# ABSTRACT

## BUILDING TEAM CULTURE: A FIRST-YEAR VARSITY
## BASEBALL COACH'S JOURNEY

The purpose of the study was to document a first-year head coach's attempt to create an effective team culture when taking over a losing baseball program. Pre-, mid-, and post-season interviews were conducted with the head coach, while field note observations and journal entries were taken throughout the season. The athletic director was interviewed in the post-season as well to get the perspective of an administrator. The results show that it is possible to set the foundation for team culture in the first year of coaching a new team. The coach's emphasis on pride, goal setting, and constant growth as a unit was instilled throughout the season in an attempt to create a new team culture. However, there were constant struggles that arose throughout the season, but once these themes were established as the team's standards and expectations, they became the major contributors to creating a team culture for the baseball program.

Gustavo Vega
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BUILDING TEAM CULTURE: A FIRST-YEAR VARSITY

BASEBALL COACH'S JOURNEY

by

Gustavo Vega

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We, the undersigned, certify that the thesis of the following student meets the required standards of scholarship, format, and style of the university and the student's graduate degree program for the awarding of the master's degree.


<u>Gustavo Vega</u>
Thesis Author


| | |
|---|---|
| Wade Gilbert (Chair) | Kinesiology |


| | |
|---|---|
| Jenelle N. Gilbert | Kinesiology |


| | |
|---|---|
| Tim Hamel | Kinesiology |


For the University Graduate Committee:


Dean, Division of Graduate Studies

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Much research has been done on how sport coaches have established team cultures, but how did they get to this point? Building a team culture does not happen overnight; the process takes countless months and years. The head coach of any program is the catalyst for this process. Effective coaches create the dynamics of a team culture through their coaching philosophy, program vision and values, athlete empowerment, and a demanding, yet, supportive environment.

To be able to change the culture of an entire sport program, coaches must be willing to create the culture that is best for their particular athletes and context. Camiré, Trudel, and Forneris (2012) found that many coaches first tried to understand student-athletes' preexisting make up and took these characteristics into consideration when designing strategies. Camiré et al. also found that coaches' philosophies were focused on teaching life skills rather than just winning. Many student-athletes will spend more time with their coaches than with their parents, throughout a season. Coaches must include everyday life skills, during practice and competition, to prepare them for life outside of sports.

Miller, Lutz, and Fredenburg (2012) found that coaches should mentor student-athletes to become successful humans, while training them to become successful athletes. Discipline, communication, expectations, and parent communication were the main characteristics high school coaches used to instill their philosophies (Miller et al., 2012). Vallée and Bloom (2005) found that a coach who possesses the elements of organizational skills, individual growth, coaching attributes, and vision would be more effective in building a successful university sport program. These four elements assisted coaches with creating successful programs; however, the coaching staff mastered these skills, over many

seasons of trials, and times of adjustment. Coaches attributed their success to their relationships with the athletes and the athletes' ability to show respect and enjoy connections established with the coaching staff (Vallée & Bloom, 2005).

Lara-Bercial and Mallett (2016) found that Serial Winning Coaches (SWC) included vision, environment, and people in their coaching philosophy. These SWCs had to meet one of the two following criteria: "a) they have won multiple championships at the Olympics, World Championships, and/or in the highly recognised professional leagues; and b) they have done so with multiple teams or individual athletes over a prolonged period of time" (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016, p. 221). Their coaching philosophy was the anchor and provided a sense of direction and purpose in everything they did. Vision was the clear perception necessary to win. Environment was described as the culture where everyone in the program knew what they must do to contribute to achieve competitive results. Recruiting those who would fit and display all attributes needed to create and be in the successful culture was labelled the 'people' component of building a championship culture.

Change or rebuilding will not always lead to success. This is also true when trying to change a losing program into a winning program, or creating a team culture. McKenna (2013) commented that effective changes are rare and many fixes fail. Not all change is good. A first-year head coach of a losing program can incorporate a new philosophy aimed towards benefitting the success of the team, but it may not come to fruition. Coaches must be able to adapt to unforeseen setbacks and continue towards establishing a team culture.

While building a team culture, many coaches focus on winning games, but having the athletes, coaches, community, and the administration buy into the head coach's vision for the team, should be the priority. This sounds like the perfect

scenario, but it is rarely the case. Barnson (2014) explored foundational paradoxes of coaching that counter-act the statement above. A coach's purpose should not be solely on winning, but everything is about winning (Barnson, 2014), so how are coaches supposed to build a team culture without winning being the primary objective? The present study was completed to explore how a coach attempts to build team culture.

## Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to document a first-year head varsity baseball coach's efforts to change team culture when taking over a losing program.

## Research Questions

1. What strategies did the head coach use in an attempt to build team culture?
2. What struggles did the head coach face when trying to balance athlete development and winning?
3. How did the coach's philosophy promote team culture?
4. Did the program visions and values resonate with all those involved in the program?
5. How much input and ownership were athletes given in culture change decisions?
6. What standards and expectations were formed to control or guide team culture?

## Significance

The present study was used to explore the process of changing team culture as it happens, opposed to research that has been done retrospectively. The study

was done in real-time and provides insights into the challenges a first-year coach encounters when attempting to build a team culture. Results of the study will allow future head coaches to prepare to build a team culture with their organizations. Also, current coaches can see what has worked and what has not worked in the first year of being a head coach, and can adapt their own coaching philosophy and coaching style to create a team culture for their team.

## Delimitations

The present study was delimited to:

1. One high school in Central California.
2. One head coach.
3. High school varsity baseball.
4. One high school baseball season (February – May).

## Limitations

The following limitations may have affected the study:

1. Head coach and administrator answers all interview questions truthfully.
2. Familiarity of coach with researcher.

## Definitions

*Athlete Empowerment:* coach allows athletes to give input on team decisions, practice design and calling plays during competition.

*Baseball:* "a game of ball between two nine-player teams played usually for nine innings on a field that has as a focal point a diamond-shaped infield with a home plate and three other bases, 90 feet (27 meters) apart, forming a circuit that must be completed by a base runner in order to score, the central offensive action

entailing hitting of a pitched ball with a wooden or metal bat and running of the bases, the winner being the team scoring the most runs" (Baseball, n.d., para. 1).

*Coaching effectiveness*: "The consistent application of integrated professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection, and character in specific coaching contexts" (Côté & Gilbert, 2009, p. 316).

*Coaching Philosophy:* a representation of a coach's purpose and core values that guide decisions for a program (Gilbert, 2017).

*Environment:* setting with clear expectations, which fosters physical, mental, and social development.

*High School:* "A school attended after elementary school or junior high school and usually consisting of grades 9 or 10 through 12" (High School, n.d., para. 1).

*Program Vision:* realistic and attainable goals set before, during, and after the season.

*Student-Athlete:* athletes participating in sport when enrolled in high school during the duration of that sport.

*Team Culture:* established norms and expectations that create relationships between all individuals to work towards a common goal.

*Varsity:* "any first-string team, especially in sports, that represents a school, college, university, or the like" (Varsity, n.d., para. 1).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Having a team culture is often interpreted simply by how many championships a team/individual has won. Coaches are hired to bring a championship to a team and to establish a culture that reflects a championship mindset. Many coaches who are hired to takeover losing programs are expected to transform the program into a winning one, immediately. What does a coach do in this situation? The coach attempts to change the team culture. How can this be done? Based on the research reviewed in this chapter, there are four components that are key for creating a championship team culture: coaching philosophy, program vision and values, athlete empowerment, and environment (see Figure 1).
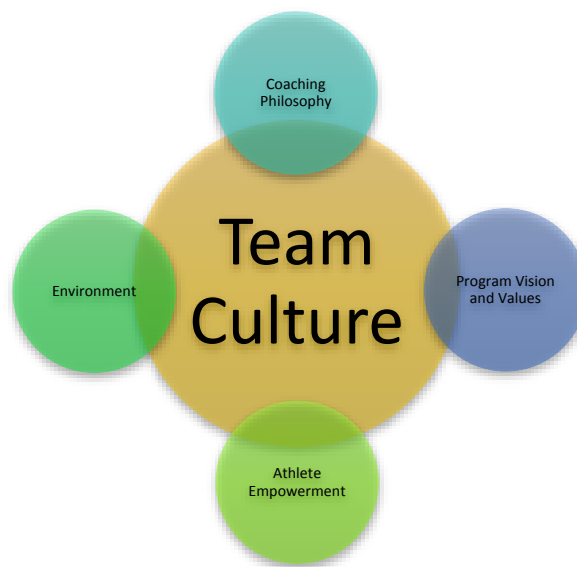


*Figure 1*. Conceptual framework for building championship team culture.

## Coaching Philosophy

Camiré et al. (2012) interviewed nine high school coaches to examine how they create suitable environments to develop youth through sport. The main objectives for all coaches were to coach life skills and to use sports to teach their

student-athletes those skills (Camiré et al., 2012). All coaches had the teaching of life skills at the center of their coaching philosophy, but that was not the only thing the coaches had in common: "[T]he coaches in the current study were aware of their student-athletes' preexisting make up and developed philosophies and strategies designed to coach life skills that meet the needs of student-athletes" (Camiré et al., 2012, p. 257). Willingness to change their philosophies for the student-athletes demonstrates that the coaches care and want the athletes to develop life skills that will be beneficial, on and off the field/court. Camiré et al. also interviewed 16 student-athletes for more input about what strategies their coach used and how they instilled their philosophy within the team. A student-athlete mentioned that their coach provided opportunities to demonstrate their skills, like prioritizing academic obligations and developing leader skills to become a positive influence on younger athletes (Camiré et al., 2012). The coaches wanted their student-athletes to be role models for younger athletes so that they are the examples of what a student-athlete should be and what the younger athletes should strive to become.

Vallée and Bloom (2016) revealed that head coach Chantal Vallée, who has won five consecutive basketball championships with the University of Windsor, focused on instilling life skills as a key component of the successful preparation of athletes to the real world and development of a team culture. Coach Vallee stated "I always base my decision on the principle that developing a team winning culture was more important than winning a single game, and that no one player was bigger than the team" (Vallée & Bloom, 2016, p. 174). Some of the life lessons that coach Vallée taught her athletes were hard work, accountability, resilience, grit, team-work, role acceptance, respect for authority, and win with integrity. Only one of the life skills is about winning and, even still, it is not only

about winning, but rather winning with integrity. Coach Vallée not only created a winning team culture, but a team culture because her athletes will be able to demonstrate the life skills they learned in future endeavors that may not be sport related: "I value winning, but I will not let it override my personal values or the team culture. As a result, I do not carry a winning at all cost mentality, but I value human growth and life skills taught through winning" (Vallée & Bloom, 2016, p. 174). Winning is not everything, teaching life skills and athlete-development is more important to creating a successful team culture. Coach Vallée says that winning will not override team culture, by demonstrating that team culture is not all about winning. She cares about her athletes and supports successful athletes and individualism. This perspective is one coach's reflection of the athletic world, that has been very successful, but her philosophy of teaching life skills is similar to what Lara-Bercial and Mallett (2016) found with Serial Winning Coaches (SWC).

Lara-Bercial and Mallett (2016) interviewed 17 coaches who had a combined 160 gold medals/major championships/professional league titles; they found that philosophy, vision, people, and environment were all key elements used by the SWC.

Lara-Bercial and Mallett (2016) reviewed all the elements and created a diagram that shows coaching philosophy to be the center of their coaching framework and all the other elements surrounding it (see Figure 2). They concluded that "[c]oaches and athletes felt that the SWC's practices were anchored upon a very clear philosophical standpoint (their goals, values and beliefs), which provided them with a strong sense of purpose and direction" (p. 224). The many recurring elements in philosophy that were apparent in the interviews were having an athlete-centered perspective, high moral values

(respect, loyalty, honesty for the athlete), and a work-life balance for athletes and coaches. Coaching evolved from a coach-centered approach, where athletes did what they were told and had no input, to an athlete-centered approach used to establish a team culture. It is not to say that a coach-centered approach does not work, but it shows that these decorated coaches used an athlete-centered approach to develop and coach their athletes because it worked in their programs.



*Figure 2*. Serial winning coaches day-to-day practice framework (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016, p. 224)

Collins, Gould, Lauer, and Chung (2009) interviewed 10 high school coaches who were finalists for the National Football League (NFL) "Coach of the Year Award," given for enhancing life skills and athlete development; the coaches answered survey questions prior to their interviews and "[n]ine of ten . . . ranked

psychological development as most or second most important" (p. 37). All coaches emphasized coaching life skills through football and the main components of their philosophies. Collins et al. found four dimensions that influenced coaching philosophies for these coaches: (a) Football/sport participation Develops People, (b) Coaches Develop People, (c) Environment/outside Factors Influence the Development of People, and (d) Miscellaneous. Each coach was driven by their philosophies to teach life skills through football: "teaching life skills is important, the importance of believing in the link between football and life, and coping/learning from adversity" (Collins et al., 2009, p. 47). The coaches allowed their athletes to fail in order to learn from their mistakes and move forward, during a competition or obstacles in life.

Collins et al. (2009) found that each coach had a clear philosophical goal for their athletes, and themselves, to teach life skills through sport. Côté and Gilbert (2009) summarized that "Sport should be seen as a medium in which citizenship qualities are learned – this objective should be important for coaches of athletes of all ages and levels of competition" (p. 313). All coaches should consider implementing a variation of an athlete-centered approach to coaching. If a coach is simply doing it for the money or recognition, then the focus is not on athlete development and/or team culture. Life skills and athlete development are the focal points in most coaches' philosophies across research; this is what makes them effective coaches and how they build their success. The philosophy is where coaching effectiveness begins, but what does that have to do with team culture? Team culture is a perception, where the coach dictates what that culture is through his or her vision for the team. Team culture is built through a coach's philosophy and vision. If the coach has a clear philosophy and realistic vision for the team,

then the culture will reflect their purpose. This is why vision is another key to building a team culture.

<center>Program Vision and Values</center>

To change or build a team culture a coach needs to have a precise and realistic vision. Schroeder (2010) explored the perception of team culture and found that no two coaches had the same visons for their team. This is common throughout the sport domain, because no two teams, nor two coaches, are the same. It is best for coaches to have a vision that is fitting for their program. The visions were not the same, but all the coaches established core values that consisted of relationship values, behavioral values, and strategic values: "While these values may not have been initially clear, as athletes began to comprehend those value sets, culture change seemed to commence" (Schroeder, 2010, p. 74). This is important because once the athletes know and understand the core values, the creation of a team culture will begin to form. Understanding a coach's core values is more complex.

For many of the coaches, it was difficult to define their core values to athletes and assistant coaches because there were frequent gaps between the coach's definition of core values and the athletes' perceptions of the concepts (Schroeder, 2010). This caused slow change in culture for one coach because he or she had to show and explain to athletes what the values actually meant and how to implement them. A way the coaches helped athletes implement these values was through role modeling. Coaches demonstrated the core values, which earned the respect and trust of players, which made athletes more willing to buy into the team's culture. Camiré et al. (2012) also found that modeling core values improves credibility of a coach: "Another student-athlete discussed how her coach would

talk about core values, such as respecting opponents and referees, but also worked diligently to model appropriate behaviors" (p. 253).

Once the core values were established, there was better communication and the athletes began to trust the coaches. Clearly defining values created better relationships with their athletes and helped build trust (Schroeder, 2010). Relationship values were the first values the coaches tried to establish with the athletes because there was a lack of trust between athletes to athletes, and athletes to coaches. Pim (2016) explored how a values-based sport program at West Point (United States Military Academy) was associated with team success and also found that trust is a key component to establish change when there is a shift in power:

> Leading change is one of the most difficult things to do and the Competitive Sports Leader Team did not underestimate the challenge. We knew that we would face resistance but we believed that confrontations would be minimized if we created a climate of trust. (p. 310)

Athletes and other coaching staff are more likely to buy into a coach's vision once trust has been established.

Similar to Schroder (2010), Vallée and Bloom (2005) found that coaches had clear goals and direction for their programs, therefore, athletes would buy into their coaching philosophy: "Vision involved the coaches' goals and direction for their programs, as well as the introduction and selling of their coaching philosophy to their athletes" (p. 189). The coaches knew what direction they wanted to take their team and set long-term goals in the first year of hire (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). Each coach agreed that changes needed to be made from the previous program, in order to become successful. The vision each coach had for their program was to improve team performance and to create a long-term team culture. The coaches'

visions were able to come to fruition due to their pursuit of excellence, motivation, high standards, and passion, which made assistant coaches and players buy into the program vision. Coach Vallée experienced how to create and act on her vision first-hand when she became the head coach for the University of Windsor:

> A standard of excellence, and nothing less, was their primary target and changes were immediately implemented in all phases of the program from the time they were hired to lead it. Shortly upon my hiring at the University of Windsor, I (Coach Vallée from here onwards) realized that I needed to develop and articulate a clear vision. (p. 171)

Coach Vallée knew exactly what her vision was for her team and she communicated that as soon as she was hired. Her vision remained consistent, made the program successful, and convinced recruits to commit to the program, before having any kind of success (Vallée & Bloom, 2016). Having a championship mindset and being confident in the vision led Coach Vallée to five consecutive championships because "[w]hile a vision is important to have, the best coaches who have sustainable excellence not only have the vision, but they *enact* the vision, which happens as a result of effective organizational and recruiting skills" (p. 173). Athletes and coaches are drawn to action; if they see a coach doing what he or she set out to do and stay true to their values, then they are more likely to buy-in and follow suit.

Lara-Bercial and Mallett (2016) too, found that a clearly articulated vision is key to changing team culture and central to success: "Importantly, the planning described by SWC was action-led and process-driven. In other words, for every set objective, the relevant actions to fulfil such objectives are clearly identified and a process is put in place to complete those actions" (p. 225). The SWCs had a clear vision and a plan to act on the vision. A vision with no plan is of no value, and is

only built on hopes and aspirations. The SWCs devoted much effort creating and acting on their program vision.

Program vision and values influenced all of the coaching elements for successful coaches. Their visions and core values were the blue prints in building successful programs and establishing a successful team culture. Acting on a vision and constantly reiterating and demonstrating core values helped coaches establish athlete relationships and build trust. Trust must be established in order for a coach to give an athlete power to be a leader or allows for athlete input for team decisions.

<div align="center">Athlete Empowerment</div>

Many coaches find it difficult to allow their athletes to have any power or input in what goes on in practices or competitions, for fear of engaging in power struggles with athletes. These coaches feel that because they are the head of the program, all the power is theirs and their word is final. This coaching style has been around since the beginning of coaching and is still used today. Times have changed and athletes have changed, so this notion of the coach-centered approach has been found to be detrimental to athlete development. Vallée and Bloom (2016) reviewed Coach Vallée's time with her women's basketball team and found that she, too, had a hard time letting go of her coach-center approach coaching style:

> My desire to foster my players' individual growth through empowerment fueled my decision to let go of control. Not only did I have to learn to delegate and trust in the abilities of other staff members, but I had to do the same thing with myself. This meant ensuring that my players could play the game without me, a model of coaching leadership I was not used to.

Initially, I felt that the coach made all the decisions, without any athlete

input. I felt athletes should submit to or obey the coach's decisions. (p. 173)

When a coach does not trust their assistant coaches to have any input, how

could the team culture change if the coach is not willing to change? Coach Vallée

then realized that a better approach to change the culture of the team was to

become athlete-centered and that she had to be the person to start that change:

Transformational leaders genuinely care about the well-being of the people

they are leading and agree to engage in a process that will equally change

them along the way. I believe that while the coach is still the leader (he or

she is not being overpowered by the athletes), there are genuine exchanges

between both parties where both coaches and athletes can grow

professionally and personally. (p. 173)

Coach Vallée knew that she could give some power to her athletes, but

remain the head of the program. The development of decision-making athletes was

how Coach Vallée empowered her athletes. She would ask for input and would

listen to what athletes had to say to get a sense of how they perceived certain

situations: "As each season progressed, I would teach them how to make

decisions. I would allow them to make some decisions until they became confident

and eventually led the team" (p. 173). A coach cannot make every decision for a

team, especially during a competition, which is why athletes must learn to make

decisions of their own, in order to overcome any obstacle on and off the court: "It

was a positive relationship and as I learned to delegate power and release control,

while maintaining authority and the respect of my athletes, I transformed myself

into a better coach" (p. 174). Giving power to athletes gives a coach the

opportunity to see if the athlete(s) are able to implement all the life skills, core

values, and the vision a coach has instilled throughout the season. If the athletes cannot do so, then that is when the process of teaching such skills will begin again.

Empowering athletes can have difference in meaning, depending on who answers. Camiré et al. (2012) found that a coach should empower athletes by providing them the opportunity to display their skills. Vallée and Bloom (2005) define empowerment as "encouraging and valuing athletes' independence, ideas, personality, potential, roles, and growth within a team concept" (p. 187). This definition is based on the coach's value that each player is equal, whether they are starters or role players. Each athlete will have the same opportunities to display what they can do and what they have learned during the season.

The coaches Schroeder (2010) interviewed gave some players leadership roles, and were given simple responsibilities, such as selecting the uniform for a competition and pre/post-game meals:

> When the players' leadership in such situations began to reinforce a
> program's values, coaches felt like their cultures were beginning to shift.
> As these instances became common, coaches believed the team's cultural
> foundations had been established. (p. 75)

The more empowerment the athletes feel, the more a team culture begins to form. In order to build a team culture, a coach must be able and willing to give athlete responsibilities and have a say in team decisions.

Vella and Perlman (2014) accumulated empirical data that supports that if a coach wishes to be supportive, they should create an environment that values athlete empowerment. Much like Coach Vallée, the approach studied by Vella and Perlman focused on allowing athletes to make their own decisions and solve problems in which the coach does not give any input. This approach also allows the athlete to display all the skills they have attained throughout the season, much

like results found in the Camiré et al. (2012) study. There were many steps in the approach of an autonomy-supportive coaching Vella and Perlman. The following is a summary of these steps: Coaches should allow athletes to give input on team decisions. Also, rationales for tasks and positive feedback to motivate athletes. Tasks should challenge athletes physically and/or mentally for athlete development (Vella & Perlman, 2014).

Based on the research, coaches are encouraged to empower their athletes by giving them sources of power such as: team captains, choosing uniforms, input during games/practices, etc. Listening and taking advice from athletes shows them that the coach is truly interested in their input and are learning as much from their athletes as the athletes learning from them. Giving athletes a voice on the team creates an environment that encourages individualized thinking that will improve athlete development and team culture. Exchanges between athlete and coach responsibility create an equal environment where each individual counts, no matter what their role is in the program.

<div align="center">Environment</div>

Much like coaching philosophy and program vision and values, the optimum environment is key to building a team culture: "Culture change may also lead to team success when carried out in concert with the environment" (Schroeder, 2010, p. 84). According to Lara–Bercial and Mallett (2016) there are multiple steps to creating a successful team environment. The SWCs described five main pillars in the environment that will develop and maintain a high performance culture. These pillars include enforcing high expectations and standards, finding the right coaching staff, creating a challenging training environment, the environment has to be stable and consistent to allow all within to

thrive, and generating the right conditions for the environment to flourish (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016).

The first pillar sets the foundation of what culture the coach wants to establish, such as high performance, winning, and team culture. The second pillar is finding a coaching staff who shares the same values and philosophies that will help develop athletes and find new ways to create opportunities for their athletes. Constantly challenging of the athlete is the third pillar. Once an athlete has reached their goal, the environment then changes in order for the athlete to reach for a higher goal to avoid complacency. Fourth, the environment needs to be stable, in order for everyone to concentrate on doing the best job they can. The fifth pillar is to establish the right conditions so that the environment will continue to provide the tools needed to flourish (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016).

Miller et al. (2012) revealed that clear expectations need to be communicated to everyone involved in the program so that the environment is acceptable for all. Similar to Miller et al., Pim (2016) reported that clear expectations give athletes accountability: "A core covenant states explicitly that it is the responsibility of every team member to adhere and enforce the covenant. The most important factor in becoming a team of significance is peer accountability" (p. 310). Holding athletes accountable for their actions fosters an empowering environment. If expectations are not met, then there will be repercussions:

> A final tactic used to change team culture was the way head coaches rewarded and punished athletes for complying with a program's core values. Rewards and punishments varied by coach, but coaches consistently connected punishments and rewards to their program's values in explicit and symbolic ways. (Schroeder, 2010, p. 79)

The consequences for violations should revolve around the coach's philosophy and visions placed on the team and so should rewards. The environment should enforce these rules and expectations for everyone. Athletes learn from other athletes' mistakes and do not follow those who are constantly breaking rules. Disciplinary actions can ruin a season for some individuals and can take away from athlete-development in order to handle those who have broken the rules or have not met the expected criteria. Punishments are consequences that enforce the expectations and rules that have been set in the beginning of the season, while rewards help motivate and/or recognize those who demonstrate the core values of their program.

Rewards can be tangible such as stickers, plaques, certificates, etc. or can be verbal, such as "good work," "keep up the intensity," or "don't stop. You're doing great." Rewards do not happen often according to Schroeder (2010): "Punishments were much more frequent than rewards and were more explicitly linked to values" (p. 79). The coaches Miller et al. (2012) interviewed admitted that problems with athletes are inevitable, but the best way to minimize discipline problems is to enforce clear and high expectations, that way the athletes will understand the consequences to actions that do not abide by the coaches' philosophy or core values. All coaches mentioned that they had a handbook or "athletic code of conduct" that outlines all the rules and expectations with the various consequences if said rules/expectations are not met (Miller et al., 2012). This way the athlete should know all the expectations because it was assumed they have read it and if any parent/guardian has questions about punishments and rewards, they too can view the handbook. Often parents are not aware of such things, due to lack of communication between athlete and parent, and/or coach to

parent. This is why establishing an environment that encourages communication is key in high school sports, especially with parents.

When asked how they minimized parent conflicts, coaches reported that communication in the preseason, general communication, consistency and fairness, relationships, and organization were the most effective strategies (Miller et al., 2012). This way it is clear to parents and athletes on what is expected of every student athlete such as behavior, rules, and consequences. Open lines of communication to all involved in the program is vital. Szabo (2012) stated that a coach needs to have communication skills that include tone of voice, enthusiasm, and even sense of humor. Communication is key for any program because it invites athletes to voice their opinions without the fear of any repercussion. Yes, there will be ways to communicate if someone has a problem, such as one-on-one appointments, before or after practice, email, phone call, etc., but no one should be turned away. Communication builds relationships and create a sense of family, within the program.

There should always be a sense of connection when one is a part of a team. Being on a team or organization builds relationships that connect those who may have never met if it was not for the program: "[T]he coaches believe and subsequently emphasize athletes as representatives of their family, school and community" (Collins et al., 2009, p. 47). This makes an athlete feel part of something that is bigger than themselves and can rely on their teammate to support them, as needed. Playing for someone other than themselves can motivate an athlete to perform and to develop the core values that the coach and environment have set in place to be successful. The coaches want players to respect authority, follow the rules, and be able to communicate with one another, but the most

important thing a coach should do is make sure the program has an enjoyable environment.

Szabo (2012) stated that "coaches should create a positive learning environment, conveying information effectively and generating result producing activities. All coaches should attempt to ensure constantly progressing in a success orientated environment" (p. 43). Côté and Gilbert (2009) determined that if a coach wants to be effective, then they must create an environment that incorporates the 4Cs: competence, confidence, connection and character. Establishing an environment that has clear expectations, disciplinary rules, good communication, and encourages athlete development and learning is a major component to building a team culture.

## Summary

When it comes to changing or building a team culture, researchers do not give a clear answer to this dilemma. The only element that all research supports is that culture change begins with the coach. Camiré et al. (2012) offered three steps a coach should take in building a successful program: focusing on skills that apply to non-sport settings, giving athletes the opportunities to demonstrate their skills, and reinforcing learning when a student-athlete fails when trying to apply those skills. These skills must be mentioned in the coach's philosophy and connected to the vision they have for their program.

Research shows that coaches do not prioritize winning in their philosophies, but winning is what is needed for a program to be successful. When coaches are trying to build or change a team's culture, they are in a paradoxical predicament. Coaches say that their philosophy is not about winning, but developing athletes.

Barnson (2014) described culture as "tradition": "Tradition is a collection of success outcomes, and is more relative to time and degree. Tradition builds over time" (p. 71). The term tradition can be a replacement term for culture because it is about establishing success outcomes, which are accumulated over a period of time. Schroeder also states that it may take as little as a year for the culture to change, but it may also take years to establish and solidify a team culture.

The research reviewed for the present study is a starting point for examining how a coach can build a winning culture, but much remains to be learned. What obstacles did these coaches face their first year when they tried to instill their coaching philosophies and program vision? Where these coaches willing to give some responsibility to their athletes and what kind of environment did they create in their first year? Was their first year the most difficult? What did they change to overcome such obstacles with their athletes? How much have these coaches changed throughout the season? The key elements to building a team culture include coaching philosophy, program vision and values, athlete empowerment, and environment, which were components of the study with emphasis of other factors that may contribute to team culture.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Research Design

The present study was a narrative analysis of a first-year head coach's attempt to build a championship team culture. A narrative study is used to interpret data collected to tell the story of the research, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies (Creswell, 2013). To tell the story, the researcher is oriented directly in the research and analyzes the data into three elements: "interaction (personal and social), continuity (past, present, and future), and situation (physical places or the storyteller's places)" (Creswell, 2013, p. 189). The most common approach for a narrative study is thematic analysis in which the researcher analyzes what is said or written during data collection (Creswell, 2013).

An ethnography is used to study a group in their natural setting, observing natural behaviors. The ethnographer (researcher) is immersed in the same natural setting as the group being observed to investigate 'cultural patterns' that are related to values of individuals in the group. The methods of data collection that an ethnographer uses should be flexible and/or appropriate at the time (Gratton & Jones, 2004). During the present study I was the head coach for the JV baseball team, which made it easy to record and observe specific themes and strategies used to create team culture. The present study is best viewed as an ethnographic narrative analysis that tells the story with first-hand experience of the head coach's journey of establishing a team culture.

## Setting and Participants

The setting for the present study was the varsity baseball team at a high school in Central California. Data were collected from February to May 2017. The high school was established in 1913 and is located in a rural town. Enrollment

consists of 525 students. Almond orchards, dairies, open fields, and vineyards surround the town. This farm town has a population of just over 3,000 people. It is a close-knit community and most children play a sport. The root of the baseball program starts with the Little League Organization then goes to Babe Ruth, which leads into playing in high school. Baseball is a successful sport in the earlier stages within this town, but the high school program has not had a winning record in the past 15 years. Parents often transfer their children out of the school district after junior high school to play baseball.

The primary participant in the study was the head varsity baseball coach (see Appendix A for Head Coach Consent Form). The head coach has been coaching in this town for 7 years. He has been the head coach for the Junior Varsity (JV) football program for the past 4 years. He has coached JV baseball for the last 2 years, and the previous 3 years he was a coach for the town's Babe Ruth program. The head coach is an alumnus of the high school and went on to play baseball at a junior college.

Another participant (see Appendix B for Athletic Director Consent Form) that is included is the athletic director. Her insight has given the study a different perspective of how the head coach has attempted to create a team culture. The athletic director provided insights about how she perceived the coach's efforts build a championship team culture. Student-athletes were not included in the study because most of them were minors.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

Data were collected through interviews and observations. Pre-, mid-, and post-season interviews were conducted with the head coach as well as on-going informal conversations during practices and games. One interview was also

conducted with the school's athletic director (AD) to see if she believed the head coach was successful in creating a winning team culture. All the interview questions were created before the day of the interview, with some questions arising during the actual interview. See Appendices C-F for interview guides.

Games and practices were observed throughout the entire 2017 baseball season (February–May). The observations were focused on signs of team culture, such as communication between coach and athlete, struggles, athlete empowerment, standards and expectation, and other vital components that affected the establishment of team culture. Field notes for the observational data were recorded in an electronic journal, which made it easier to categorize the data. See Table 1 for a summary of the data collection procedures.

Table 1

*Description and Purpose of Data Collection*

| Source of Evidence | Description | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Coach's interviews (n=3) | Pre-season interview (6 page transcription) | Obtain coach's perceptions about team culture. |
| | Mid-season interview (7 page transcription) | Establish observational cues based on interview |
| | Post-season interview (5 page transcription) | |
| | All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed | |
| | 20 – 30 min | |
| | Semi-structured questions | |
| Administrator interview (n=1) | 10 min | Obtain administrator's perception of the coach's attempt to build a team culture. |
| | Structured questions | |
| | Mid-season interviews (4 page transcription) | |
| Observations/Field notes (n=20) | On-field | Validate cues described in coach's interview |
| | During practices/competitions (8 page transcription) | |
| E-journal reflections (n=20) | Post practice/competitions | Reflect if the coach used any cues |
| | All thoughts and questions for the day (8 page transcription) | Questions for coach to validate actions |

Data Analysis

All interviews with the head coach and the AD were recorded and transcribed as soon as possible once the data were collected. The field notebook was used for quick observations, reminders, mental notes, questions, etc. The field notes were taken before, during, and after practices/competitions. After all the field notes were taken, a journal reflection was done for each day. The journal reflections were thoughts and questions that came to mind while writing the observational notes and reflecting of the coaches strategies to establish team culture. The observational data and interviews were then coded to find themes connected to the research questions. See Appendix G for observation/field notes and reflection dates.

Open coding was the first stage in which statements relating to the research questions will be assigned a code (Gratton & Jones, 2004). These statements came directly from the original data. The second stage was to reread the data and search for statements that may fit into any code, referred to as axial coding (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Open coding of the data from the interviews and field notes were categorized into themes. Once an overall sense of the data was discovered in open coding, axial coding by research question was used to organize the data into relevant themes. Once axial coding was completed, then the narratives were written for each of the questions. The narratives tell the story of how the head coach attempted to build team culture through the research questions. Constant peer-debriefings were held throughout the analysis process with the chairperson of the thesis committee.

Validity

To address validity of the process and results a meeting every 1-2 weeks was scheduled with a critical friend (chair of thesis committee) to test emerging

conclusions. The critical friend helped identify potential problems with the coding process and made sure that the cultural themes were relevant to the research questions (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The critical friend questioned the coding and analysis to ensure validity and reliability of the data. This member of the research team played the "devil's advocate" in the peer-debriefing sessions in which he asked questions about the methods, meanings and interpretation; kept the research and coding transparent; and listened to any research concerns (Creswell, 2013). Many of the concerns were believing the team would make playoffs throughout the season and thinking the coach's approach to creating a team culture was effective.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

<u>Season Summary</u>

As the season began the coach was excited to begin his coaching journey with his new team. The outcome goals of making playoffs and finishing the season with a record above .500 seemed to be unrealistic for some. The reason being this program had not had a winning season and made playoffs for the past 15 years. The school administration has its own requirements that all teams must meet in order to make the playoffs: top three ranking in league, at least a .500 win-loss record, top five in playoff ranking, and/or winning league. Three out of the five requirements must be fulfilled in order to get permission by the school administration to go to playoffs. The coach used the schools requirements and set goals that exceeded these requirements, such as finishing above a .500 record.

At first these goals did not seem realistic because in the last 15 years no varsity baseball team from this school had made it to the playoffs. In the beginning of the season it looked as though this goal was far out of reach. The team started off losing their first three games. The coach was frustrated and began to have self-doubts about how he coached during games. He questioned the positioning of players on the field, rotation of players, the batting line-up, the position of players, and the preparation of the athletes. He also began to compare himself to previous coaches who had not been successful, stating "I am like the old coaches, I can't even win one game."

After losing four of the first five games, the coach then recreated situations in practice that caused errors and opposing players to score the winning runs. This way he prepared his athletes for these situations. The team then went on a seven game winning streak to finish off their pre-season games. During their win streak,

the stands began to fill with family, friends, alumni, and other baseball spectators. The coach told the players, "this is what you play for," while pointing at the crowd before the game. The coach stated, "You play for those who cannot play anymore and you represent them through your play." After each win, it seemed more and more people would fill the stands, but this was short-lived. Once league play started, the team lost five games in a row. The team finished the season with a 14-13 record, one game above .500. The team was able to reach these goals, which some believed to be impossible, and go beyond these goals. The team made it all the way to the semi-finals in the playoffs, becoming the first team in 25 years to make it that far. They also became the first team in 15 years to host a playoff game.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections corresponding to the main research questions. Q1 describes all the strategies the head coach used to create team culture around pride. Q2 provides an overview of the struggles the coach faced throughout the season. Q3 and Q4 are combined because the head coach's visions and values are tied to his coaching philosophy. Q5 is about how the athletes influenced team culture and how they established the motto "pride." Q6 show the standards and expectation the head coach set. All the themes relate to ways in which the head coach tried to establish a team culture in a baseball program that has not had a winning season in over 15 years. A summary of the results is provided in Table 2.

## Q1: Strategies

Throughout the season, the head coach used different strategies to create team culture. The main strategies used were ambitious goal setting, scheduling for success, communication/feedback, and other strategies that nurtured pride in the

Table 2

*Research Questions and Culture Themes*

| Research Questions | Culture Themes |
|---|---|
| 1. What strategies will the head coach use in an attempt to build a team culture? | • Ambitious goal setting<br>• Scheduling for success<br>• Communication<br>• Nurturing Pride |
| 2. What struggles will the head coach face when trying to balance athlete development and winning? | • Resistance to change (old to new)<br>• Distractions<br>• Athlete's Commitment<br>• Coach's self-doubts<br>• Losing close games |
| 3. How does the coach's philosophy promote team culture? | • Improvement/Growth<br>• Community/Family<br>• Passion<br>• Goal setting |
| 4. Do the program visions and values resonate with all those involved in the program? | • Mastery orientation<br>• Building a baseball community<br>• Respect & Pride |
| 5. How much input and ownership are athletes given in culture change decisions? | • Team motto ("Pride on 3")<br>• Peer accountability<br>• Promoting Baseball culture |
| 6. What standards and expectations are formed to control or guide team culture? | • Be Successful on and off the field<br>• Team ownership and accountability (Field maintenance)<br>• Setting the bar high |

team's culture. As soon as the season started, the head coach's goal was to be successful, quickly, in order for the baseball program to be recognized by the community. This strategy did not go as planned because the team lost their first three games. Another one of his ambitious goals was to bring attention back to baseball and create a baseball culture that was a representation of the community. In order for the rural town to recognize a sport as competitive, it needs to be successful. If you do not win, no one supports you. After the first three losses, the only spectators that were there to supports were parents and siblings, no one else.

This is why the head coach set the bar very high and tried to achieve something that has not been done in 15 years, which is win league and make it to the playoffs.

The first goals that were set were to make it to the playoffs and to be competitive in league. In order to be competitive in league the team must finish in the top three rankings in league and win more than half the games against league opponents. As the season continued, the coach continued to readjust goals that seemed to be unattainable, in order to reach them. His reasoning behind this was to show the athletes that they can achieve their goals and once they have reached their goals, new ones will be waiting. If the goal has not been met, then the athletes can readjust them in order to reach their ultimate goal. The process of goal setting set the tone for the rest of the season.

During countless impromptu conversations with the coach, he would talk about getting better. Setting goals for the following week and having a game plan before each game was consistent throughout the season. After a loss, he would then calculate the number of games needed to win in order to win league and/or make it to the playoffs. The goal was to win and go to playoffs, but the focus on creating a sense of pride and connection with the community, remained a key towards program success. The coach believed that by winning games the athletes' confidence would rise and lead to more victories. The more victories for the team, the more support the team would get from the community. The goals for next year have been set and the coach will focus on some goals that were not attained this year, hoping to improve from this season. These are the goals for next season:

I think my goals are to continue to bring that sense of pride, to continue to bring the ability of bringing new things to the team in order to get them better. Changing the overall appearance of the field always to make sure

that it's always something new and those kids always have something to play for. I think that some of the goals for next year [are] to make sure that the kids that should be playing and should be out there, you know, and a goal that we didn't reach this year was an academic all-league mention. I think we need to work on our studies; figure out a way to have success in the classroom and have success on the field. I think with one you can go to a certain height and with both you can… the road is immense. You can go to school and you can go play somewhere. So, as a coach, I have to find ways to build the classroom and build their grades and making sure that we have the right grade[s] so we can go play, continue play college ball and stuff like that. So, that is definitely a goal of mine for next year for the program and I think the only way to do that, is to build that culture in the classroom. You know, that way everyone is taking care of each other in the classroom as well on the field, you know. Kids that are better in certain classes will help out the ones that might not be. So, that is a goal of mine next year and we'll find a way to get that done.

The first-year head coach was constantly asking the AD for updates on potential games in case any game was cancelled and also to schedule "easy" wins, referred to as "scheduling for success." The coach did schedule games with teams that had losing records. His reasoning was because league play is very competitive, he must have those "sure" wins in the schedule. He also mentioned that these games would help with the preparation of league play and that the athletes could use these games to fix their mistakes. The AD commented on the topic of scheduling in our interview and how it was a strategic move for the coach:

Ever since the beginning, because as I said even in the interview process, after we hired him, he wanted to schedule, obviously every school does

this, manipulate where you are successful, you want to get wins so that the kids feel success and when they feel success they tended to move forward on progress.

The coach and his coaching staff had a straight forward and open-line of communication with the athletes. Whenever any issue arose, the coach let the athletes know of the situation and communicated with them what action(s) would occur to resolve the issue. This way every athlete knew what was going on and everyone in the program was informed. The head coach also kept an open line of communication with the AD and school administration in order to have umpires paid, make sure the fields were ready for game days, each dugout had water and cups, and other essentials needed to operate an effective baseball program. During practices, the coach would emphasize that the mistakes that happen in practice need to be corrected, in order to improve their skills and to be well-prepared for the next game. After a loss, the coach would reenact the plays in which the athletes made mistakes. This gave the athletes time to break the play down to learn different ways in which to get the opposing player out. During games, the feedback to players began to fade as the season went on and the coach let the athletes play their game, such as allowing the pitcher and catcher call their own pitches.

To instill pride back into the baseball program, the coach created an environment that made the athletes feel that they were part of something special. He invited several alumni to practices so they could speak to the athletes about how special baseball used to be in this town and how they can be the team to bring back that baseball pride. All the strategies used by the coach were incorporated in this team's culture to recreate the baseball community and create that sense of pride into the baseball program.

Q2: Struggles

As first-year head coach, he knew there would be obstacles throughout the season. Once the season commenced, the struggles that seemed to always arise were distractions, accountability, coach's self-doubts, and losing close games. These struggles made it difficult for the community, players, administration, and even the coaches to buy into this new baseball culture. The struggles faced throughout the season took away from athlete development because the time in which the athletes could have been refining their skills the coach had to address these issues.

Resistance to change from athletes was the first distraction that arose in the beginning of the season. Coming into the season the coach knew that he was going to be facing quite a bit of friction from veteran players who have been playing 3 to 4 years on varsity. The coach brought in a new outlook and mentality to how the baseball program would be run. Like many of those who do not like change, the veteran athletes refused to change throughout the season. Many players expected to start/play after missing a practice before a game, or expected to play any position they desired, but that was not the case. The coach used a "next man up" strategy, where if a player was not performing like they should or missed practice without an excuse, the player who was willing to play the position would be inserted. The coach wanted to send a message to all his players that they can all be replaced if they are not willing to work hard for a position and those who want to earn a spot should work hard in order to solidify themselves in a position. When asked "have there been instances where the athletes resisted change?" the coach replied:

> We're definitely an out on the table type of coaching staff where we're
> gonna put it out there, how it is. The adjustment is definitely trying not to

take things personal but trying to work forward, so we, definitely, had some kids that have resisted, some of our seniors and our juniors. I think our younger guys don't really resist the fact because they kind of all knew them. So we get to those in baby steps and you know the kids can have their struggles day in. But we're to a point now where, I think we've gotten to the point, where we're focused and what we would need to do and how we need to do it. So, yeah I would say that there are some struggles and we were working on it slowly by this communication and teamwork.

Another constant struggle that was present during the season was constant distractions. These distractions were school field trips, athletes' parents, and negativity. All these distractions took away from building a team culture, but were necessary, in order for the coach and athletes to learn how to overcome the obstacles that prohibited athlete development. School field trips and tutoring sessions during practice were major distractions. Field trips were scheduled on game days and some athletes used tutoring sessions as an excuse to miss 2 days of practice. When athletes would not play, because they have missed practices, parents would confront the coach about their athlete's playing time. In the mid-season interview he stated that parents were going to be one of the biggest barriers he would face this season:

> Our biggest barrier is parents. I think our biggest barrier is what our parents tell our kids when things don't necessarily go their way. When losses happen and, you know, instead of just taking the good with the bad and taking it as a loss or as a struggle if you made mistakes I think our parents kinda tend to try to find somebody else to point the blame at so their child has a better mood at the dinner table. I think those barriers then come back

and that cancer kind of feeds the team a little bit in the hallways and we

kinda gotta put a stop to it as fast as we can.

Other struggles like athlete accountability and commitment, whether it be missing practice or failing classes, was frequent in the early part of the season. Missing practice was often rectified by running laps or other physical activity to make up for the time lost, but when athletes are failing classes their two choices are improving their grades or getting kicked off the team for not maintaining a 2.0 GPA. One athlete was lost in the beginning of the season, while two more did not meet the GPA requirements mid-way through the season.

Throughout the season the coach displayed moments of self-doubt and frustration, especially when the team lost close games. The coach had set high expectations for the season and when the expectations were not met, then self-doubt would take over his mindset and take away from building team culture. This self-doubt was apparent after the first game. The team lost 13-2 and the coach jokingly said that the previous coach could have done better. The next two games were lost by one run each, 4-3 and 3-2, and that is when he began to believe that he was not much better than previous coaches. He would put the blame on himself stating "I should have switched the pitcher sooner" or "I didn't prepare them for this type of game." As mentioned earlier, the coach would then use game-like situations to help with the athletes' skill development and cognitive recognition in certain situations. This happened a lot during the season due to the fact that the team lost six games by one run and two games by three runs or less. This was frustrating to the athletes and the coach, but the coach knew he had to figure out how to fix the issue. He knew that the team had the skill to play with any team in the league, but the players needed to be committed to going to practice and maintaining their focus to avoid losing games they should have won. He took it

upon himself, and decided that in order for the athletes to improve, the coaching staff needed to make changes as well to prepare the athletes for these situations.

<div align="center">Q3 & Q4: Coaching Philosophy, Vision and Values</div>

The coach's clear vision and values are what established his philosophy and kept him from straying too far off his course of establishing a team culture. His philosophy was to create young adult role models for future baseball players in town and also for the athletes to be model citizens off the field. His vision for all of his players was to graduate high school knowing they can all hold themselves accountable in order to better their lives. The value of family, community, pride and respect are the ways he guided all of his athletes.

Growing and constantly improving is what drove the coach's baseball culture; learning from mistakes, moving in the right direction. The head coach made sure that his coaching staff shared his same value of learning from mistakes. I believe that his assistants allowed the athletes to make mistakes and gave the proper feedback, when needed. In order to become a better athlete, one must constantly practice and refine their craft. This is what the head coach wanted for his athletes. He wanted them to reach their potential and, if they could, go beyond what they thought was possible. During the middle of the season, the coach began each game by stating, "Buy into the fact that you are good ball players and that you can play the game. Be confident in yourself and in your teammates." Throughout games, all coaches would remind the athletes after a mistake to make it up on the next play/pitch and to not dwell on the mistakes because it takes away from what they are trying to accomplish, which is prove to the town and other teams that this baseball program is no longer a "push-over" team.

[T]hey can kind of put some of the naysayers in their place. The teams that say in the past this team hasn't been successful. They say that we can't do it, [this] is not a good team, they've never been good. A lot of those negative comments that are said our players can attack it with saying we're gonna go out there, we are going to do our best, we're gonna keep working hard, keep getting better. Hopefully by the end of it, everything that we've kind of given them and shown them is successful on the field.

By sticking together and continuously improving week to week, the athletes seemed to buy into the new baseball culture. Baseball is a team sport and the only way to be successful is to support one another through wins and losses, which is why the head coach believes that community and pride are the most important values in his baseball program. These values were other contributing factors that drove the coach's philosophy and vision to establishing his program's culture.

Before the season started, the coach had his goal set on making playoffs and having a winning record. The coach soon found out that establishing a culture around these goals were going to be challenging, especially when many believe it is lucrative for a first-year head coach to pursue these types of goals. As mentioned in the section of struggles, the coach had to face unforeseen issues that needed to be addressed, constantly, in order to create an effective baseball environment. All coaches face struggles each year and must find ways to overcome the issues to become an effective leader. The coach used his vision and values to guide his players, as well as himself and his coaching staff, to establish a culture that would hopefully lead to success. The values that the coach attempted to instill in his players were community, family, and playing with pride while respecting the game.

The support of the community, as mentioned before, was a driving force for the coach. In the mid-season interview the coach was asked:

So in the beginning of the season your vision for the program was to be successful fast and to be the pride and joy of the community. Do you believe that the team has accomplished this so far?

He replied:

I think it hasn't been accomplished but I think it's definitely growing, the talk is definitely getting louder amongst the community and school administration and the way the kids are talking is you know the morale is definitely changing and the aspects of where we want to go. I think it's, it's growing. I want to say it's there but think it's definitely getting to where we wanna be.

The coach's focus on family and community is something that was present in every aspect of the baseball program. The coach would bring his daughter to practice and the team would play catch with her. He regularly talked about ways the athletes can give back to the community through fundraisers and hosting their own baseball camp. The athletes ran concession stands during football, soccer, and basketball games, while they also sold shirts and hats to raise money for the program. Creating lifelong bonds between players and coaches through baseball will help athletes have positive experiences in high school and in life. Creating the baseball culture that is like a family, in which everyone supports one another through any situation.

The community aspect was very much part of his coaching philosophy. He wanted to have the support of the town, that way the athletes have something to play for. Many alumni would come watch the athletes play and would give encouraging words to the players. After the annual alumni game, the coach

huddled the alumni around, both junior varsity and varsity teams, and said, "They pay to show you how to love the game and to be proud to play [for this town]". Bringing back the pride and passion back to baseball and to the town was the backbone of his team culture.

After the first interview it was evident the coach had a lot of passion for the game. The coach is very passionate about baseball, which he incorporated in his philosophy in which he wants the athletes to play the game as best as they can. He was determined to put baseball back on the map. He wanted everyone to know who they were and not settle for being "mediocre." The town is mainly a football and softball town, so he wanted to bring baseball to the forefront and establish a culture that proves it is here to stay. The AD was also excited to have the first-year head coach on staff because she too saw the passion that he brought to the table. In the interview with the AD, she was asked her how she would define culture and what she thinks the first-year head coach would do for this baseball program:

> For me, I feel like your culture is created by your coach and it is expected by your coach. And you see that within every program like our softball program at the school, it has been a softball culture and the culture there is very strong. I've seen it struggle I would say this year and they would probably struggle a little bit next year but the culture is still there it is just kind of gliding through the rough spots because you don't have too many kids who are capable or at that level where we're used to. But what I appreciated about [the coach] is that he brought culture and you could see in the stands and with the kids; they are part of their team, they are proud to be a part of the program. It wasn't really like that before it was like 'oh it is something to do, so here we go.'

The passion brought pride and respect to the baseball program. Setting the bar high and striving for goals that may seem impossible is how the coach built that confidence and pride. When athletes meet a goal that they did not believe they would achieve, they set new goals to improve their performance. Some goals included increasing batting average, lead the team in stolen bases, and increasing the number of double plays.  This has helped the athletes build confidence in their play and made it easier to buy into the coach's system because of the success that they have had. Pride has grown tremendously during the season to where every break during practices and games began with "Pride on three!"

These values and the coach's philosophy created a team culture that allowed them to stay true to their vision and strive for success in all aspects of the game. The coach knew that this year not all goals or visions came to fruition, but this was a building block for next season. The vision for the upcoming seasons would be:

I think next year's program is to continue to do the daily things that day in and day out continue to grow and continue to respect the game, to continue to build the program in the community. And I think it's not something that's going to be done in a year. And I don't think it's going to be done in 2 years. I think it's something that grows and if we can continue to play hard and give the people something to watch and something to be excited for, then I thinks everything kind of falls in place. I think the kids are kind of taken on this role towards the end of the year that you know they kind of realize that it's not just them their playing for its people that enjoy the game… I think over time once that change starts to happen and it becomes a daily occurrence then, you know, it's going to grow into something that's going to be exciting.

Q5: Athlete Influence on Culture

The head coach had a great influence on the team culture, while the athletes expanded and molded the culture to fit the dynamic of the team. The varsity team was very diverse with players ranging from seniors to freshmen. The athletes played a critical role in spreading team culture around campus and throughout the town. The athletes were the ones who came up with the team motto of saying "pride" in every break. This moment occurred before a game when a veteran player took charge and said "Pride on three" before they took the field. This was the first time I saw/heard an athlete use pride to reiterate the coach's values. The athletes created this ritual that was used throughout the entire season.

Athletes who were not committed to the team began to fade out of conversations between athletes because they did not show they wanted to be on the team. Many players kept their teammates accountable and began to keep tabs on each other to make it to practice. The athletes that missed practices without communicating with the coach were not allowed to start the next game. When the athletes realized that they had the potential to make playoffs and be successful in playoffs, they all became focused on improving their game play and encouraged each other to get better. The coach set these standards and expectations, but the athletes are the ones who had to abide by them in order to get better, and that is what the players did.

The athletes also used social media to spread the baseball culture around town and throughout the school. The athletes voted on using money they raised in their golf tournament fundraiser to purchase more hats and shirts for the team. Players wore their team baseball shirts 3 out of 5 days of school because they had three different shirts. The athletes would wear their practice hats after school, which is something that I had not seen in previous years. The athletes wore these

shirts and hats with pride and confidence. The players posted pictures of their shirts and would post game information on their social media accounts to invite spectators and update the community on the baseball team.

>Well I think social media as a big push for culture. I think you can see it in kids nowadays when before use to be word of mouth kids used to talk to people use to communicate. And I think now a lot of it's come down a social media. So, I think building a team culture and how they relay messages and how they promote themselves and how they promote their team, that culture, I think you can read off of their social media accounts.

<div align="center">Q6: Standards and Expectations</div>

The standards for level of play, as well as expectations of the athletes, was set before the season began. During tryouts, the coach had one-on-one meetings with every player in the program, varsity and junior varsity. These meetings were held to notify the athletes about what team they would be playing for this season and what their role would be on that team. Rules and expectations were written in the athletes' handbook with a contract each athlete and parent(s)/guardian(s) had to sign. The handbook contained the rules and expectations of the athletes, how communication is handled between coaches, parents, and athletes, the baseball code of ethics, and the coach's contact information.

By signing the contract, the players agreed they understood all guidelines, expectations, and consequences set forth in the handbook. With the parent(s)/guardian(s) signature, it was assumed that they had read all the rules and expectations for the athletes and for them as spectators. It was clear after the first few weeks, that some parent(s)/guardian(s) did not read the handbook. Nonetheless, the coach made it clear that he would hold the team to a higher

standard than previous years and truly wanted to build a culture that allowed for growth and success.

Since the beginning of the season the coach told the athletes that the baseball field was to be raked and drug after each practice/game and that all trash was to be picked up. The first week of field maintenance went by smoothly, until athletes would sneak out early to avoid their duties. Once the coaches became aware of it, they assigned players to sections in the baseball stadium that they were responsible for. This was a quick fix. The coach also let the athletes know that the field is a representation of themselves and the community.

> I always bought into if you look good and you feel good and the grounds that you are playing on are nice, you're going to have a lot of pride and you're going to take a lot of pride in that.

As the season went on, administration and spectators would acknowledge that the field was well maintained and that it made the program seem that much more respectable. No matter what position an athlete played, each athlete helped pick up trash and rake and drag the field. Everyone was expected to pitch in and do their part. Team ownership and accountability through field maintenance and team cohesion were strategies that brought pride to the athletes and the program.

During the last post-game speech, the coach addressed their journey to the semi-finals. He told the athletes that they had made history. The team was the first team in 15 years to make the playoffs and the first team in 25 years to make it to a semi-final game. In the post season interview the coach was asked if making it to the playoffs next year would be added pressure for the baseball program?

> I don't think it's added pressure. I think the pressure is over. I think the pressure of making it and setting the bar knowing that you can get it. I think the next couple years or especially next year is going to be easy. I say that

gingerly, but I think easy because the pressure is the confidence. We have

the confidence now, you know… So now, we have enjoyed the kids coming

back and I think they have that understanding, hey listen, now we can

actually do it we can make it… before there was you know the last hope of,

hey listen, we will never make it to playoffs or we've never done it… I

think we're trying to do too much last year. You know we're trying to make

playoffs, we are trying to have a winning record, were trying to, you know,

keep our rankings high. I think a lot of that pressure was just added stress

and added distraction. When now, the kids know that it's possible… I think

it's more of a confidence now.

Based on his response, he believed the athletes have an understanding of what is

expected and that they will hopefully continue to be successful for years to come.

As long as the athletes remain confident in their abilities and their experience, then

there should not be any doubt that they cannot improve from their previous season.

Setting the bar high and constantly, striving to reach it seemed to pay off for the

team this season. The team made playoffs and that bar has been set for next

season. High expectations and holding the team to a higher standard may lead to

continued success for years to come.

<u>Summary</u>

The results show that it is possible to set the foundation for a championship

team culture in the first year of coaching a team. The head coach's cultural

foundation for his teams in the foreseeable future will include pride, goal setting,

and growth. Building pride in the program made the athletes feel that they were

part of something special and helped build confidence throughout the program.

Setting and revising goals were constant reminders that once you have set what

seems to be an attainable goal, then you must set new goals to strive for future success. If the goals were not met, then these goals must be adjusted or recreated to become attainable. Constant growth, like goal setting, drove the coach and athletes throughout the season. Striving to improve the athletes' skills and moving the program in the right direction will be the expectations for next season. These were the major themes for creating team culture for this baseball program.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to document the journey of a first-year head coach taking over a losing baseball program. This chapter is written in three sections. The first section focuses on theoretical implications, which connects results of the present research to the literature. Second, future directions and limitations are discussed in the research implications section. Lastly, the final section is used to suggest practical implications for coaches and coach educators.

## Theoretical Implications

Results from the present study demonstrate the coach had a philosophy that was driven by his vision for his players to be successful on and off the field, and to instill his values of family, community, pride and respect. In the beginning of the season the coach made it clear to athletes and parents what his vision and values were, but it was not as clear to them as he would have hoped because there were constant struggles with players and their parents. The coach's vision and values for the team were different from that of the previous head coach, which may be why they struggled to understand the new vision and values. Schroeder (2010) found that having a clear vision is a key starting point for culture change, which may have led to confusion. In previous seasons the coach did not have a clear vision for this team, which did not foster an effective team culture for the program. The head coach's vision for the team was clear and his expectation and standards were set, but athletes and parents did not understand his motives in the beginning of the season. As the season continued, the coach began to instill his vision and values in practices and games to which the athletes and parents began to understand these factors. This was also found by Schroder: "If coaches

consistently connect their actions to team values, such change can occur rapidly" (p. 84).

Other values that were set were to be successful on and off the field, be role models to younger athletes and create an environment in which athletes would constantly improve. The coach allowed his players to teach one another to improve their skills. There were multiple instances when the varsity and junior varsity teams practiced together and varsity players ran drills while coaches discussed plans for the upcoming game. When athletes are allowed to demonstrate the skills they have learned throughout the season, like developing leadership skills, it becomes a positive influence on the younger athletes (Camiré et al., 2012).

The clear visions and values became the standards and expectations for everyone in the baseball program. Coaches with clear goals for their programs, often have more athletes buy into the systems they have put in place. Therefore, more athlete adherence to team culture due to the fact that they know what the coach envisions for the team (Vallée & Bloom, 2005). These standards and expectations have been written in the athletic handbook and dispersed amongst the parents and athletes in the beginning of the season. According to Miller et al.'s (2012) findings, all coaches gave their athletes handbooks that their rules and expectations for the season and the athletes themselves. This allows athletes to be accountable for their actions and by signing the contract they agree to have read and abide by the team rules and expectations. The head coach also had the parents sign the contract as well, this way if a parent has any issue they can look back to the handbook before talking with the coach.

Athlete accountability lead to athlete empowerment, which helped establish the team's culture. By allowing the athletes to make some decisions of what

jerseys they will wear, what gear they would like to buy, what pitches to call, voting on the team MVP, etc. a coach will be able to view the team culture in action. Giving the athletes a voice in the program lead to more group cohesion and trust between the coach and athletes. Schroeder (2010) reported that "When the players' leadership in [certain] situations began to reinforce a program's values, coaches felt like their cultures were beginning to shift" (Schroeder, 2010, p. 75). In certain situations athletes need to be given the chance to prove that they are capable of demonstrating the program's team culture on their own without a coach's assistance, creating a trusting environment. The more power given to the athletes the more influence they have on team culture and the faster it evolves into formation. A coach must be able and willing to give athlete responsibilities and have a say in team decisions. Coach Vallée had a similar experience when she began her coaching career: "I remained in control of the team, yet I allowed the players room to participate in team decisions" (Vallée & Bloom, 2016, p. 174). The coach transformed into a "better coach" during the middle of the season during tournament play when he told his coaching staff that he is going to let the athletes play with little to no instruction. He believed the athletes were playing stiff and this would allow the athletes to play freely and without constraint.

This created an environment that allowed athletes to make mistakes with the opportunity to learn and move forward in skill and cognitive development. The coach defined the team's environment to be welcoming and stress free. The environment allowed athletes to grow at their own pace and the coach always set new goals for his team. This pillar of constantly challenging the athletes helps avoid complacency and creates an environment in which everyone is trying to improve in all aspects of the sport (Lara–Bercial & Mallett, 2016). The coach also had athletes participate in beautifying the field and maintaining the field before,

during, and after games/practices. This gave the athletes a sense of pride and ownership in the field because they all had a hand in transforming the field to what it is now. This created the right conditions to be successful on the baseball field because the field was well maintained, so the athletes did not have to worry about getting injured on a poorly-condition field (Lara–Bercial & Mallett, 2016). Coaches need to provide their athletes an environment in which they can grow and prosper in the aspects of improving their skills and enjoy playing the sport.

<u>Research Implications</u>

In the present study, all the interviews with the head coach were semi-structured, while the interview with the AD was structured. Many of their answers to the questions were clear and conveyed a positive outlook for the program. The question that comes to mind is how many of these answers were truly sincere? Future studies should include a pre-season interview with the AD with the same questions asked during the post-season interview, in order to compare changes in their perspective of the program's team culture. A limitation to the head coach interviews was that they were not divided into equal sections of the season. The mid-season interview was taken 2 months after the pre-season interview, while the post-game interview was taken a month after the mid-season interview. The head coach's emotional state may have influence his answers, which were not as genuine as they seemed.

Another limitation in the present study is there was no monitoring of the coach's emotional state. A questionnaire each week of how the coach felt about his progress and rating his attitude about the team would help increase the knowledge of his thoughts in real time. There were informal conversations during practices/games were he relayed his frustrations. Documenting weekly or, perhaps,

daily emotional states could be used in future research to get a clearer understanding of what a first-year coach is going through. Another method researchers may consider is having coaches keep a journal to log their team's journey for that season. This way it comes from internal questions they ask themselves, instead of a researcher probing them for answers. Self-assessments could be used to accurately monitor the coach's attitude weekly, before and after competitions. Self-assessments may bring awareness to the coach on how they are thinking and how they need to change if they are not where they want to be.

The present study excluded input from other contributors of team culture such as assistant coaches and athletes. Future research design on team culture should incorporate more interaction with other coaches and the athletes to receive more information about what they perceive to be the team culture. This would allow researchers to compare and contrast perceptions on the team and monitor the participants buy-in to the coach's team culture. These alternate perspectives could offer more insight on team culture and effectiveness of the strategies a coach uses to build team culture.

Another method that would be beneficial to future research would be to create a study for multiple first-year head coaches across multiple sports to compare their journeys. This could be used to establish a common ground as to how successful programs should be created by forming a solid team culture in the first-year. Based on the team and how well the coach adapts his philosophy and visions for their particular team may provide information for other coaches to use and apply to their teams.

Practical Implications

Results from the present study may be used by other coaches while attempting to create team culture. Results from the present study allow coaches to see what strategies a first-year head coach used to build a team culture. Modifications to the strategies used by the present coach should be done to instill personal values and expectations that will create the most effective team culture for athletes. Coaches can also use this information to create assessment guides for the team's/coaches' attitude, goal setting, visions and values, etc. and use the information to adjust aspects of their coaching philosophy to maximize team success.

Athletic directors and school administrators can use results from the present study to create a checklist of what they believe are the necessary qualities that a coach should have. The checklist can be composed of characteristics that administrators believe will help students achieve success beyond the realm of sport, and instill the school's model of building character through sport. Administrators and ADs can create assessment guides to see if the coach is effective in achieving their own, and the school's goals for specific sports program. See Appendix H for an example of a team culture checklist.

Coach educators may use results of the present study to create workshops around building a team culture. The workshops could include various strategies a coach would need in their attempt to establish team culture that best represents their values and their sport program. However coaches, ADs, school administrators, coach educators, and any other individuals who want to coach use this information is up to them, but the present study was done to document the journey of how a coach attempted to create a team culture. The use of the information in the present study should be integrated with the focus on coaching

effectiveness. All participants in sports should have the goal of improving an athlete's competence, confidence, connection, and character, which creates an effective learning environment for the athletes and coaches. Any other use for this information is welcome, as long as it contributes to the development of coaches and athletes physically and cognitively.

## Summary

Establishing team culture can be difficult, especially for first-year coaches. It may be difficult for some coaches because they want to be in control of everything and set expectations too high for their first year. If coaches set expectations too high and do not meet those expectations, the stress may create an environment that hinders athlete and coach performance. If the environment is not suitable for growth and development, then an effective team culture cannot be established, due to little or no support. Results of the present study provide an example on how coaches can successfully approach their first-year as a head coach. The coach in the present study created a team culture that emphasizes the major themes of pride, goal setting, and growth for athletes and others who are involved with the program. These themes connect the coach's philosophy, as well as visions and values, to a baseball program that was in desperate need of a culture change.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: HEAD COACH CONSENT FORM

**Consent Form – Head Coach**

*The project:* The purpose of the proposed study will be to document a first-year head varsity baseball coach's efforts to change team culture when taking over a losing program. Successful coaches and teams are asked about team culture once they have become champions and have had consecutive years of success. This study will follow a first-year head coach and observe what strategies and methods he would use to change the team culture at the very beginning of his baseball coaching career. Interviews and observations will be used in this qualitative study.

*Analyzing and Reporting Results*: Qualitative data collected during the interview will be audio recorded and observations will be noted in a journal. Interviews and journal entries will be viewed by two primary researchers (Dr. Wade Gilbert and Mr. Gustavo Vega) and may also be viewed by two secondary researchers (Dr. Jenelle Gilbert and Mr. Tim Hamel). All data will be kept in the Sport Psychology Lab at California State University, Fresno and only members in the research committee (listed above) will have access to the data.

*Benefits and Risks:* There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. Potential benefits of this study will include increasing knowledge on building team culture and developing various strategies to create a team culture. All coaches will benefit from this study because they will be able to identify what methods they could incorporate in their sport to create or improve team culture. Depending on the study, coaches will be able to differentiate between good and/or bad methods that improve or hinder team culture. Upon completion of the study you will be provided with a copy of the results if so desired.

*Participation is Voluntary:* Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. There is no penalty for not participating in the study.

*Contact Information:* For more information, feel free to contact Dr. Wade Gilbert at (559) 278-5170 or wgilbert@csufresno.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

By signing below, you are making the decision to participate in this study. Remember, once you have signed you are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if you so choose. Your signature indicates that you have read the information above and have decided to participate.

_____          _____

Coach's Signature                                                              Date


_____          _____

Witness Signature                                                            Date

APPENDIX B: ATHLETIC DIRECTOR CONSENT FORM

**Consent Form – Athletic Director**

*The project:* The purpose of the proposed study will be to document a first-year head varsity baseball coach's efforts to change team culture when taking over a losing program. Successful coaches and teams are asked about team culture once they have become champions and have had consecutive years of success. This study will follow a first-year head coach and observe what strategies and methods he would use to change the team culture at the very beginning of his baseball coaching career. Interviews and observations will be used in this qualitative study.

*Analyzing and Reporting Results*: Qualitative data collected during the interview will be audio recorded and observation of coach will be noted in a journal. Interviews and journal entries will be viewed by two primary researchers (Dr. Wade Gilbert and Mr. Gustavo Vega) and may also be viewed by two secondary researchers (Dr. Jenelle Gilbert and Mr. Tim Hamel). All data will be kept in the Sport Psychology Lab at California State University, Fresno and only members in the research committee (listed above) will have access to the data.

*Benefits and Risks:* There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. Potential benefits of this study will include increasing knowledge on building team culture and developing various strategies to create a team culture. All coaches will benefit from this study because they will be able to identify what methods they could incorporate in their sport to create or improve team culture. Depending on the study, coaches will be able to differentiate between good and/or bad methods that improve or hinder team culture. Upon completion of the study you will be provided with a copy of the results if so desired.

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*Contact Information:* For more information, feel free to contact Dr. Wade Gilbert at (559) 278-5170 or wgilbert@csufresno.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

By signing below, you are making the decision to participate in this study. Remember, once you have signed you are allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if you so choose. Your signature indicates that you have read the information above and have decided to participate.

_____          _____

Participant's Signature                                                    Date

_____          _____

Witness Signature                                                          Date

APPENDIX C: PRE-SEASON INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

(Pre-season)

1.  Why do you want to coach this program?

2.  What is your vision for this program?

3.  What are you most excited for, taking over this program?

4.  How would you define team culture?

5.  What type of culture do you want to build for this baseball program?

6.  What standards and rules will you set for the team and athletes?

    a.  How will you keep your athletes accountable to these standards and rules?

7.  What are your goals as a coach this season?

8.  What are your goals for your student athletes?

    a.  How will you guide your student athletes to reach these goals?

9.  Do you foresee any obstacles that may arise this season as a first-year head coach?

    a.  How will you overcome them?

10. Do you have any other fears for this season?

APPENDIX D: MID-SEASON INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

(Mid-season)

1. In the beginning of the season, your vision for the program was to be successful fast and to be the pride and joy of the community. Has the team accomplished this?

2. You wanted to create a team culture of a family/community. Is this how you would define the team's culture as of now?

    a. Do you feel that your practices reinforce that team culture?

3. You wanted to create a culture based on adult behavior and accountability. Have there been moments when that culture has been challenged? How?

4. What are some challenges/barriers you see/feel as a coach to building the culture you envision?

5. You mentioned that one of your goals for the athletes is to not fight the change and embrace it. Have there been instances throughout the season where the athletes resisted change and what is change?

6. The varsity has had no issues with grades, but JV lost many players due to grades. Do you feel that this may effect team culture in the future?

7. You have mentioned last week that the coaching staff should allow the players to "just play" in the upcoming games because you feel that you have held their hands for too long. What is the purpose of this?

8. You said that you would post stats in the locker room each week; I have not seen any grades posted recently. Are there other ways the team can see their stats?

9. There have been some tough loses this season. Do believe the mood of the team has changed after these loses? How do you overcome these loses?

10. What are your goals for the remainder of the season?

APPENDIX E: POST-SEASON INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

(Post-season)

1. In the last interview you stated that the team was not where you envisioned them to be (ie. pride and joy of the community and success), but it was still growing. With the season over, do you believe they have reached this point?

   a. What is your vision for next year's program?

2. How would you compare the team's culture from the beginning to the end of the season?

   a. What type of culture do you want to build for next year's baseball program?

   b. What do you believe worked well in building your team culture? What did not work?

3. How did the athletes influence the team's culture throughout the season?

4. During the season the word "Pride" came up often, especially before the game?

   a. Is this the team motto or do you believe it will change next season?

5. Since you have made it to the playoffs your first-year, will this continue to be a goal for you each season?

   a. Is there any added pressure?

6. How would you describe the environment you have created for the baseball program? (ie. physical, cognitive, nurturing)

7. How have your visions and values changed throughout the course of this season?

8. What are your goals for next season?

APPENDIX F: ATHLETIC DIRECTOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

(Other Participant)

1. What did you expect from the first-year head coach and the baseball program before the season started?

2. How do you define team culture?

3. How would you describe this team's culture?

    a. In your eyes, what is the difference between this year's team culture and that of years prior?

4. Did the coach ever mention to you about his vision of the team?

5. From what you saw during games/practices, where the athletes given the freedom to make their own decisions on the field, or was there constant instruction by the coach(es)?

6. Do you believe the athletes have bought into the team culture?

    a. How did the coach manage to accomplish this?

    b. How was the coach not able to manage this?

7. Did the coach create an environment that allowed his athletes develop physically and cognitively?

APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION/FIELD NOTES AND
REFLECTION DATES

Observation/Field Notes and Reflection Dates

| Date | Observation Situation |
|------|----------------------|
| 2/23/17 | Game – 2.5 hours |
| 2/24/17 | Practice – 2 hours |
| 2/25/17 | Practice – 2 hours |
| 2/28/17 | Game – 3 hours |
| 3/2/17 | Game – 3 hours |
| 3/3/17 | Practice – 2 hours |
| 3/7/17 | Practice – 2 hours |
| 3/9/17 | Game – 3 hours |
| 3/10/17 | Practice – 1.5 hours |
| 3/14/17 | Game – 2 hours |
| 3/28/17 | Game (double-header) – 4 hours |
| 3/31/17 | Game – 2.5 hours |
| 4/7/17 | Practice – 2 hours |
| 4/10/17 | Game (tournament) – 2 hours |
| 4/12/17 | Game (tournament) – 2.5 hours |
| 4/25/17 | Practice – 2 hours |
| 5/16/17 | Practice – 1.5 hours |
| 5/19/17 | Game (Playoffs) – 2.5 hours |
| 5/23/17 | Practice – 1.5 hours |
| 5/24/17 | Game (Semi-finals) – 3 hours |

APPENDIX H: EXAMPLE OF TEAM CULTURE CHECKLIST

Example of Team Culture Checklist

| Team Culture Questions | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Does the coach demonstrate an athlete-centered philosophy? | | |
| 2. Is the coach's vision for the team clear? | | |
| 3. Do the coach's values match that of the organization, school, university, etc.? | | |
| 4. Do you believe the coach will incorporate life lessons to the athletes through their coaching style? | | |
| 5. Did the coach mention strategies of creating team cohesion and creating a team culture? | | |
| 6. Is the coach open to athlete input and making high-stake decisions in games? | | |
| 7. Does the coach have clear and attainable goals for this upcoming season? | | |
| 8. Does the coach have an evaluation process when hiring assistant coaches? | | |
| 9. Does the coach display confidence in their coaching philosophy and the strategies they would use? | | |
| 10. Does the coach use symbols, rituals and/or traditions to as a strategy for creating a team culture? | | |