

Wooden's Wisdom - Volume 1

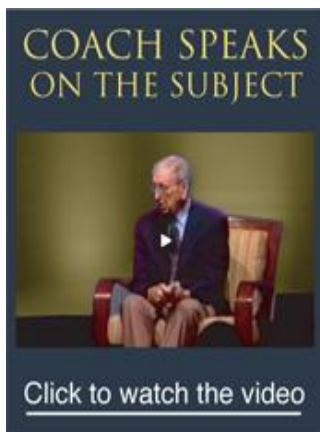
Issue 1

THE WOODEN PHILOSOPHY

Coach Wooden established four essential components of being a successful coach: The coach as a Philosopher, as an Example, as a Teacher, and as a Leader.

The primary sources of the early formation of his philosophy were the rules (The Two Sets of Three) and the advice (The Seven Point Creed) that he received from his father. Utilizing this philosophy along with his early challenges as a coach and teacher, Coach was able to define his concept of true success. For achieving success as he defined it, Coach established the most desirable character traits one must possess –the same traits that molded his style as a teacher and a leader– within the blocks and mortar of his Pyramid of Success.

Hence, while Coach Wooden is most famous for his Pyramid of Success, in order to properly understand the philosophy upon which the Pyramid was constructed, one must first have a basic understanding of the “Two Sets of Three” and the “Seven Point Creed.” Thus, in order to lay the proper foundation, it is here at the



APPLICATION EXERCISE

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Coach's FAVORITE POEMS

*No written word
nor spoken plea
Can teach our youth
what they should be.
Nor all the books
on all the shelves.
It's what the teachers
(coaches)*

beginning where we will begin our series of weekly coaching modules.

Coach Wooden's father gave each of his four boys two direct sets of three rules he hoped would guide their everyday behavior. They were referred to as "Two Sets of Three." The first set dealt with integrity, and must be the starting point for any leader:

Never lie
Never cheat
Never steal

These rules are simple and self-explanatory, yet they are as important as they are obvious. The first thing anybody wants to know about you is, "can I trust you?" It is a question asked by parents, friends, co-workers, recruits, athletic directors, fellow coaches, any anyone else with whom you may hope to build a relationship. By following these three simple rules consistently, you will always be trustworthy.

Know that your most important teaching tool is the example you set. In order to set the model for good character, you must consistently follow rules that drive your behavior. You cannot be a person whose ethics depend upon the situation or the company you keep. (As a sidebar, a tremendous asset to your recruiting ability is your own true character, which will be conveyed to your recruits by your current players when you are not present.)

On each side of Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success are five desirable character traits that he referred to as mortar, the substance that holds the structure together. Four of the five pieces of mortar on the right side of the pyramid directly reflect what he learned from his father's first set of three: "Integrity (purity of intention), Reliability (creates respect), Honesty (in thought and action), and Sincerity (keeps friends)."

Coach Wooden's players and those he worked with over the years always talk about the good example he set. His coworkers have told many stories about this, such as the payment he made to cover some personal phone calls he had placed over a school phone, even though they totaled less than a dollar. One of his fellow coaches speaks of the fact that after Coach Wooden retired and maintained an office in the athletic department, he would still take all of his return correspondence and packages to the post office himself each day and pay for the postage out of his own pocket. Indeed, his integrity was legendary.

are themselves.

~Unknown

Four things a man must
learn to do
If he would make his life
more true:
To think without
confusion clearly,
To love his fellow man
sincerely,
To act from honest
motives purely,
To trust in God and
Heaven securely.

~Rev. Henry Van Dyke

As with most of his wisdom, Coach provided us with a set of maxims to help us remember the lessons and implications of trustworthiness. He explained that the “first set of three” were significant for the following reasons:

Tell the truth. That way you don't have to remember a story.

The true athlete should have character, not be a character.

Young people need models, not critics.

And of course Coach always gives a character trait (a block on the pyramid) to remind us of these behaviors. In this case it is Loyalty – “To yourself and to all those depending upon you. Keep your self-respect.” Coach Wooden has often described Loyalty as an essential component of any successful team. However, loyalty can only be built if you have integrity, so be certain to start there first.

Yours in coaching,

Craig Impelman
The John R. Wooden Course