



Featured Columnist
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We all know the importance of team chemistry within any locker room or organization. This mystical abstract that transforms individuals into a cohesive unit is a must-have for championship-caliber teams and top-level organizations.

Traditional team chemistry models involves the typical "feel good, bonding, play nice, support and respect" rhetoric we have all heard. A great starting point, but without the team physics aspect, team chemistry alone doesn't bring home the ultimate prize—a championship.

The real "science" in team and organizational excellence combines player chemistry with coaching physics. One without the other and you are left with a bad experiment and an underperforming team.

Put another way, the physics part of the equation is what really matters, and many great teams' chemistry is suffocated by the lack of physics coming from the top. To go from chemistry to physics, key ingredients need to be added to the mix by the coaches, which is known as Double LEAD.

L. Listen and Laughter

E. Energy and Empower

A. Appreciate and Aptitude

D. Discipline and Delegate

The best coaches understand and demonstrate genuine listening skills. They know when to give monologue speeches, and they know when it's time to be quiet or engage in personal dialogue. The master coaches use laughter and humor to ease the daily stressors of practice, life and game conditions. It's tough to ask your team to play with passion, fire and max effort when people in leadership positions don't model the same behavior.

It's a simple concept, really. The great coaches teach, and then they empower their players to go and play without fear of constant criticism. The great coaches also know that at times they have to be the master teacher in practice and then allow the players to play freely come game time. Basically, is it obvious to your players and other coaches that you appreciate them, the sport and life each day you are together?

We have all heard the classic line; "Players first want to know you care before they care what you know." In the current age of information overload and social media, this "care" distinction has never been more relevant.

The best coaches make everyone around him or her feel special and appreciated. What score would your players give you on your technical and tactical knowledge of your sport? Are you stuck with the same drills, formations and teaching cues from the last 10 years? Or are you learning and challenging yourself through clinics, reading and learning from sources outside your comfort zone? Are you integrating new-school technology with an old-school way of presenting it? We ask our players for discipline, so how disciplined are you? Are you on time for practice, detailed in your game preparation and able to give equal treatment to all players from the superstars to role players?

A survey taken from over 200 athletes gave us the four most undesirable traits athletes want to see in their coaches. Otherwise known as FAST.

F. Favorites and Frustrated (tone of voice)

A. Angry (sometimes mean, miserable and annoying)

S. Stubborn (and screamers)

T. Tight (when it comes to crunch time)

It's known that the inmates do not—and should not—run the asylum, but feedback from the trenches is what the best coaches welcome. Team chemistry starts in the locker room, and when it's connected with team physics, it starts showing up on the scoreboard and beyond.

Reflect on the following message from an anonymous author that has stopped many coaches and leaders dead in their tracks and opened their eyes to a new way of coaching . . . and leading.

I have come to a frightening conclusion
I am the decisive element on the field
It is my personal approach that creates the climate
It is my daily mood that makes the weather
I possess tremendous power to make an athletes life miserable or joyful
I can be the tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration
I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal
In all situations, it is my response that decides
whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated
and an athlete humanized or dehumanized.

