do not and to have faith when others give up. They know that one person with a belief is equal to ninety-nine who only have an interest. They are optimistic and can elicit the same from other people. They trust themselves and others. Leaders know that everyone wants to make a difference, accomplish something in soccer, be accepted and receive acknowledgement for their skills and talents. The leader takes action to reinforce a person's self worth and value, in a positive and hope-filled manner.

DECISION MAKER

Deciding to decide is often harder than carrying through once the decision has been made. Leaders know that not deciding is still a decision made by time, fate and circumstance. The leader is vitally aware of this and would rather make a wrong decision than none at all. Few decisions in life are so critical that they cannot be corrected. If that is true for life then for soccer it is doubly so. Leaders know that indecision wastes time, energy, talent, money and opportunity. They make decisions and commitments to avoid future failures. Coaches are also willing to make decisions and plans that affect future generations, because they know that indecision will forfeit everyone's future.

ACCEPTS AND USES POWER WISELY

Leaders do not shrink from power, nor do they seek it unnecessarily. They know that having clout often intimidates others, so they use power judiciously. They "pull rank" only in emergencies. Leaders use their power to direct others to help them achieve their full potential. Coaches take responsibility for themselves, their actions and the results. They use their personal power to instill this example in others. Power and greatness is not a goal, but a by-product of learning how to serve. This they do gladly!

COMMITTED

Commitment is the primary word for coaches. They realize that without it, all else is meaningless. They have a zeal and dedication to their cause that pulls others to them. Their commitment exudes confidence and hope. Leaders set high standards of excellence for themselves and others, and people grow to those expectations. Leaders determine a course, make a plan and then have the self-discipline to follow through in spite of obstacles. Coaches stay in the game long after the others give up. Most people quit too soon, missing the riches of life. Just like the seasons, life and soccer have cycles. The leader's commitment is sustained through the good and bad, hot and cold, ups and downs. Although coaches are committed to their goals, they live only for one day at a time and know that if they take care of today, tomorrow will take care of itself.

