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# A Comprehensive Study of Leadership Styles and Various Factors Contributing to the Success of Athletic Teams

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A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND VARIOUS  
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF ATHLETIC TEAMS

by

Christopher P. Intoppa

Submitted to the Honors Program Council

in partial fulfillment

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2016

# LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESS IN ATHLETICS

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## LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESS IN ATHLETICS

### **Abstract**

This paper involved a study of leadership styles in the realm of athletics. Using literature that had been written on the subject and examinations of particularly successful coaches over time, an accurate determination of leadership styles, qualities, and characteristics that contribute to success was able to be achieved. It was concluded that transformational leadership styles are explicitly profitable when dealing with athletes at any level of athletic competition. However, it was also discovered through research that these qualities are even more valuable if paired with an authoritative style of delivering instruction, mutual respect between coaches and players, and discipline by both parties.

**KEYWORDS:** leadership styles, success, coaching, coaching styles, sport management, sports

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**A Comprehensive Study of Leadership Styles and Various Factors Contributing to  
the Success of Athletic Teams**

**Chapter I: Introduction**

Leadership is a concept that has existed for an extremely long time. Regardless of one's beliefs about the age of the earth or the existence of human life, it can be confirmed that leadership was present in the time of Ancient Egypt (Williams, 2016). Pharaohs and kings led groups of people using a number of techniques and tactics, some more aggressive than others. Though the ideas and perceptions behind leadership styles that have developed over the last century were not available in Ancient Egypt, it is important to note that leadership is not a subject that was recently established.

Not only is it essential to mention that leadership has roots that date back thousands of years, but it is imperative that the significance of leadership be clarified, as well. Leaders have the ability to influence groups of people in a certain direction (Scott, 2014). However, this authority is not always utilized to steer others on the correct path. The course on which a leader guides their followers can either be in an upward direction, producing positive interaction, growth, and high-quality results, or in a downward direction, producing negativity, decay, and possible demise. In order to understand which styles of leadership generate the greatest amount of success, it is paramount to inspect certain leadership techniques and characteristics.

In the realm of athletics specifically, coaches and captains on the playing field can have an immense impact on those around them. They are the ones players look to for guidance and instruction in situations where they need assistance. It is rare that one hears of a prominent championship team in any arena without being aware of the leaders within

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the structure of the club. For example, when someone mentions the University of Florida's National Championship football seasons in 2006 and 2008, they are immediately connected with one of two people: Urban Meyer (the coach) or Tim Tebow (the captain). This is due to the fact that leaders, whether they play or coach the team, usually have a bearing on the outcome of plays, games, and even entire seasons.

Though coaches and players can influence the people surrounding them on the playing surface, they can have an immeasurable effect on individuals outside of athletics, too (Dungy, 2010). There is evidence that participation in sports has a tremendous bearing on the psychological development of children, but the leaders in athletics can influence day to day development of players, as well (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). There are countless stories of athletes, coaches and administrative personnel describing instances where leaders impacted them and changed their lives (Dungy, 2010). These influential individuals have enabled athletes to perform with wonderful skill on the field, while also achieving success in life situations. Because of the exponential impression leadership in athletics can have on a variety of people, it is necessary to understand what qualities, characteristics, and styles translate to measurable success.

"The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been." (Kissinger, 1982). Seems pretty self-explanatory, right? A leader's main responsibility should be to help those under his or her leadership achieve an objective by motivating them to be better than they have ever been. The problem with this task is not the main idea or the end result; however, the concern is figuring out an effective and efficient way to accomplish the goal at hand. There are many different leadership styles



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and techniques that seem to contribute to success, since every winning team does not have a coach with the same leadership qualities as the others. Some kind of list involving specific characteristics or leadership styles that are advantageous when it comes to success in the athletic realm would be a beneficial contribution to the field.

"Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable" (Wooden & Tobin, 1972). That is how legendary basketball coach, John Wooden, defined the term "success". Success is not something that is the product of a formula. One does not necessarily achieve success after doing X, Y, and Z. In contrast, many people have tried to define success over the years, citing fame, mass amounts of money, and approval in the eyes of others as prime examples (Wicker & Breuer, 2014). This review examines a functional definition of success that applies to the athletic domain, while also encompassing other areas of life.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to show a definitive connection between certain qualities and characteristics employed by coaches through their leadership styles and success on the athletic field and in the lives of players. Through a comprehensive examination of various leadership styles and the perception athletes have of those styles, accurate conclusions should be able to be drawn. By inspecting the leadership qualities of the coaches and managers of athletic teams that have been labeled "successful", one can more clearly identify those characteristics which might produce the achievement of triumph in an individual situation, a single game, over the course of a season, or even throughout an entire career. The application of this research will be extensive and should

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pertain to a variety of different atmospheres, environments, and situations. Not only can this study be applied to coaches of sports teams, but it can also be utilized by other leaders on the athletic field, teachers in the educational classroom, and managers in the business workplace.

### **Research Questions**

This paper will seek to answer a few questions regarding how leadership and success can be intertwined, which include:

RQ1: What are desirable leadership qualities from both the perspective of the coach and the players?

RQ2: Exactly how successful are these leadership styles in different sports at various levels of competition (i.e. high school, college, and professional)?

RQ3: What connections can be made between autocratic, democratic, authoritarian, transformational, and transactional leadership, motivation of players, and the overall development of teams and players?

RQ4: What other factors, if any, contribute to the general success of athletic programs and organizations?

Overall, this purposeful study will encompass the information concerning leadership styles, success, and any association between the two categories. Because more information is consistently being discovered on the subject of leadership styles in athletics, this research will likely act as supplementary information to the ongoing discussion in the field of sport management. However, this specific research is necessary since there is a limited amount of data on the topic of leadership styles affecting the performance and success of athletes and athletic teams in general.

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### **Organization**

In conclusion, the structure of this project is formulated in a way that presents readers with a history of leadership styles, an account of certain coaches, and the results of which characteristics and leadership style techniques that contribute to the triumph of athletic teams. This thesis will contain a literature review that is explained in detail in Chapter Two. Chapter Three describes the methodology behind this paper. Chapter Four and Chapter Five specify the accomplishments of particular coaches who are considered successful, while examining the deductions involved with their leadership methods. A cohesive understanding of leadership approaches, success in athletics, and an arrangement of the characteristics contributing to victory at all levels of athletic participation will be gained through the reading of this analysis.

## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

There has been much information written about the field of leadership styles; however, when compared to the amount of data regarding the effect that coaching styles have on the success of athletic teams, there is little research. This literature review will aim to provide the information needed to draw an educated conclusion about the connection between leadership techniques utilized and the performance of sports teams. Through an examination of existing literature in the areas of leadership, success, and responses to certain characteristics in leadership, the effect that certain leadership styles have on the performance of athletic participants should become increasingly evident.

### **Overview of Leadership Styles**

An overview of the leadership styles practiced in the field of sport management is necessary before proceeding with the actual leadership approaches themselves. There are a variety of different leadership styles and qualities that must be analyzed to accurately determine the right combination of characteristics one must obtain to maximize the potential of performers. Before the mid-1980s, McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y styles were employed in the athletic environment (Peachey, Zhou, Damon & Burton, 2015). From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, there was a focus on transactional vs. transformational leadership styles and how gender might play a role in leadership. From the mid-1990s to the present, there have been numerous styles of leadership that have come into question including a concentration on transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, and ethical leadership (Peachey et al., 2015). Though the focus has been on those leadership styles in the past, a concentration on servant leadership and

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distributed leadership might help sport management research become more complete in the future.

Because the study of transformational leadership was so prevalent over the course of many decades in research in sport management, it is extremely important to focus on the topic in depth. The general theme that developed throughout the research was an involvement in both transformational and transactional leadership styles. When one of these two techniques is studied, the other always seems to be presented in comparison. This fact is prominent in the research, but a few key pieces will be touched on.

First, it is imperative to understand what transformational leadership and transactional leadership both entail. Transactional and transformational leadership have a positive effect on team identification; however, transformational leadership, which has a higher correlation with self-sacrifice, is more closely linked to team identification than transactional leadership (Ruggieri & Abbate, 2013). This is typical because of the relational nature of the transformational style. Due to the connection to team identification, it further proves that leadership styles have an effect on performance. In regards to the significant link between transformational leadership and self-sacrifice, this can develop chemistry that leads to effective team performance.

Further examination of transactional and transformational leadership styles involves their association with a variety of other leadership styles. Downward mobbing is not typical of either transformational or transactional leadership qualities; however, authoritarian leadership does have some association with mobbing, resulting in high turnover rates, as well as a negative overall satisfaction from participants (Ertureten, Cemalcilar & Aycan, 2013). The information presented in this article will act to support

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the concept that the leadership style of a coach can have a positive or negative impact on the performance and retention of players. In comparison to transactional and transformational leadership styles, the directive management technique is also quite different. Both transformational and transactional management styles can have a positive effect on performance, while directive management does not due to its focus on strict obedience instead of relational factors between coaches and players (Peris-Ortiz, Willoughby & Rueda-Armengot, 2012).

Not only do transformational and transactional leadership differ from other techniques in their fundamental characteristics, but they also have a unique effect on the leader. Because managing from certain perspectives requires more effort, certain leadership strategies are essentially more beneficial to the manager than others. It was discovered that transformational leaders are considered to be associated with those who try to act the way they should in certain situations, causing burnout (Arnold, Connelly, Walsh & Martin Ginis, 2015). However, these people also tend to show genuine emotion due to the nature of their personal values. Leaders who practice the laissez-faire approach do not experience burnout at the same levels as transformational leaders, yet still experience some emotional depletion through the use of genuine emotion (Arnold, K. et al., 2015). Though both leadership styles contribute in one way or another to burnout, the transformational leadership quality is more beneficial because it has more of a positive effect on those under the manager's leadership.

As was established, the leadership styles coaches and players exhibit can have an impact on the performance and the retention of the player (Ertureten et al., 2013). In regards to the retention of people in connection to specific leadership styles, authoritative,

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coaching, task-focused and relationship-focused leadership styles contribute positively, while autocratic, empowering, democratic and pacesetter leadership styles do not (Zhang et al., 2015). This information contradicts other studies that provide data involving the positive influence of democratic perspectives. Though this situation is related to the retention of business workers during acquisitions and comes to a rare conclusion, it can still utilize the same principles as those in athletics and be used as support for the fact that leadership styles affect performance.

Most research supports the thought that the democratic style of leadership is a preferred one. Generally desirable qualities of leadership involve the democratic style (building commitment among staff and generating new ideas) and the coaching style (long-term professional development of staff) (Jones & Spamer, 2011). Jones and Spamer (2011) further enhanced the topic by concluding that based on these results and the fact that there is not a specific leadership style that is best, the authors proposed the Leadership Styles Competency Framework for Governing Bodies in Sport, which also includes variables such as team commitment, flexibility, responsibility, standards, rewards, and clarity, instead of simply a particular style.

A study of leadership styles would not be complete without the inclusion of characteristics that seem to be preferred and work appropriately in relation to those styles. A theme of strong collaborative approaches and team-oriented approaches, as well as the topics of open communication, relationships, and leading by example are introduced in leadership styles (Brown & Light, 2012). There is also a correlation between childhood experiences, relationships with parents, early sport experience, and preferred leadership style (Brown & Light, 2012). In reference to correlation between experiences and

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leadership style, this is information that contributed because experiences shape thought processes related to how athletes respond to certain leadership styles, which will be explained in the paper.

In addition to some characteristics that must be understood, there are three major categories of coaching responsibilities: developing a personalized approach, delegating responsibilities, and decision-making (Bennie & O'Conner, 2012). While various leadership styles exist, one that empowers the athletes (such as a democratic leadership style) is recommended over one that is autocratic (Bennie & O'Conner, 2012). This is true because the democratic leadership style allows for player-coach relationships to develop, the free-flowing of ideas and suggestions, and ultimate satisfaction from the players' perspectives, instead of simply verbal direction from an authority figure.

Since the team leader managerial style includes many aspects of the democratic leadership style, it is the final leadership style that will be discussed. The team leader managerial style has the greatest impact on employee behavior and performance within the business world (Khan, Langove, Shah & Javid, 2015). This would typically be expected because the team leader style focuses on both the needs of the organization and the employees' needs equally. Since employees feel cared for, they are then committed to working with excellence, which cultivates an environment with respect, motivation, and satisfaction. Since team chemistry has a great deal to do with success of athletic teams and conflict is bound to occur, the way conflict is dealt with based on leadership style is especially important. Because the article written by Khan et al. (2015) specifically mentions that the team leader managerial style has "a positive effect on employee



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behavior and performance", it can be used as evidence in regards to conclusions on leadership styles.

### **What is Success?**

Success can be defined in a variety of ways in the athletic world. For example, there are those who say that sports are a mere way to have fun and use the talents one has been given (Smith, 2014). There are others who consider winning to be the determining factor in whether or not a performance was worthy of appreciation (Martens, 2012). Then, there are still others who do not care about the enjoyment of athletic participation, or the elation involved with prevailing over an opponent on the scoreboard, but are more worried about the financial considerations of sports (Wicker & Breuer, 2014). This is a problem that is overwhelmingly prominent at the professional level of sports, but can penetrate even the youngest of athletes through illegal activity (Thornton, Champion, & Ruddell, 2012). Because of this knowledge, success can be interpreted as joy, winning, money, fame, or a combination of all of these aspects, depending on who one speaks to about the topic.

Often at the youngest ages of athletic participation, joy is the motivation for partaking in the activity (Martens, 2012). When an individual becomes bored with the sport in this stage, they might sit down in the outfield, talk to their friends, or even walk off of the field during a game. This is reinforced through the fact that researchers who disagree on many stances in sport management both state the importance of athletics bringing joy to the participants (Stewart, 2014; Newman, 2014). Though Stewart wrote in response to Newman's article *Sport without Management*, and looked for fallacies and within the information presented, he actually agreed and supported Newman's claim

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regarding the definition of successful participation in athletics- one that included enjoyment in the activity.

Another typical way success is defined is through the physical performance of athletes, leading to the winning of competition. An instrument was created to determine this specific usage of the word success. The Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA), which uses Linear Programming for the analysis of relative efficiency of “decision making units” (DMUs) involved in a production process, accurately measures the decision-making methods and execution of plays by athletes (Gutierrez & Ruiz, 2013). This contributes to the research because it proves that there is a feasible method to test how efficient players are by analyzing the decisions made in situations and the results of those decisions. Scores can then be compared to other players so coaches, players, and management can determine who plays well on their team and their opponent's team (i.e. which individuals are successful and if a team is successful even in defeat).

At the highest levels of athletic competition, success may be determined by wins and losses, but it is often the revenue that comes with triumph that motivates. Money will always be at the forefront of conversations when determining success because the words "money" and "success" are often used synonymously in the business sector, and athletic organizations are essentially businesses (Fried, DeShriver, & Mondello, 2013). The definition of organizational success is actually specifically compared with the financial condition of the sport organization in the article *Examining the Financial Condition of Sport Governing Bodies: The Effects of Revenue Diversification and Organizational Success Factors* (Wicker & Breuer, 2014).

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Though the love of money can permeate the realm of professional sports, leading to a finite definition of success, there are cases that defy the odds. Heinze, Soderstrom, and Zdroik (2014) contribute to the study to show that all professional athletes are not in the business solely for the paycheck, but can define success as assisting the community through athletics. The authors describe how the Detroit Lions professional football players and the organization as a whole give back to the community of Detroit (Heinze et al., 2014). It is through the athletic platform that these players and businessmen have a positive effect on the community in which they perform, demonstrating a transformational and servant leadership mentality that leads to the success of bringing the community together.

The conclusion can be drawn that the definition of success is determined by what is considered important. Because success, as viewed from the perspective of how many wins one has in relation to the number of losses, saturates the world of sports, it is extremely significant to have an accurate and acceptable description before applying the principle to how leadership styles can have an effect on the success and performance of athletic teams. For this paper, the definition of success that is most relevant to the study, and the one that will be implemented to establish the amount to which leadership styles have an effect on success, is the amount of wins in relation to the amount of losses in athletic competition.

### **Response to Leadership Styles**

If the definition of success that applies to wins and losses in regards to overall performance is the one that will be adopted for this paper, it is essential to point out that athletes respond to leadership styles. Whether positively or negatively, there is a reaction

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that takes place within the athlete. This reaction can lead to a greater motivation to succeed by bringing more effort and drive, or it can leave an athlete desiring to walk off the field with their head down in agony after making a mistake or being defeated in competition. Whatever the effect, there is one, and the leadership style portrayed by the coach has a lot to do with how those on the team respond (Soebbing, Wicker, & Weimar, 2015).

By defining certain aspects of a manager's responsibilities in regard to their problem solving capabilities, their motivational techniques, and their leadership qualities, the conclusion that there are some characteristics that are extremely effective when managing athletic teams and others that are not can be correctly assumed (Jinga, 2014). This can be applied through the concepts of specific management styles and their effect on performance and success of athletic teams.

A physical response might not always be evident when observing the reaction of a player to a coach's certain leadership qualities; however, a study that was done determined noticeable specific attributes including motivation, confidence, anxiety, preparation, and concentration of the players after coaches gave players certain types of feedback from coaches (Bozidar, Ivana, Milan & Miran, 2014). There is a connection between the leadership technique of coaches and the performance of players due to the extreme psychological effect a coach's words and actions can have on the player (Bozidar et al., 2014). This is only the beginning of the effect that different leaders and leadership styles can have on their followers.

Some additional key characteristics that may have an outcome on how a leadership style is interpreted by followers are intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation,

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communication style, and attitude of the authority figure (Marius & Viorel, 2015). All of these factors have an effect on the motivation and performance of the students and athletes; though these aspects are important to consider, intrinsic motivation can be preferable to extrinsic motivation because it is not dependent upon how the person in charge acts (Marius & Viorel, 2015). This makes a connection between the leadership styles that coaches use, how their motivational techniques are received by athletes, and how the result can help or hurt the performance of the individual athlete and the team.

Stewart-Banks, Kuofie, Hakim, and Branch (2015) describe the qualities that positively affect performance and motivational factors that attribute to an optimistic morale. In regards the conclusions reached by the study, it was determined that open-mindedness, approachability, effective communication skills, and relational qualities were aspects that positively affected the performance of school employees (Stewart-Banks et al., 2015). This information can be applied to the athletic realm because though the boss-employee relationship is different from the coach-player dynamic, the positive performance of players can be linked to the coach's leadership style just as the functionality of employees can be connected to the motivational techniques of their supervisors.

There are a few characteristics that can have an effect on the way a leadership style is perceived from the perspective of a player. One major quality involves a distinct differentiation between ages and the leadership style and characteristics that attribute to success (Martens, 2012). In general, younger athletes tend to perform better under the instruction of a coach who exhibits more positive feedback and emphasizes training technique (Ardua & Marquez, 2007). On the other side, athletes who are older are

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inclined to perform at a higher level when under the instruction of a coach who exhibits democratic styles of leadership (Ardua & Marquez, 2007). This conclusion is what one would typically expect because younger athletes need more instruction to perform better and older athletes desire freedom to make mistakes, while still under the supervision of a coach. Though not all athletes relate to the same coaching style, there are some key characteristics that most, if not all, athletes respond to particularly well.

Not only does age have an effect on the way leadership styles are interpreted, but competition level does, as well. The personality, skills, and experience of National Performance Directors (NPDs) have a great effect on the performance of the Olympic athletes (Arnold, Fletcher, Anderson, McKenna & Vella, 2015). Not only do these self-related factors have an influence on the athletes, but the environment-related aspects of development opportunities, operations, and personnel have an effect, too (Arnold, R. et al., 2015). Since Arnold's article goes into detail about characteristics that can have a positive or negative influence on athletes, it will assist in developing a clear understanding what factors are evaluated when determining whether an athlete's performance is enhanced or harmed by outside influences and personal factors.

Gender is another factor that might have something to do with how leadership styles are interpreted, but more research is needed for an accurate determination in the field. According to Surujlal and Dhurup (2012), who analyzed specific traits such as training and instruction, democratic behavior, autocratic behavior, social support, and positive feedback, there was no difference between genders in the preference of some leadership styles. Athletes, whether male or female, prefer the democratic form of coaching and leadership styles over the autocratic styles (Surujlal & Dhurup, 2012). This

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is typical and should be expected because very few athletes like to be told what to do without being provided with feedback in a positive relationship with their coach. An athlete's preference about leadership style can be linked to their willingness to perform at a high level, especially if intrinsic motivation is not prevalent.

After researching leadership styles like transformational leadership, organizational leadership, and situational leadership, it was determined that characteristics essential to a high amount of success include communication, organization, support, and an understanding of the situation (DuBois, Koch, Hanlon, Nyatuga & Kerr, 2015). According to the article, there is no specific leadership style that is the best (DuBois et al., 2015). A combination of different skills and qualities previously discussed are necessary for a leader to be as effective as possible. The previously mentioned article clearly makes the case that followers are directly impacted by the form of management their leader possesses, but there are other aspects that affect exactly how they are received (DuBois et al., 2015).

In conclusion, there are a wide variety of factors that come into play when examining the results of these aspects based on virtuous leadership qualities, benevolent leadership qualities, and authoritarian leadership qualities, in addition to the characteristics of teamwork and interpersonal skills (Chen, 2013). The results in the article further prove the importance of this particular technique; the paternalistic leadership style and characteristics involved with that style positively affect the performance of players, both individually and collectively (Chen, 2013). Understanding the connection that can be made between leadership styles in general, the cohesiveness of the teams, and therefore, the performance of those same teams is the overarching theme

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that proves to be consistent. However, supplementary research is required in the discipline to make definitive conclusions about the subject of leadership styles and their effect on the success of athletic participants.



## Chapter III: Methodology

Though supplementary research may be required for certain leadership styles, sound methodology was utilized throughout this thesis. Since the thesis is a literature review with case studies involving available research on certain coaches in athletics, and does not include any form of survey or instrumental test, the methodology concerning the study was conducted through the form of online research. This includes aspects such as searching for academic journal articles in databases by inserting key words, titles, or topics of study in the fields. For this paper, general searches on the EBSCOhost database led to numerous academic articles on the subjects of leadership styles, success, and the effect specific leadership styles can have on performance. The key words and phrases that were used when investigating this information contained "leadership styles", "sport management", and "success", as well as a combination of these terms.

One specific journal that proved to be tremendously valuable to research was the *Journal of Sport Management*, which boasts a rating of 0.580 regarding the SJR, an IPP score of 1.167, and a SNIP rating of 1.138. A database that contributed to and will continue to contribute to research was SportDiscus with Full Text. There were numerous scholarly journal articles on this database regarding the keywords searched. A detailed examination of the authors' credibility was obtained and will be for the thesis through investigation of reliability as reported by Scopus, as well as exploration on Google Scholar. However, not every resource found on the subject was used in this paper.

Some academic sources that were included in research, but discarded because of their main topics included articles related to the financial status of professional sports organizations. Though certain articles containing professional athletics were still used for research, a majority of those articles were excluded due to the lack of focus on coaching

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leadership at the professional level. Most scholarly sources associated with professional athletics involved the revenue of the organization or the organizational structure, which are both subjects that do not directly connect to the purpose of this paper. All academic sources regarding professional athletics were not discarded, as will be noted in the summaries of chapters.

Because much of the information in the realm of athletics is presented through informal mediums and on less-than-scholarly websites, such as ESPN.com, the credibility of data could be skewed. To avoid this problem, data from academic resources and educational textbooks was used to report information in this paper. Research involving specific case studies was also done through reliable sources. The authors of articles published in Sports Illustrated or online that were utilized in this project were ensured to be trustworthy and impartial when reporting statistics. Though some facts and figures were gathered from informal channels, the overall validity of the statistics in this thesis was confirmed through formal methods of communication in the field, such as through online research of peer reviewed articles.

The nature of this thesis, which depends upon the application of accessible information, concerns a qualitative study, while utilizing some quantifiable data. Quantitative data is presented to strengthen the argument regarding the success of coaches in this paper, although the majority of information analyzed involves qualitative research on leadership styles. According to Barnham (2015), qualitative research is “soft” data that may provide greater insight than quantitative data, but at the expense of subjectivity. This type of research was especially necessary for the project due to the subject matter. Everyone has an opinion on which leadership styles are effective and

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which ones should or should not be utilized in athletics. For this reason, it is important to analyze the leadership techniques that contribute to success in an unbiased and impartial way. Through studying literature written on the topic, as well as examining the common strategies of victorious coaches, information can be attained regarding a potential equation for triumph in athletic competition. Though the beliefs and outlooks of those in the field presented as interviews or surveys can be supplemental to research information, and some of the literature in this project made use of those techniques, it is imperative that the research be as unprejudiced as possible.

Not only does this project utilize qualitative research with some quantitative data, but it also makes use of case studies in order to further exhaust information in the field. Through investigation of multiple aspects of leadership styles using a method more unique than simply inspecting data or observing coach and player interaction, a personal, yet accurate perspective on the effectiveness of certain leadership styles can be reached. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2016) defines a case study as “a situation in real life that can be looked at or studied to learn something”. Once again, the inclusion of case studies is necessary to not only provide data on the topic of leadership styles, but to do so through a neutral avenue. Case studies offer a means of analyzing information by observation of techniques and strategies without allowing any interferences, such as coaches desiring to make a good impression, and therefore, altering their performance while being physically observed (Lindstedt and Lombardo, 2016). These reviews also eliminate any aspects of peer pressure or pressure to respond in a specific way that could be included in the results of both surveys and interviews.

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### **Participants**

This thesis explores the instruction and leadership styles of five prominent coaches: Bob Ladouceur, Nick Saban, Steve Spurrier, John Wooden, and Joel Quenneville. The coaches that were analyzed in this paper were chosen due to their amount of perceived success in the athletic realm, regardless of the level of the sport they coached. Though there are many coaches and programs that can be considered successful, these were elected not only based on their success on the field, but a dedication to winning the correct way. A point of emphasis in the selection process was integrity of the program associated with the coach. Therefore, organizations such as the New England Patriots, who have achieved a number of remarkable feats in the past decade or so, were left out of the study because of their alleged participation in gaining an unfair advantage pertaining to instances including "Spy-gate" and "Deflate-gate". Other coaches, such as the University of Connecticut's women's basketball coach, Geno Auriemma, the late Pat Summitt, former University of Tennessee women's basketball coach, the current Ohio State Buckeyes football coach, Urban Meyer, the San Antonio Spurs' coach, Greg Popovich, and the Duke University men's basketball coach, Mike Krzyzewski, were excluded from the study, though they would have been high-quality examples to consider, as well. Future studies, which should reflect similar results to this one, could analyze these additional coaches in order to either further confirm or disprove this thesis.

### **Chapter IV: Case Studies**

In order to appropriately assess successful leadership styles, an examination of coaches who have been determined to be successful is necessary. The investigation of certain leadership qualities possessed by these coaches, both past and present, can be helpful in reaching a conclusion about the effective management of athletes. By studying the specific cases of Bob Ladouceur, Nick Saban, Steve Spurrier, John Wooden, and Joel Quenneville, an accurate depiction of admirable coaching and leadership characteristics at various levels of athletics in numerous sports can be achieved.

#### **The Streak**

Bob Ladouceur was the Head Football Coach at De La Salle High School in Concord, California from 1979 to 2013. Over that span, Ladouceur amassed nearly 400 wins while constructing a legacy second-to-none in high school football. Of his many notable accomplishments, such as numerous National High School Coach of the Year awards and several California State Championships, by far, the most recognizable achievement of his career is the record 151 game unbeaten streak that was depicted in the 2014 movie *When the Game Stands Tall*. The streak, which stretched from 1992 to 2003, shattered the previous record of 72 straight wins, and established De La Salle High School as a national football powerhouse. As a coach, inspiring high school athletes to reach their full potential every day for an entire season is an achievement in and of itself, let alone doing so for twelve consecutive years. Though Coach Bob Ladouceur consistently received football players with tremendous skill, without his leadership style, such a run would have certainly been impossible.

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Some of Coach Ladouceur's impressive accomplishments are noted in the table below:

Team	Wins	Seasons	National Championships	Winning Percentage
De La Salle	399	34	11	93.4%

*Table 1: Bob Ladouceur*

Not only was Coach Ladouceur's ability to care for his players manifested in football, but it also transcended in the lives of those he taught. Through a tradition of commitment and relational growth, Ladouceur crafted an environment where coaches and players could be honest about where they were currently and where they desired to be in the future (Ladouceur, n.d.). In turn, this atmosphere assisted in creating an attitude of a "brotherhood" amongst team members (Ladouceur, n.d.). Because players were open and honest with each other, everyone knew what goals were yearned for, and both coaches and athletes were committed to aiding one another in reaching those individual and collective goals, the true definition of a team was achieved (Williams, 2016). Coach Ladouceur got the most out of his players by enabling them to collectively strive toward specific and strategic objectives. This relationship with his athletes acted as a transformational agent of his leadership style that immediately translated to a great deal of athletic success.

### **St. Nick**

Coaching high school football may seem similar to coaching football in college; however, the players at the superior level often have a more mature mentality and should exhibit a higher degree of skill. Nick Saban is a coach who has seemed to have mastered

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the art of coaching college football. Although Coach Saban's short stint in the NFL with the Miami Dolphins was less than impressive, and Saban experienced the only losing season of his coaching career, his tenures with both the Louisiana State University Tigers and the University of Alabama Crimson Tide college football programs supersede any negative thoughts of his professional career. At LSU, Coach Saban won a National Championship in 2003, but the majority of his success came at Alabama. Under Saban's supervision, the University of Alabama's football team won the National Championship in the years 2009, 2011, and 2012. No other team in the "Bowl Era" (1998-2014) won as many titles in such a short time period (National Championships by Year, n.d.). The Crimson Tide also added a College Football Playoff Championship (the equivalent of a National Championship in the new system) in 2015, winning their fourth in seven years, and forcing sports journalists everywhere to draw comparisons between Nick Saban and legendary Alabama football coach, Paul "Bear" Bryant, who won a total of six championships in his illustrious coaching career (Khodabakhshian, 2011). Though Saban has merely coached at the university for the past decade, he may very well be on his way to becoming the greatest coach in the history of the storied Alabama football program, Southeastern Conference history, and even the history of college football in general.

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Below is a table that illustrates a few of Coach Saban's successes:

Team	Wins	Seasons	National Championships	Conference Championships	Bowl Wins
Toledo	9	1	0	0	0
Michigan State	34	5	0	0	0
LSU	48	5	1	2	3
Alabama	100*	9	5	4	7

\*Through the 2015 season

*Table 2: Nick Saban*

Despite Coach Saban's relatively old age (he was 65 years old when this project was completed), he brings youthful enthusiasm to all of his football endeavors. Not only does his energy excite players, but he knows how to motivate them through other means, as well. Coach Saban recognizes that discipline is a key component to the success of his program. He strictly enforces policies and procedures, while enabling players to be the best they can be both on and off the field, an admirable quality of a coach (Dungy, 2010). For instance, after Alabama football players, Cam Robinson and Laurence "Hootie" Jones were arrested on drug and weapons charges earlier in the year, Coach Saban disciplined his players internally and still allowed to remain on the squad (Casagrande, 2016). Some might say that this decision is due to the quantity of skill those players possess and the amount that they can contribute to the result of a game; however, Nick Saban treats those in his program like family members. Saban believes that he can assist those under his authority by placing an emphasis on responsibility and discipline instead



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of simply kicking a player off of his team for making a mistake (Casagrande, 2016). When players show initiative by making progress toward the standards Saban has established in regards to decision-making, representation of the university, and disciplined actions, athletes are permitted to return to the field of play (Casagrande, 2016).

Great defense, discipline, energy, and a coaching philosophy that enables his players to focus on the task at hand by trusting the process were factors that propelled Nick Saban's teams to championships (Staples, 2016). Well-respected former Notre Dame Fighting Irish head coach, Lou Holtz, declared that "[Playing against Nick Saban] was just like playing against one of the teams coached by Bryant", whom the legendary Bryant-Denny Stadium is partially named after (Khodabakhshian, 2011). "After Nick Saban got [to Alabama] I wasn't sure if we would ever be able to beat them again", added Holtz (Khodabakhshian, 2011). In his first twenty seasons as a head coach at the NCAA Division I level, Nick Saban amassed 191 victories, second only to Tom Osborne, who had 195 in that span (ESPN College Football, 2016). Saban also tallied five National Championships during that period, and will surely look to add at least one more over the next few years, as his current contract with Alabama does not expire until 2022 (ESPN College Football, 2016).

Nick Saban disciplines those under his influence, but he does so in order to make them better individuals (Casagrande, 2016). He corrects behavior in a way that gets his message across, while acknowledging the fact that he genuinely cares about players (Casagrande, 2016). Coach Saban is there for his players when they need him; therefore, his players are there for him when he needs them to perform. Concerning discipline,

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defense, an area of the game that Saban takes pride in, includes positions requiring extreme discipline. If one player decides to stray from the strategy or reacts incorrectly to an offensive play, it can end up costing the entire team dearly. Because of Coach Saban's intense focus on discipline, his players are able to stay out of trouble off the field, aside from the occasional confrontation with the law, and achieve tremendous success on the field.

### **The Head Ball Coach**

Since Nick Saban extracted some coaching qualities from Steve Spurrier, he is worth mentioning, too. Spurrier coached at a few major colleges, and even coached in the National Football League for a short period of time. However, his true achievement came on the collegiate stage. Coach Spurrier had a habit of transforming football programs from mere teams into contenders for the National Championship within a matter of a couple years. After beginning his coaching career at Duke University, where his dynamic offense broke school records for yards and scoring, Spurrier left for his alma mater, the University of Florida, where he won a Heisman Trophy as a player in the 1960s (Spurrier & Martin, 2016). His innovative offense excelled at Florida, just as it did at Duke, and the Gators finally won the National Championship for the first time in 1996 after the school fielded a football program exactly ninety years earlier. Following a less than impressive year coaching the Washington Redskins, Coach Spurrier returned to the collegiate level with the University of South Carolina Gamecocks. As he did while at the other institutions in his coaching career, he turned the program around, from a weak team in the Southeastern Conference to a team who competed for the Conference Championship for the first time in program history.

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Steve Spurrier's coaching accomplishments are summarized in the table below:

Team	Wins	Seasons	Seasons Over .500	Conference Championships	Bowl Wins
Duke	20	3	2	1	0
Florida	122	12	12	6	6
South Carolina	86	11	10	0	5

*Table 3: Steve Spurrier*

Steve Spurrier may have focused on doing things differently than those who came before him, but his success is definitely prominent in the world of college football (Silva, 2014). While introducing a style contrary to many college football coaches before him, Spurrier ran a passing offense with grand success through his ability to convince his players to believe in the process and system the team utilized in both practice and against other opponents. Because he had a trusting relationship with players, those on his teams accepted new concepts and passing schemes, changing the way the game of college football was performed (Sliva, 2014). Though Spurrier only won one National Championship over the course of his prestigious coaching career, he turned two programs, Duke from 1987-1989 and South Carolina from 2005-2015, that were less than impressive, into legitimate threats for a national title. As the majority of coaches in recent history have, Steve Spurrier utilized many of the coaching techniques that were key characteristics of the final collegiate coach in this research.

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### The Legend

To determine what is likely to be successful in the present and the future, one should not only consider the recent past, but must also examine distant history. In the case of leadership in athletics, success in life, and leadership in general, John Wooden is an example that cannot be ignored. He is widely considered the most successful coach in the history of sports (Martens, 2012). When his accomplishments are surveyed, it is no wonder these claims are made by several respected individuals in athletic journalism (Martens, 2012; Pederson, Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 2011). The UCLA Bruins basketball team dominated from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. With John Wooden's highly effective leadership approach, the team captured ten out of twelve possible championships from 1964-1975, a stretch in college basketball that is frankly perceived to be unattainable. When such an incredible feat is accomplished, the tactics and strategies used to reach that end should be taken into consideration if replication of the achievement is to ever be attained.

A couple of John Wooden's illustrious coaching feats are mentioned in the table below:

Team	Wins	Conference Winning %	National Championships	Winning Percentage	Seasons
Indiana State	44	.857	0	.746	2
UCLA	620	.825	10	.808	27

*Table 4: John Wooden*

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There are many techniques and characteristics that John Wooden utilized over his illustrious career; however, there is one that has clearly proved more prominent than the others. By concentrating on his players as individual people instead of simply pawns to be used for athletic achievement, Wooden formulated an idea that is as close to an equation for success as there is. John Wooden's Pyramid of Success is taught in coaching and leadership classes across the country and the world (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). He focused on coaching as a form of teaching his players to become better men, while also training physically, which would both combine to lead to better athletic performance on the court. Some of the main principles contained in Wooden's Pyramid of Success include self-control, loyalty, cooperation, enthusiasm and friendship (Pyramid of Success, n.d.). Throughout his tenure at the University of California Los Angeles, Wooden firmly believed that these qualities were key, as he never allowed a player to criticize a teammate (Hill & Wooden, 2001). Ideologies such as this one have propelled Wooden into the coach that all coaches desire to emulate in their own techniques and strategies; however, the Pyramid of Success is merely a single example of his appealing techniques.

Wooden was extremely detailed about how he conducted his team and how the players on his team conducted themselves, making sure that they were dressed sharply when arriving at games and instructing his players to always be clean-shaven with neat hair (Hill & Wooden, 2001). Coach Wooden even went as far as educating those under him how to properly put on their socks and shoes on in a specific way (Hill & Wooden, 2001). This might seem outrageously particular; however, Wooden did it to protect his players from injury. He learned that many players suffered from blisters because their

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socks were not smooth to the contour of their feet or their shoes were slightly bigger than necessary. Therefore, Wooden was able to eliminate the risk of blisters and other physical injuries. In turn, this allowed the players to succeed on the court, as their physiological needs were met. By protecting his players' physical condition and caring for them as individuals, Wooden was able to make a difference in the lives of those players, while establishing a winning program with three distinctly different groups of college athletes over twelve years.

Wooden's leadership style transcends different levels of sports, and even different sports themselves, because he focused on the development of a player's character, rather than simply their skill (Williams & Denney, 2012). There is evidence that suggests that the authoritarian leadership technique is highly effective in this scenario, since John Wooden required so much from his athletes, and did so with tremendous specificity (Scott, 2014). When players "buy in" to a system and develop a trusting relationship with their coach, they obey the coach's orders, especially if there is previous evidence that the coach's strategies prove to be successful (Williams & Denney, 2012). Even though some of the things Coach Wooden required of his players might have seemed out of the ordinary, there was never any argument from the players' perspectives because they had a healthy fear and respect due to the amount of success attained by Wooden over the course of his career, in addition to the bond between the coach and the players.

### **The Dynasty**

From investigating a coach who is certainly one of the greatest in history, there must be a transition to one of the most dominant professional sports franchises of the past decade. Though the Chicago Blackhawks were one of the "Original Six" hockey teams in

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the National Hockey League, they have not always been considered a successful organization based on society's standards. However, after claiming merely three Stanley Cup Championships in their first 80 years as a professional organization, the Blackhawks were triumphant three times in the next six years of their existence. Regarding professional sports franchises, it is important to analyze the strategy involved in forming the team, which is put into action by the General Manager, as well as the leadership style utilized by the coach to measure success. Under the combined leadership of both the General Manager who formed the team, Dale Tallon, and the Head Coach, Joel Quenneville, the Chicago Blackhawks have been transformed from a franchise with historical relevance into a fresh, dominant Stanley Cup contender.

Although Dale Tallon contributed to the success of the Blackhawks' organization, as well, Joel Quenneville's coaching accomplishments are summarized in the following table:

Team	Wins	Seasons	Playoff Appearances	Seasons Above .500
St. Louis	307	8	7	8
Colorado	131	3	2	3
Chicago	376*	8	8	8

\*As of the end of the 2015-2016 season

*Table 5: Joel Quenneville*

Though Stan Bowman is currently the General Manager for the Chicago Blackhawks, and was the General Manager for all three of the organization's recent Stanley Cup Championships, the structure of professional sports requires the examination

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of the previous General Manager, Dale Tallon. By acquiring talented hockey players through the two channels available to professional athletic organizations, Tallon assembled a well-oiled machine and a dynasty by hand-picking the correct pieces.

Everyone who has knowledge about professional athletics understands how essential the draft can be for an association (Pedersen et al., 2011). Though the purpose of the draft is to distribute fresh talent, there are players who excel at the echelons inferior to the uppermost level and underwhelm their opposition becoming known as "busts", while others may be considered average at lower levels and become superstars in the professional leagues (Pederson et al., 2011). Dale Tallon began his endeavor with the Blackhawks by drafting two of the most skilled players to play hockey in the twenty-first century: Jonathan Toews in the 2006 NHL Draft and Patrick Kane in the 2007 draft. Though Toews has enjoyed great success whilst competing for Canada and has obtained six gold medals in international play, he has also been the recipient of the Conn Smythe Trophy as the Most Valuable Player in the playoffs following being named the captain of the team after playing merely sixty-four games with the Chicago Blackhawks. While his Blackhawks teammate has been victorious at the international level, Patrick Kane has succeeded in his own way. Kane won the Calder Memorial Trophy as the NHL's best rookie in 2008 and is presently a five-time NHL All-Star. Most recently, Patrick Kane won the Hart Memorial Trophy as the NHL's most valuable player for the 2015-2016 season, after leading the league with 102 points. These two athletes singlehandedly propelled the Blackhawks into regular playoff contenders and led other members of the association through their example of remarkable play on the ice.



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Obtaining skillful players through the draft is definitely significant to a franchise's success; however, the acquisition of free agents by the team is also important to analyze (Pedersen et al., 2011). While two players can be the difference between winning and losing, without other supporting pieces around superstars, success is only a distant thought (Smith, 2014). Not only was Dale Tallon extremely successful regarding the drafting of talented athletes, but he was also proficient in his ability to obtain free agents. As the Blackhawks approached seasons that would conclude in championships, the signings of Kris Versteeg, Tomas Kopecky, and Marian Hossa cemented their spot in the playoffs each year. The acquirement of Hossa proved beneficial due to his veteran leadership and his scoring ability, while Versteeg and Kopecky provided the team with youthful exuberance and energy throughout the physically demanding playoffs.

Dale Tallon may have contributed in the acquisitions of crucial players, but Joel Quenneville arranged them in the correct positions and with suitable teammates. Assembling lines to create the maximum amount of chemistry is a responsibility Joel Quenneville takes awfully seriously. Not all superstars can play well together, or, even if a couple star players do have chemistry together, there could be a better combination of skill and chemistry within the team.

All of the pieces of a puzzle can be present, but if they are not arranged properly, the picture is not made visible. Likewise, the acquisition of the correct players is important to the success of an athletic organization; however, if they are not placed in the right position or situated with other players that complement their skills, success is less probable. The Chicago Blackhawks enabled their athletes to further succeed by

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positioning them where they fit comfortably, which set their association apart from others with similar amounts of skill.

Due to the nature of the sport, success in hockey is especially dependent on the amount of chemistry achieved between teammates. An NHL hockey team consists of twenty participants- eighteen skaters and two goalies; however, there can only be five skaters on the ice at a single time (Davidson & Steinbreder, 2000). Therefore, it is up to the coach's discretion to determine the most profitable combination of skaters to place on the ice with each other at a given time to both give the team a balanced attack and a sturdy defense. Each combination placed on the ice is referred to as a line (Davidson & Steinbreder, 2000). Typically, there are four lines of three offensive players and three lines of two defensive players to allot positions (Davidson & Steinbreder, 2000).

Coach Joel Quenneville not only placed certain offensively skilled players together to form an attack second-to-none, but he also created chemistry between pairs of defensemen in order to thwart enemy threats. It was this maneuvering and shifting of players that heartily contributed to the success of the Blackhawks organization over the past decade- all because Quenneville knew his players well enough to recognize who would work well together during intense competition.

Furthermore, there can be a favorable matchup that a coach desires to exploit in order to gain the upper hand in competition. At any level of sports, but particularly at the professional level because of the proximity in degree of skill level all participants possess, taking advantage of weaknesses presented by the other team is imperative (Dyck, 2016). Coach Quenneville has done an excellent job of shifting lines around to create a competitive advantage through both chemistry and matchup analysis during his

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tenure with the Chicago Blackhawks' organization. He placed superstars Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane on the ice together at moments the team needed immediate productivity, while balancing the talent on each line for the majority of the games, a key to success in the sport (Davidson & Steinbreder, 2000). Toews and Kane, amongst all the other players on the squad, never questioned the decisions made in switching groups around, and it worked to their benefit.

The example of superstars who know each other well, but do not necessarily provide the best advantage when playing together, can be explained through the Pittsburgh Penguins hockey team. Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin are both phenomenal hockey players within the Pittsburgh Penguins' organization. Crosby has consistently been compared to hockey legend Wayne Gretzky and has cemented himself in the conversation of being the greatest hockey player to ever live (Joyce, 2005). Malkin is likewise an exciting player to watch, and together the two should be unstoppable. They have won two Stanley Cups with the team; however, an admirable amount of success was not always present. The Penguins regularly make the playoffs due to the abundance of skill on their roster. Though they have a high caliber roster with many talented players, the Penguins failed to have success once they reached the playoffs. The times the Penguins have won championships and exceeded expectations were the instances where the coach decided to play teammates together who had chemistry with one another instead of merely placing the most talented players on the ice. In their most recent Stanley Cup quest, Head Coach Mike Sullivan positioned Crosby on a line with rookie Conor Sheary, a place where both Crosby and Sheary excelled, instead of on a line with

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the exceptionally skilled Evgeni Malkin, producing copious amounts of chemistry that ultimately led to a championship.

Much like the teams under John Wooden at UCLA, under Nick Saban at Alabama, or under Bob Ladouceur at De La Salle, there is little argument about the itinerary within the Chicago Blackhawks' organization. At first glance, it may not seem like Joel Quenneville is a very personable coach. From harassing the officials to being more than emphatic when explaining his strategy to his players, Quenneville has a demeanor that would scare a grizzly bear with a simple glance. Though it might not seem like Quenneville is a personable coach, he knows his players and often his demonstrative actions are in defense of his players or their safety. This can be proven by his exceptional ability to construct lines within his team, contributing to tremendous amounts of triumph on the ice.

### **Analysis of Data**

There are many contrasting styles, techniques, and strategies that can be effective when coaching at any level in athletics. However, there are also a couple of very obvious common denominators between all of the examples presented in this study. First, it cannot be argued that any of these teams did not achieve great amounts of success under the leadership of their respective coaches. Though success can be defined in various ways, there is no doubt that success was achieved within the constructs of these certain groups. The length of each coach's tenure in the field further confirms this conclusion. In a business where coaches are expected to win at a high rate or they will immediately be replaced with a colleague, the longevity of the careers of these specific coaches speaks volumes to their true accomplishments (Spurrier & Martin, 2016). Second, and finally,

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the players on each and every one of the teams examined did not question the coach's strategy. It did not matter what the style was, whether it was contrary to what the athletes had been taught, as was the case with Steve Spurrier's teams, or if the technique seemed oddly meticulous and precise, like the circumstances at UCLA with Coach Wooden's teams, because the players trusted in, and submitted to, their authority. In these situations, the team was told what was going to happen, they "bought in" to the idea that it was going to happen, and therefore, the players executed the gameplan to the best of their ability. It is amazing what can happen when a group of skilled, respectful, and talented individuals believe that a goal is achievable, are believed in, and are directed by someone they believe in (Martens, 2012). Call it tradition, call it superstition, but there is something to be said about doing things the way that is known to be successful and trusting it will work time after time (Martens, 2012).

So maybe there is a formula for success after all. At first, when the teams and respective coaches in the case studies were hand-picked to be examined, the only common thread seemed to be success on the athletic field. However, at second glance, and after further investigation, the mutual factors amongst all of these successful teams include additional aspects, as well. According to Hill and Wooden (2001), talent is a must when achieving success. If players cannot perform with some amount of skill, then they will not attain victory (Hill & Wooden, 2001). Coach Wooden once said "no one wins without outstanding talent, but not everyone wins with it, either" (Hill & Wooden, 2001). Though skill is absolutely a necessary portion of the equation for triumph in athletics, it is undoubtedly not the sole ingredient (Hill & Wooden, 2001).

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John Wooden was certainly correct in stating that no one wins without outstanding talent, as it is a necessary component in any athletic endeavor. For example, no matter how many lucky bounces in the competition, a normal group of individuals should not be able to be victorious over a professional basketball team, assuming the basketball team was taking the game seriously. However, Wooden was also right when he asserted that not everyone wins with outstanding talent on their team, either (Hill & Wooden, 2001). There are countless examples of underdogs overcoming disproportionate odds and beating teams that had more talent than they did. The United States hockey team, a group of amateur hockey players, upsetting the world-renown Soviet Union team in the 1980 Winter Olympics should come to the mind of any major fan of athletics when reminiscing of "David versus Goliath" moments in sports history. The Soviets certainly had more talent than the United States players, and, in fact, the Soviet Union team demolished the US in an exhibition game by a score of ten to three merely three days before the beginning of the Olympic Games; but the US team prevailed during the semifinal matchup in the Games (Williams & Denney, 2012). Why? The 1980 United States hockey team achieved greatness because talent was not, and is still not, the only factor that contributes to success (Hill & Wooden, 2001). If it was, sports would be extremely more predictable since the team that was favored due to their athletic ability would always come out on top. There is a reason why sayings like "hard work beats talent when talent does not work hard" exist, and it is not because the team with the most talent is always triumphant. Even if a plethora of factors that typically lead to success, mainly skill, are present within a team or an organization, success is not inevitable, which is the beauty of competition and the basis of athletic contests (Frazier & Snyder, 1991).

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Another factor in determining the amount of success a program might achieve that was common amongst the coaching examples investigated in this study is respect. With all of the "superstars" in sports and their less-than-modest egos, there have definitely been examples of disrespectful athletes achieving tremendous amounts of success. Nevertheless, in any team sport, the dynamic of all athletes together is exponentially more important than individual accomplishments (Dungy, 2010). As was mentioned earlier, skillful players can contribute to the overall success of an organization or team, but they are not the sole reason for success, no matter how skilled the athlete might be. This is due to the concept of synergy, where the sum of the whole equals more than the sum of the parts (Williams, 2016). A team of athletes who respect themselves (not participating in activities that might harm their body, such as excessive partying or even being reckless in general), respect each other (by avoiding physical confrontation with teammates during menial arguments), and show respect to their authority (by obeying the coach's orders or respectfully disagreeing and solving the problem) is a force to be reckoned with. Too many times, players are allowed to be disrespectful under coaches with certain leadership styles and it has an extremely negative effect on the potential success of the group. For example, the laissez-faire leadership approach permits players to have an unlimited amount of freedom in making decisions, which can lead to damaging actions when those who are given independence do not exhibit self-control or act respectfully (Scott, 2014).

According to the case studies analyzed, a necessary component to the success of an organization is not only a leader, or even an authoritarian leader, but a knowledgeable leader who projects their strategy through an authoritarian communication method. This

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does not necessarily mean that the coach exhibited authoritarian strategies in disciplining the team, but an authoritarian mindset was asserted in the intentional way things were to be done. There is nearly always a reason that coaches such as John Wooden are specific regarding the method they desire their team to perform particular actions. It is because they know. They know what it takes to be successful on and off the playing field, even when it might not make sense to the team. For example, consider the manner in which players change into their socks. To the average person, a coach who demands that his players put on their socks and shoes in a specific way would seem like a controlling lunatic. However, Coach Wooden was not an average person or coach, his goal was not to be average, and his teams were not average. There was a reason behind his strategies, a "method to his madness", and his outstanding accomplishments were directly caused by this attitude and perspective.

These types of scenarios seem exceptionally comparable to a parent demanding that their child not touch the cookies on the stove. The parent knows full well that the child wants to enjoy the delicious cookies and desires to do so as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, the child may not fully understand why he or she is not able to devour his precious snack at the present time. If the child does not heed the warning of the knowledgeable adult, they will certainly be burned in the process, and probably not get to enjoy the snack. However, if the child obeys the command of the authority figure and does what it asked of them, he or she will likely have the benefit of eating the cookies, barring any unforeseen circumstances. The parent in this illustration is not trying to command those under their authority in order to control their actions, but instead is trying to notify them of the most profitable method of performing actions to ensure safety and



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guarantee eventual triumph. Likewise, knowledgeable authoritarian coaches inform their players of specific methods that they believe give their team the greatest opportunity to conquer the opponent at hand (Scott, 2014).

As was touched on earlier in this paper, an important quality that any coach should possess is a caring relationship with their players. Regardless of the type of leadership style the coach possesses, the relationship between a coach and their players can have a drastic effect on some athletes' willingness and ability to perform at their highest level (Dungy, 2010). Most athletes will run through brick walls for coaches they have a good relationship with and who they know genuinely care for them as an individual person (Martens, 2012). If a coach treats his players with little respect, the players will be less likely to reciprocate respect toward the authority figure (Martens, 2012). Though they might compete to the best of their ability, they may not have extra incentive to reach levels they did not think they could attain. However, when athletes feel as if their coach values them more than simply using them to achieve victory, a stronger mutual bond can be formed, and success both on and off the field can be achieved without as much difficulty (Martens, 2012).

The relationship between starting quarterback Tim Tebow and Head Football Coach, Urban Meyer, at the University of Florida from 2006 to 2009 perfectly illustrates the point of a healthy relationship influencing an athlete to go above and beyond their basic responsibilities. There was a connection between the two that is rarely found in the athletic realm. Tebow and Meyer had a personal relationship, while also having a professional one, and it proved to be tremendously successful (Tebow & Whitaker, 2011). Because of the relationship Coach Meyer had with Tim Tebow, Tebow was

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allowed to work toward his full potential by desiring to satisfy not only his own passion to win, but by striving to do what his coach asked of him without question, too (Tebow & Whitaker, 2011). This dynamic that linked captain and coach created an environment where Tebow utilized his own leadership qualities to lead the Gators to National Championships in 2006 and 2007, as well as numerous Southeastern Conference Championships, while also receiving individual awards such as the Heisman Trophy in 2007 (Tebow & Whitaker, 2011).

Though many knowledgeable coaches, including the ones in this study, exhibit certain qualities of the autocratic and authoritarian leadership styles in their approach when delivering information, those who genuinely care about their players outside of athletic competition, are often those who succeed (Dungy, 2010). The same kind of relationship that existed between Coach Meyer and Tim Tebow was present in Coach Wooden's, Coach Saban's, and Coach Ladouceur's teams, as well. Through personal connection with players, coaches can gain insight into the lives of the members of their team, giving them an advantage when it comes to dealing with difficult circumstances that might arise out of everyday conflict (Williams, 2016). Not only does this insight act as a deterrent to possible conflict, but it also allows players to feel appreciated, leading to a willingness to obey commands without doubtful thoughts (Scott, 2014).

Along with the concept of caring for players, the coaches in this study focused on the process, rather than the end result. Bob Ladouceur intentionally developed his players in the "Spartan" way (Ladouceur, n.d.). Nick Saban concentrated on the individual tasks at hand instead of directing his attention to national championships (Staples, 2016). Steve Spurrier brought his teams together around the concept of performing differently, while

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John Wooden focused on cultivating his athletes into young men suitable to join society (Spurrier & Martin, 2016). Though their main motivation was not necessarily producing championship teams, in the end, the coaches examined in this study centered their attention on how things were done, which consequently led to the abundant amounts of physical success in their coaching tenures.

Part of success as a team rests on the individuals' performances, while the other piece is determined by the coach (Martens, 2012). There are numerous factors that coaches should exhibit that assist a team's performance including protecting athletes and preserving their well-being (Penrose, 2014). Discipline, by both the coaches and the participants in athletics, is of the utmost importance (Thornton et al., 2012). It has long been said that the best ability is availability (Parcells & Coplon, 1995). Discipline and respect go hand-in-hand when discussing athletic participation because it is often the same players who are disrespectful who also are undisciplined (Martens, 2012). These types of players are a danger to their teams, despite their possible copious amount of talent, due to their hazardous habits. Because a spirit of insolence coupled with sizeable egos, as are relatively common in athletics, frequently results in actions deserving suspension from athletic involvement or even removal from the team altogether, a comparable attitude can cause much more harm than it does assistance (Thornton et al., 2012). It does not matter how much skill a player has if they cannot use that ability on the playing field due to suspension or dismissal from the team.

From the players' perspectives, if a coach is disrespectful and unruly, it demonstrates a tolerance for that behavior and conditions the athletes to accept the actions as normal (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Athletes may be more likely to behave in a

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disorderly fashion after being subjected to their authority figure acting in such a manner (Myers, 2012). A coach losing their temper can be particularly perilous to the attitude of a team since the same rule regarding availability being the best ability applies to both instructors and participants alike. Coaches cannot lead and direct their players if they are dismissed from competition because of undisciplined actions. Therefore, a successful quality that should be demonstrated by coaches is the characteristic of discipline.

Disciplined players and coaches are essential; however, within the construct of team sports, a certain level of cohesion and chemistry is necessary to play with a common identity, purpose, and goal (Smith, 2014). Cohesion, especially as illustrated in the case study of De La Salle's football team, assists in team development, productivity, and communication (Williams, 2016). Because an increase in productivity naturally occurs in groups that are formed tightly, it is no wonder why these certain coaches achieved the amounts of accomplishment that they did. By disciplining a team as if it were a family, by cultivating relationships with players outside of the technical aspects of sports, and by standing up for athletes when they needed assistance, each of the coaches in this paper demonstrated qualities that exuded and exhibited cohesiveness.

A final common thread between the coaches in this study was effective communication. Communication, which includes both the sending and receiving of a message, is vital to the triumph involved with any group of people (Williams, 2016). Whether it was addressing problems within the program, developing relationships with players, verbalizing the strategic plan, or utilizing words to discipline athletes, every individual examined employed successful communication within their organization. This allowed for a distinct and specific purpose, leading to a clear overall mission for the

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team. In turn, the players were able to effectively strive toward a common goal under the supervision and direction of the coach.

The general measurable accomplishments of each coach analyzed in this thesis are summarized in the figure below:

Coach	Wins	Winning %	Championships	Years Coached	Conference/Division Championships
<b>Bob Laoueur (De La Salle)</b>	399	93.4%	11	34	28*
<b>Nick Saban (LSU/'Bama)</b>	201**	76.7%	5	21	6
<b>Steve Spurrier (Duke/UF)</b>	228	71.8%	1	26	7
<b>John Wooden (UCLA)</b>	664	80.4%	10	29	21
<b>Joel Quenneville (Blues/Avs/ Blackhawks)</b>	801***	55.7%	3	19	3

\*Denotes North Coast Section Championships

\*\* As of November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016

\*\*\* As of the end of the 2015-2016 season

*Table 6: Overview of Coaches' Accomplishments*

### **Chapter V: Conclusion**

Though generalizing groups of players can be dangerous to the individuality of athletes and some claim that no one coaching style is superior to others, for the purpose of this paper, both of these assumptions are necessary. Because there is such variety in personalities and dynamics concerning single teams and various levels of athletics, it is clear that one leadership technique does not fit all situations perfectly. However, based on the examples presented and analyzed, it can be determined that certain management styles can be exceptionally productive at the high school, collegiate, and professional ranks.

At the high school level, in order to be successful, it can be concluded that while instruction is necessary, the needs of the players must also be met (Weaver, 2016). Not only is this concept supported through the coaching illustration of Bob Ladouceur at De La Salle, but it can be confirmed by the psychological thought of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, as well (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). For example, a player is not going to perform to the best of their ability if they are worried about where their next meal is going to come from (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). They will often be more concerned about their safety, physiological needs, or belonging, rather than worrying about their performance on the field if those former needs are not met (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Because certain needs must be met before an athlete feels like they can compete effectively, and Bob Ladouceur attempted to make every effort to care for his players, when it came time to perform on the playing field, the athletes on De La Salle High School's varsity football team were only concerned about their responsibility within the game.

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The psychological connection between a coach and their players is immensely important at nearly any age (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Although the Pyramid of Success can transcend all levels of sport, in order to get the most out of college-aged athletes specifically, coaches must employ the principles of John Wooden. He has proven to be the most successful coach to have ever lived and his strategies and leadership qualities are emulated by many victorious leaders today (Williams & Denney, 2012). Because of his focus on the athletes on his team as people instead of merely pawns in an ultimate plan to achieve greatness, a larger effect was made possible (Dungy, 2010). Though Wooden did concentrate on developing the skill of his players on the basketball court, his concentration on the process and the growth of his players as individuals in society and the world in general enabled them to reach heights that would have otherwise been unattainable.

At the professional level of sports, the business, skill, and organizational structure of the field force the relationship between a coach and their players to be quite different (Pedersen et al., 2011). In both high school and college athletics, players may need more instruction, while for participants at the professional level, education involving the technical aspects of the game may not be prominent, or even necessary at all (Shimon, 2011). Instead, professional coaches aim to cooperate with the General Manager to create an organization that balances both the ability of the athletes and the chemistry that can be generated between teammates (Pedersen et al., 2011). It is this combination in leadership that ultimately, if realized, can translate to enormous amounts of success and accomplishment on the athletic platform.

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Due to the nature of professional sports, a transactional leadership style is often adopted by management over a transformational one, as players can be traded or released from the team at nearly any moment and the “transaction” of playing for money is a prominent topic (Pedersen et al., 2011). As heartbreaking as that reality might seem, professional sports are inherently a business, and the administration in each organization is going to do what it can to produce the best possible chance for success, even if it means trading players at a moment's notice (Pedersen et al., 2011). Because the vast majority of participants in professional athletics are fully grown adults, there is also significantly less of a need to focus on teaching life lessons. Since there is a sharp contrast between the psychological development of someone at the age of fifteen and someone at the age of twenty-five, slightly different coaching styles should be utilized (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Though unique leadership strategies may be used at various levels within athletics, there are key principles that remain the same regardless of the maturity and skill level of the participants.

In conclusion, it can be extremely difficult to formulate a method for consistent success in athletics. There are a number of different aspects that contribute to the overall achievements of teams, while individual games can still be contended by squads with less talented players (Frazier & Snyder, 1991). Though players do ultimately determine their performance on the playing field, no single factor affects a player's performance more, either positively or negatively, than the coach's influence (Becker & Solomon, 2009). This thought is especially evident at both the high school and collegiate age levels, while it is still visible at the professional level, as well (Pedersen et al, 2011).



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In closing, the leadership style that seems to be the most successful when dealing with the transmittance of strategy in direct accordance with the cases inspected is the authoritarian type of coaching technique. Once again, this is merely the style of communicating the direction of the program, not necessarily the overall leadership style presented by the authority figure. Though this approach was utilized in the majority of the case studies examined, it is important to recognize the other factors each of the examples exhibited, as well. In order for the authoritarian leadership style of direction to be profitable, qualities that complement the technique must be present. Talent is obviously required, but a knowledgeable leader who delivers their strategy in an authoritarian manner and genuinely and habitually cares about the participants on the team, which is characteristic of the transformational leadership style, is surely a necessity (Martens, 2012). These traits, along with respectful players who are disciplined and "buy in" to the ideologies presented by the coach, are essential to accomplishment in the athletic arena (Weight & Zullo, 2015). If these factors are displayed in team athletic competition, the transformational leadership technique with limited authoritarian characteristics is undoubtedly proven to be extremely more successful than other styles at any level of sports due to the examples of highly triumphant coaches in the athletic atmosphere.

### **Limitations**

Though this study is relevant to the field, there are some limitations involved with the investigation. Because the paper consists entirely of a literature review on the subject matter with a few case studies regarding successful athletic squads, it does not add to the field through the presentation of statistics. The inclusion of data helps to strengthen the

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argument; however, the information exhibited was gathered from a plethora of credible academic sources rather than solely from an individual survey or interview performed on a group of participants by the author himself. Investigation and research in the form of a literature review completes this analysis by closing the gap in available information on the subject of leadership styles and their contribution to athletic success.

A couple of other limitations involved with this research include both the fact that the case studies concern coaches from various levels of athletics and the concept that the information derives from numerous sports. Instead of simply focusing on a single sport or level of athletics, in order to cover a majority of the realm of athletics, a small amount of consistency may have been compromised. To expand on that thought, the participants in sports are obtained through tremendously diverse means depending on the level of athletics. In high school, athletes cannot be recruited, and simply attend the school which they are "zoned for" (Pedersen et al., 2011). An exception to this regulation involves attending a private establishment or transferring for a substantial reason (Pedersen et al., 2011). College athletes can be recruited to join a particular institution for their athletic ability and are often persuaded by the coaching staff to attend through athletic scholarship (Weight & Zullo, 2015). On the contrary, professional athletes can be "recruited" by organizations; however, they are often drafted, signed, and traded with little regard to their personal desires about joining the specific organization they have a contract with (Pedersen et al., 2011). Therefore, discussing the leadership styles of coaches at all levels in one examination using solely a couple of examples is a weakness regarding the study.

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The research in this paper concentrates on examples in male sports with male coaches. Though the majority of coaches in athletics, even in female sports, are male, coaching females could present a different dynamic than the ones examined in this project (Martens, 2012). Studies support the concept that coaching women is certainly distinctive from coaching men, as men and women tend to process information in ways unique to their respective gender (Martens; Surujlal & Dhurup, 2012). Not only do people of opposite genders handle information in diverse manners, but there may also be a gap in participation between sexes (Glennie & Stearns, 2012). Because the case studies represent solely male athletics, the research might not be as comprehensive as it could be, but this information could enable others to investigate the effect of prosperous coaching styles between genders.

Since there are several factors included in team athletic competition that are not necessarily incorporated in individual athletic events, and vice versa, the focus of this paper is strictly the dynamic between coaches and players concerning the team portion of athletic contests. Similarities do exist in the psychological and physical effect coaches have on the performance of athletes among both individual and group sports; however, there is much more of an emphasis placed on the psychological condition of the athlete due to their own mentality in individual sports, rather than on the impact a significance a coach can have on the execution of the athletes in a team setting (Weinberg & Gould, 2015). Further research in the field could discuss the similarities and differences between the successful coaching styles in team and individual athletic competition.

Some might disagree with the notion that the authoritarian management style is efficient when coaching (Bennie & O'Conner, 2012). One major negative aspect of the

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authoritarian leadership style is the pressure that seems to be put on the athletes to perform with excellence (Martens, 2012). Since an emphasis is placed on specific actions of players and the execution of plays, athletes tend to let their past performances affect the way they play in future endeavors (Martens, 2012). If this is not effectively handled by the coach of the team, unnecessary pressure may cripple an athlete's performance (Smith, 2014). In order to prevent this situation from occurring, the coach who employs authoritarian leadership techniques and strategies must take precautionary measures when focusing on the immense detail involved with the system. This style also allows the coach to communicate exactly what is expected from the athletes, which can relieve pressure on the participants themselves, if managed correctly (Weaver, 2016). Though the authoritarian style usually adds pressure to situations, it can contribute positively to a player's thought process when directions are given explicitly (Martens, 2012). Instead of the players deciding which course of action might be most beneficial during a game and bearing the full responsibility for the events that take place, an athlete could feel empowered knowing that the pressure of calling plays is entirely on the coach, unless the athlete deviates from the conveyed gameplan or improvises during play.

While there are certain limitations to this research technique, there are definitive advantages to this style, as well. The specificity of the research focuses on what it takes to be successful at different levels of athletics. By intensely examining certain situations, accuracy can be achieved through analyzing coaches with immense detail. In order to provide a comprehensive assessment of coaching strategies in all dimensions of athletics, not only must numerous sports be inspected, but various levels must be studied, too. By

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selecting coaches who have exhibited skill in their respective sports and echelons, conclusions about similarities and differences between the dimensions can be drawn.

### **Application**

The research in this study can be applied to multiple subdivisions in the field of sport management. When Athletic Directors (at the high school and collegiate level) or General Managers (at the professional level) are searching for coaches who are exemplary, they can use this information to seek people and leaders who exemplify the characteristics alluded to here. Not only could this assist those hiring, but it could also aid coaches in their personal reflection. Coaches, and anyone in general, for that matter, should always be desiring to better themselves. The data presented in this study can enable growth based on internal assessment of qualities in order to achieve success in a coach's personal life and professional life. Players and leaders on the field can benefit from this project, as well. Due to the analyzing of qualities that better individuals and create synergy within teams, captains and other leaders on athletic teams around the world could use this as a means to accomplish goals through applying the principles of discipline and respect. All of these areas in sports could potentially be improved upon if the ideas are applied to the field.

Because the concept of leadership transcends the world of athletics, it can be utilized by those in business, as well as people in other areas of life. Leadership qualities that contribute to players reaching their potential on the field can be translated to the business world by helping bosses maximize the potential and production of their employees. This could, in turn, play a part in the financial condition of the company as a whole because of the output and morale of workers in the company (Williams, 2016). In

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relation to business, another group that could benefit from these concepts is managers or team leaders of any kind. Since the main purpose of team leaders is to facilitate team activities toward accomplishing a goal, effectively and efficiently managing others is a function of particular relevance to them (Williams, 2016). Through a comprehensive study of leadership styles, in addition to the examination of specific people in positions of leadership in athletics, sport management, business, and lives in general can all be enhanced.

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