COLLEGE WOMEN'S ULTIMATE RESOURCES MANUAL

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY CHIP CHANG, MICHELLE NG, &
KYRA CATABAY

PUBLISHED 2018
FIRST PUBLISHED 2010


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FIRST EDITION PUBLISHED 2010 | MICHELLE NG

2018 PREFACE BY MICHELLE NG
FOREWORD BY CHIP CHANG
INTRODUCTION BY KYRA CATABAY

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BROUGHT TO YOU BY

WITHOUT LIMITS

Women's Ultimate. Community.
Competition. Empowerment.

FIRST EDITION CONTENTS

FIRST EDITION PUBLISHED 2010 | MICHELLE NG

Cover Photo: Cara Sieber (Ohio State Fever) & Michelle “Hydra” McGhee (Stanford Superfly)
Photo by Brian Canniff

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

EYLEEN CHOU

A DEAR FRIEND AND CONTRIBUTOR TO THE 1ST EDITION OF THE COLLEGE WOMEN'S ULTIMATE RESOURCES MANUAL

AND THE OTHER FRIENDS & MEMBERS OF THE ULTIMATE COMMUNITY WE HAVE LOST

YOUR LEGACIES LIVE ON IN THE WAY WE LOVE THOSE AROUND US

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION II: LEADERSHIP

SECTION III: DEVELOPING TEAMS, BUILDING PROGRAMS

SECTION IV: MENTAL HEALTH, INJURIES, AND BURNOUT

SECTION V: COACHING

2018 PREFACE | MICHELLE NG

For the past decade, ultimate has been my life. I'm lucky enough to have been to College Nationals, Club Nationals, and Club Worlds, and I've captained nine different seasons across five different teams.

I've also been on teams struggling just to complete passes and get people to practice. I started playing ultimate on a college B team and it was one of the most formative experiences I've had in this sport.

A couple of years into my journey, I became very invested in creating playing and development opportunities for other players and teams. I remember using shoes for cones at College Sectionals (not Conferences!), and it being the norm for the women's division to be relegated to the back fields at tournaments. I also remember organizing a meeting of the minds at Women's College Centex in 2008 to try to ignite change and to get all of these brilliant leaders, my friends, on the same page. Equity wasn't in our vocabularies; we just believed that we deserved the same opportunities we saw the men's teams getting.

I started Without Limits with the mission of fostering relationships within the women's ultimate community and helping to grow the women's division. Along the way, I began to realize the importance of these relationships and opportunities - not just on the field, but in life outside of ultimate. It's been a privilege to see many players I've worked with become leaders on their teams and in their workplaces, and live lives as kind people making their communities better.

In 2010, I organized and edited the first edition of the College Women's Ultimate Resources Manual. It was a passion project, inspired by the many amazing leaders in our community and a desire to capture some of their knowledge in a how-to guide for new and/or aspiring leaders. We carried out the editing in Microsoft Word documents emailed back and forth. This was in the dark ages when I had a Nokia 5190 and printed MapQuest directions to navigate tournament weekends. Tournaments didn't have round-by-round updates; you might not know who won a tournament across the country until days later. It was an entirely different time, one that not many current college players will be able to remember.

Hundreds of tournaments, clinics, and team and individual mentoring sessions later, I'm thrilled to be involved in the release of the 2nd Edition of the Manual. While many of the challenges facing young leaders remain the same, our sport has grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade and our foundation of knowledge is constantly evolving. I'm in awe of how many people the original project reached, and I'm excited to bring even more content your way in this 2nd Edition.

Read this Manual from cover to cover, or pick and choose the articles you want to read. More importantly, take the time to reflect on your own experiences, and thoughtfully engage your teammates and friends in conversations about these topics. A leader's job is to empower and inspire each of their players to be the best version of themself, and we hope that these articles guide you to that end. The 1st Edition of the Manual was very focused on the "basics" of leadership and documented many hard skills and processes that could be shared and replicated across teams. While the 2nd Edition also covers some of these same topics, this edition also includes coverage of many soft skills that might not be obvious to a young captain. We also included articles on equity and mental health, two critical topics that have been brought to the forefront of many discussions since the 1st Edition was released.

A huge thank you to Chip Chang for her work in making the 2nd Edition of the Manual happen. Thank you for raising the idea, circling back to raise it again, and for all of the work you put in along the way. This 2nd Edition truly would not have happened without you!

I also want to say a big thank you to Adriana Withers from VC Ultimate for all of her guidance and support over the years, and to Kyra Catabay who has taken the lead on Without Limits. I'm proud of everything you do for our community, and I'm excited to work with you in the years ahead.

And last but not least, a heartfelt thank you to my family for their lifelong support of my crazy dreams. Thank you for your advice and love, and for being alongside me every step of the way.

FOREWORD | CHIP CHANG

I came across the first edition of this Resources Manual in the fall of 2010. I was a sophomore in college and had just come off my first season playing ultimate with the B-team. We had just graduated an enormous class, leaving seven returning members of the A-team, four of whom had the same years of ultimate experience as me - one. In fact, one of our elected captains was coming off her rookie season. Not only did this mean that a large contingent from the B-team was likely moving up to the A-team, but we also needed another large recruiting class to fill both teams and create a sustainable future.

I went to UC San Diego (Psycho, you know!) and during that time, no one had played or even heard of ultimate prior to college. During my four-year tenure, we only had one rookie who had played before college - she stopped playing after a devastating ACL injury at our first fall tournament. The point is, we had to do a lot to recruit, retain, and teach rookies, especially on a college campus that was nicknamed UC Socially Dead. There is nothing like being at a public, research one university, known for its academics and lack of student participation in anything other than going to the library and finding free food, and especially not in sports.

We began the fall feeling woefully ill-equipped. We of course had our vast network of Psycho alumni who never hesitated to help, and a strong women's club team in the area. We relied on traditions and information passed down to shape everything from our team culture to strategy. And while passing down traditions was a very special part of my college experience, it also meant we were using the same strategy for years. So when the first edition of this Resources Manual was released during our fall season, it was the universe sending us a sign.

See, back then we had the Internet, but we didn't have nearly the wealth of, and access to, the ultimate knowledge that exists today. It was hard to acquire knowledge outside your immediate circles. There was RSDnospam, essentially a google forum for ultimate players that was moderated in order to, well, remove the spam. If you wanted the latest update on tournament bids, the date of next year's tournament, or juicy Callahan gossip, you went there. There was also, "The Huddle," an ultimate magazine that featured drills and tips from experienced ultimate players, and the UPA Newsletter. (Yes, the Ultimate Players Association, pre-USA Ultimate.) And then there were a bunch of blogs hosted by college women's ultimate players that were equal parts entertaining gossip and helpful advice. Most importantly, they functioned to create a community of college female athletes. (Anyone remember J.Wo?!)

Ultimate in 2010 was very different than ultimate in 2018. (Other things that happened in 2010 - Instagram and the iPhone 4.) Quality and easily accessible game footage did not exist. In fact, this was during the time where YouTube had a 10 minute cap! Callahan videos, ultimate specific strength & conditioning guides, apps that kept track of stats, ultimate playing tours, and livestreams did not exist. Imagine your ultimate career, being able to only access the immediate, physical community that surrounded you. If you played on a college women's team that was just starting out, didn't have a coach, was trying to go from playing savage to becoming a national caliber team, or didn't have a strong ultimate community in your area, good luck.

So when Michelle Ng created Without Limits, specifically for female ultimate players in college, it would completely change the landscape of college women's ultimate. And when Without Limits came out with the College Women's Resources Manual, it would forever change my ultimate experience.

The Resources Manual was my bible in college. I painstakingly downloaded the files onto my computer, and when my computer crashed later that year during finals week, I downloaded the files again. I re-read the section on "Recruiting and Retention" every year before the fall quarter. I used the "Practice Planning" articles to design practices when I captained my senior year. I re-read Bryn Martyna's "How to Find a Coach" when we looked for new coaches. In fact, the coaches we hired are still with UCSD and one of them wrote a piece on how to find a coach for this edition. I remember one of my first interactions with mental toughness was Sam Salvia's piece recounting Fury's historic comeback win against Riot (Hint: Fury was down 10-1, go read this story!) And in helping create this second edition, how lucky was I to speak with Sam Salvia on the phone 8 years later?!

But what I loved the most about this Resources Manual, though I didn't fully realize it then, was that it was catered specifically to college women's ultimate. Don't get me wrong, the lessons, strategies, and tips can be applied to ultimate across levels and divisions. This was before gender equity existed in my vocabulary or could articulate why this was so important. I just knew there was something special and rare about seeing mostly female authors, players, coaches, and Callahan winners in this manual. And little did I know, it was history in PDF form, filled with legends, emerging stars, and many future friends.

It's been 8 years since the first edition came out. This past summer, I was chatting with an incoming captain at the University of Minnesota. She was excited about captaining, but equally nervous. I sent her this manual (I still had a PDF!) and revisited the articles to see if they were still relevant.

Indeed they were.

INTRODUCTION | KYRA CATABAY

I vividly remember the first time I stepped onto an ultimate field. It was January, it was cold (for Florida), and I had no idea what I was doing. Little did I know, that muggy practice was the gateway into the obscure sport that defined my college experience.

Two weeks later, I caught the first score in the history of our B team at its very first tournament. I don't remember much more about that season, but I knew I loved it.

The next season, I tried out for the A team and didn't make the cut. It was a returner heavy roster that only took 7 new players (including a DI and Team USA Lacrosse player in grad school) and eventually made its way to Nationals for the first time in several years. Would I have loved to make that team? Of course. But I don't think I would have seen the field all that much. There were players that played just 1 or 2 points at Nationals on that roster.

The day after those cuts were made, I put my disappointment in a box and went to practice. My new position as B team captain combined with my desire to be the best player I could be led me to ask a women's player in the area for resources that I could read (videos and game film were few and far between back then). She sent me to The Huddle and to Win the Fields and to other various blogs. And somewhere in the black hole of the internet, I found the College Women's Ultimate Resources Manual. I read it all.

I learned so much in that year of captaining the B team -- how to lead, how to play with confidence, how to compete and have fun at the same time. I played in game situations that I wouldn't have been in with the A team. Through it all, I developed as a player and leader, forged friendships with my teammates, and still burned with that the desire to compete at the highest level (which in my mind was on the A team).

Fast forward to eventually captaining that A team for two seasons, qualifying for College Nationals, and qualifying for Club Nationals multiple times with North Carolina Phoenix.

Michelle created the Manual that found its way to me (in Florida) and Chip (in California). What is strange and interesting, or maybe just purely coincidental, is that the three of us started on B teams, captained our A teams, and then worked our way up to Club Nationals qualifying

teams. We found that if we worked hard enough, we could improve immensely as players and leaders, and it was that journey that inspired us to work on the 2nd Edition of the Manual.

What you have on your screen now are pieces of advice and stories that might pull on your heartstrings enough for you to write it on a sticky note, or in your journal (I always keep a playing journal), or on your arm in Sharpie at tournaments. These stories, interwoven with women in's ultimate in some way, capture the feelings, the love, the community, and the experiences that we all share.

The Manual was an integral part of my development as a player and leader. I leaned on the articles when I played college ultimate and found that the lessons I learned applied to other parts of my life. And because of that, I am so excited to share this Manual with YOU: from club players gearing up for Club Nationals to new B captains who are on the cusp of making your A team to everyone in between.

Read every page if you can and settle in for the journey ahead. I can't wait to see where you go.

SECTION I

TEAM CULTURE

Creating Team Culture: It's a Team Process!

Anraya Palmer

What is team culture and why is it important? What are some practical things we can do to develop team culture and how do we incorporate everyone's input into this process? How do we balance being the team we are vs. being the team we want to be?

A little known fact about me is that I am a huge sports buff. I've been around sports since I was born and started playing shortly there after. I love watching sports; I'll watch just about anything. My brain is full of random sports facts that typically aren't useful for anything except maybe trivia. I also keep up with sports stats like team and player efficiency rating- yes I know, I'm THAT person. Some teams I was obsessed with and loved watching play have some pretty awesome nicknames. The Los Angeles Lakers in the early 80s were known as Showtime, the Detroit Pistons took on the Bad Boy persona, the Pittsburgh Steelers in the early 70's had the Steel Curtain defense, and the University of Miami football program is simply known as The U. These names were more than fun, catchy nicknames. These names were also these teams' identities. The Showtime Lakers were known for exciting, run-and-gun offense. The Bad Boys were physically aggressive and relentless on defense, same as the Steel Curtain. The U was a culture of swagger made up of big time personalities with lots of attitude and never shied away from trash talk. All teams may not have catchy nicknames, but all teams have a unique identity or a team culture.

When we think of culture, we think about the attitudes and behaviors that may characterize a particular group of people. So team culture is the attitudes and behaviors of a team. This includes all the rituals, habits, routines, systems and expectations teams have in place to achieve a common goal. **The most important thing to remember about team culture is the concept of team.**

A positive team experience comes from each member of the team buying in or believing in your teams' values and goals that each member helps decide. Good team culture comes from every member working together, communicating effectively and being supportive of one another. Support from teammates is key! Support is what gives people the confidence to open up and trust each other. You want people to be willing to open up when times are good and also when things may be tough or challenging. This includes on or off the field issues.

I really like this topic because I definitely identify as a true team player. I strive to be flexible, willing to help, but most importantly, be supportive. As a team player, I completely believe and trust my teams' systems. No matter what other roles I may take on within the team, I always want being the best teammate possible to be my first role.

My club team, Atlanta Ozone, likes to say, *"Be generous with your teammates."* Being generous with your teammates means being willing to support and listen to them. Taking the time to build relationships with your teammates. Going the extra mile to make sure we remember we are a team and not just a bunch of individuals. I have a couple of practical things you can do and other takeaways to help develop team culture. I will also share perspectives on team culture from some of the high school students I coach.

Establishing Team Culture

Ok so you have just selected your team for the upcoming season. What now? After selecting your team, the next best thing to do is to have a team meeting. Plan ahead and select a time when a majority of your team can join. A good way to get everybody comfortable and willing to open up is with some ice breaker games. I used to be a person who hated playing ice breakers, but now I love them. It's a good way to see if there are people that you share commonalities with. Having these connections helps people feel closer to one another and more willing to open up and share.

Something Ozone has been doing at our preseason meetings is asking for buzz words related to how we want to define our team. We use a white board and ask for everyone to participate by writing down a word or a phrase on how they want to define the team's identity. Examples of words we wrote down: present, gritty defense, supportive, trust, swagger, motivating, spirited, welcoming, balanced, family, and fun. After everyone has written down a couple or words or phrases, everyone gets some sticky notes and puts them around the buzzwords that they identify with. The words with the most sticky notes beside them will be what the team values the most. Our top words included family, balanced, competitive and supportive. I like this way of coming up with team values because it is definitely a team effort, everybody has an input. It also helps to narrow down some attainable team goals based on the values the team just decided on. For example, Ozone wants to be known as a competitive team. A goal

we came up with based off of that value was making semis at each tournament we competed at. Remember, these team goals should be decided together as a team. You'll get more buy-in when everybody starts on the same page.

Team Buy-In

The team is set, values have been established and goals have been made. All of this sounds good on paper, but how do you get everyone to believe in them? You are about to spend a tremendous amount of time together as a team. Practice, workouts, tournaments, that is a ton of time together! Before you get into your season, make sure there are planned team activities. These activities can involve ultimate, but make sure there are non-frisbee activities as well. Fun activities don't have to take up too much extra time.

My team will usually have lunch post practice or grab dinner together at tournaments. Other activities we like include watching movies or streaming ultimate games, getting food together, or going to support other local sports teams. Spend time with your teammates, be flexible and get to know them! When your team starts to feel like family, you are establishing good team culture.

Ozone celebrates an upset win over Riot during Quarters at the 2017 USA Ultimate Club National Championships. Photo by Paul Rutherford

Another way to instill team buy-in is by creating team mottos or mantras. Having a phrase that can fire up your team, but also reminds you of team values is huge! My high school kids last year were a roster of 23, which lead to the call and response cheer, "How strong are we? 23!" Not only was this a cheer to bring the sideline energy up, it also reminds them that the team is made up of 23 individuals, not just a few players. On Ozone we like to say, "Eat and Stay Hungry." It fires us up, but it's a reminder that we aren't satisfied until we reach our goals. Some words or cheers can also come from inside jokes or funny stories shared by the team. Ozone gets really hyped talking about carrots...don't ask.

Team We Are Vs. Team We Want To Be

Turnover on a team from year to year is bound to happen. Sometimes you lose one player, sometimes a large graduating class. Sometimes you may have issues during the season that could have a major impact on the team. Team culture may change with these situations, for better or for worse. It is important to have regular check-ins with the team to make sure team values and goals are still being carried out. I have seen these check-ins happen as a

whole team, 1 on 1 or within smaller groups like buddy groups or pods. What feedback are you getting from players? You could also be getting feedback from other teams. Listen! Are you getting away from team values? Are you making sure everyone feels included? Are you connecting with newer players? Take all this feedback into account and make the necessary changes to preserve team culture.

Final Takeaways

1. Team culture is how your team identifies. Are you competitive? Spirited? Just playing for fun?
2. How your team identifies and what your team values should be decided as a team. Everybody's input should be taken into account. Remember, support is important!
3. Team bonding. Your team is your family. Get to know each other and have fun together.
4. Regular team check-ins are a good thing. How's the team culture? Are we achieving our goals? Are we practicing our team values? Listen to feedback and make changes if necessary. Remember this is a team and everyone should feel supported and valued. Everyone should feel included!

In addition to playing on Ozone, I coach the women's varsity ultimate team at Paideia. Paideia Groove is a well established program. Groove has a phenomenal team culture; the best word to describe it is family. I asked a couple of my kids how they defined the team culture on Groove. I wanted to share some of their thoughts and ideas on Groove's team culture.

> *"We were able to recognize each other's strengths and have a good time together because of it."*
>
> *"Commitment was one of the biggest defining things."*
>
> *"The balance between goofiness and focus. There are leaders on the team that are weird in an awesome way and that became part of the culture. It's cool when the leadership can be fun too."*
>
> *"Good balance of competition and support within the team. I strived to work hard because I saw my teammates working hard. I was friends with my teammates so it wasn't hard to want to work and cheer for them."*

Creating team culture requires input and effort from everyone on the team. And when there is commitment and buy-in to team values and goals, it is easy for everybody to feel welcomed and supported. It is easy for everybody to recognize and believe in their team's culture. So even if your team doesn't have a catchy nickname, your team should be able to come up with an identity and own it.

Building a Culture of Positivity

Samantha Salvia

After “retiring” from club ultimate to start my family, I became involved with Positive Coaching Alliance. PCA defines positive coaching as creating an environment that supports the best performance, and I’d add, supports individual and team growth. Here are tools that I would implement as a team leader if I had my college/club career to do over.

One of my lowest moments as an athlete was in the waning minutes of an away NCAA Division 1 field hockey game against our rival University of North Carolina. My team, Old Dominion University, was awarded a penalty stroke. I was the team’s primary stroke taker and routinely took 50+ strokes at the end of each practice. I stepped up to the mark and reached my stick toward the ball to line up my step as I’d done so many times before. But I REALLY wanted this one to go in and so, unlike so many times before, I decided I would step slightly further back than usual so I could put something “extra” on it. The ref blew the whistle and I took the shot but the extra long stride compromised how much I could put on the ball and it trickled off my stick for an easy save by the keeper. I was mortified. It was my job to put the ball in the goal and I’d failed. We lost the game and our coach imposed silence for our 3.5 hr van ride back to our Norfolk, VA campus.

For the first part of my athletic career, fear of mistakes was a strong motivator. The athletic programs I was a part of had a culture of expecting strong performance as the norm, so praise was minimal and criticism was free flowing.

This changed for me when I joined Stanford Superfly as a grad student and then later, Fury. To my surprise, we could have tremendous success and a culture of excellence without fear and relentless criticism.

For the last six years I've been affiliated with a nonprofit called the Positive Coaching Alliance. As a PCA trainer, I've delivered over 100 workshops to coaches, sports parents, and athletes on the principles of positive coaching and how to create an environment in sports that supports the best performance and personal growth (life lessons).

I've learned so many, many things in the last decade or so since I've retired from club ultimate that I wish I'd known as a college and club athlete. If I had my college career as a Division I field hockey player at Old Dominion University and a grad student ultimate player on Stanford Superfly, to do over, these are the things I would implement with my teams:

5:1 ratio

Research in multiple areas — classrooms, sports, and marriages — has found that an overall positive climate supports better performance and that a ratio of about 5:1 positive to critical feedback is optimal. Often when I share this with coaches in workshops, they will balk, "I can't say five compliments before I can make the correction I need to make." Good news for all of us, it doesn't have to be 5:1 in the moment. Rather, the overall climate needs to be one of positivity. Things like using someone's name, high fiving, eye contact, and other positive interactions count toward this overall environment as well. Positive Coaching Alliance uses the analogy of an emotional tank. An environment of 5:1 fills teammates' tanks so that when criticism, a mistake, or another challenge occurs they have enough emotional reserve to respond constructively.

The Power of Positive Actions

Actions can be even more impactful than words in filling teammates' tanks and creating a positive environment. This lesson was made clear for me in 2007 while competing at the national championships with Fury. Our defense had just gotten a turn and Alex Snyder strided to the disc. She surveyed the field and called one of our set plays that was an isolation cut from me. From the stack, I took two hard steps deep, planted, and accelerated on an in cut. I had shed my defender and was already thinking about who I would turn and throw the disc to when her perfectly thrown disc bounced off my hands. My teammates said all the right things: "We'll get it back! We got this. Defense!" etc. But nothing anybody said could make me feel any better. I had a turnover in the finals of nationals. During that same point, thanks to our collective defensive effort, we got the disc back and in nearly the same part of the field, Alex picked up the disc and called the same play. I made my cut, caught the disc with complete focus and completed the next pass. Nothing could have been more tank filling in that moment than my teammate showing me, through her actions, that she had full confidence in me.

Truthful, specific praise

Let's talk about praise for a bit. Praise is more effective when it's truthful and specific. The vague "good jobs and nice works" are ok, but not nearly as impactful as — "Great job clearing space on that last point" or "nice defensive footwork, I know you've been working on that." It takes more work on our part to deliver that type of praise, because we have to notice what our teammates are doing well. It's so much easier to notice what they are doing wrong. Humans have that tendency. I used to be concerned that if I gave too much praise the recipients wouldn't think they needed to improve and would be less motivated. Thankfully for my teammates and coworkers I know differently now. Noticing and praising effort builds trust, fills tanks, and creates an environment in which teammates can improve.

Growth Mindset

If you haven't read Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset or watched her Ted talk, please consider putting this coaching manual down to GO DO IT! Her key insight is that people adopt different mindsets around their abilities. Someone with a fixed mindset believes talents are fixed and there isn't anything to change them. They are more likely to give up when faced with adversity and seek to validate their talents. Someone with a growth mindset believes effort and practice can lead to improvement. They are more likely to be resilient and see mistakes as learning opportunities.

She also found that mindsets can be influenced by the type of praise we deliver. So what this means for us as coaches and teammates is praising effort rather than natural ability or outcome will yield better long-term results. When we focus on the process rather than some innate ability or talent, athletes are more likely to keep trying when it gets hard. I think a great example of this is teaching the forehand. For some new players, it seems to come more easily than others. If we praise those teammates by saying something like, "Nice forehand, you're a natural" — what happens when that athlete does inevitably struggle with a throw? Or when her teammate who is already struggling overhears and interprets that as it should come "easily"?

Adopting a growth mindset goes beyond just how we praise our teammates. Having a growth mindset for ourselves and others means genuinely believing in our teammates' capacity to improve. It's not that our teammate can't break the mark — she can't break it YET.

Rewarding Effort over Outcome

Often the outcome is reward enough in itself (e.g. scoring the goal); positive reinforcement is most valuable when the process is hard and challenging. "I noticed you clearing wide on that point opened up your teammate for the score." I've been in Positive Coaching Alliance workshops with parents who have shared with me that they motivate their soccer player by paying money for goals. This has always struck me as misguided. The kids I've encountered seem pretty motivated to score goals. If you're going to incentivize something — how about paying them to hustle back on D!? Or to open space for teammates?! I am being facetious, but my point is — consider how to incentivize the aspects of the game that need more

reinforcement — being a great teammate, working off the disc, shut down defense so you don't need to layout for a glorious block, etc. Bottom line: Notice and reward the effort!

Framing direction in the positive

This is a simple one. "You can't do a don't" Let's try it right now.

Don't think about pink elephants.

Framing direction in the positive means telling people what you want them to do. If you say the "don't", it requires people to take the extra mental step to figure out what you do want. Have you ever been at a pool and noticed how much more effective the lifeguard is who tells kids "walk" instead of "don't run." So instead of "Don't stop your cut," it's, "Run through you cut." Instead of "don't be late to practice," it's "be on time", or "be respectful of people's time", or "let us know if you aren't going to be on time." Tell them what you want! This also puts the onus on us, as the deliverer of the feedback, to think about what we DO want from that person.

If..Then.. Statements

If...then statements are a simple yet powerful way to construct feedback. When we deliver feedback, we are usually wanting to change behavior. We can tell other people what we think they should be doing all day long, but in the end, whether that feedback is acted upon is ultimately up to the receiver. What I like about the If...then construct is that it provides some context to the receiver on why you are suggesting the feedback and acknowledges their agency in acting upon it. So, for example, "Step out further when you release the disc" becomes, "If you want to break the mark consistently, then step out further when you release the disc." This not only works well for simple instructions, but for more challenging conversations too. For example, "If you want more playing time, then we need to see you at every practice and track workout consistently."

Mistake Rituals

Staying present is a critical skill in every sport. There are numerous sayings about this — Mind in the moment, best play is the next play, etc. It's particularly challenging after making an error (say...dropping a disc in the finals of nationals). A mistake ritual is a simple physical gesture to help an athlete let go of a mistake and stay in the moment. "Flush it" is a common one that has been used by college baseball teams and U5 soccer teams alike. Others include — shaking out hands (Shake it off), brush off your shoulder (Brush it off), pressing a reset button. I've found it can be useful to have the entire team adopt one so that it can be a signal among teammates — a gentle reminder when you see heads go down. I've worked with teams that have used the mistake ritual to also help them shake off bad calls or other uncontrollables and return focus to the present. I played for many years with Gwen Ambler (former Stanford, Fury and Riot, former USAU Board Member, now coaching Riot) and when I first learned of mistake rituals, I immediately thought of her. In the rare instances when she threw a bad pass, she would shake out her hands, and sometimes even look down at them in surprise for a brief

moment, before shifting to defense. I'm not even sure it was conscious — she instinctively had her own mistake ritual.

Parking Lot

I love the mistake ritual tool and have found it useful as a youth coach and as a mistake-ridden masters player. However, there are some mistakes during competition I find I don't want to simply "flush" — I want to learn from them and make adjustments. At times I find myself replaying things in my head and having trouble letting it go. The amazing mental skills coach Colleen Hacker shared a tool with me that she introduced to the 1999 World Cup Champion US Women's Soccer Team. She calls it the parking lot.

CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE WITH GOOD COMMUNICATION AND FOLLOW THROUGH CAN HELP TEAMMATES RESPOND TO ADVERSITY AND USE THE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO THEM.

As she explains it, when you park your car somewhere, you don't go back and check it every few minutes. You trust it will be there when you are finished what you are doing and need it. So for some mistakes or corrections, she suggests "parking them" during competition, knowing you WILL come back to it, but it's okay to let it go for now. She shared an anecdote with me. One of the USWNT soccer players came up to her right before a game very upset with complaints about something a coach had said and something a teammate had done. Colleen heard her out and then simply said, "Parking lot." The player responded in exasperation: "The parking garage is FULL Colleen!" While it's a great tool, as Colleen's story reminds us, no tool will work all the time in every situation. Creating a positive culture with good communication and follow through can help teammates respond to adversity and use the tools available to them.

Shout Out Circle

Peer feedback is powerful and finding ways to build it into your team interactions can be valuable. One way to do this is to use a shout-out circle in which teammates recognize each other for what they are doing well. I especially like using something like this at halftime. For a few seasons after I retired from Fury, I played in a recreational field hockey league. We had no coaches, so the player/captains led our halftime talks. When I took over this role, at first I would use halftime to tell everyone what we were doing wrong in the first half and needed to change going into the second half. I was one of the more experienced players and certainly my wisdom in this top-down feedback format was what we needed. After starting work with PCA, I decided to try using a shout out circle at half time. We would go around the circle and each player was asked to turn to the teammate next to them and tell them one thing they wanted them to CONTINUE doing in the second half. At first it was challenging for some teammates to deliver a piece of truthful and specific feedback (noticing what your teammates are doing well takes some work!) and other teammates would need to chime in if someone was stuck. What we found was this was an incredible energy raiser. We would head into the second half with an extra bounce in our steps. And over time, we all got much better at noticing what

each other was doing and delivering truthful and specific feedback to teammates. Decorated champion ultimate player and champion human being Lauren Casey used to say teams were made of leaners and lifters. This tool can be a way to cultivate more lifters on your team.

Conclusion

In this article I've described concepts and tools that you can use to build a culture of positivity on your teams. I tried to write the article that I would have wanted as a college captain and I hope you find it useful. In my experience a positive culture not only makes for a more enjoyable team environment, but supports better performance and growth.

The concepts above will work well with an ultimate team. They are tools and concepts I've introduced to the teams I have had the privilege to work with, including Fury, the 2017 All Star Tour, and 2016 Team USA Mixed in their preparation for London. But they are not tools restricted to ultimate. They are team tools, interpersonal tools, life tools. Please take them, modify them, expand them, use them with your teams, use them in other areas of your life, share them with others! Good luck!

Fury's D-line eyes their match-ups at 2006 Nationals (Left to Right: Gwen Ambler, Alicia Barr, Samantha Salvia, Stacey Schoemehl Nolan, Amanda Dauphinee) Photo courtsey of Samantha Salvia

Dealing with Difficult Teammates

Tiina Booth

There are difficult teammates on nearly every team and not all difficult teammates are the same. Learning how to identify the different types of difficult teammates, intervene, and find a solution for the greater good of the team are leadership skills that are central to building a cohesive team culture.

If being on a team is a metaphor for learning about life, there is probably no more important challenge than dealing with a difficult teammate. No one likes confronting this type of player and most leaders will avoid doing so for far too long. This is not a way to run a team. I have found that all problematic players are not the same and offer this primer in an effort to help you to identify, intervene and find a solution for everyone.

Some caveats for leaders:

1. Culture is everything. I don't care what kind of x's and o's you are working on if your team culture is fractured. While every team is different, a strong team culture is generally a supportive one that has procedures built in to deal with any problems that inevitably arise. Every person is valued, no matter their level of experience or skill.

2. Do not ignore these types of teammates. My litmus test is whether something bothers me overnight. If yes, I need to take some kind of action. And if you are hoping a behavior will go away, or if you make excuses for it, then you are probably too late.

You still need to intervene, but it is so much more effective if you can suggest a correction rather than bring down the hammer.

3. Your main obligation is to the players who are bought-in. Do not ignore them because you are trying to rope in a prodigal player. I learned this years ago as a teacher. In a class of 25, if I had 1 or 2 students who were failing or self-sabotaging, I would become obsessed with bringing them onboard. That meant I was ignoring the needs of maybe 20 teenagers who were doing their best to take care of their obligations. The message to them was that your dedication to accountability is unimportant, which is a terrible message from a teacher or team leader.

4. You will occasionally meet a player who has some kind of mental illness. While it may be tempting to be a counselor to them, I strongly advise against it. Unless you are a certified mental health professional, you should not attempt to probe. You have no idea what kind of trauma your teammates have gone through and you can do more harm than good. Kindly refer them to professionals.

THE CONTRARIAN

Appearance

This player seems at first glance to be anti-team. They may prefer scrimmaging to learning and will approach most drills listlessly. They may disagree about the color of the uniforms or where to eat dinner. I remember playing on a loosely organized mixed team in Ithaca and no matter what color shirt we had decided on for a tournament, this player would always bring the wrong color. It would be close (gray instead of black, blue instead of gray) but was his own way of showing his independence from the team. Annoying but not fatal.

Intervention

If this type of player truly bothers the leadership, than a simple chat away from the field may work well. This may be the first time they have ever played a team sport. Ask about how connected they feel to the team or why they are so unhappy. Chances are that they will be surprised that they are being called out as this is the way they may operate in the larger world. It is a service to them to help them recognize their entitlement.

Solution

Invite this player to be an active part of your team structure. I would definitely have them run some drills for a week or more. Put them on the uniform or logistics committee. Once you have an investment in something, it becomes much easier to see how it connects to the team's success.

THE GRUMBLER

Appearance

Imagine that the Contrarian has found an audience and upped the ante. This player may show up purposely late or show up early and warm up half-heartedly. They may be the center of a Grumbler Group who share glances during practice and text afterwards. Grumblers often

have too many obligations and expect the team to accommodate their inability to manage their lives. They often are absent and indignant when questioned. They are mostly disdainful of whatever the team is working on.

Intervention

You are heading into difficult territory now. Finding out why this person is so negative is important but, more than that, ending the behavior is what matters. Do not have a multi-hour chat with a Grumbler about how to bring them on board. Often this is what they want. You also cannot fix everything with a Grumbler with one conversation, so prioritize.

Solution

Establish a standard for attendance for everyone, with consequences for those who fall short. Speak directly to a Grumbler about behavior that is rude or challenging. Do this away from the field. Again, put them in charge of something at practice so they have to prepare and receive feedback. The more you can get them focused on team development, the less trouble they will cause. Hopefully.

THE PRE-TOXIC TEAMMATE

Appearance

You are now entering the Badlands of Bad Teammates. This type of player checks in and out sporadically. They may be playing club in the fall, so their commitment is split. They may hate "fall ultimate" or burnt out with ultimate in general. They may feel like they have a right to do other things in college, but they don't have the time or energy to work out a balance. If you mention that you expect more from them, you may become the target.

Intervention

Give them time away from the team: "Hey, it looks like you have a lot of things on your plate, so why don't you take a few weeks off until you can work things out? We can definitely take care of the team without you." Ok. That's a little passive aggressive but who the hell needs a Disc Diva damaging the early development of a team? Time away will be good for everyone.

Solution

Build the best team you can while this player is gone. Lots of learning at practices. Fun activities away from the field. Watch games together. Whatever you need to do to build a new strong team, do it. You will probably be energized to do more because you don't have the PTT watching over your shoulder. If they choose to come back, they will encounter a real team that has developed without them. And then it is their choice what kind of teammate they want to be.

THE TOXIC TEAMMATE

Appearance

Here we go. The player above has chosen the wrong path and is now fully toxic. They suck most of the energy out of the entire team and make players never want to be captains again. The emotional labor to keep them connected to the team never ends. Unfortunately, they almost always happen to be one of the best players on the team. This appears to give them

the power to miss practices completely, expect to play all of the time, be dismissive of players who are not that "good." They have curated a strong group of teammates who support them. They believe themselves to be untouchable.

And perhaps they are. If they are truly uncuttable, then you have to live with them on the team. Accept them for the mediocre teammate that they are and try to minimize any direct hurt they do. but absolutely do not coddle them. That helps no one.

Intervention

I have had almost no success in getting Toxic Teammates back in the fold. They listen half-heartedly to any criticism and continue to do what they want. I wish I had some magic answer but I do not. You can, however, learn from this experience and redouble your efforts into building a better culture next year.

Solution

Buh-bye. Let them go. Maybe you don't have the power to kick them off the team but I guarantee that the team will never thrive with this level of toxicity. You can modify their behavior a bit but once you have let a bully into your program, you have to live with the results.

Obviously not everyone fits into these neat little categories. Players may exhibit poor behavior at times but genuinely want to be part of a positive experience. Everyone can have a bad day. Part of being a team is working toward commonalities, even if this work is painful. And when you do good work with your teammates, you only make the entire team stronger.

I have found this quote quite helpful. *"There is no such thing as a neutral teammate."* If you are not helping the team, you are hurting it. If you can make these words part of your team's creed, then it becomes much easier to protect your team from those who seek to undermine it.

How to Bring up Equity with Your Team

Rena Kawabata

Do you want to talk to your team about equity but not sure how to bring it up? Do you feel like you want to interrupt racist, sexist behavior but you don't know what to say? In this article, you can find some tools for first steps towards having that continued conversation. You will also find some language and definitions that might be useful in communicating what you're feeling or what the problem is to your team.

You may be already following some equity advocates on Twitter and you have read some articles posted on Skyd about the conversation about gender and racial equity. We are definitely in a moment in our sport where more people are standing up for what they believe is right, and as a result, having conversations with the important people in their lives.

For a long time, I felt different, excluded and othered. I am a woman of color, mixed race of Japanese and Anglo-Saxon/Scandinavian ethnic descent. And so, I looked very visually different from people, and didn't even fit into what people thought an Asian person looked like. I'm also the daughter of an opinionated and assertive woman, and was socialized to be equally (if not more) opinionated and assertive. And so, I've had to deal with more than my fair share of people accusing me of being arrogant,

annoying, loud, bossy, unlikable, abrasive, unladylike, cocky, condescending, selfish, pushy, obnoxious…

I thought I was the only person that felt this way and experienced these things. It was so lonely and disheartening to feel like I was alone in the world. One day, I met another half-Asian person and we had a lot in common and I realized that there were other people who knew what it was like to be half-Asian. And another day, I met some rad feminists who were also called arrogant, loud and annoying. As I became more connected to the world, as I started to share my experience and stories, and more importantly as I listened and heard from other people about their experiences and stories, I realized that there were so many people in the world with whom I shared similarities.

I decided to write this article because is it in this sharing of stories and experiences where we find connection. We realize we are not alone. It is the culture and society that was founded on imperialism, white-supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy that has made us feel different, excluded and othered for so long. This is why we need to have conversations about equity, because I guarantee there are players on your team, who for some reason or another feel different, excluded and othered. Even if you or your team has never intentionally made them feel that way.

Statistically, a women's college team in the US will be mostly white and female-identifying, but we all have seen and unseen identities that can contribute to our feeling marginalized or feeling different. Even outside of race, gender and sexuality, you might want to consider that a teammate may be the first person in their family to attend college, they may have a family member living in the US who doesn't have legal documentation, they may not drink or do drugs for any number of reasons, or they may not identify as being a woman.

I don't drink. Never had and probably never will. And a lot of my young adult experience and college experience revolved around drinking and drinking culture. Many times as a young person I would enter a party or social event and be offered a drink. When I declined I would get questions, weird looks, judgement, peer-pressure a lot of the time. Thankfully, I'm that assertive and opinionated woman I mentioned before and would offer a snappy response to their judgement. When I joined the T-Birds, I told my teammates that I didn't drink and to my surprise I was welcomed with non-alcoholic beverage options at parties and social events. It was such a relief! I felt like I could be myself around my teammates and that I wasn't being judged or pressured. It showed me how

Rena Kawabata representing Vancouver Traffic at the 2017 Club National Championships. Photo by Brian Canniff

much they cared about me feeling welcome on the team and it really made me feel included. This may be a simple anecdote about a non-trivial thing, but I wanted to show how it can really just be a simple gesture that goes a long way into making a teammate feel they are part of the team.

"EQUITY IS A VALUE AND SHOULD BE TREATED LIKE ANY OTHER PART OF THE SEASON, LIKE STRATEGY."

In this article I hope to convey first that **equity is important for everyone.** It's not just for women's teams or teams with POCs. This is for men, this is for white people, this for people who grew up in the middle or upper class. And second, I hope to convey the importance of actually having an official and formal space to have this conversation about equity and not to rely on it "just coming up" or "seeing if it's an issue that people care about." It is up to the people who have power, people in dominant identities (white, cis, straight, middle/upper class) to show that there is a safe, welcoming space for others to talk about stuff that is probably going to be very difficult and painful to share. This is key to creating a team and environment where everyone feels welcome, where everyone feels included.

It may be terrifying to look at the mountain ahead of you, and it can be really tempting to think, "There are other people doing this work," or "I'm not an expert - Why should it be me?" or "I just don't have the time and energy." In truth, everyone who engages in social activism is struggling with this. But we need to push through that discomfort and persevere. I will outline some steps that you can start with and some resources that might be helpful to share with your team to start chipping away at that mountain.

First, what is equity?

Here are some definitions borrowed from Cadoux Consulting and harp+sword that I have used in my work that have helped people decipher what equity is and what all the other buzzwords used these days actually mean. These are by no means the be all end all definitions of these terms, but some version of this is what is generally accepted in social justice education.

- **Equity** is the condition that would be achieved if one's identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about equity as one part of justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by identity or fail to eliminate them.
- **Equality** is treating everyone the same. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same support.
- **Intersectionality** is a framework to navigate and acknowledge how power, privilege, and access impact persons with multiple marginalized identities at the same time. Beginning with race, intersectionality builds in gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, socioeconomic status, and other identities to humanize the whole of a person; thus,

combating a single narrative often given to marginalized communities. (Written by Joyell Arvella)
- **Prejudice** is personal adverse and preconceived beliefs, opinions, or attitudes about an identity group.
- **Discrimination** is personal behaviors that give access or deny individual people better treatment due to their identity.
- **-isms** (ie. Racism, Sexism) is prejudice plus institutional power to effect an entire identity group.

Next, here are my step-by-step suggestions if you want to start a conversation with your team.

Step 1: Talk to the Leadership
- Send an email or text to your captains right now saying, "I would like to talk about having a team conversation about equity."
- It's really important to have the leadership on board because creating any sort of change (especially when it's difficult) requires buy-in from the team. Your captains will help you get buy-in. If you are one of the captains, you need to get your other captains on board too.
- If you're finding your captains are resistant, then you'll first need to have a conversation with them about equity and why it's important to you and why it should also be important to the team. Just speak from the heart here.

Step 2: Add to your Team
- Once you get buy-in from leadership, I would suggest involving some veteran players and asking them for advice and their buy-in to whatever changes you might propose.
- This will be important in making sure it's a team-wide conversation as opposed to just a lecture.

Step 3: Have a Conversation
- Schedule a team meeting where most if not everyone can attend.
- Share some of your thoughts and feelings on why you feel this conversation is important, and invite others to share their stories.
- Share some information and resources with your teammates. Here is a really great list of equity resources put together by Kellie Koester.
- Invite people into a conversation through prompts like: Have you ever felt othered or excluded? What made it feel better/worse?

Step 4: Make a Plan
- This part will entirely be up to you and your team. Each team's plan will be slightly or entirely different based on who you have on your team, what dominant/marginalized identities are seen and unseen, and how hard you want to hit the pavement.

- Create some goals. Looking up at a huge mountain makes it really hard to want to start climbing it. Start with some tangible, objective, and realistic goals.
- You may consider:
    - Making an equity committee or electing equity captain(s)
    - Changing your language:
    - ‘Match-defense’ vs ‘man-defense’
    - Ask people what their preferred pronouns are instead of assuming
    - Avoid heteronormative language like asking “Do you have a boyfriend?” and instead consider asking “Are you with anyone?” (or consider asking why it’s important to ask at all)
    - Regularly sending out interesting articles or stories written by people in underrepresented groups
    - Writing a team equity statement (and publishing it!)

Step 5: Execute Your Plan!

- Get a commitment from your team and hold each other accountable. Being accountable is going to be really hard because we all mess up and fail and make mistakes. But there needs to be a way for people to get back on the horse and keep going. Remind each other that we made a commitment to being better and that pointing out mistakes isn’t to make you feel bad, but to hold each other accountable to your commitment.
- Make sure to have regular check-ins be a part of your plan where you can reevaluate and reignite the commitment to equity on the team.

Step 6: Stay Committed

- Stick to it! It will continue to be hard.

Step 7: Live an Equitable Life

- It’s still hard… But you gotta do it! And one day, it will be less hard.

Finally, I wanted to share some lessons I’ve learned on my journey as an advocate for equity and social justice.

- **Equity is a value and should be treated like any other part of the season like strategy**. Consider bringing it up during the off-season so that the leadership can create a plan for before the season starts. Then you can share at tryouts what your values are and whether equity is a part of what your team stands for.
- **You may lose some players.** The reality is that not everyone wants to be actively thinking about equity. People may say things like that they don’t want to because it takes too much mental energy and ultimate is a place where they just want to turn their brains off. What your leadership needs to decide is how much you want equity to be a part of your team: Is it a fundamental part of what your team stands for? Are you wanting to start the conversation but not turn anyone off? Or are you willing to

talk about it as long as it doesn't push anyone towards the door? The thing you might want to consider is how the privilege of thinking about equity, and not talking about it, has impacted people in your life and the world who have been marginalized. By not prioritizing equity, you may not push some people towards the door, but you may end up pushing others out.

- **Don't tokenize equity.** Make it a team value as opposed to something that just one person is the champion for. This same phenomenon has happened with environmentalism and sustainability where you
- **Take a course!** If this is something you want to learn more about, learn from an expert. If you're reading this and in college, you have a once in a lifetime opportunity to learn from an expert in the field! Look into the following departments - gender studies, ethnic studies, African American studies, Asian American studies, Chicano/Latino studies, American Indian studies, woman's studies, American studies

Ultimate is still in its formative years and the really cool thing is that the community is small enough and connected enough that each of us can have an impact in defining what the sport will look like 10, 20, 50 years from now. Lots of us are standing up for what we believe is right and trying to make positive change in our sport so that more and more people feel included. You can stand for this too and you can start by simply having a conversation with the important people in your life about what you can do to make them feel more included.

How Colorado Kali Started Conversations Around Equity

Megan Ives

We've all had that moment. We hear or see something that feels wrong or makes us uncomfortable. Worse, it's coming from a teammate. How do we engage them in conversation? How do we talk about equity as a team? And why is it important that we do so?

Ultimate can be a very white-dominated space, especially at the college level. As a white, cisgender, economically advantaged, able-bodied person, this space is extremely welcoming to me. While I face certain oppressions, especially in sports, as a woman, the other aspects of my identity lend me incredible privilege within ultimate, college, and society in general.

While discussions of gender equity and sexism may come easily to many women's teams, equity is hollow unless it encompasses all relevant oppressions. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly explain my own experience attempting to bring a more inclusive awareness of equity to my own women's college ultimate team, the University of Colorado Boulder.

Our team, Colorado Kali, began having organized discussions around equity as a way to increase the scope of our awareness beyond issues that primarily affected white women. We created an optional group within the team that communicated ideas around white privilege, mental health, financial access to our sport, reproductive rights, sexual violence, politics, racial divides in our country, and so on. These discussions succeeded in growing awareness and interest in a portion of our team, and began to influence some team decisions and practices, as well as leadership approaches.

However, our team did not start from this place of intentionality or awareness. The idea for this group was born out of the realization that many aspects of our team culture, and individual words and behavior were problematic. I can think back to several instances with my college ultimate team when I had a horrible feeling in my gut about something said or done, but didn't have the words or confidence to address it. Especially when it comes to checking your friends/teammates/family, the tension can be hard to swallow.

The first time I worked up the nerve to address problematic behavior by my teammates was at a fall tournament my junior year. Several white players on the team gave themselves cornrows on Saturday night of the tournament. Sunday morning, when I saw their hair, I felt it was important to speak up. As a new captain, I already felt slightly insecure about my leadership position, however it was my responsibility as a white teammate/friend to explain the potential cultural appropriation involved.

This particular experience exposed further tension in that dynamic as my words were thoroughly unappreciated and mistrusted. What began as a nervous attempt at calling out appropriation/white privilege ended in resentment and misunderstanding. I was a bit stunned about my teammates' defensiveness, but I realized that my firm thoughts on the matter came off as power-seeking and unsubstantiated. This made me realize that no matter who was right, if I wanted to be effective in communicating and changing their actions, I needed to find a more approachable method. I realized that if I wanted to be a voice of equity and awareness, I had to create an environment in which my teammates could **engage** with me over these topics, rather than assume a relative position of authority over them.

Through some discussion and support from my coach, Claire Chastain—one of my idols and mentors in both ultimate and equity—we brainstormed some ways to engage the team. Luckily, my team was already fairly engaged and passionate about women's rights. I figured I could leverage this passion and understanding of marginalization into other areas of oppression. We already had a groupme called "STP" which stood for "Smash the Patriarchy." I created a new groupme called STE to "Smash the ~Everything~" and invited the entire team to my house for cookies, tea, and initial discussion around various concepts of equity such as financial access to sports, microaggressions, mental health, etc. To be honest, the initial meeting drew a mere five people, which had me feeling a bit disheartened, but I went back to the drawing board in search of better ways to engage.

Colorado Kali celebrates their semi-finals win against Pittsburgh Danger in the 2018 College National Championships. Photo by Paul Rutherford

Our next event was a trip to the movies to see Jordan Peele's *Get Out*, an eye-opening racial satire. We

followed up the movie with discussion at a local restaurant to share ideas ranging from general impressions of the movie to controversial opinions on what messages about race the director was aiming to share. The film, when engaged with, can open the audience, especially a white audience, to feelings of discomfort and guilt as it exposes a multitude of microaggressions white people direct to people of color. This event had a much better turnout and genuinely opened the door to more fruitful, honest engagement in these topics likely due to the inviting, accessible nature of the event.

It Takes Time, Patience, and A Lot of Work

The concept of intersectionality dictates that no one oppression exists outside of the other oppressions in our society, and that each—whether it be racism, sexism, classism, ableism, etc—must be understood in conjunction with the others. Realistically, our team was not prepared to dive into all relevant oppressions immediately. We started our group primarily discussing the perils of feminism that is blind to racism (white feminism) and slowly expanded our understanding from sexism and racism to other intersecting oppressions. We found this intersection of race and gender to be particularly important to our team at that time due to the racial diversity (or lack thereof) of our team, and areas of ignorance that were painfully visible in our actions and words. I am proud to say that a good portion of the team engaged in this group thoughtfully and has continued to share ideas related to mental health, financial access to our sport, reproductive rights, sexual violence, politics, racial divides in our country, and so on.

In reflecting on this experience, I have several suggestions for improvement and key takeaways. The first is that I would have liked to start this process from the very beginning of the season. While our group eventually gained some traction, there are so many topics and conversations that I would have loved to dive into had we had the time.

Second, I think the efficacy of the group would have been higher if this equity awareness was integrated into the whole team. Having the support of our coach absolutely piqued my teammates' interest and improved turnout at some gatherings, but I think a real buy-in from all of leadership could have resulted in an even-greater impact. These discussions of equity are the responsibility and privilege that we carry in this wonderful sport, and in our greater humanity. To build equity and awareness into your team identity is to build upon the founding principles of ultimate and would be an incredible example for teams worldwide.

Third, I think it could be effective to have several people take the lead on this project, organizing spaces to meet, brainstorming reading material and activities, and consciously creating safe spaces, understanding that each person on the team is approaching the group with a varied personal connection and knowledge of each topic. Given some intentionality and thought, this group can become an amazing space for teammates to share personal stories, struggles, and feelings. This is an awesome additional leadership opportunity for those on the team that really identify with the concept.

Lastly, my tip to those interested in bringing up equity with their teams is to remain patient, yet be persistent with your cause. Yes, each of your teammates will be at a different place

in their understanding and interest in these topics. However, your interest in beginning this process probably stems from your understanding that equity is crucial to your teams, your community, this country, and even globally. Every person deserves equal opportunity and our beautiful, yet flawed sport is a perfect place to do the work that inclusivity requires.

Using Inclusive Language

Jenna Weiner

Why is inclusive language important? What are some “norms” that are assumed? How and why should we check in with ourselves, and our teammates?

On recruiting flyers.
In game huddles.
At team hangouts.

All of these are examples where the language and words we use are critical in creating an open, welcoming college ultimate environment, specifically inclusive language.

There are three key aspects of using inclusive language with a team that I’m going to talk about here:

1. Understanding why using inclusive language is important.
2. Knowing what “norms” we often assume and how to recognize them.
3. Learning how to check in with ourselves and teammates about the process.

While not exhaustive, these three steps will hopefully give you and your team a base to build off of towards using more inclusive language on and off the field.

1. Why is inclusive language important?

I’ll start here with a bit of my own story. My name is Jenna Weiner and I’m a transgender woman who has played for both men’s and women’s college teams. I transitioned while in graduate school at the University of Nevada, Reno, and had to navigate joining the women’s team in the middle of the season only 6 months into transitioning. One thing that made it a lot easier was the welcome I received from

the team and that included the inclusive language that they used, especially using my proper pronouns (she/her). It made a major impression on me and it's something that I will be forever thankful for. This is the first reason why inclusive language is important: it can make a huge impact on your teammates, whether or not you realize it.

The second reason why inclusive language is important is because it is a significant factor in creating a team culture. Teams, especially college ultimate teams, develop their own special cultures that often include unique nicknames and ways to refer to plays and each other. If this language is inclusive, the team culture can be extremely cohesive and the team thrives. If the language is not inclusive, it can possibly isolate parts of the team and potentially erode the trust that teammates have in each other. This can be, and is often, done unintentionally, and without realizing the effects that the language and words that we're using have on our teammates. Because of this, we need to make sure that we understand the language that we're using and just how much simple words matter to creating a positive, or negative, team culture. One aspect of that is knowing the "norms" that exists in our language and how we can recognize them.

2. What are language "norms" that we assume and how do we recognize them?

The language we speak and the words we use aren't created entirely in the moment, but are shaped by our cultures and environments. This leads to "norms" in language, or what we say that we assume is normal, but may actually be exclusive to different people and possibly unhelpful to creating a positive team culture. In American sports culture, including ultimate, these norms are expressed in language as predominantly white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and male centered — like the use of "guys" as a supposed gender-neutral term or the appropriation of non-white cultures by predominantly white teams.

Now how do we recognize these norms and how can we possibly combat them? First, we need to acknowledge that they exist, whether or not they're brought up. Norms in our language are often so entrenched that they are assumed to be acceptable, regardless of how people feel. And because they're ingrained, people may not want to speak up about any issues they have. So we need to be aware that our language and words may be affecting people, even if there's not an issue. Which brings me to how to combat norms and our third point: checking in with ourselves and our teammates about the language we're using and understanding what is and isn't acceptable for your team.

3. How and why should we check in with ourselves and our teammates?

Checking in about inclusive language means making sure that everyone is comfortable and on the same page with the language being used on a team. How this manifests itself varies from person to person and team to team so check-ins are useful to ensure that issues aren't being ignored and, even if not fully addressable, can hopefully be worked on. Checking in with ourselves in this regard means confirming that we are comfortable with the culture and then, especially for team leaders, ensuring we're being intentional about the language we use, even if it's not perfect. Changes towards more inclusive language will not happen overnight,

but if we're being intentional about trying to use more inclusive language that will go a long ways towards progress.

With our teammates, it's a similar situation. Checking in with folks is necessary because people may or may not be comfortable with the language being used on or off the field, and it's our responsibility as teammates to know so that those issues can be addressed. However, checking in isn't limited to just inclusive language, as it can be helpful in supporting teammates in general and in facilitating and creating a positive team culture. Without checking in, we could miss or mess up an important issue with teammates, which is not helpful for team unity especially as team leaders.

Suggestions

I want to end with some suggestions of potential ways to make your team's language more inclusive. None of these are necessary, but can be useful ways to start thinking and working towards more inclusive language and an open, welcoming team culture.

- Have people introduce themselves with their pronouns (ie: She/her, he/him, they/them)
- Make sure that interest/registration forms are inclusive of all people potentially involved in the team (ie: a place to indicate pronouns)
- Be on top of, and correct, poor or incorrect language (ie: inappropriate "jokes", comments.)
- While this may feel awkward or uncomfortable it's important to stay on top of potential issues and not allow for un-inclusive norms to take hold in team culture
- Use all-inclusive language like "match" or "person" D; use y'all, folks, everyone, or team when referring to a group instead of "you guys" or similar language
- Be aware that non-verbal communication and symbology can be inclusive or exclusive as well, and is often as important if not more so than verbal language; this can include body language, deciding not to respond to poor language use, or logos or symbols on team gear or apparel

As a closing note: Different teams and environments may be more or less open to changing language and norms and that's okay. Take what is most useful for your team and situation at the point that it's in and try putting some of these ideas into practice. I hope that they will be helpful in creating a more welcoming and inclusive team culture.

Is Spirit Of The Game Working?

Alyssa Weatherford

This is an exploration of the standards of SOTG we are working within and working through. Some of the standards and norms of the dominant culture in ultimate, and as a whole in the United States, are exclusive. How can we think about other teams and our own positions in relationship to SOTG? Can rethinking what “good” SOTG looks like lead us to a new version of ultimate that is more inclusive?

When I was in college, I would do anything to avoid being described as feminine or lady-like. If I saw a boy being an asshole or not helping others, I thought I should, and be able to, act the same. Being competitive and positive felt exclusive and I did not care if players on other teams liked me or thought I was nice. I hated and hated on my opponents. I thought I was right and others were wrong. I was, very honestly, sexist towards women. I was trying to do my best and I was trying to be fair and never cheated, although my opponents might have not believed me.

After college, it was playing Riot where I started to have more conversations with people like Hana Kawai and Gwen Ambler about feminism and other -isms (ie: racism, classism, ableism, etc). My mind was opened to the ideas around feminism and the social constructs that keep people down and in a box. That maybe they could be combated in a constructive way versus a destructive way. Such as, instead of getting mad at my teammates for crying, asking them how they are doing. Instead of trying to force myself not to feel, find a way to connect with others. I tried to connect with people instead of just

doing a job, knowing that there is something each of us have in common. We are all humans first. I learned to believe that feelings aren't negative, but we choose to put a negative descriptor, which can then lead to habits or responses that impact others or yourself in a harmful way. I realized that maybe there were more answers and thoughts about why I felt the way I did towards women. As I learned more about feminism and systems of power, I realized I had internalized sexism.

In 2018, players from Western Washington organized a forum on Race & Intersectionality at College Nationals. Photo by Brian Canniff

I have been considering what Spirit of the Game means - how do I know if I have good SOTG and to whose standard are we measuring. Okay, let's get real about Spirit of the Game. As a hyper competitive woman in ultimate, I have struggled with what SOTG means since I was in high school, and in college it got more complicated. Usually it's described as, be positive and friendly to your opponents. But what do those words mean and can playing fair look traditionally negative or have a different definition of positive? Traditionally, "negative" in women's ultimate could mean celebrating, not giving high fives, not trying to introduce yourself to opponents, or speaking loudly. I have personally tried to take the word positive out of my vocabulary and exchanged it for constructive or intentional. I think positive has been defined for too long as being nice. I think you can respect your opponents and teammates without necessarily being nice.

A definition I learned at a conference was "good and useful thinking," I like this a lot, but it's hard to get people out of the let's all just be friends mindset. I think that SOTG is sexist, racist, and classist. I think that often if you do not fit into the dominant identity of what it has looked like in the past (white, male or female but not both, and from a more privileged class) than you are described to have bad SOTG.

Here are some critical questions I've thought about to rethink Spirit Of The Game:

Are there behaviors or responses that are universally considered to be good SOTG?

I have been racking my brain for a behavior or response that is universally, across cultures and different backgrounds, indicates or is considered to be a reflection of good SOTG. You might say a high five or smiling, but I have seen (and done) a condescending smile when you think your opponent is just wrong. I think if I get scored on and my opponent insists that I high five them and I do not want to, I should be able to respectfully walk away and get ready for the next point without someone demanding something from me, which can lead to a negative

or awkward experience. We should be figuring out how to treat others how they want to be treated, not assume that we should treat others how I want to be treated.

As I've thought about this more, I have not been able to argue myself out of two and a half behaviors that may be universally good. The first one is the act of listening. I can't think of any situation in which listening could be bad. You might not agree or you might think someone is wrong, but you can still listen to them. The second is seeing your opponents as humans. Go into a situation knowing that you have made mistakes and so will everyone else.You can only control yourself, you cannot control others. And the "half" is going into each game neutral and treating it as an independent event. In theory, you would try to go into each game with this mindset, but I think if you have been treated with a severe lack of respect, you must protect yourself, while being open minded that they may have changed. This one becomes murky, fast and as a coach, it can be difficult when you want to teach and protect your players.

If you come up with others, I would love to talk through them.

What assumptions do we make about ourselves? Our opponents? Am I interpreting something as good or bad? Why?

Take a second and think when someone makes a call: Do I assume I am right? Do I assume the other person is right? Why do I think one or the other? Do I think of the call as an independent event? Does it make sense that they would call it? I think most people are willing to think of their behaviors or their friends' behaviors as mistakes and can much more easily forgive it than a stranger's.

Without even recognizing it, I may be someone who talks differently to people who are different than me. I might make a judgment on their character based on my assumptions about their motivations. There is a range of reasons that impact my judgments or opinions, some might be more objective, but a lot are subjective. I have seen players on other teams talk differently to the people of color on WWU. I have heard coaches on other teams talk differently about players of color on my team being aggressive versus athletic. I have had observers come up to me and tell me to tell my players of color to watch their tone. And I have very rarely been told the same thing about white players on the team. You might think, why are you making this about race? I am including race in the discussion because I have been told by the players of color on my team that it is about race, and I believe them. I challenge people to make calls in the most objective way possible. For example, instead of saying your mark was aggressive, you could say that you are hitting the disc and my arm while I pivot. To continue to grow as a community, we must embrace differences, learn from each other, and connect with people.

How do you distinguish a team's action as an isolated mistake or a chronic symptom of their team culture? How would I as an opponent know?

I know I have said it in the past and I hear it all the time: this team [blank]. It could be something like, they foul on the marks, they make dangerous plays, or even, they are the nicest team I have ever seen. Whatever it is, I think it is very dangerous to make claims about the foundation of other teams' cultures. In doing so, we put a lens on the game that could

cloud our vision to see what is actually happening in the moment. As an opposing coach or player, I have no idea what another team talks about or what their intentions are. As a white person, I have no idea what the experience of a person of color is. As a woman, I am often held to a different standard compared to men in the realm of sportsmanship. While making calls, I am supposed to use a certain tone and be articulate. I am supposed to leave my emotions off the field. What if one didn't learn how to fit in? I would recommend that instead of deciding whether we like or dislike an opponent or team, we listen to each other and treat others how they want to be treated. Leave the calls and mistakes on the field and move forward.

Are there parts we should conform to or should we reinvent SOTG at the risk being perceived as having poor SOTG?

This question is the reason I have been recently questioning SOTG. WWU got last in spirit at Nationals in 2017, meaning we are now facing the question: which parts should we change and which parts are we going to ignore because players on the team feel like they are being judged unfairly? Even with something that maybe feels more objective, like body control, we are not convinced that that is true. Are people expecting a certain game from us because of previous years, games, or by the way the players talk and look? Once teams label a team as aggressive, every bump seems like big deal… but if we were to expect a fair game than might the bump be considered an accident? Is there a line that is clear? As a women's team, we have to be careful we don't celebrate too much. As a team in a white sport, we have to talk to people in a certain way. As a sport that has a majority of people in it coming from universities and upper class, we have to act a certain way. I do not know which things we should conform to and which things we will have to reinvent for ourselves, but we plan on having a preseason retreat to discuss this question with the program and make a decision. And I can tell you that, we will be defining SOTG in the ways that make sense for the program we have and the division we play in, not because someone else says we should.

Some closing thoughts:

Spirit of the Game is very biased and we can go through our ultimate careers just going through the motions. Or we can question the norms, so that we can continue to expand who plays ultimate, who feels comfortable being themselves. And in doing so, maybe we can work on actually being as inclusive as we hope to be.

Alyssa Weatherford (center) at the 2018 player-led and organized discussion on Race & Intersectionality at College Nationals. Photo by Brian Canniff

If everyone could be themselves and we gave our opponents the benefit of the doubt, then maybe we can start working towards a healthy version of SOTG for all or at least more. And ultimate could be a safe environment for not just the dominant culture.

Let's spend more time celebrating the differences and wonderful people in our division, less time thinking about how someone once made a bad call or marked you aggressively. I don't really have answers, but over the past few years, I have been trying to have more conversations, be open minded to people who are different than my experiences, educate myself, and question myself to get better idea of why I think the way I think.

Building a Culture of Positivity

Tulsa Douglas

Steps to create a team culture that supports and promotes the growth of individuals and the team to reach the highest level possible by helping players to take risks that facilitate development.

"I have never felt as supported and welcome, yet pushed to be better, by any team than I do with this team." - First year St. Olaf Vortex player post-season

How do you create a team culture that supports the individual and the team while pushing both to improve and become the best they can be? What tangible actions can you take and what mindsets are crucial?

Building, cultivating, and developing a positive team culture creates an environment that promotes success teamwide. It both allows individuals to feel supported in taking risks towards growth while also creating a unified foundation for the team to work from when challenges -- which they inevitably will. Athletes improve as players by taking risks, stepping out of comfort zones, and responding to the failures that occur by doing so. Having a culture of positivity allows individuals to feel safe enough to take those risks knowing that if they fail they will be relentlessly supported. By developing a culture of positivity, teams create a fundamental foundation of support to fall back on when challenges arise. This team identity of positivity and support means that rather than crumbling in the face of challenges, individuals can unite together in support of each other.

Building a culture of positivity is especially important for female athletes specifically. Between the ages of 8 and 14 girls' confidence drops 30%. They begin to doubt themselves, their skills, and their potential to improve. This lower confidence contributes

to less inclination to take risk to avoid failure and less perseverance upon failure. To support girls, specifically in sports, it's crucial to create a culture of positivity where they feel safe and empowered. This positive environment provide girls with a place to take risks safely to discover and develop their skills and gain confidence.

Tulsa Douglas (left) shares laughs with her teammates Lien Hoffmann (center) and Elana Schwam (right). Photo by Paul Rutherford.

Does a culture of positivity have to butt heads with competitiveness? No, by being positive about improvement and growth, players and teams strive to improve and be their best. Players can still be held to high expectations, give and receive feedback, set goals, compete against each other, and face challenges and fail. The culture of positivity frames and guides the way each moment is approached.

How to build a culture of positivity to:

1. Promote Growth (as individuals and as a team)

- **Foster growth mindset**
  - Growth mindset - abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work
  - Fixed mindset - basic qualities are fixed traits, talent without effort creates success
    - Help players develop a growth mindset by pointing out examples of players developing specific skills or knowledge. Provide and acknowledge opportunities for players to develop new skills or fine tune skills with the awareness of their growth.
- **Leaders model and demand team-wide support**
  - Top down - Model what it looks like to support others by vocalizing your recognitions of other players successes and actively assisting during setbacks. Your actions set the tone for the rest of the team and show others how to act.
  - Demand - Have conversations with your team about how to cultivate a culture of positivity. Brainstorm concrete actions that contribute and hold each other accountable.
- **Discuss how to give and receive feedback**
  - Openly ask players how they like to receive feedback
    - When (immediately, post-drill, post-practice)
    - How (in person, via email, compliment sandwich)
    - Who (from coach, captains, in front of team)
  - Share feedback using positive language
    - Ex: "Continue to catch with two hands, I've noticed you're really successful that way!" vs. "Don't catch with one hand, you drop a lot like that."

2. Respond Resiliently to Challenges

- **Leaders model positive response:** Show others how to respond. Often when challenges arise, people look to others for cues about how they should react. When leaders are able to demonstrate positive support of each other, others will follow.
- **Identify controllables and uncontrollables:** Introduce this mental principal to your team. Help them learn to identify what they can control and what they cannot. Mental energy can then be focused on those things that can be controlled rather than lost on uncontrollables. When challenges occur, players can recognize what they face that is not controllable and rather than wasting mental energy on it, they turn to the controllables and their actions and attitudes contribute to forward movement.
- **Build in challenges:** Create opportunities for the team and individuals to be challenged. By providing opportunities for players to face challenges and come out successfully they will be forced to test and develop their positive culture. Each challenge that provides failures and successes further refines the team's support and shows them future challenges can be conquered.

Culture of Positivity Exercises:

Goal: Creates a mindset of noticing and voicing appreciation of others

- Notecards
    - Sitting in a circle each player writes their name small at the center of a notecard. Then, each card is passed to the left. For each notecard you receive (eventually all of them), write one thing you appreciate/value/admire about that person. Keep each note short- a sentence or two- and anonymous (prevents people from thinking too deeply about who said what). At the end, everyone will have a notecard with 18-25 things that people value about them.
- Post-practice/tournament shout-outs
    - There are many ways to do this but the basic idea is to share things you appreciate about others.
    - In buddy groups, 5 quick shout-outs, about the person to your right, etc.

SECTION II

LEADERSHIP

Finding Dynamic Balance as a Leader

Russell Wallack

Being a new college captain can be exciting, overwhelming, and a bit intimidating. You will make mistakes, and you will have countless opportunities to grow as a person, friend, athlete, teacher and leader. You are stewarding the growth of a living system. Create language and frameworks that help you to observe this growth. Are you as a leader creating conditions for health and growth? How can you do that more fully?

It is an honor to be writing this article, and to think that these words will impact the way that you offer leadership to your teammates and players in the coming years. As I write this from a cozy coffee shop in Amherst, MA (we are always accepting recruits and visitors!), I am asking myself, "How can I write in a way that upholds the principles of leadership that I am espousing?"

Just by asking that question I see how much more spacious my thinking is right now, than it ever is on the sideline. It's a good reminder for me. While this article will hopefully offer you some helpful insights, it is not how I always coach. No, I fail to live up to my own advice everyday. This does not make me a failure or a bad leader, just a work in progress.

My approach to leadership changes weekly. The more that I accept this reality, the more I learn not to take my mistakes personally along the way, and the better I can focus on the needs of the team, and the young people that I coach. For many of you

reading this, that might be the most valuable advice I can share. You are imperfect, a work in progress. As a leader you will make countless mistakes. Acknowledge them as needed, and refocus on the needs of your team.

So, as you read this article, read it not as a standard or ideal to which you should hold yourself. It would be an impossible one. Please instead read it as a discussion of team dynamics that you can reflect on as you grow as a leader.

Finding Healthy Balance as a Leader

With the UMASS Men's team, Tiina Booth and I frequently emphasize that **growth is the result of a healthy balance between competition and support.** In huddles, at tournaments and practices, we use this framework to highlight the team's actions, or clarify a request.

For example, we ask all players to always have their "eyes up" (making eye contact) in the huddle. A huddle is a time to come together as a team, not to be alone in your thoughts or brooding on your errors. Even something simple like this is a way of focusing players' energy on supporting each other's success. We also emphasize that everyone has a role to play. On the field or off, you always have an opportunity to support.

Competition is a catalyst for growth. Developing as an athlete requires going beyond your perceived limits to discover new ones, and we use competition to generate that process. Creating competitive environments in drills, workouts, and scrimmages helps players to shift their focus from their self-imposed limits to the challenges at hand. (Note: If you do not have a healthy culture of support, it can be physically and emotionally unsafe to ask players to push their limits.)

This balance between competition and support is one that we focus on explicitly with our players. One that we use implicitly is the the balance between **flexibility** and **responsibility**. Your team must have enough flexibility that players are able to express themselves as athletes, and the players must also have a sense of responsibility to contribute to the health and success of the team. Flexibility without responsibility results in a group of individuals failing to act as a team, and responsibility without flexibility fails to demand the full potential of each individual.

Allow for Uniqueness

A lack of flexibility is rigidity. A rigidity that there is only one way to a member of your team, and an inherent expectation that every player is the same. Even at the most shallow level this is obviously not true. On UMASS we have players pursuing many different majors, with huge variations in their work, academic and extra-curricular schedules. They come from many places, join the team with varied levels of experience and athleticism, and of course have unique personalities. A rigid culture that does not leave room for this diversity would be a culture that suppresses the value of these players.

I believe that every person is unique, and has a unique offering to the world. Each role I play, each team I work with, even each passing year within the same team, is different. The teams are different, the people are different, and thus how I lead must be different. Embrace this difference, and be willing to explore when you or your team is operating in a way that might

suppress it. For example, are you setting an ideal for what it means to be supportive? Or do you have a culture that allows players to find their own way of supporting their teammates? Some players support their teammates success by pushing themselves physically, some support them with goofy cheers, others with impassioned speeches. It is valuable to continually explore how much flexibility each player has to find their own contribution.

That said, flexibility can go too far if it is not grounded in the needs of the team. When it goes too far, your conversations start to sound like "Oh, that's just Russell being Russell." When "Russell being Russell" is detrimental to your team's health, then it cannot be allowed, and you need to be able to have a conversation about it.

Responsibility to the Team

These conversations are supported by the other side of this relationship, responsibility. When a player pushes flexibility too far, or is simply selfish with their actions, it is likely due to them both lacking awareness of the effects that they are having on your team, and lacking a sense of responsibility for the health of the team. So, how can you approach these conversations without being rigid? A few ideas:

> **Set clear expectations.** Yes, set them at the beginning of the season, but also be willing to reiterate and/or update them as needed based on your team's needs. For example, with college teams it can be very hard to create a practice schedule that allows for perfect attendance. Perfect attendance is thus an impossible expectation, but clear communication is not. On UMASS we emphasize that each player has a responsibility to communicate in a clear and timely fashion to the coaches and captains regarding attendance.
>
> **Explore what the team needs.** If your team has shared language around norms, values, and/or expectations, use these to check-in with players. For example, on UMASS we create 1-on-1 and team meeting environments where we use our shared commitment to compete and support as a framework to reflect on the team's performance. This could be in regard to on-field play or it could be in response to inappropriate language or behavior. We simply ask, "Is this behavior creating the conditions for growth on our team?"

Having these conversations is one way that we walk the walk. As coaches, we are establishing boundaries by saying "we need to have a talk," but ultimately the resolution and path forward comes from the players. It is a clear demonstration of our trust in them.

As we say on UMASS, there are no neutral teammates. Each player's choices and actions have effects on the team. By highlighting responsibility, we can switch from focusing on restricting players' actions to instead empowering each player to be a contributor to the team's success.

The balance between competition and support and responsibility and flexibility are not static relationships. Just as you are a work in progress as a leader, these relationships are

works in progress. They are dynamic and require ongoing attention. One practice might be heavy on competition, and another might emphasize support. As a leader, your role is to observe these dynamics and to adjust accordingly. Below are a few helpful cues to support you on your journey:

Helpful Cues for Dynamic Leadership

Ask dynamic questions, and set dynamic goals. Are the questions that you ask and the goals you set pertinent to every player on the team? For example, if your team has a goal around focusing on energy for a tournament, everyone can contribute to that in their own way. It is a goal that allows for flexibility and responsibility.

Support your players' development to look beyond themselves. When I am working with a player who is having a hard time understanding how to contribute to our team, I listen to hear what they are focusing on. Are they overly concerned with their own "success (e.g. playing time, goals scored etc.)?" I try to ask questions that explore how their success can be the team's success. I try to help them find a role that is complementary to the team's success.

Some players are not going to be a fit on your team. At a certain point, if a player repeatedly ignores (often unintentionally) their responsibility to the team, you may have to part ways. Be clear and concrete about what it means to be a part of your team. It is not about them. It is about how they are showing up for the team now.

Popping the Public Speaking Bubble

Anna Nazarov

Speaking in front of a group can feel scary. Anna Nazarov presents four ways she has made it less intimidating for herself.

If you're anything like me, standing in front of a group and confidently delivering information takes an enormous amount of energy. Here are a few ways I've found to make being a leader slightly less intimidating.

Make It More Intimate

Here's a confession. Every single season I coach, I get really nervous about those first few practices. Though I love coaching, talking in front of large groups of people is one of my least favorite things. Talking in front of 50-60 players, half of whom I don't know, who've circled up in what feels like a mile radius is just not setting me up for success. While some people are born with an insane ability to project, it takes a lot of work for my voice to carry from sideline to sideline. So usually one of the first things I do is make the circle as small as possible by getting people to hug in the huddle. Feel free to throw in the classic joke about how people should pretend they like each other. Nothing like smiles and a few pity chuckles to break the ice, you know?

If I'm teaching a drill, I ask everyone to come huddle in closer (like storytime in kindergarten) under the premise of it being hard for me to project. All of the sudden, this intimidating group of people shrinks into a clump that's more easy engaged right in front of you. This eliminates my need to yell, which in turn lets me be a dynamic speaker. When I'm yelling, I'm just yelling. That's all I have. When I'm speaking, I can undulate my voice, I can slow down to emphasize certain information. I can watch people's faces for confusion or understanding and adapt as I go.

Making the space more intimate helps me, but it also has the added bonus that it makes it a more welcoming space for people to ask questions. Interrupting a coach from the other end of a 50-person huddle feels hard. A quick "wait, can you explain that again?" from 10 feet away feels much less intimidating.

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

I will never be the person who can, on the spot, come up with an eloquent drill explanation that concisely covers all the main points. In order for me to feel confident with what I'm explaining, I have to prepare beforehand. This might look different for everyone, but what works for me is thinking through the important bullets of the drill (purpose, logistics, and how you know you're being successful) and writing those down in notes that I then bring with me to practice. I'm also thinking about how the drill fits in with our season plan, how it connects to full-field play, and how it builds on other drills we're doing that day or week. Once I have my bullets, I spend some time stringing them together into sentences and making sure the information flows well in my head and maybe even out loud. My first year coaching, I had a 15 minute drive from work to practice, and I would use that time to practice my drill explanations out loud. If you're not used to it, hearing yourself speak assertively and hearing yourself project may feel weird at first. You might as well get that weirdness out while you're alone and no one can hear you.

Outlaw "Sorry" At Your Practices

I could write an entire article on this alone! Women apologize too much in life as it is - there's no room for it at my practices. If you're spending time apologizing, you're wasting valuable learning time. I want each of my players to be confident, resilient, and willing to try new things and fail. In fact, you might fail a lot! But never apologize for your right to exist and learn. Next time you feel the need to say sorry, say thank you instead. "Sorry, my forehand is terrible," becomes, "Thank you for your patience with my forehand." "Sorry about that huck," becomes, "Thank you for busting your butt to try to run that down." "Sorry, I forgot the force," becomes, "Thank you for yelling at me from the sideline."

But what does this have to do with finding confidence in my own leadership abilities? Well, if I can project and instill confidence in my athletes, I become surrounded by unapologetically badass women who will support each other, and me, through and through. The less apologetic and deferential the athletes feel, the more questions they will ask, and the less it becomes about me talking AT a silent, unreadable group. It's a beautiful cycle.

Practice Popping The Bubble

Ever notice this phenomenon that happens: There's a fantastic street musician, but the audience has formed a circle around them that's really far away? Or people are waiting for their order at a coffee shop and feel an urge to slink up to and scurry away from the counter as quickly as possible? Or you've entered a class and everyone is packed into the last rows leaving an awkward distance between the students and the instructor? Maybe you're getting into an elevator and everyone

has plastered themselves to the walls? Being inside, or in front, when everyone else is on the periphery is, socially, an awkward place to be! Here's an experiment for you next time you find yourself in the above situations: go stand closer to the musician, go stand near the counter, go sit up front in class, go stand in the middle of the elevator. More often than not, as soon as one person pops the bubble, more people will begin to feel comfortable and will join you, without them even realizing it. It's like you've given them unspoken permission to step into the void (so much power!). Putting yourself in those awkward-feeling situations outside of frisbee practice can help you feel more at ease next time you have to step inside a huge huddle of peers on the field!

Maggie Ruden of Fury lays out for the disc. Photo by Paul Rutherford

Captaining: Step Back to Step Up

Carolyn Normile

My philosophy toward captaining evolved over the three years I served as a captain of the University of Pittsburgh's Danger Ultimate. That evolution continued even in my final year on the team after I had handed off captain's duties. Our team progressed from placing third in the region my first year on Danger in 2014, to tying for third at Nationals my last year in 2018.

Pitt Danger's first goal-setting meeting in my final year was pretty standard until a quiet (or so we thought) rookie stood up to speak. Working hard together, supporting teammates, picking each other up, gratitude for the group… she spoke eloquently for more than a few minutes in front of seasoned players and upperclassmen. Our jaws were on the floor. When you have never played before and you join a competitive team, any average person would take a backseat for a while to see how things work. But Ultimate players are not average, and the fact that she felt empowered to stand up and speak her mind says as much about the vibe in the room as it does about her.

Encourage Teammates

If you create spaces where people feel comfortable sharing, then you will get more out of everyone. Each player adds their own spice to the team's culture. As captains, we need to recognize and encourage players' ideas and provide opportunities for them to speak up without fearing criticism. Danger's GroupMe, for example, has been a great space for us to discuss strategy and logistics, but also to motivate and have fun.

Riding home from a tournament this past season, a teammate started a game in the GroupMe that we call “I’m sweet; you’re sweet.” You post something that you are proud of that you did during the games, then something that someone else did. That person then does it for another player until the entire team is covered. It may be a great catch or throw or being really loud on the sidelines, but everyone is called out. My point is that the captains and coach didn’t instigate this motivational game. A player felt comfortable enough in the GroupMe to initiate it. The other appealing aspect of this game is that for female athletes especially, it may be harder to give ourselves props.

This simple game requires us to celebrate our own achievements with the complete support of our teammates. By the time a team has its first scrimmage, rookies are cheering loudly from the sidelines for their teammates. But rarely have I seen rookies comfortable enough to say “yes, I did that, and it was great.” Boastfulness is not a sustainable attitude for a team player, but being proud and acknowledging one’s own successes makes us stronger as a team.

Embrace Inclusivity

Danger has a low power distance culture. Which means that we don’t have a strict hierarchy with the captains as the predominant authorities. In my first year as captain, the leadership dominated the goal-setting meeting. Before long I learned that if I stepped back and listened more, the team would step up with creativity and ownership. The seed for this structure can be planted by continuously requesting input from each player on the team and valuing the input. This encourages players to think critically about the game and to feel comfortable sharing ideas. The result is that many players contribute to leading the team.

Share the Work

An important way to further ensure a sense of team ownership is for every single player to have a job. Rookies can be apprentices, which also supports mentoring off the field. While it may seem easier, captains who try to do it themselves are missing a great opportunity for essential team building.

Sharing logistical, training, housekeeping and communications tasks makes the players more of a team, and these tasks are necessary for the team to actually function. Coaches and captains can handle them ably and with consistency, but when everyone is involved, they feel ownership and engagement beyond their role as players. They have a sense of pride and want the whole group to succeed. Every player having a job means that in some way they are contributing to the team in a measurable way, and working together with teammates. Whether intentional or not they are adding some personality in what they do and in that, a unique team culture incorporating everyone is created.

In addition to the tasks of Captain, Treasurer, and Logistics Manager, Danger players are responsible for organizing track and lifting workouts; Sideline Squad; social media; gender equity activism; uniform procurement; University, alumni, and recruiting outreach; fundraising; and booking a sweet group house for Spring Break. We have a list of the jobs with brief descriptions. At the first team meeting, everyone signs up for something, an upperclassman

and rookie will pair up to support continuity for future seasons. It is a clear structure that allows room for growth, change and discovering new skills.

Photo by William “Brody” Brotman

One junior jumped into the job that causes the most headaches – jersey procurement. She put a ton of hard work into this, organizing the team jersey order and a huge family and friends order. Doing this work for the team as a junior set her up to be in a leadership role the following year. Now as a senior, she helped create Danger’s new Leadership Core in which a group of about five players are elected to do the start-up work for the team, and captains are elected later. This allows rookies to have a vote, and further emphasizes Danger’s credo that being on the leadership is a result of demonstrated commitment to the team.

Get Out There & Bring Back What You Learn

When I went to U20 trials, I didn’t make the team. But I learned drills and tactics that I had never known before, and that I brought back to Danger. As captain, I encouraged players to go out for U20, U24 and any club team – not only to try to make the team, but because exposing yourself to a higher level of competition helps your game and you can learn so much from other players and coaches just at tryouts.

My two U24 tournaments were a treasure trove of new info and ideas for me, as is playing with the Philadelphia club team AMP. Coach Patrick Sherlock emphasizes that AMP doesn’t want to be the same team every year, that we need to grow each year in a different way. I brought that concept, and a whole zone defense, back to Danger with great results.

Conclusion

A captaining style of **talking less and listening more**, combined with **encouraging players** to go out of their comfort zone and engaging them in the management of the team, paid big dividends. It is a plan for the long term. Giving people pride in themselves and the team, a safe space to be yourself and feel ownership in turn led to more ideas shared, trust, hard work and a better team.

I feel that this style of captaining enabled us to **optimize talent**, which, in turn, drove performance to a new level. It also enabled us to have the time of our lives.

You Don’t Have to Be the Best to be Great, You Just Have to Care the Most

Chelsea Murphy

After countless conversations and experience playing on all different kinds of teams within and outside of frisbee, I’ve come to the conclusion that you don’t have to be the best player on your team in order to be a great leader, but you do have to care the most (or just care a lot). The best leaders I’ve seen and tried to model are ones who put in the time, passion, and commitment, the ones who lead with effort and authenticity. The best leaders aren’t the ones I remember as the best players on the team, but the ones who worked the hardest and embodied the team’s norms and values.

Leaders come in many shapes and sizes, and after countless conversations and experience playing on all different kinds of teams within frisbee and outside of frisbee, I’ve come to the conclusion that you don’t have to be the best player on your team in order to be a great leader, but you do have to care the most (or just care a lot). The best leaders I’ve seen and tried to model after are ones who put in the time, passion, and commitment, the ones who lead with effort and authenticity.

So, a little background on me- I've always thought of myself as solid impact player on my teams I've played on, but not necessarily the best. I've never felt like I was super specialized as the best thrower (although, humble brag, I did win an accuracy contest in Tiina Booth's day camp in 7th grade) or the largest deep threat (I'm almost 5' 3" so I'm still working on that height issue.) And throughout my frisbee career, I have wavered between my identity as an offensive or defensive player. I've been a general solid all-around player, not known for a specific skill, and usually one of the shortest.

Only until recently, after well over 10 years of frisbee playing, I find myself developing my true frisbee identity as a defensive cutter - so it has taken a while. The point of this background is that you don't have to fully be sure of your identity as a frisbee player before you start thinking about leadership. Just like how you find your individual identity as a player to the team, it takes time to find out what kind of leader you are and the leadership style that fits with your team's needs. Finding your leadership personality will be a process that is also shaped by who you are as a frisbee player.

So what do I mean by that?

Being in a leadership role essentially gives you two roles on your team. One, you are an individual athlete on the team, just like everyone else, who has certain responsibilities on and off the field. And two, you now have a leader hat on, which means you must put the team's needs first and foremost when making decisions for yourself and for the team. I'd say the biggest shift from a player to a leader is that you now must be a role model with your actions. What you expect from your team, you must exemplify in your actions. That doesn't necessarily mean you need to be the best player on the field. Rather, you need to embody an exemplary type of player you'd want on your team. You need to model your expectations of culture and team norms. If you expect your team to show up to practice 10 minutes early, you have to model that behavior and be consistent.

Most teams usually have more than one leader, they have a leadership group to help carry the load. So, most likely if you are in leadership you don't need to feel like you have the whole team on your shoulders. You fit within a smaller dynamic of team leaders who can support each other in their commitment to the team's needs. Whether that leadership group looks like co-captains, a leadership team of 3-4, or whatever grouping fits your team, each of you in a leadership position is there for a reason and have a role to fill as co-leaders. One person can't fill all the team's needs, so don't try to do that. Use an informal cohort of players to advise you and who you can go to in order to get a "feel" for the team. You are the team advocate, and the best way to do that is to have a good read of the team vibe.

This all also takes into account if you have a coach or not - what role does your coach fill that you might not necessarily need to fill, etc. There are other articles in this manual that can answer those questions you might have about the role of the captain vs. the coach - go check them out.

So what are some examples of great leaders?

We always had a leadership group of around two to three when I was in college. When I was a rookie in college, my captain was not the best player, but she had the best work ethic

out of anyone on the team. Still, I haven't met a lot of others in this sport, with the work ethic and drive that she has. Her commitment and passion to the team was apparent, which automatically gave her tons of respect. We all could see the hours she put into thinking about the team, strategy, practice planning, etc and she would model showing up to practice early, and leave late – always going above and beyond. She might not always catch the disc, she might not always make the right cut, but she ran the fastest she could, always tried to improve, and cared a whole lot. Thinking back on that team, I don't remember any key moments of mistakes that she made. What I remember is her passion for frisbee and her commitment to making our team the best it could be. It was her authenticity of being herself that was so genuine and a role model for the rest of us to aspire to.

My freshest experience of looking at the inner workings of a team is on Brute Squad. My rookie seasons on Brute Squad we had a larger group of captains (4 leaders) and each one played to their strengths. They were not the top 4 best players on the team, but they each had special qualities that they excelled in, whether that be strategy, whether that be effort, whether that be emotional IQ, etc. They were people we all looked up to in different ways. As a leadership team they complimented each other and displayed the leadership we needed, and connected with the rest of us in different, necessary ways, providing the diversity of team voices into the leadership discussions and decisions.

That's one thing to keep in mind as well. As a leader of 20 or so other people, who are your friends, it's going to be hard. It's not always going to be easy. You can't please everyone at once, but with a leadership group with different strengths, you can try to ensure that you have the diversity of voices and feelings reflected from the team within your smaller group.

When I was co-captain of Brute Squad in 2016 I was not the best player on the team (I was playing on a team of ballers - Kami Groom people), but I filled a space that was needed. Initially I tried to find my footing and made assumptions of what the team expected me to be as a leader. The leadership traits I thought I needed to convey contrasted my personality as a player. What I found as I explored my own leadership identity, and the needs of the team as the season progressed, was that I was a little too serious. I hadn't allowed myself be my authentic, goofy self, which in the end turned out was what the team needed and wanted. I had assumed I needed to change who I was for this new role, when it was actually the opposite.

What I learned is that you should always play to your strengths. You are in this leadership position for a reason, and that means you probably rank highly on some of these qualities that I think good leaders exemplify below:

Effort & Passion

A great leader is a great team player who cares a ton about making the team be as successful as possible (however your team defines success). There is a connection between hard work and success. A leader is someone who is inspired to create an atmosphere that everyone buys into, leading by example and committed to doing things the "right way," meaning leading with intentionality and not cutting corners.

Vulnerability
None of us are perfect, and none of us know how to manage every situation. Everyone will make mistakes, and when you do, vulnerability is owning up to those mistakes and discussing them, not trying to avoid them. Owning up to challenges in this role will gain you respect. This also means you should ask for help from your team when you need it. You shouldn't have to put the team on your back to get places, they are a valuable resource. The best leaders have figured out how to cultivate an un-intimidating environment of challenge and growth - don't be afraid to make mistakes together.

Authenticity
Like I said before, be yourself. Play to your strengths. Be honest, transparent and communicative.

Consistency
Don't make rules when you feel like it, don't just be strict about practice times at certain times. You have to be consistent. This also means be consistent with your words and your actions - if you ask the team to put in a certain amount of focus, you have to model that in your actions. Be consistent with your team presence, consistent with your decision-making. Consistency provides structure and expectations.

Positivity
We play this sport to have fun. You want to create a fun team atmosphere where everyone feels valued and enjoys spending time together. Cultivate this fun together. Celebrate the little things as well as the big things.

You don't need to check off every box, but you are bringing just as valuable an impact to the team through these qualities as the "best player on the team." You will make mistakes, your team will not always win games, but it's how you react to these challenges that sets the tone for your future team outcomes - on and off the field.

Most of you new captains or up-and-coming captains have a knowledge of the sport that others on your team don't yet have. People look up to you to share that knowledge and guide them. You may not have been playing for over 10 years, but you have a unique experience of frisbee to share and important traits to support your teammates with. Have fun with it. Leadership is hard work and it's really rewarding.

Planning An Effective Practice

Holly (Greunke) Denecour

Practice. There's no way around it. If you want to get better, you need to practice. But there's a difference between efficient practices and the ones where you felt like you wasted time. So how do we plan more efficient practices?

It wasn't until I was several years into my captaining career that I started planning practices in the manner outlined below with my leadership team on Texas Showdown. At first, I was annoyed at how long it took to plan out all the details. I thought it was overkill, a waste of our meeting time. After seeing how smoothly the first few practices of the season were, I realized that although it may be a lot of work, there was no arguing with the results. We accomplished what we set out to, and maintained a high level of focus from all players (which is impressive in itself because our practices were 4-5 hours long). Our team would go on to advance to semifinals of Club Nationals the year we started planning practices like this, as well as the following year. Granted, planning effective practices was only one part of the equation to our success, but it was an extremely important part in my opinion. At the end of this article, I have included a sample practice plan based on a 2-2.5 hour practice.

When planning a practice, collaboration with all people involved in leadership is crucial. It will seem overwhelming to plan every practice in this much detail, but your team has chosen you to lead them. Everyone out there is dedicating and sacrificing their time to be at practice. It is your responsibility as a leader to make sure their time (and your's) isn't wasted. I promise the more you do this, the easier and faster it gets.

There are four main concepts to planning an effective practice.

1. **Timing is everything.** Plan your practices out minute by minute.
2. **Pick a focus that aligns with team goals and strategies.** Think offensive and defensive goals. Examples: Swinging the disc, moving the disc before a certain stall count, cut timing, marking, zone defense, deep defense, under defense, etc.
3. **Know the why of everything you do at practice.** If you don't have a purpose for doing something, don't do it. Be ready to explain the why to your team.
4. **Don't underestimate the power of efficient transitions.** Poor transitions are where all the focus of a practice is lost. Have a plan in place.

Practice Planning Preparation

Before planning the specifics of the actual practice, you'll need to figure out the focus and have a plan for transitions.

1. **Pick a couple skills to focus on:**
   - Questions to ask yourself:
     - Why did you choose this skill?
     - How will it help the team achieve its goals?
     - How will you introduce the skill to the team?
     - How will you explain to the team why working on this skill is important?
   - Tips:
     - Keep your explanations short and to the point (2-3 main points).
     - You don't have to explain everything at once. In fact, you shouldn't. It's very hard to retain information when too many instructions are given.

2. **Have a plan for transitions:**
   - Questions to ask yourself:
     - How long will you allow for each transition?
     - Will it just be short water breaks?
     - Will there be a longer break at any point?
     - How will you get the group back together to start the next thing?
     - Do you want them to jog/hustle? If so, how will you set that expectation?
     - How will you handle situations where players are talking while you're explaining a drill?
   - Tips:
     - Keep these as short as possible to avoid players losing focus (exception: if you have a longer practice and want a longer break in the middle for lunch/snack).
     - Be assertive in getting the group back together. The team is planning on you to keep the practice on pace, so be confident and authoritative.

- Rookie mistake:
  - Using water breaks as a time for leadership to figure out what is next and who's going to do or say what. Come to practice knowing exactly who will do and say what and when. Print out or write down the plan if you need to.

An Outline for Planning Practice

1. **Warm up:**

- Questions to ask yourself:
  - How long do you want to spend in total warming up?
  - How long will you spend on plyometrics? On throwing? On a drill involving cutting and throwing?
- Tips:
  - Don't introduce new drills to warm ups. You don't want to spend this time teaching drills. After the first several practices, there shouldn't be anything in the warm ups that needs to be taught.
  - It's perfectly fine to do the exact same warm-up every practice and before games at tournaments.
  - When doing the throwing warm up, make sure you include a focus that will challenge players. Don't say, "Ok, everyone warm up your throws." This will inevitably cause some players to lose their focus, and some players may not know how to appropriately warm up their throws. Give clear directions such as, "Stand 15 yards apart, throw 15 backhands, 15 forehands getting as low as you can."
- Rookie mistake:
  - Jogging around 7 fields before starting plyometrics. Instead, jog across the width of the field or end zone a few times. Or better yet, look through ultimate specific strength and conditioning programming that tackles ultimate specific warm-ups.
  - Allowing people to do warm-up stretches and drills with bad form or lack of effort. This will allow players to develop bad habits, and set an unfocused tone for the practice. Set high standards and expectations for warm ups from the very beginning.

2. **Skill & Drill #1**

Introducing a Skill:

- Questions to ask yourself:
  - How long will it take introduce this skill?
  - Will you need to teach the skill (fall season or new players)?
  - What misconceptions or preconceptions might players have about this skill already? Will those need to be addressed?
  - What will be said? Who will say it?
  - How will you handle questions from players in order to stay on task and on time?
- Tips:
  - Explain what it is and why it's important for the team (2-4 sentences).

    - Keep this part short or players will lose focus. (Example: Today we are going to focus on moving the disc before stall 4. If we can do this consistently as a team, it will be much harder for other teams to play defense on us.)
- Rookie mistake:
    - Spending all that time warming up only to have your players stand still for 20 minutes while you explain or teach a new skill.
    - If you have anything you need to explain that will take longer than 5 minutes, such as a new offense or defense, either plan a separate time outside of practice for a "chalk talk" or do the talking BEFORE warming up.

Running a Drill:

- Questions to ask yourself:
    - What is the why of this drill? Does it reinforce the skill you introduced? How will you communicate this to your team?
    - How long will you do this drill?
    - How will you teach the drill to the team? Will you need any supplemental visual aids? If so, make sure they are ready.
    - Who will explain the drill?
    - Who will set up the drill? When will they set it up so as to lose the least amount of time?
    - Who will demo the drill?
- Tips:
    - Use visual aids! Most people find it hard to learn a new concept from only listening to how it's done. Use white boards and/or returning players to demo drills.
    - Drills should never last more than 15-20 minutes. The longer they last, the more you risk players losing focus or putting in less effort.
    - Make sure you plan for numbers! If you have one breakmark drill going with 25 people, it's probably best to split into two groups.
    - Build in a little flex time to interrupt the drill in order to clarify things.
- Rookie mistake:
    - Not having everyone's attention while explaining or demonstrating a drill, then spending 10 minutes answering questions.
    - Keeping the purpose or reason of the drill a secret from your team.

3. **Short focused scrimmage** (game to 3, game to 5 or timed scrimmage) to apply the drill you just did:

- Questions to ask yourself:
    - What will the focus be?
    - How will you integrate the skill you just worked on into your scrimmage?
    - How will you reinforce or reward teams that successfully implement the skill?
- Tips:

        - Add an incentive for teams that successfully put into effect the skill that was just practiced (i.e. skill focus was swinging the disc -- teams can only score if they swing the disc from one side to the other 3 times).
    - Rookie mistake:
        - Making this first scrimmage too long. Keeping things short will facilitate players being able to maintain maximum focus.
        - You should still plan to have longer (full game), focused scrimmages, just not every practice.

4. **Skill & Drill #2**
    - Questions to ask yourself:
        - See above Skill & Drill #1
        - Will you take a break after the scrimmage? If so, how long?
        - How will you get the team focused again?
5. **Longer scrimmage** (integrating both skills if possible)
    - Questions to ask yourself:
        - What will the focus of this scrimmage be? How does that focus relate to what you did at practice that day?
        - Will you add incentives for teams that implement the focus skills?
        - Will there be any consequences for not implementing skills (sprints, etc.)?
    - Tips:
        - To aid in the team developing mental focus while tired, add in short, intense conditioning opportunities between points in scrimmages.
        - Example: Someone blows a whistle and everyone runs the width of the field and back before getting back on the line, or everyone does 10 burpees
        - Though it might feel tempting, don't add too many focus skills. Again, one practice shouldn't try to tackle too many concepts. Pick one or two.
6. **Cool down**
    - Questions to ask yourself:
        - What went well at the practice that you want to recognize?
        - Are there any important reminders or announcements you need to share with the team?
        - Do you want to do a team cool down? (Probably yes)
    - Tips:
        - Always end with a positive note about something that went well.
        - Offer constructive criticism for the group as a whole when necessary, but don't be too negative (for more specific details, reference other articles in this manual).
    - Rookie mistake:
        - Having every single person on the leadership team say several things about practice. Like everything else, keep this short and concise. Respect people's time, and make sure practice is over when scheduled.

General Tips

- Use returners to demo drills. This will allow you to explain what they are doing while the other players can have a visual of the drill. Plus, it also creates opportunities for returners to lead by example and step into "the returner" role.
- Use returners to set high standards for the new players in terms of mental focus at practice. This might be talked about in a separate returner only meeting, in the pre-season. Remember, lead by example. If rookies see returners paying close attention during a drill explanation, they might follow suit. If your teammates see you jogging it in for the next drill, they might follow suit.
- Always keep transitions efficient and short. Put in the work early to make this a routine. Jog to the next drill. Water breaks are for water, not checking your phone. If you set this standard early, there's one less thing you have to worry about in the middle of the season.
- Have your detailed plan ready (printed, on phone, etc.), but be willing to be flexible depending on conditions and attendance. Suddenly have less than half the team absent due to a flu going around campus? Be ready to adjust.
- If you can't answer the why, revisit the purpose of the drill.

Sample Practice Plan (2 hour practice 4:00-6:00pm)

1. **Warm up (25 minutes) → 4:00-4:25**
   - Plyometric warm up → **Chip** leads, 10 minutes
   - Throwing → 5 minutes
   - 4 line drill → coach or injured player sets up during plyos, 10 minutes
2. **Water break/time to do what you need before starting (3 minutes) → 4:25-4:28**
   - Coach or captain splits players into teams for the end zone drill during this time based on who is there. (Tip: If you have a regularly updated attendance sheet, you can do this beforehand).
   - Announce what color to change into before introducing the skill and starting the drill in order to save transition time.
3. **Skill #1: End zone offense (2 minute intro) → 4:28-4:30 Holly**
   - "Today we're going to focus on our end zone offense. We need to be able to score at a higher percentage when we get in the red zone in order to be more efficient on offense and win games. Our focus is to move the disc quickly while running our set and maintaining position."
4. **Skill #1 Drill: End zone sets with double score (15 minutes) → 4:30-4:45 Michelle**
   - (In this scenario the end zone set has already been introduced and learned. If you are first introducing the end zone set, do it at a "chalk talk" time outside of practice or before warming up).
   - Explanation: Each team will get 5 chances on offense. They start 10-15 yards outside of the end zone, run the end zone set and try to score. If they score, the person who scores must bring the disc out and the team must score again for the point to count.

- Consequence: The team who scores the least amount of points will run the difference in 40 yard sprints.

5. **Water break (1 minute)**
6. **Focused end zone scrimmage game: Let it Ride (15 minutes) → 4:46-5:01 Chip**
   - "In this game, each team will start 15 yards out of the end zone, just like in our double score game. However, if the offense scores, they have a choice to "bank" their score or "let it ride." If they bank it, they get one point, but possession changes to the other team. If they let it ride, they keep possession, the person who scored takes the disc back, and they try to score again. However, if they let it ride and turn it over, they lose any points they have not banked."
7. **Water break (3 minutes) → 5:01-5:04**
8. **Skill #2: Defensive positioning (7 minutes) → 5:04-5:11 Michelle**
   - Explain the basics of positioning to guard against in vs. deep cuts. Talk about the need to change your position based on where the disc is or where you anticipate it going next, as well as demonstrating how to move your hips correctly and proper footwork. Have Holly and Chip demo positioning as Michelle talks to give a visual reference. "Our focus is to put our bodies in an optimal position to limit the cutting options of the offensive player."
9. **Skill #2 Drill: Triple cutting drill (15 minutes) → 5:11-5:26 Chip**
   - Explanation (draw on whiteboard, then demo with returners): From a vertical stack, cutter will make an in cut, an out cut, then another in cut (Holly set up cones while Michelle is explaining skill). The defender will have to focus on their hips and footwork to maintain position to take away either the deep or the under cut as determined prior to the drill.
10. **Water break (2 minutes) 5:26-5:28 →** captains make teams for scrimmage if different from end zone teams, players change jerseys if necessary
11. **Final scrimmage: Scrimmage for time, double score (27 minutes) → 5:28-5:55**
    - Defense will be told on the line if they are responsible for stopping the deep cut or the under cut.
    - Teams can earn a bonus point if they successfully stop any deep or under cuts during that point as assigned.
12. **Wrap up and Team Cheer (5 minutes) → 5:55-6:00 Captains/coach**
    - "The focus was phenomenal today. We made a lot of progress on our end zone offense. I can't wait to get the chance to see it at our tournament this weekend!"
    - "Remember to put in your flight info for our next tournament so the travel committee can arrange cars and hotels."

Bonus item: Think about having some team traditions for after practices! For example, when I played on Showdown, we practiced for 4-5 hours on the weekends. We had a rotating schedule of people who were responsible for the "Bag of Joy," which was just a bunch of snacks we would sit around and eat together following practice. In college, we practiced from 10:00-midnight, so afterwards those of us old enough would go get some food and a drink at the bar across the road.

Captaining: Creating a Healthy Flexible Spaces for Success

Lauren Boyle

Teams are made up of people with different personalities from different backgrounds with different goals, different approaches to our sport… the list goes on and on. How do we effectively lead a group of people with so many differences? How do we build structures that are flexible to reach each of our players?

Teams are made up of people with different personalities from different backgrounds with different goals and approaches to the sport. We all have similar goals as athletes, push our potential and be competitive. How we want to be loved, heard, and seen is different for each person. And what we see as successful for our personal season or for the team can be different from player to player. As a leader, finding similarities to connect people's individual journey to the overall goals of the team will create healthy environments where everyone is working towards success. Creating initial structures so people have avenues to be their best self will help your team find success. More importantly, it will enable productive dialogue as bumps come up throughout season.

The tools I have used are an initial expectations document, buddy groups to identify team goals and connect players to each other, and finally an overall idea that players are "people first and athletes second."

Setting up for Success - Expectations Document

Before people accept their spot on the team, I find it helpful to send out an expectations document. It outlines things that you expect out of your teammates as athletes: showing up to practice, communication, general play time philosophy, etc. Having that initial set-up means that players know what they are buying into before they accept their spot of the team. It connects everyone as athletes so that it is easy for leadership to have hard conversations around general expectations since everyone is on the same page from the start. It also helps the athletes know leaderships' expectations so they feel more comfortable advocating for themselves if they feel like things aren't going according to what they bought into. Having that initial expectations conversation connects people. Having them written and agreed to helps players have a safe space for dialogue. Attached is an example document from a club team I coach, Small Batch.[1]

Throughout the year - Buddy Groups

Alright, we now have a foundation with the expectations document. Next let's set up structures so people have an avenue to connect to leadership and to each other. Buddy groups are a great place for players to have a space to chat, set up micro-groups to connect, and more importantly dialogue about success and support. The more you can connect to your teammates as people, when mistakes happen it will be easier to let go of anger or to let go of the perception of people being angry with you.

To form the buddy groups, I like to connect people who are like-minded so they have a space to receive and give support in ways that are comfortable to them. Connectivity in a team is important. When games are tight or practices are hard, these connections will help us remember that this a game about throwing a piece of plastic in a rectangle and that each person on this team is human. Allow people to lean into their own micro-group, by leaning into connections that already exist, and also by creating new ones. Send out an email giving people the option to request a type of buddy group. Pair people who like to give/receive gifts, strategy minded people who want a place to dialogue with teammates, people who don't want to talk, a group who like dancing before games, etc. The possibilities are endless. (Side plus: it is also a fun leadership activity to make the groups together. Try it without the names associated to the requests to see what forms.)

Add a member of leadership into each group. My last team, we had 6 buddy groups where each captain was in two groups. Because leadership were present in all groups, we were able to be proactive about common ideas and be accessible. As things arose during the season, I had an avenue to check-in on players through my captains and each player had an avenue to easily chat with leadership. This was an easy way to reach players and for players to reach leadership through established pipelines.

You now have these fun flexible spaces for people to foster and enhance each others. I let each group decide how they want to use their buddy groups throughout the year. Some have a group text that is very active. Others only convene when there is an activity that requires

1 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ax92UChlh1EGxCxOz7nqDD46898PH8rtfURY3VgpG2Q/edit

it. The important part is that the group exists so there is that flexibility for people to connect how they would like to.

As a first buddy group activity, the captains facilitate a group discussion around success and support. Asking these direct questions allows you as a leader to understand how to communicate with each athlete and learn what drives them to be successful. It takes the guesswork out of the equation and you get to hear directly from each individual what type of support they need so you can be a good flexible leader for them. Here are the questions I stole from somewhere. Thank you to the individual that created these:

- What does success look like for the team? What do you see as the biggest barrier to that success?
- What does success look like for you? What do you see as the biggest barrier to that success?
- Personally, what is one Offensive goal you have this season? One Defensive goal?
- How do you want to be supported by your teammates?
- What is your preferred way to receive feedback from others?
- When you are your best on the ultimate field, what are you doing?

Having conversations like this in smaller groups means that everyone is being heard. Bring these discussions to the greater group to make your team goals. Even though everyone could have a different vision of success, find ways to connect that variety into 2 or 3 simple phrases. People will see how their words translate into the team's vision and be connected even though each person's views are slightly different. They will have an opportunity to speak up where they might not have in a larger group. You can now use these players' answers as you work through the season so that you all are pulling in the same direction to have a successful season.

People First, Athlete Second

This one is the hardest to master, but the easiest to explain. Choose to be kind and compassionate when conflict arises to minimize potential for feelings about feelings. Use the structures you established above to have a good starting common ground. You have outlined common expectations that both parties have agreed to, and you have listened to how they want to receive feedback. Utilize how they expressed receiving feedback, as it is more important to channel communication through the ways they can hear you.

When having the hard conversations, first state facts (things a camera would pick up), then say how that person's actions made you feel, then invite dialogue to hear their side. It will help both parties come to common ground.

Finally there is never a bad time to be kind. Tell people how you value them more often than you give criticism. Make it genuine and in the way they want to receive feedback. It makes the hard times easier as there is a foundation of trust.

Things I Learned From Being Bad At Leadership For A Long Time

Angela Lin

Leadership is essential to the growth of any team, but good leadership develops over time and with experience. As a leader, it's okay to make mistakes. Learn from them. Here are some lessons learned: plan, provide structure, and create a culture for buy-in.

As I got older it felt mostly natural to really delve into questions like, what do I still get out of playing on a competitive ultimate team (why am I here?) and how can I more thoughtfully target my training plan to improve identified weaknesses (how do I get better?). I'd argue that I got curious about these a little bit too late, and making a habit of going through those kinds of thought processes as a younger player will help you develop into a more dynamic ultimate athlete (and human) faster.

It seems like we all come into a greater understanding of goal setting and how process translates to outcome in different ways in life and ultimate. After many seasons and instances of feeling, "I'm still thankful for the experience but really pretty devastated about this result," I also eventually experienced thoughts like: "If I'd only known some of this or empowered myself when I was younger, I would've potentially achieved some of the outcome goals that I didn't," or "How can I help some of my younger teammates think through these things and do it better?" How did I get from the first thing to the other things and beyond? Hopefully this article helps to elucidate.

Personalized Training Strategy

Somewhere around the end of 2011, after a rough Nationals performance by our team, I decided that to be a more effective player and teammate I needed to create my own specialized 9-month training program that tied together physical, mental, and emotional preparation and included methods to track gains, celebrate successes great and small, and hold myself accountable. I didn't exactly know how to do all of that. I leaned heavily on a trusted world-class PT/functional movement training friend, researched which books I wanted to read for training both the body and the mind, and continued to talk in depth with my therapist about balancing all of the things in life. My working hypothesis was that if I defined my season's goal as, "Make a good personal plan of attack and stick to it," then no matter what my team's place or performance looked like at Nationals that year, I would feel good about my own well-constructed plan.

I wanted to prove that I could be: a physical defender that good cutters didn't want covering them; a smart and threatening defender in more diverse spaces; an aggressive, decisive handler who could take high levels of physical contact and keep pushing through; a positive force for mental strength that I wasn't the previous year. Once I'd mentally constructed these performance aspects that I wanted to embody, I set out to plan a progression of lifting, functional movement, and agility/jumping workouts for the off-season, pre-season, and in-season. I thought, read, and discussed ways to make gains in power. I made a calendar chart in a grid notebook to count the weeks until Nationals and penciled in preliminary notes next to each phase on what types of lifting and jumping workouts would go in each, and I took this everywhere. I learned and worked on form for new movements. I schemed to develop time efficient workouts that would simulate the full body feel of Sunday morning at a tournament. I defined time points at which I'd increase intensity or velocity and how. In the calendar I highlighted specific Saturdays indicating 'celebration days' to appreciate the gains I had made since the previous one (usually a nice dinner). I read sports psychology books and carried out the exercises and visualizations that sometimes involved saying things aloud to myself or putting sticky notes in various places.

It was exciting and fun to implement my plan and feel myself getting more powerful and durable. Honestly, I think I felt ambivalent about the mental toughness aspects at first. I probably felt a bit more centered, which was nice but initially not too noticeable. Across the season's arc, I think that because I relieved myself of something with the longer-term planning attached to the physical part, I felt some amount of reduction of mental anxieties over time. Knowing that I had a training plan in place and focusing on fulfilling that plan allowed me to see and appreciate mini-victories (within my plan and on the field), which was huge for me emotionally.

To sum up — I don't actually remember what our team's outcome goals were for the season. We lost to Riot in a really windy quarters at Nationals. I personally had all these performance oriented goals that broke down to specific processes and tasks that could be narrowed to things within my control (namely what I did in the gym and with my brain). And I felt really good about all of those. Losing in the quarters still hurt, especially in conditions that, as the

winners of the flip, probably should've equated to a win. But, I set out to control certain things within myself, and that allowed me to let go of a lot of the things I could not control.

Scaling Personal Plan to Team Goals & Structure

I needed the space to do all this work on a personal level, unencumbered by the burdens of real formal leadership roles. But as it turned out, after a couple years, my questions shifted toward whether / how I could translate this to a full team setting and simultaneously continue to make gains in personal growth. I wondered whether I could enjoy facilitating a team coming together around certain values (continuing to grow, pushing each other, making a plan of attack and sticking to it, celebrating mini-victories) in order to help propel the program into the future. The important word here for me was 'enjoy.' I believed I could probably be a much better captain than I'd ever been before, even if I didn't necessarily want to be one. I wanted to keep all my previous performance goals intact and play well. I needed a way to frame the whole process of becoming a good captain while maintaining a high level of playing contribution as a fun challenge (or game within the game) for myself.

Things had also turned into a time-limited scenario, partly because a previous multi-tissue knee injury resulting in the sometimes sidelining pain and range of motion loss of joint degeneration was becoming harder to manage each year. I gave myself a two year cap to sustain training, playing, and captaining the best I could, and to have fun with my team and leave it all out there (this is kind of analogous to the time-limited nature of college ultimate).

Let's skip to the useful parts. To me, team is a space where individuals are given the structure and environment to learn and hone frisbee skills together as well as to grow and push themselves as people. **The job of the captains, coaches, and leadership: provide the structure.** The team needs mechanisms by which to discuss what its goals will be, set them, appreciate when goals are attained, and continue to evaluate progress made. The team also needs to trust that the practice plans throughout the year are reflective of the team's goals and provide some innovative and fun ways to learn the team's system. Individuals also need to understand their roles, receive constructive feedback, and feel heard by the captains, coaches, and leadership.

Here are some things I found to be useful for getting at the above:

1. Pre-season team meeting to discuss and define goals — outcome and process oriented.
2. Map out specific foci (with malleability) for at least the first block of practices (up to the first tournament).
3. Create a strategy committee that is willing to be engaged in a lot of in-person meetings to become cohesive.
4. Have regular full team check-ins and adjustment meetings.
5. Foster individual growth and build buy-in to the team process.
6. Have an understanding that everyone may need a slightly different expression of ideas to 'get it,' necessitating a willingness by leaders to try many different ways of approaching the same thing.

1. Pre-season goal setting

Some like to just spout off brainstorm style any ideas about what results they want the team to achieve and the specific processes by which to achieve those results. Some need more direction, such as asking: After winning the finals at Nationals, there's an article written about the team's journey — what would your one line headline/summary be? Or, you get interviewed after finals and they ask, "What got you and your team here?" What do you say? Some don't like to talk about this stuff at all, and you are left to hope that they're tuned in but just don't like to talk. As #6 suggests, a leader has to be willing to meet each person where they are and **help them feel good about the process**. Regardless of the methods of ideation used, thoughts should be written down, digested to a more cohesive format, then posted/shared somewhere for teammates to review whenever they want.

2. Translating Personal Training Map to Apply to Team Goals

In making things similar to my personal programming, I created a captains/coaches spreadsheet with each practice date as a row, then blocked off color coded sections that made sense (depending on tournament schedule). The sections/blocks were representative of a progression of sorts (not exactly delineating intensity, volume, or velocity increases like in my lift programming, but analogous). There was a column that counted down the weeks until Nationals. There was a column each for defining offensive, defensive, and energy foci, for each practice, as far out as we felt comfortable. This was all done before any practices occurred.

Mapping out the entire season's practice foci is great if you can, obviously with flexibility to edit once you have more data. The next step was to produce a separate tab for each practice, which included specified times, drills, goals of the drill, who'd run the drill, and also left room for follow-up notes after the practice. Initially, those tabs were just populated with ideas that needed to be ironed out by leadership the week of practice. For how this connected with the above goal setting processes, an example:

- If the team stated that they wanted to win the first tournament of the season (outcome) and agreed that they would like to do this largely through being the most physical defense most capable of defending under cuts (processes)
- Then those defensive foci would be heavily written into the first block of practices, prior to the first tournament, and drill ideas around defensive footwork, microcharges, defensive repositioning, and active marking would be dropped into the first few weeks of tabs for discussion and hashed out by leadership to create a good progression.
- In the first tournament, those overarching goals of preventing easy under cuts or physically bodying up on offenders would be featured highly in the tangible team goals per half (e.g. allow a maximum of 3 under cut completions; if achieved coach has to do some ridiculous dance).

3. Strategy Committee Ground Rules

I came to an understanding that a strategic leadership group needed to have the freedom and space to discuss, argue, and potentially never completely agree, but come to an accepted place on all things. And, this space needed to come with the understanding that when you leave the room, you all become on the same page regardless of what the discussion process looked like.

4. Team meetings and team togetherness

Meetings are super important to have at every tournament (most everyone is together!), and in my opinion every few weeks, to examine the goals, to discuss progress, to allow people to listen and be heard, or to just be around everyone doing somewhat silly things. It's nice to have variety in these meetings, as in they shouldn't always be the full team sitting in a room with one person speaking at a time. One other way (of many possibilities) is to break out into small group discussions with captains defining specific questions to be addressed, and after small group time have one representative bring those thoughts back in a full team summary. When you say things out loud, they become more real, and touching on the goals and team-wide processes often and through multiple forms, means greater connection and more real-ness of each of them. Also of importance is to make some team meetings (or at least parts of each one) more about just getting to know one another as people — funny icebreaker games, teammate trivia, 'hot seat', eating delicious food, laughing with and at each other, etc.

5. Player buy-in

In my experience, individuals who were willing to set their own outcome, performance, and process goals and were receptive to feedback from leadership about how those were going both helped with the full team process and grew more as players. The team process is better with every single person buying in — period. But, I think it's important to note that even if every single person doesn't buy into every single piece, those pieces are important for the team to have. I also tried to introduce mental toughness reading or provide particular exercises (like visualizations or directive affirmation writing/rehearsing), and my sense is that those who participated enjoyed and felt some shift mentally and emotionally.

6. Diversifying communication and practice tactics

This point of providing information in various ways doesn't just relate to the verbal communication of instructions or feedback. For example, if one of the goals of the team is to steadily increase intensity and mental challenges in practice such that game-time doesn't feel so tough, this needs to be approached from many different angles. Asking players to 'bring the intensity today' may work for some. For other teammates, it might work to initiate practice as if it was a real tournament day — teams divided at some point the week before, separated warm-ups, a long scrimmage as the first scheduled activity. Some drills are designed to intensify pressure and anxiety (Ozone had 'Calla-can't' where the offense started buried in the back of their endzone and defense applied various types of pressure or sometimes had an

extra player and sideline was screaming as loudly as possible). Some captains and coaches are particularly good at pushing physical and mental limits (safely) with unpredictable practice components like fitness rewards, unfair advantages, and other uncontrollables. When your coach makes your team run 40s every time they yell, 'Get on the line,' and you don't know when they're going to yell it… resilience necessarily ensues.

Conclusions

I hope that these thoughts will help with some of your team's processes. Did all of this help me become a better leader, player, person? Absolutely. Did these ideas help some of my teammates become better leaders, players, people? I think yes, but you'd have to ask them. Did I help propel my team into the future? I'd also like to say yes, but that's not really something that can be done by any one person. Thanks for reading.

SECTION III

DEVELOPING TEAMS BUILDING PROGRAMS

Believe in Your Teammates: How to Bring out the Best in Every Player & Build a Long-Term Program

Ben Banyas

The teams that are successful on the field year over year are the ones that focus on long-term development of every player. They focus on how they can improve instead of how they "should" have performed in the past. They use risk and failure as tools. All of this is made possible by believing in the full potential of every teammate. This article discusses the author's journey as Head Coach of the University of Pittsburgh Women's A Team, Danger, and how these concepts helped them grow in on-field success, size, and long-term stability.

Introduction

I believe that one of the greatest experiences in life is devoting your time, energy, money, blood, sweat, and tears to and with others in the pursuit of a shared desire. The shared sacrifice you all give is what determines the greatness of your experience. Sports are the most amazing way to accomplish this. The most powerful tool a leader has is to help others find what they can excel at and support them to be able to be

the best they can be. Ultimate has provided me with countless opportunities to have this experience, and I think that it is the duty of coaches to help as many as possible to have the same opportunities. I have been on small teams with a few all stars and, while we had a few good years, it was always the holistically developed programs that would eventually outperform us and inevitably outlast us. If my experience has taught me one thing, it's that believing in all of your teammates will lead to the whole of your team exceeding the sum of its parts.

It is a common trap to focus entirely on wins or losses, or to put down teammates, or to not have a strong connection with what your teammates need. I've done all of those in the past. Through all of my failures, what led to my most worthwhile experiences and greatest successes as a player, captain, and coach was when I shifted my mindset to be that of building up every single one of my teammates. To seek out people with common desires and work with and for them to help them achieve everything they want. What was the surprise result of this, for me, was how much every one of my teammates wanted to work for me. At the end of my last season playing club, when we failed to make Nationals, multiple teammates came up to me with tears in their eyes and told me, "I wanted to get you there Ben. I'm sorry." I was speechless. All of the work I put in that year was to just make my teammates and my team as good as possible. Their response was to work even harder for me. These are the most worthwhile experiences. And, in the long run, they lead to your greatest successes.


Danger huddles around Ben Banyas. Photo by William Brotman

Getting players to buy-in to the team is the key to success. If the team buys-in to the player, the player will buy-in to the team. I share what I believe are the most important lessons that have helped my teams transform from weaker teams dependent on all-stars into deep teams who, in the case of the Pitt women, win regional titles and have rookies score goals in quarter-final victories at Nationals.

Overview of Danger's Growth

In every year since I joined Danger in August 2015, more than half of our roster started playing ultimate in college, and, save for 3 players in 2018, all players on the team played four or less years of their college eligibility. The team had made Nationals in 2015 (first time since 2009), and although 8/19 players in 2016 were rookies, the team continued an upward trajectory the next few years, though not without hiccups. We had significant regular season success in 2016 and 2017, and we won the Ohio Valley Region those years as well. Though this was paired with some crushing defeats (15-3 to Oregon at 2016 Northwest Challenge, sectional final loss to West Chester in 2017, to name a few), overall we saw dramatic and

consistent improvement and 2016-2017 was the first year of our B team, High Voltage. Last year, while much of our regular season was rained out and although we placed 3rd in our region, for the first time ever we won our pool at Nationals and were one point away from the National championship game.

From 16 Players to A Program

After ending the 2015 college season with the program's second Nationals appearance (2009 being its first), graduations left us with 11 returners, most in their 2nd or 3rd year. How did Danger go from 11 returners in Fall 2015 to adding a B-team in one year?

The most important thing to add to your on-campus recruitment is to have a team/program environment that people want to be a part of. Pitt students had heard that the women's ultimate team was incredibly fun and welcoming. We had 11 people return in fall 2015 and by November 2016 we had two teams with nearly 40 people total. Most of the new people had heard how great Danger was or that there would be a B team. 3 or 4 players who ended up making the A team only came out because they thought they would only play B. If we hadn't be able to get these players out, nothing else would have mattered because you can't develop who you don't have. Each year we get multiple sophomores and juniors who are rookies. In 2018, we had 13 players who never played ultimate until college (10 of them are returning). We had some incredible players who played in high school, but if we hadn't recruited well on campus we would have been stuck with less than half our team. Of the players who led our offensive stats at Nationals, one (Carolyn Normile) had been playing at a National level since high school, the other two (Sarah Russek and Hannah Blizzard) began playing at Pitt. 4 of our O line starters from the year were players who started playing ultimate with Danger. One of the benefits for having brand new players who are coachable, have great attitudes, and high potential is that they are able to learn ultimate the Danger way, which helps them fit into our systems quickly.

How did Danger start their B team? Carolyn, one of our captains at the time, tweeted in 2015 that her goal was to have a B team at Pitt the following year. That became the primary goal for the program in fall of 2016. Through their hard work, the Danger players built it, and new players came.

Now, while on-campus recruitment was perhaps the most important, we would be significantly farther behind if we didn't have a lot of players with great experience coming into Pitt. We are lucky to have two large youth programs in Pennsylvania, and players often come from New Jersey and other places as well. The experience and leadership these players bring help them hit the ground running and able to make a massive impact right away. There can be some transition challenges, as they are used to a different way of playing, coaching, etc. In all, we have found a good balance of how to mix brand new players with those with former experience. We are lucky that Pitt is increasingly becoming a more desirable school, and we are working quickly to improve our youth recruitment and outreach efforts.

In summation, *the most important thing to building a program for long-term success is recruitment and retention.*

Building The Limitless Potential of Every Player

In Spring 2017, Danger finished 2nd at Northwest Challenge, handing Dartmouth Princess Layout its first loss of the season. Weeks later at Nationals, Danger (seeded 13th), plagued with injuries, fell short, but we won one game, beating the #1 seed Stanford. In 2018, our Callahan finalist and main D-line handler had graduated, among others, but we kept our focus on broad, year-long development, culminating in a universe point semifinal loss at Nationals.

We believe in the limitless potential of every player on the team. We believe the team has the potential to defeat any team in the nation. So, what do those statements mean?

The two crucial concepts are belief and potential. From the very first comments we make to the team to the attitudes the leadership provide throughout the year, we do whatever we can to instill faith into, and receive the same from, every teammate. Self-doubt — and even worse, doubt of one's teammate(s) — can be a cancer that spreads and destroys a team from the inside. We focus on what players are capable of, the great thing about that being that we never truly know. We don't place any limits on what we believe our teammates can do. Focusing on fulfilling our potential is what pushes everyone to improve and strive to be their best. We don't take anything for granted — many players are fine, good, even great as they are, but we are striving to go beyond that. We commit to the idea that by having faith in each individual to be able to play beyond what they've ever done before, those individuals will go above and beyond for the team and more fully buy into team systems and commitments. When players make that extra commitment with trust in their own ability to achieve anything, the team will have its most success.

Don't Believe the Hype

"THE FOCUS WAS NOT ON HOW WE COULD GET BETTER, OR ENJOYING OUR TIME WITH EACH OTHER, BUT ON AN EXPECTATION OF EXCELLENCE THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO MEET EVERY TIME."

In 2017, much of the team bought into external hype, and when things didn't go great for us many players were frustrated that our results didn't match what the hype said it should. It first reared its head at a November tournament. Although it was still the preseason, this tournament is one when a lot of the East Coast powerhouses test their mettle against each other going into the spring. Most of the previous year's team had returned and we had an excellent recruiting class. Ultiworld had written much about us, lamenting our stars and saying, "This is our year," as multiple seniors would be graduating. Without any of us realizing it, much of the team had internalized this idea, both in how good we should be and also that we would drop off the following year. That made immediate success so much more important in many minds. When we didn't play as well as we were capable of throughout that tournament, our sideline became quiet and team members became frustrated. "We should be better than this. Why aren't we better?" players thought rhetorically. **The focus was not on how we could get better, or enjoying our time with each other, but on an expectation of excellence that was impossible to meet every time.** So when we met it, players felt OK, maybe a little relieved, and when we didn't, their stress and pressure increased. This would impact us at many tournaments that year, and while we

improved at it, it really took us until 2018 to fully shift our focus from how good we think we should be to just working our hardest, having fun, and recognizing that both teams in any game can succeed. This allowed us to play without pressure and love what we were doing more, which is how we were able to play our best and do the best in Danger's history in 2018, which, according to the 2017 hype, should have been a down year for us. It just goes to show that you are always in control of your mentality, your focus, and how much you can grow.

Here's the thing about hype: Nobody outside of your program really has any idea where you're at or what you're capable of, and even if you do meet those expectations, that has no impact on the strength of other teams. You can be every bit as good (or better) than what Ultiworld says, and there could be 20 teams better than you. Keep your focus internal and on how you can improve with every opportunity. If the standard you or your team sets is that success is based on improvement, you'll be better over the long-run (and actually have better results in the long-run) than if you spend emotional energy on wins and losses. One of the most difficult things to manage is how we let external opinions impact our thoughts. This is tough enough as it is, but adding in the fact that mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and Imposter Syndrome develop at a high rate in college — often unbeknownst to the person going through it — makes dealing with external expectations extra difficult.

Now, obviously we all want to do well on the field. We all want to win — I would be lying if I said that wasn't part of the thrill of competition. *The irony is, by focusing too much on winning and who you "should" be better than, you get lost in the desire without having the tools to do it.* The teams that focus on the little things — getting better every day, improving fundamentals, building team chemistry, taking each point and game one at a time — those are the teams that end up winning more. A big part of mental toughness is being able to block out the noise - hype, negativity, expectations, pressure, etc. — so you can just focus on the basics of player development and team building.

I've given a few examples of how this can impact a team — it also can have a major impact on individual players. When top players are given extra praise and coverage online, part of it is wonderful — you get to see your teammates (or even yourself!) commended for your abilities and the hard work you've put in. However, it can also put a lot more on one's shoulders — it can make players believe that they need to do more, that the team should (or by neces sity) rely on them more. That coverage may also make teammates feel like they aren't as valued. Much of this is subconscious or is left hidden, because these are tough thoughts to admit. As leaders, the trick is to be able to help manage your stars' egos (and your own) and how your team treats each player. Just because everyone does different things for the team doesn't mean each teammate isn't equally valuable to the team. The best leaders are able to help their stars learn how to set up their teammates for growth and success in training and competition (the old adage, "The best players make their teammates better.") In turn, teammates will be able to set up the top players to be their best as well. By getting everyone to focus on how they can best set their teammates up to succeed, all players will buy-in each other more, and the team will be able to have the stars taking over when needed and stepping back when that's what's best too.

Challenge Yourself

Everyone can improve at every skill. Someone who has never thrown a disc before and someone who can throw 80 yards can each improve their throwing skill. I'm a big fan of small group work - lots of reps and it allows players to tailor the activity to what they need to focus on. So instead of always doing throwing lines where everyone throws the same 20 yards, we may have some players throwing 50, or have everyone throw a similar distance, but some are working on release points whereas others are working on just getting it to fly flat. We run cutting drills where there are multiple options, so while everyone is running the same drill, each thrower can be challenged appropriately. Some drills will challenge players to try to be 100% in completions, while others are challenged to get comfortable throwing a new pass that will result in <50% completions in that drill (my mantra is, "If half your throws don't hit the ground when you're working on expanding your throws then you're not pushing yourself hard enough.") We are also big proponents of players having "good risks." What is a "good risk" changes throughout the year - earlier in the season we're pushing players to do the things they've been working on in practice, or test out something new to see if it will work. This applies to turnovers, defensive decisions - really anything that is a possibility on the field. When we learn new strategy, we encourage players to try something out instead of asking if they can do it/if it will work. There are infinite ways to play this game — test something out and you may find the new best way to do something. Then tell your teammates and make them better too.

Conclusion

The last thing I'll leave you with is that to really expand every player is to talk with them about where they can get better and what they can work on. Help them find new resources that will work specifically better for them — articles, blog posts, videos, old UPA magazines, books on ultimate techniques and tactics, experts, etc. Learn who their heros are and reach out to them — or better yet, encourage the players themselves to reach out to them.

Fever Dreams: How Ohio State Built and Sustains a Successful Program

Cassie Swafford

What does it take to build a program? As college players, our time on a team is finite and we only have a few years to leave behind an impact. How do we build and leave behind a sustainable program? Four key aspects to program building deal with coaching, leadership, team culture, and player development.

In the fall of 2010, I was a sophomore at The Ohio State University and had recently been elected as one of the captains of Fever. During my freshman year, we placed fourth in a two-bid region and were consistently unable to compete with national caliber teams. At Regionals in 2011, we avenged several of our past losses to get the only bid and qualify for our first ever College Nationals. We lost every game at Nationals that year except for the game to play for "not last place," which we won on universe. We continued to qualify for nationals each of the following years and by 2014, we were National Champions. More importantly, Fever has continued to qualify for every College Nationals since that first trip in 2011.

Coaching

People frequently ask how Fever went from a mid-level at regionals program to winning a national title in a span of five years. There are a lot of factors (and some luck) that contributed to this success, but in my opinion, the single most important element is that we had one of the best coaching staffs in the country. By the time we

won our national title, DeAnna Ball was in her 8th year coaching Fever, Brent Reeb in his 4th, and Nick Hamilton in his 3rd. DeAnna is now in her 13th year with the team. This consistency within our coaching staff created a strong foundation for growth and permitted us to implement our vision across multiple years.

A committed, well-balanced, and cohesive coaching staff can make a world of a difference for your team. Having coaches that are able to lead drills, call lines, and keep practices running smoothly frees up your time as captains to focus on other things such as individual player development or the emotional needs of the team. Coaches also help push your boundaries as captains and develop the depth of your team's strategy. It's often valuable to have coaches with a diverse range of experiences and personalities as well. I'm a big proponent of a three-person coaching staff as this lends to more frisbee knowledge to maximize offensive and defensive strategy, more specialization of coaching roles, and more opportunities for players to receive feedback.

Finding coaches can be a demanding and overwhelming process, however putting extra time and energy into it can be one of the most effective and rewarding ways to grow your program. When trying to find new coaches, start the search early in the pre-season or as soon as new captains are elected. Generate a list of potential coaches and don't be afraid to reach out to people that you don't know personally. Interview potential interested coaches to find out their availability and commitment and to determine whether they'd fit into your team's culture. If you already have 1-2 coaches but are looking for a second or third coach, make sure that these coaches meet and feel they'd be able to work well together.

There are a lot of qualities that make a good coach and a good coaching staff, **but the most important one is that these coaches align with your team's culture and persona.** If you have a coach with a high frisbee IQ and a lot of experience but their personality doesn't match the team's, their potential contributions will be significantly less powerful and could even be detrimental. In the search for a quality coaching staff, don't lose sight of the fact that this team is YOUR team. Coaches should be present to support the player leaders, not make all of the decisions themselves. For this reason, it's often helpful to adopt a policy not to tenure in coaches but decide whether or not you want them to come back at the start of each season. If something isn't working, change it.

Leadership

A strong and dedicated leadership is another absolute essential in developing a successful program. Much like having consistency within a coaching staff, it's also helpful to have captains that are able to lead for more than one year. Invest in a mix of young players and veterans to lead the team to increase the continuity of strategy and leadership from year to year. The people you elect to be captains don't necessarily have to be the most skilled players on the team. But they should be motivated individuals with strong communication skills, a commitment to developing interpersonal relationships, and an awareness of positive team dynamics. Team captains and leaders need to be selfless and willing to always prioritize the well-being of the team over their own personal interests.

Captaining a team and building a program takes an incredible amount of emotional endurance as a leader. There will be times when you will be faced with difficult decisions, and there will be times when you make the wrong decision. How you react to these situations can define what kind of leader you are and what kind of precedent you set. I think one of the best things a leader can do is to consistently be supportive and understanding of teammates, even when this feels impossible. College is a time of massive personal growth and change, and many of your teammates will face some major challenges both within frisbee and in their broader lives. Before assuming the worst in someone, approach them with an open heart and open mind and try to meet them where they are. You may be frustrated with a teammate who is consistently late to practice or has frequent absences, but they may be fighting some silent battles. If you want to help a teammate make a positive change for themselves and for the team, find a way to help them fight these battles. If you assume the best in people, you will see more of the good in them.

As a leader it's also critical to recognize that there are often financial and societal barriers in place that prevent people from fully committing. Some players may have a harder time with practice and tournament attendance not because they are lazy or aren't putting the team first, but because they are working multiple part-time jobs. It's your job as a captain to help your teammates navigate these obstacles.

In addition to having a structured leadership core in place, it is also essential to have **non-captain leaders**. This can consist of both officers with clearly defined roles (e.g., president, secretary, treasurer, etc) and it can also simply be veterans or even young players on the team who act as leaders to set positive examples by organizing small-group workouts, throwing outside of practice, and watching film. Team officers with clearly defined roles can help considerably with the logistical needs of the team, such as coordinating fundraisers, organizing travel plans, and planning team workouts. These more task-based roles offer a large opportunity to expand both the range and the depth of your team's capabilities. For example, having a club sports liaison can ensure your team maintains a good relationship with the university, which may help with securing fields and increasing your financial allotment each year.

Having additional leaders in place permits captains and coaches to delegate when needed, and it also increases the overall buy-in on the team. When many members of a team are contributing both on and off the field, more people feel invested and are willing to put in the extra effort to push the program to its potential.

Team Culture

Before getting into the strategic details of the season, it's important to establish the team's expectations and goals. There's a lot of legwork that needs to be done initially to ensure that the team has the buy in that it needs and that every person on the team feels supported and encouraged. Poor organization lends to team members who are less engaged, less committed, and less emotionally fulfilled. In addition, the goals you set as a team may dictate some of the ways that you structure your season.

Think carefully about what your goals for the season truly are. Do you want to go for a title? Develop a B team? Provide maximum playing opportunities for everyone? Create a team culture that centers around SOTG and the joy of play? Build community and friendships? None of these are mutually exclusive. However, there are some teams who will choose to sacrifice even playing time in the quest for a championship, and there are other teams who will opt for closer, more affordable, potentially less competitive tournaments to increase access for everyone at the expense of not getting to play highly skilled teams. There's no one right answer, and there are ways to try to incorporate all of these components into your program (if you're willing to put in the work). Just because people often equate a successful team or program with winning doesn't mean that this is the only measure of success. Success can also look like having a program with a deeply connected alumni network or consistently demonstrating top-notch spirit.

One word of caution with goal-setting: be careful about putting too much emphasis on finishing at a specific place at a specific tournament. While it's helpful for your goals to be measurable, I've also found that teams that focus so heavily on outcomes often miss out on some of the joy that happens along the way, and often there's so much pressure to reach that outcome that they actually underperform. Choose joy first, and you'll find success.

As you're setting team expectations, **make sure that the expectations are clear and that they fit into the goals and team culture you've developed.** These expectations need to be communicated clearly and implemented consistently. If you're having issues with low numbers at practice or players arriving late to practice, consider how your words and actions may be contributing. Is the attendance policy somewhere in writing? Have you ensured that all players know and understand it? Do the leaders on your team frequently arrive late or miss practice? If it's unclear or if players (especially leaders) disregard it, new players will understand this to be an accepted norm. Every year on Fever we developed a player contract that clearly stated our team goals, expectations for tournament and practice attendance, fitness requirements, and guidelines for being a spirited teammate and opponent. Toward the end of the fall season, each player would sign the contract in writing and agree to uphold these foundations to the best of their abilities. While it would be easy to send these out quickly via email, having a meeting dedicated solely to discussing and evaluating these goals and expectations helps everyone feel even more invested.

Finally, what you do outside of scheduled team time to **develop a positive and growth-oriented team culture** often makes the biggest difference - and it tends to create a feedback loop! Throwing outside of practice, doing extra workouts with teammates, and holding team bonding events can help build friendship, community, and on-field chemistry in a way that relying solely on practices and tournaments simply can't.

Player Development

Player development is a hugely critical portion of building a successful program. Recruiting and player retention are important pieces of this, so be creative with the recruiting process. Flyers in dorms and classrooms, social media takeovers, hanging out near athletic facilities,

reaching out to players who might have been cut from other club sports, running middle school and high school camps in your area, and coaching local youth players are all ways to recruit both in the short and long-term. Talk to strangers in your classes, at parties, and around campus. Nine times out of ten it won't make a difference, but for that one person it can mean an introduction to a truly special sport and lifelong friendships.

"EARLY ON IN THE SEASON, YOU SHOULD BE AIMING TO PRIORITIZE PLAYER GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OVER GAME OUTCOMES."

As youth ultimate continues to grow, more and more college players are entering with prior experience. However, there is still a significant opportunity to pick up athletes who are looking for a new sport. Remember that most new players aren't going to stay and play because they love the drills and conditioning and scrimmaging, at least initially. Many will enjoy the sport, but just as critical, many are looking for a new social circle. During my first year of captaining, I was hyper-focused on how we could change our strategy, our drills, and our commitment to the point that I overlooked a lot of the less tangible things, like the importance of developing relationships and community. Thankfully, my co-captain had a knack for bringing people together and recognized how crucial (and fun) this was. The friendships and connections off-field are often the initial reason why people stay and play.

A large decision you will have to make is whether or not to hold tryouts and whether or not to make cuts. My general rule when trying to build a program is to avoid making cuts as much as possible. I've always been firmly in the camp that if you are unable to make a B team, there is no number too high for an A team. Increasing your numbers may seem like it is taking playing time away from others, but if you are creative in how you structure practices, this may actually generate more playing opportunities for everyone in the long run. As Fever continued to grow, we ended up with a 29-person roster one year, and many people didn't see much of the field in our bigger games. However the next year we were able to start a B team, and it has continued to grow since.

Early on in the season, you should be aiming to prioritize player growth and development over game outcomes. Do this by providing ample play time and touches for everyone, both in games and at practices. Choose drills that maximize touches, such as 3v3 mini rather than playing 7v7 where rookies might not touch the disc for several points. If you can safely play X/Y at fall tournaments, do it! Don't siphon players into one small role early in the season, but encourage all players (both rookies and returners) to try both handling and cutting. Having even a small amount of experience handling and seeing the field from a handler's perspective can make a large difference in someone's ability to effectively cut downfield and then distribute the disc.

Another crucial way to deepen individual's skill sets is to **THROW A LOT**. Throwing with veterans and coaches to improve form and technique is so valuable, I CANNOT STATE IT ENOUGH. Find the best throwers you know in your area, whether they are in college or not, and ask them to throw with you. Soak up as much knowledge as you possibly can from people who do it the best. There's a tendency for players to over-train physically but under-train

when it comes to throwing. While conditioning and strength building for injury prevention is absolutely essential, consider whether all of your workouts are truly needed. Could that time be better spent throwing? Or could you be incorporating throwing into your workouts?

As a leader on your team, it should be your highest priority to strengthen and develop the skill sets of those around you. This often means consistently placing the development of your teammates above your own personal growth. You MUST have a team-first mindset, always. While having a few top players can help your team win some games, it won't win championships and it definitely won't create a sustainable program. You want to progress your team to the point that you can confidently give meaningful points to the majority of your roster in big games. The programs that fall off the map are those that only invest in a few players, both because of their short sightedness and because of the poisonous culture that often accompanies such tactics.

One final word for player development - as the season is coming to a close, leadership should reach out to each individual on the team to find out what their summer plans are. Help people find playing opportunities, whether that's club, league, or both. Often one of the main reasons that younger players don't play over the summer is because they aren't encouraged to or they don't know where to look. Having a majority of your team play club of any level in any division is one of the very best things you can do to make your team nationally competitive. Playing on an elite level team allows young players to learn from the best of the best, but a low or mid-tier club team can also provide lots of valuable playing time and experience. Playing women's is great to experience the variety of structures and strategies within the women's division, and playing mixed can be valuable in that it forces you to be more flexible as a player. If you have a team culture where there's no expectation or encouragement to play club, people might not know about it and might miss out on valuable playing and life experiences. If you have a team culture where everyone plays, people will be more likely to actively seek out these playing opportunities.

Miscellaneous Tips

Coaches and team leadership should meet frequently to develop an outline for practice planning and to determine topics that need to be covered. It's helpful to have a skeleton in place so that you can ensure you're not missing anything throughout the season. There's not one particular practice/tournament schedule or strategy that will work for every team, but here are a few things I've found over the years to be vital for our program:

- **Find the right tournaments for your team.** Put yourself in tournaments where you face the best of the best, but also play in tournaments where you'll likely see more success. Crafting the right tournament schedule is a tricky balance but when done well can make a big difference. If your team can handle more tournaments without incurring extra burnout, go to more tournaments. If your team is willing and able to travel, try to diversify the teams that you will play to broaden your experiences.

- **Practice against high level competition in a supportive environment.** Fever frequently scrimmaged players from local club teams (of any gender). We had a rotation of 10-14 people who we asked to participate in our practices and play against some of our top lines. We'd scrimmage for a few hours and often only score a handful of points, and sometimes we'd even go scoreless. However, we all became much better at getting open against other college players after we had to learn to get open against club players who were taller, faster, and more skilled than us. If you do invite club players to come out to your practice, it's better to hand pick people that you trust will have good body control and follow whatever restrictions you have in place. For instance, we had rules that players weren't allowed to bid (to reduce risk of injury), and male-identifying players weren't allowed to jump.

- **Practice outside in the winter, even if it's only once a week or a few times a month.** Having those touches in outdoor conditions and full-field scenarios is so important. We typically practiced 2x/week indoors for mostly drill-based work, and then spent one three-hour practice outside each week where we solely scrimmaged. It's fun, it helps cure some cabin fever, and pushing through painful weather can give your team the resilience and mental edge when you face difficult conditions in competition.

- **Look beyond simple game outcomes.** A win is not just a win, and a loss is not just a loss. I've lost many games that have felt like huge wins because we stretched our potential as a team and competed at a new level. I've also won many games that have felt like losses because we had poor spirit, poor teamwork, or simply underperformed. Resist the temptation to fixate on the outcomes, and don't allow yourself to become complacent!

- **Don't be afraid to make changes.** Just because something has always been done in a particular way doesn't mean it's necessarily the best way. Change can be valuable, and as long as you have the best interest of the team in mind and it fits within your team culture in a way that permits a high degree of buy-in, change might just be the missing piece. Push the boundaries, be creative, and the opportunities will be endless.

“Why do you love ultimate?”: Recruitment and Retention

Alaine “Shakes” Wetli

Each time fall comes around most teams are in the same boat, trying to recruit players to come out and try ultimate. There’s a lot that goes into recruitment and retention. Fever approaches it as a process of getting new players to be able to answer the question, “Why do you love ultimate?” As Fever sees it, the sooner new players decide they want to come to practice, the sooner the new player becomes a returner.

Everyone can remember their first Ultimate practice. Whether you were nervous, excited, overwhelmed, or confused about what in the world was going on, you can probably recall at least a little bit of what happened that day. Personally, I walked up to my first practice with a confident stride. I got about 10 feet from the group of last year’s returners and immediately lost that stride. I saw returners talking to each other laughing about something that had happened earlier that day, and I realized I felt out of place. My eventual captains, Cassie Swafford and Caitlin Harley, stood up, I am guessing to greet me, but instead of saying hi, I promptly picked up that confident stride in the opposite direction. Luckily for me, that stride ran me straight into, literally, another returner who smiled and promptly spun me around back to that group. In my story, I stayed at that practice, fell in love with the sport, and in seven short months became best friends with that previously mentioned large group.

But why did I stay after that returner turned me back around? Initially, I stayed because I was embarrassed that Cassie and Harley would see me try to run away twice. But to answer why I came back to practice number two, I would have to answer a common question asked to the Ultimate community - Why do you play Ultimate? And for many rookies like me, a part of it is because of the team. However, the more you ask that question, the more diverse answers you will receive.

I remember during that first practice not knowing a single drill or concept, but quickly figuring out that my idea of what ultimate frisbee was, was not even in the ballpark. I couldn't throw a backhand, and didn't even attempt a forehand the entire practice. However, what I did come away with after that practice was 10 new female athletes' numbers who throughout the week texted me about how school was and if I needed a ride to the next practice. Even though I hadn't done a single thing correctly that first practice, I somehow now had what it felt like a team expecting me to come to the next one. That is why I came to practice number two, and then number three and four. That team expectation and acceptance soon also became the reason I was doing sprint workouts on Fridays, and lifting on the same days I had exams to study for. The Fever culture and my teammates were the reason I started playing ultimate and is still the reason I play ultimate today.

Many players have similar stories to that, with a different reason they fell in love with ultimate and started playing this sport. No matter what your answer to this question is, it is for that reason you push yourself to go to practice, give 110% during practices, and the reason one would go the extra mile outside of practices.

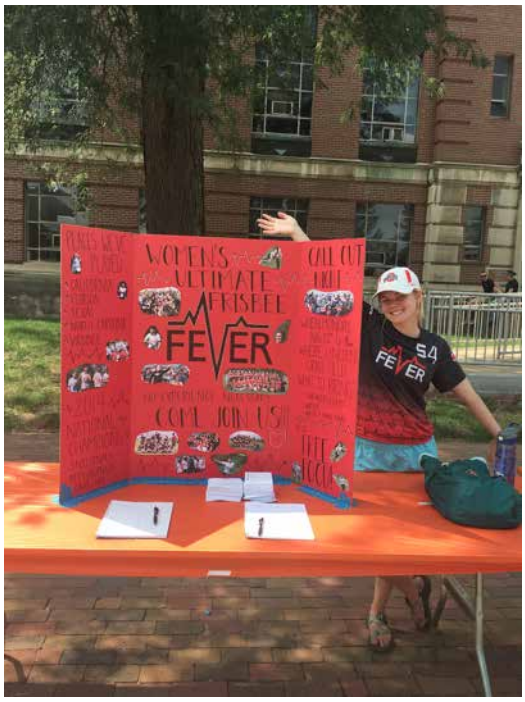
Individually, it is pretty easy for anyone reading this to answer that common question without thinking too much. And while I recognize that there is so much variety in how teams recruit new players and that different strategies work for different teams, for Fever, getting the rookies to be able to answer this question and getting them to stay often goes hand in hand. For Fever, we capitalize on the idea that once a rookie figures out how to answer this question for themselves, is the moment that a Fever rookie turns into a Fever returner.

As a previous captain, I have had to go through the process of watching 15-30 new faces show up to our first practice to only have half of those faces come back the next practice. There are three main points that Fever tries to accomplish when trying to recruit and retain new players. These points include:

- Create a consistent, positive practice atmosphere
- Get new players to a tournament early
- Make an effort to connect outside of practice

Before the first practice, Fever will have a meeting with all of the returners to discuss the upcoming year and our team goals. In this meeting, the topic of new players come up and how important it is to say positive phrases. We remind each other what it was like when we were rookies, and how important those initial conversations between new players and returners really are. The Ohio State University has an activity fair two days before the start of classes.

Each fall, Fever is at that fair trying to talk to every female student who walks by the booth. We have flyers, candy, and someone standing on a chair yelling about Ultimate Frisbee.



Get As Many People As Possible To Come Learn More About Ultimate

There is no selecting at the beginning; the main goal is to reach out to as many women as we possibly can. We talk to and try to recruit anyone who walks in front of the booth. There are no exceptions.

It is pretty easy to hand out a flyer to a passing person, and in two days that flyer be in the trash can or the bottom of a book bag. So, the day after the activity fair, and after we had that great first encounter, we have what we call "call out night." This is where everyone we just tried to reach out too is invited to come to our first practice and are introduced to the concept of Ultimate. When the new players first show up to call out, they are greeted by a returner who uses those positive phrase to start a conversation and begins to throw. Call out night is used to introduce the overarching idea of what the goals are in Ultimate. Get the Ultimate from one end of the field to the other by throwing and catching. You have seven on the field from both teams and there is a defense and offense. Two drills that go with the basic ideas of Ultimate are done to get the new players as many touches as possible. We then end with scrimmaging. First with both new players and returners, and then with just returners so they can see what a high level game looks like. After all of that, we feed everyone because, let's be honest, free food is always a good idea.

Create a Positive Atmosphere

Trying to get each new Fever player to answer that basic question is part of the structure that we set during the first weeks of practice. We run drills that cover what a forehand and backhand are, how to set up a good cut, the difference between open and break side, and then we throw as much as possible. We are doing all of this, while at the same time trying to create an atmosphere where new players are constantly getting positive feedback.. Imagine trying something new and the whole time you have a personal cheerleader standing next to you yelling praise. Do you get frustrated? Do you give up? No, you keep trying to do things to make the cheerleader yell. Now, imagine you have 20 or so people yelling that praise. Hyped yet?

The kicker to this positive atmosphere for new players is that you cannot just do it for the first practice and then go back to challenging drills or unhelpful comments. Be persistent. For at least the first few weeks, we try to have the entire team be that constant cheerleader for each new player. As obnoxious or awkward as it feels to the returner, it can make the difference between a struggling rookie who decides to give up or to keep trying this new sport. The drills

we run are to introduce concepts, but at the same time make the new players realize that they can throw, make that cut, and are starting to understand a little more each week.

We want the new players to want to come to practice and feel like this new thing they are trying is working out well for them. We do not want practice to be a place where they are nervous or stressed, but instead a place where they can come and run around and afterwards talk about those other stresses. The more you get the new players to want to come, to be excited about practice or even the atmosphere at practice the easier it is to get them to want to come when either work or school starts to ramp up.

Go to a Tournament Early

Once you have that positive atmosphere, our second point comes into play. Having a solid practice is great, but that only goes so long before new players starts to think that is all that Ultimate has to offer. We all know this is untrue, but we cannot prove that until we show them what a tournament is all about. Fever tries to go to a fall tournament as early as possible to get rookies that exposure. Nothing can quite prepare you for your first tournament, and it is an important experience that all the new players will go through together. Each new player is in a new place, away from their dorms and campus,and is playing a new sport, with this group of women they don't really know. This is where inside jokes, nicknames, and real game experiences are made. Tournaments are some people's reasons why they love Ultimate, so the sooner we expose new players to it, the better.

Connect Outside of Practice

Finally, it is extremely hard for one to play Ultimate and only partake in the sport and nothing else. Thus enters my last point. Each Ultimate team comes with a sense of community, no matter the level of your participation. That is something unique to Ultimate. Whether your community is mostly college based or your whole city, new players are often not aware of how many other people are playing this awesome sport. SHOW THEM. Fever does multiple social events outside of practices to try and illustrate that this team is there for everyone on and off the field. That is our final hook. We have this new sport, and no matter what they do, they get positive feedback. We bring them to an awesome tournament where everyone is away from their dorms and growing together. And they have this group that wants to hang out outside of practice.

Conclusion

Fever continues to grow each year, now supporting a B team starting their sixth season this year. Each year more and more women come try out, and start their own Ultimate journey. Everyone falls in love with Ultimate in a different way. Whether it be the thrill of tournaments, the strategy of your throws, the social gatherings after practice, or the fact that you know that you have someone to talk with after a stressful day, there is a reason that people continue to play this sport. The teams that successfully have growing numbers every year are not always the teams that are winning the national championship, but instead are the teams that leave a legacy of a program for years to come.

B-Team or Bust: The Do's and Don'ts of Adding a Second Team

Kayla Emrick

Adding a second team is an incredibly exciting point in your program's growth, but it needs to be managed carefully. I can't give you a perfect recipe for B-team success, but I can give you some questions you should answer as you move forward as well as some lessons learned and challenges to prepare for.

If you're lucky, you'll know your program is approaching a split the season before the split actually happens. Ensuring a smooth transition, as your program splits into two teams, requires a lot of planning beforehand! My first year coaching at Emory, the team had just over 30 players and only graduated 4 seniors at the end of the spring. With around 28 returning players before recruiting a single rookie, it became clear that a second team was a possibility if not an outright necessity. Captains and coaches were able to start planning to split at the beginning of the summer. We planned tentative timelines, put together a recruitment strategy, and answered a lot of questions that came up well in advance (see below!). With ideas in mind, we were able to communicate the upcoming changes to the team and carefully consider upcoming challenges before they hit us in the face. The more you can get a sense of how the split will operate and what needs to be communicated with the team, the smoother things will go as you move forward.

As your program grows and you consider splitting into two teams, here's what you'll need, the challenges you'll face, when you'll know if it's time, and the questions you'll need to be able to answer to ensure a smooth transition.

The Necessities: Numbers, Leadership, Resources, Buy-in

As you approach a first-time split, there are three things you absolutely need: numbers, leadership, resources, and buy-in. It's worth noting that these things may not appear naturally for your program. Not to worry - they can be cultivated! Just recognize that a successful split does require these things above all else.

1. Numbers: Do you have enough players to form 2 full teams?

There are two different starting places for this question: Are you planning a split into two teams of roughly equal size, or are you cutting people from the A-team and creating a B-team from the remainder?

If you plan to form two teams of roughly equal size out of a single program that historically does not cut players, I loosely suggest that a good cutoff number for forming a B-team is 35 players in a program. Maybe fewer will work for your program, maybe you'd only feel comfortable with a few more- that's fine! Feel it out! I suggest 35 because it has thoroughly crossed the line past a comfortable number for one team. 30 still feels a little low- you still might lose a few freshman to another extracurricular and injuries happen to the best of us, and if you find yourself with 25 able players you no longer have enough to easily split into two. At 35, you comfortably have two teams of between 15-20 that can survive a few deserters and a handful of sprained ankles.

If your program is historically competitive and routinely makes cuts, but has yet to add a B-team, the question becomes: how many players beyond your ideal A-team are necessary to form a B-team? I loosely suggest 15 players is the minimum for a functional B-team. If you have fewer, not to worry- there are ways to engage these players and work towards a full team in the future (see section below!). To compete in the college series, a team needs a roster of 10. 15 gives you enough of a buffer to account for injuries and deserters. Bonus: if everyone comes to practice, you'll be able to play 7v7! If you have a committed crew of 11 B-teamers who are all in and ready to go, go for it; 15 is just my suggestion for a comfortable threshold for a functioning team with successful practices.

2. Leadership: Do you have someone to lead the B-team?

A leader doesn't necessarily mean a coach; hell, you might not even have a coach for your A-team! You just need to make sure that forming a B-team doesn't mean that half the players in your program are cut off from the knowledge, feedback, and organizational capacity provided by your A-team leaders. Someone needs to plan practices, select tournaments, and handle logistics. There are several options available: A-team leadership could lead the B-team as well, though this can be a

big undertaking. If there are experienced players with leadership qualities who are willing to captain the B-team, they might fit the bill. Maybe your program is lucky enough to have multiple coaches available. Whatever your particular situation is, you just need to make sure that someone is handling the planning and decision-making necessary for a successful B-team.

3. Resources: Do you have the field space, gear, and financial resources to support a second team?

Before approaching a split, you need to make sure that your program can practically support another team. You might need to ask your school's club sports organization for additional funding; this is part of why I suggest planning for a split the year before. You'll definitely need another disc bag and more cones for a second team. You might need to reserve additional field space or additional practice times. When I played at Oberlin College, our expanse of green space on North Fields meant that we never had to worry about fields for another team; coaching at Emory, we have to submit detailed paperwork a semester ahead of time to request access to a larger portion of the closely guarded intramural fields. At the beginning of our split, securing field space was one of the biggest stressors. Be prepared for financial changes too; you might even need to increase fundraising efforts or raise team dues. Essentially, be aware that a second team means you'll need two of everything you already have, or you'll need to share.

4. Creating Buy-In

Lastly, the team has to buy-in. This is a little less tangible than the other necessities, but it's just as important to cultivate. Splitting into 2 teams is a big change for a program, and the players need to be on board with the idea if it's going to be successful. Intentionally cultivate buy-in, make sure the team is on board. If there's hesitation, address it. Focus on the positives. Many of the general tips below have to do with buy-in

Challenges to be prepared for:

1. Change is hard!

Specifically in a program that's splitting one team into 2, and not forming a second team out of cuts from the first, there will likely be a lot of mixed feelings around the split. Going from one team with lots of players and all your friends to two teams with smaller numbers and half your friends play on a different team is tough. Pushback from some players doesn't mean splitting is the wrong decision, it just means that the change needs to be managed. Listen to players, validate their concerns, ask for constructive input, and always return to the positives of the split.

2. Balancing priorities: Creating a competitive A-team as well as a successful B-team

In the first year of a split, it can be really tough to create the most competitive A-team roster possible while also cultivating a B-team with a baseline of skill necessary for success. Depending on your program's goals, you will likely have to compromise on this front in one way or another. It's also important to carefully consider the players that are on the bubble between the A-team and the B-team. Who will learn best surrounded by players better than them, and who will thrive in an environment where they can be a star? You'll have some tough decisions to make, and you might miss the mark with a few players, but that's all part of the challenge that goes in to balancing the priorities of two teams in one program.

3. You can't make everyone happy!

This applies to all coaches and life in general, but it definitely bears repeating in this context. Nearly every decision you make will ruffle someone's feathers. Players will disagree with you about everything from the order of your warm-up exercises to whether the team should've split in the first place. Leading a team through this kind of change means that you'll be responsible for making decisions for the collective program while considering the wants and needs of a ton of individual players. Listen to individuals and take their concerns seriously, but also recognize that you can't magically create the perfect scenario for every single player. Trust yourself and recognize that it's not your job to make everyone happy.

4. Finding B-Team Competition

Something else to keep in mind is that B-teams thrive best when they can play against an appropriate level of competition. Emory's A and B teams both attended a fairly competitive tournament last fall. While the A-team did fairly well and finished middle of the pack, the B-team did not score a single point the entire tournament. They still gained a lot of experience and celebrated their small successes, but it became clear that this tournament was not appropriately competitive for them. Seek out tournaments with other B-teams or first-year teams. You can schedule scrimmages against local teams' rookie squads, or even local high school teams if that's an option.

What If Now's Not the Time?

Sometimes teams find themselves in an uncomfortable situation in which they're just shy of having enough players to split into two. Maybe you have a squad of 32 but a few players are struggling with injuries and a handful are going abroad in the spring. The program has been growing, but you're not quite prepared to make the jump. What can you do to get there?

The good news is, the earlier you decide to split in the following season, the better you'll be able to plan for it. If you know that adding a B-team in the next year is the plan, then you can

start floating the idea early and get ready for a big recruitment push in the fall. There's also a lot you can do in the preceding season to manage your extra-large numbers and prepare players for the change to two teams.

Practices with over 30 players feel unwieldy and awkward; reps in drills are hard to come by, and players are only on the field for every other scrimmage point at most. Make the most of your time by rotating through drill stations in smaller groups. If you have the space, either get 2 full scrimmages going at once or add a game of mini alongside your 7v7 work. Position-specific drills can help keep things focused, with handlers and cutters splitting to work on different skills. If it makes sense for your team, you could occasionally split into drills by skill level; newer players can focus on more fundamental skills or more basic versions of a drill while more experienced players take things to the next level.

With a large squad it can be nearly impossible to get playing time at tournaments. To make sure new players still get to improve and compete, create those opportunities. Send a squad of players who don't see a ton of playing time to developmental tournaments on their own, or schedule scrimmages with other local developmental teams. This will also help introduce the idea of a B-team as an opportunity for players to get on the field instead of staying on the sidelines at tournaments.

his was exactly the situation Emory's team found ourselves in my very first year with them. At the end of the fall we still had over 30 players coming to practice. We discussed splitting for the spring, but decided not to; we estimated about 5 or so players would likely drop before the competitive season, and in any case we weren't logistically prepared for that next step. Well, all those rookies stuck around and we ended up with one enormous team. After bringing nearly 30 players to an early spring tournament, the first day ended with rookies in tears over how little play time they had. We worked hard to create playing opportunities at practice, but even with three coaches it was logistically tough to manage. Then, we got extremely lucky. Our home tournament was coming up and we were nervous about how the team would cope with having even more players than we did last time. At the last minute, 2 days before the tournament, a team dropped out. We had 2 options: either plow ahead with an awkward 15-team tournament format, or send a B-team. The choice was clear. We quickly threw together a B roster and contacted every player directly: Would you be willing to play with a second team this weekend? The hook was infinitely more playing time. Everyone agreed. I went with the 13-person B-team while the other 2 coaches stayed with our A-team squad of 19. It went so well that the team agreed to split again for another tournament in the spring. We did have to compete as one team for the college series since we did not officially roster a second team, but the seeds were planted. It became clear in a lot of players' minds that, as complicated as adding a second team can be, it was worth it just to be able to play.

Questions You Need to Answer

You have the numbers, you have a leadership plan, resources are in place, and the team has bought in; now what? This is where things get a little less concrete. Your next steps are entirely up to you and what your program wants the split to look like. Planning, intentionality,

and flexibility are the most important pieces to a successful split. There are no definitive right or wrong answers to the following questions, but as you proceed into a first-time split, you should come up with an answer that works for you. Neglect to answer these questions, and you could unwittingly leave room for tension and confusion as the program goes through an uncomfortable change.

- **What is the relationship between the A team and B team?**
  This is a nebulous question without a concrete answer, but it's the perfect starting place for a program approaching a split. Everything else falls under this broad umbrella.

- **What will the teams do together? What will the teams do separately? (warm up, practices, tournament schedules, social events, workouts)?**
  This is one of the more important questions to answer early, as it's likely one of the biggest concerns for returning players. Depending on the history and composition of your program, there are a lot of different answers here. More distinct separation can lead to better focus and skill development for players on each team, but it can also lead to social divisions that undermine team culture in programs that are used to doing everything together. Attending the same tournaments might be good for social cohesion and travel logistics, but it might also mean that one team isn't facing the appropriate level of competition. Combining practices also might be a logistical decision; at Oberlin, we had 2 relatively small teams, so combining for most practices was the best way for both teams to play with good numbers. Think through what the best decisions are for your program's goals, numbers, and culture so you have a plan going in, and be prepared to compromise.

- **How do the expectations and goals of the two teams differ?**
  Are the A and B team players expected to attend the same number of practices, tournaments, and workouts? Is the B team primarily for players who want a relaxed environment to play for fun, or is it a developmental team that will feed players in to your A team over time? These things can change over time; Emory's B-team was framed as a lower-commitment option in its first year to draw in players who were wary of the time and intensity involved with the A team. As interest has grown and more players have voiced an interest in being a more competitive team, expectations have shifted to be more similar to the A-team. This is a great place for the players to drive the conversation.

- **When will the teams be split and who is involved in those decisions?**
  Are you planning an early-fall split so the teams have as much time to focus on their individual development, or would you rather plan to divide at the end of the fall semester to prioritize playing together? Will you hold official tryouts, or a

tryout period of practices, or a tryout tournament? Do you have the opportunity to send X & Y squads to a fall tournament? Who will decide the final rosters: coaches, captains, both, neither, the players themselves? To what extent is a player's team preference taken into account? This gets at the heart of the logistical planning for the fall of a team split. Be as clear and concrete as possible about how this process will unfold!

- **How will team decisions be communicated?**

  Who will tell players which roster they're on- captains, coaches, another logistical figure? What communication method do you use- texts, calls, emails, in-person meetings, a combination? At Emory, we take a mixed approach: A-team captains, who are involved in the decision-making process, reach out via text to offer team invites for players who are on their preferred team. Coaches handle the more difficult conversations with players who were cut from the A-team, offering the opportunity to meet with these players as needed. This way, coaches can be the bad guy so that captains aren't asked to jeopardize friendships by cutting their friends. I will say we're extremely lucky to have multiple A-team and B-team coaches; programs that aren't as lucky will have to work through the difficulty of communicating uncomfortable decisions with those close to them.

- **What language do you use to talk about the teams individually and the program as a whole?**

  Language matters. Does the B-team have a different team name from the A-team? After splitting at Oberlin for the first time, I asked the B-team captains if they had any ideas for the B-team's name. One of them looked at me incredulously. "We're the Preying Manti", she said- the same name as the A-team. That identity was extremely important to them. At Emory, the names are related but separate (and extremely cute); Luna, our A-team, now has a B-team named Tuna (like two-na, since it's our second team. Shoutout to Keith Raynor for that brainwave). Moon- and fish-related imagery abound. More importantly, we focus heavily on the unity of the two teams; together, we are EWU (Emory Women's Ultimate).

  Beyond names and titles, the language that you use to describe each team is also extremely important. In conversation, what adjectives do you use to describe each team? Do you subtly (but unintentionally) imply that the B-team is less important, less worthy of attention? How do you describe the teams to new players when they ask what the difference is? Do you focus on the separation of the teams, or the unity of the program? Think carefully about how you choose to present the teams, especially in a first-time split.

- **How are A & B team captains, and other officer/logistical positions, decided, and when?**

  A little more logistical nitty-gritty to consider here. Just pin down a system to make sure you know who decides what and when. When a team is splitting for the first time, it can make sense for coaches or other leadership to essentially appoint B-team captains to make sure that responsible, knowledgeable players have a role in forming a program's second team.

General Tips:

As I've mentioned previously, I can't give you a perfect blueprint for B-team success. However, I CAN share some general tips and lessons learned.

- **Communicate clearly!** As with any group of people going through any amount of change, clear communication is key. Let players know details about the split as early as possible- when teams are splitting, what tryouts look like, what the practice and tournament schedules for each team will be, etc. It's also important to verbalize the why behind the split. Hopefully this will be fairly obvious:
  - More playing time for more people
  - More tailored instruction/drills to different skill levels
  - The entire program will get more competitive
- **Be flexible and adapt!** Things will change as you go- that's ok! The best laid plans go astray. Be ready to change your plans as necessary in the face of unforeseen challenges.
- **Manage expectations re:change!** Be as honest as you can about the fact that things will be different! Acknowledge that change is difficult, but don't dwell on it too much.
- **Focus on the positives!** Instead of dwelling on the difficulties, focus on the positive changes and the excitement & opportunity that comes from adding a second team
- **Listen to the team!** Create buy-in and ease concerns by listening, really listening, to the players on the team.

Teaching Ultimate to Newcomers in D-III Division or Any New Team

Rachel “Rojo” Johnson

In my experience, the main difference between DIII and DI ultimate is the size of the recruiting pool. A smaller student body means a smaller universe from which to pull potential players and teammates. And most likely, the DIII student body also happens to be a demographic where sports experience isn’t necessarily a given. No worries though! The beauty of ultimate is that anyone can learn to play. Have patience, go slowly, and you’ll have a team that can run with the best of them. These are my top 4 tips to help you find success as a new DIII team - or ANY team full of new players!

I should preface this article with a disclaimer: 99% of these ideas are not original. I have had amazing coaches, teachers, and teammates who have taught me all of the things I explain here. I wish I could add footnotes for all the people who have taught me along the way but unfortunately this article is already too long. This is all to say - take the following, add your experience, share it with those around you, and we will all become better players and teachers of the game.

Tip #1: Engage Your Returners

Before the first practice even begins, you've already got a key resource to help build your team in your returning players. Engage them from the beginning! Have a leadership or team meeting to talk about plans and goals for your season so everyone is excited once your new recruits show up. Ask returners to help set up and demonstrate drills and always partner them up with new players. I really like doing a "teach the teachers" practice before new players join the team where we run through the first day of practice and prep returners to teach our new players. It's fun for us to reminisce on our first practices and they will be ready to rock as teachers once those first new faces show up.

Once you start having practices, use your returners' voices throughout the season. When teaching a skill for the first time, ask a returner to explain it first. As you introduce rules, ask the returners to explain them. Anyone who works in a classroom can tell you this is awesome for information retention and deepening understanding of a subject. But even more, it saves you from having to be the only voice out on the field. Everyone learns differently and some players on your team may learn better from other explanations. Plus going hoarse is a real possibility for coaches and captains, so save your voice!

When you involve returners in the big picture planning of the season and the day-to-day running of practice, you're doing a couple things. First, building buy-in. If returners are invested in what is happening and helping the team meet its goals, there is a lot less griping and drama. I think we can all agree that's a good thing! Second, building leaders. You won't be around forever as a captain or a coach. Start empowering teammates to take on that role and they will be ready to kick some butt once they need to step up into a leadership position.

Tip #2: Make a Plan

My next piece of advice comes, I admit, from an innate part of my personality. I like making a plan, executing the plan, and then thinking about how I could make a plan better. So when it comes to planning an ultimate season, I try to structure what we will cover over the course of a semester from a crawl-walk-run perspective. Think about the skills we have to learn to play ultimate - catching, throwing, cutting, down field defense, marking, offensive plays, defensive positioning. It's a lot of really new stuff, especially if you think about this from the perspective of a college freshman who has never played an organized sport before.

So break it down into building blocks that will get you where you need to be. Start with a basic skill like throwing a backhand. Begin by practicing stationary backhand throws with a partner. GREAT. Now, do a drill where the partner is a moving cutter. Slightly more difficult, but do-able. Now add another wrinkle and have two cutters, the first has to cut, catch, then throw to the second. Getting closer to a game scenario right? Next, add defenders to your two-person cutting drill. Now run the same drill with your offensive cutting pattern - vertical or horizontal stack. Boom. You have taken your team from throwing to playing offense. How many practices this takes depends, of course, on your team. Which leads me to my next piece of advice.

Tip #3: Go Slow

Your returners will be chomping at the bit to get out there and play hard. They're awesome and we love them. But when they panic the week before the first tournament that we haven't yet gone over zone offense and certainly someone will throw a zone at the tournament since it's going to be windy, it's crucial to simmer them down. I'm not saying go as slow as the slowest person learns. But maybe go as slow as the middlest person.

Find this elusive middlest person not by just watching, but talk to a cross section of the team. New players, second year players, veterans. See how everyone is feeling by going up and asking them. Take in not just what they're telling you, but if they're projecting confidence and if they follow up with questions. If your players or teammates are asking deeper questions and projecting confidence, they're ready for more advanced skills. You can also try a simple thumb poll after a drill - Thumbs up if you get it, thumbs in the middle if not quite, thumbs down if you're confused. Plus no one feels singled out!

Tip #4: Focus on Fundamentals

Which brings me back, in a roundabout way to season planning. The college season is broken down helpfully into two semesters for most schools. I like to think of fall semester as the learning portion and spring semester as competition portion. If we can lay the groundwork for solid fundamentals in the fall, then there will be time to hone strategy and more advanced concepts like zones and end zone offense in the spring. But none of this planning will come to fruition without those fundamentals.

So during those fall practices, don't look for perfection. Look for the little things. When everyone is learning to throw, or coming back to it after a long summer away from the disc, look for rotation on the disc, flat throws, or even just the disc going generally toward its intended receiver. This may seem like an exaggeration, but when running warm-ups and plyos, does everyone have correct running form? Opposite arm, opposite leg, core engaged, etc. Spend time on these little things so when spring comes and it's time to put in the work with sprint workouts and drilling the end zone set, everyone can complete throws and run without getting injured. Believe me when I tell you that goes a long way!

No matter if you're a seasoned DIII program, a new team in their first DIII season, or any program with a huge of new players, my hope for your team is that you embrace the process of turning ultimate newbies into ultimate-obsessed weirdos like you and me. These tips are just a starting point and will work even better when you add your team's enthusiasm, culture, and love of the game.

Managing Personal Expectations Across Different Levels of Ultimate

Erynn Schroeder

An exploration in managing personal expectations when playing at different levels of the sport — a journey from D-III to World Junior Ultimate Championships and back. How success across divisions is transferable.

When selecting a college, I made sure that all of my top choices HAD a frisbee team, but ultimate was not my only focus. I decided to attend the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University based on degree and scholarship opportunities. When I showed up to the first frisbee practice that fall (2011), I was very excited to meet my teammates and toss a disc. Having played four years in high school, I showed up to the team as one of the most experienced and most committed players (though arguably also the most shy). The power dynamic was awkward for a bit; I was scared to share the wisdom I'd gained from past coaches. My confidence grew throughout the year and the team began to trust my judgment. I was nominated to captain during sophomore year and continued leading the team in my junior and senior years.

In the summer of 2012 (between freshman and sophomore years) I played on the U20 USA Women's team in Dublin, Ireland. I was originally offered a spot as an alternate. While this was exciting and definitely the highlight of my career so far, it was not the roster spot I hoped for. Knowing there was still a chance to gain a full roster position, and wanting to earn that spot, I trained hard. Part of that training was the spring season with my college team. We were the team that showed up to Regionals with only 9 players (down to 6 players by the end of the first game on Sunday). Luckily,

the small roster meant plenty of playing time and mental toughness training. In that season, I did not know D-III nationals existed (first championship was only in 2010) or how close we came to making it; I was out there to play lots of points with my team and have a good time showing off our team's hot pink jerseys and billowing yellow shorts.

I continued to train on my own throughout the summer. After traveling to a national team practice weekend (which was treated as a second tryout for the alternates), I got the email I'd been waiting for, offering me the fully rostered position! When the time came, I went to training camp with the team in Massachusetts for a week, then flew to Dublin to play against young women from all over the world. We took second place that year to Colombia. The principles I learned during those weeks shaped my play and leadership greatly. They included how to be a good teammate, listen and apply advice from different coaches, make simple drills more advanced to focus on multiple skill-sets, communicate effectively about the rules (even with people of different backgrounds and first languages), and many more. These lessons I was able to bring back to St. Ben's and the teams I now coach and will coach or captain in the future.

After playing with the USA Womens Junior National Team, I was honestly a little worried about going back to the team at St. Ben's. I was sad that the time with Team USA was over and knew that practice and tournaments would not be the same... And they weren't. But the way I coped was by managing my own expectations. I was still able to play my game, and at college I was able to be a leader, sharing and helping other women learn the sport I found so fun.

The Benefits of Coaches

Part way through my sophomore year, I played in a hat tournament in Minneapolis. Though not the goal going into it, by the end of the weekend, two players on my hat team offered to coach me and the St. Ben's team. They attended a few practices that spring and were at every tournament. The help and guidance they provided during those tournaments led to a steep learning curve. With all attending players as a captive audience, I remember learning 2-3-2, a completely new defense, in the first huddle of a tournament Saturday. We practiced it throughout the day against various teams and by the end of the tournament, it was earning us more turnovers than person defense. Our coaches took the burden of line-calling and in-game strategy, freeing up the captains to focus on playing (lots of points). We started winning, earned another bid for our region, played Regionals with a roster of 16 people, and made it to DIII Nationals.

On-Field Captaining

For sophomore and junior years, I was part of the same group of three captains. The other two were both a year ahead of me. As a captain in that leadership group, my role was almost entirely on-field. I would plan and run practice and sometimes speak in huddles. The other two did all of the REALLY IMPORTANT AND UNDERAPPRECIATED behind-the-scenes work (finding tournaments, booking hotels, making carpools, creating a budget, talking to the Student Council to get money for the budget, attending club sports briefs before spring break, ordering

jerseys, booking space and time for practice…). I did not fully appreciate or understand this other side of the captain role until they graduated. AKA a little too late.

In the on-field captain role, it was my responsibility to make practices fun, engaging, and as competitive as possible. At a small school, with a small team, it was very important to pick times for practice that worked for a majority of people. Retention of new players was a struggle every year, as was the balance of planning drills that would keep new players and returners engaged and building their skills. I found that the best way to do this is trying to incorporate competitive elements into drills whenever possible. Keeping score, putting defense on, changing up a rule slightly to take away the returners' disadvantage, and scrimmaging often, even with low numbers (3v3, 5v5, as many as we had at practice). In drills as simple as the "go-to" drill (two lines of people facing each other, mark, throw, cut, stand in line), we made it more challenging by adding rules of catching with only the outside hand or only counting the catch if you actually ran-through and didn't give the (imaginary) defense an opportunity to interfere. Go-to can also be played elimination style with a straight up mark and throwing to a stationary person. If you don't get the block and also don't get the throw off, that is a strike against you. Last woman standing wins!

Adding these competitive elements is a good way to encourage chemistry-building and trust. Winning (or losing) together — feeling connected on the field — is a great way to make friends. Adding defense whenever possible makes the offense work harder and is a good opportunity to work on simple things like the mark, even if it isn't the main focus of the drill. Pairing up new people and returners shows that we trust our new players to step up and figure out how to stop or get around something that may at first seem impossible to them. It also gives returners a chance to practice their leadership by explaining concepts one-on-one within drills or scrimmage. It amazes me how quickly people can learn new physical and mental skills — trust the rookies!!

Off-Field Captaining

At the beginning of my senior year, as the only returning captain, I was the assumed know-all within my new leadership group, but that was far from true. At that point I had a couple years' worth explaining frisbee concepts and drills, but had only seen the logistics worked from afar. It was a year-long struggle of communicating and delegating tasks (as an example, our jersey order was so delayed that they barely arrived in time for nationals!). These new administrative burdens were put on top of a hefty class-load and the stress of figuring out my after-college plans. To mitigate issues like these, which can and do exist on competitive teams at all levels, it seems best to have a list written down or typed out with links. Helpful information to pass on (specifically for college teams) includes:

- School club sports director contact (and a bit about their communication preferences/style)
- What the budget looks like/how to make changes to the budget and ask for more money
- The email and password for any team email account
- Contact information for current or potential coaches

- Dates for tournaments, school meetings, USAU deadlines, etc.
- Who has the disc bag, what needs to be replaced
- A list of drills broken down by skills
- Cheers (written out)
- Info for ordering jerseys/logo in jpeg form (if design doesn't change every year)
- Lessons learned or things often forgotten in past years

Conclusion

I am so thankful for my time at the College of Saint Benedict. Playing ultimate in the DIII scene helped me gain confidence in my on-field skills and leadership ability. Managing a team was a joy and a struggle, I was very glad to have the support of other captains and coaches along the way. Having played at many competitive levels in places all around the country, I can truly say that some of the most intense and most fun games of ultimate I've played were during the seasons I played with the College of Saint Benedict. As the division continues to grow, it will get only more competitive with larger and more committed teams — I am excited to see that growth expanding to more and more college players around the nation, and to see more of these players competing at national and international levels.

SECTION IV

MENTAL HEALTH INJURIES & BURNOUT

Thriving through Multiple Competitive Seasons

Bert Abbott

Many athletes play ultimate year-round -- from the college season in the fall and spring to the club season in the summer. While skill level seems to increase with more playing opportunities, athletes may risk injury and might possibly be hindering other aspects of their game. How can we care for our bodies throughout the competitive seasons and what little “off-season” we have? How can we maximize the 4 (or 5) years we have in college to get the most out of our college careers while decreasing our risk of injury?

Looking back on my time as a college ultimate player, it seemed like the world was open with possibilities. There were so many opportunities to play, from my local league team I’d been on since high school, to practices throughout the school year, to the club season all summer long! There were only a handful of weeks where I wasn’t playing multiple practices and games, or even scampering off to fun tournaments. This was incredible for my development as an ultimate player, and my skills developed by

leaps and bounds. However, it was just as trying for my body, and I spent most of those years strapped into two ankle braces and playing through countless aches and pains.

When considering your college career, you have to take into account developing and caring for your skills as an ultimate player, but also for your athletic development. Sometimes, these two goals seem to be at odds with each other, but with some deliberate planning and attention to your body's needs, you can walk the line and make the most of your time playing college ultimate.

Mobility & Self Care

Focusing on keeping your joints moving how they should and listening to your body is central to staying in the game. Our bodies work as one cohesive system, so not rehabbing and playing through a rolled ankle, for example, can have a cascade of consequences. If your ankle isn't moving through its full range of motion, you'll compensate somewhere else, like in your knees, which aren't meant to do the same job as your ankles. This can lead to chronic or acute problems for those other joints.

In addition to resting injuries and treating problems as they come up, a proactive practice of mobility and soft tissue work can help keep you on the field. Learn how to use a foam roller and lacrosse ball to release myofascial pressure points. Take the time to stretch after practice and workouts. Get in a practice of daily deliberate movement; for an example, check out the Kinstretch CARs routine that moves you through head-to-toe movements in just 10-15 minutes. Pay attention to your posture while you're in class or studying, and take frequent movement breaks.

Rebuild your Foundation

The college and club seasons seem to bleed into each other on both sides, so it can seem impossible to take a break after either season. Do what you can to carve out the time to create an off-season, even if it's only a handful of weeks. Use that time to first take care of resting and rehabbing any injuries, then to rebuild your foundation. The extended fall season when your team's focus is more on developing the skills of new players and less on scrimmaging is a great opportunity to dedicate time to strength training.

In this pseudo off-season, focus on the big strength-building movements, like squats, deadlifts, push-ups, and pull-ups. When done with proper form, these exercises are great at improving your overall muscular strength as well as the strength of other connective tissues (bones, ligaments, and tendons). To get the ideal gains from a strength training program, it's recommended to do at least three sessions a week. That's a great goal to shoot for as your schedule allows, but pay attention to how much physical, mental, and emotional stress you're under. The week of midterms might not be a great time to try and train really hard because your body won't necessarily be able to handle all the extra stress.

Core Strength & Movement Patterns

When you're in-season and practices are intense alongside a big tournament schedule, your training focus should be on maintaining functional core strength and patterning solid movement patterns. Your core is your powerhouse, the center that ties together all the movements you do on the field. It's how you ensure you're transferring energy effectively into the ground, and a strong core helps support health movement patterns to keep you injury resistant. I want to emphasize that using functional core training is important, as poor core exercises or even great one done poorly won't give you the benefits we're looking for -- and might even hurt you.

Using the strong foundation of a functionally engaged core in addition to your off-season and mobility work, you can focus during the season on maintaining healthy movement patterns. That means doing running technique work to sprint and change direction efficiently and safely. It means working on single sided strength and power in the gym, being careful to not overdo it in those high stress times! Some great exercises include split squats, single leg deadlifts, and other one-sided variations on lifts.

What Next?

Bert Abbott celebrates with Seattle Mixtape after winning the 2017 USA Ultimate Club National Champsions. Photo by Paul Rutherford

Many of the concepts I've laid out here involve working on your body mechanics and movements with great form. Check around your area to see if there is a strength coach or other movement specialist you can work with to learn more about what your own body needs and get some hands-on attention. Your school may even have classes on lifting, either for credit or through your student gym. A few sessions can go a long way to patterning great habits. There are also multiple online strength and conditioning memberships designed for ultimate players that support players in some of these areas. Check out Strive & Uplift, the Ultimate Athlete Project, Morrill Performance, and Game Point Performance to see what fits your needs the best!

Rohre's Tips for Overcoming a Season-Ending Injury

Rohre Titcomb

Ultimate is a sport that requires teamwork. Teamwork on the field, but also off. No 7 players on the line can be their best on their own — they need their team's support to meet their potential. Even when you are limited to the sideline, there are a multitude of ways you can contribute to your team AND continue to improve as a player.

I wish I didn't have the authority to write this article. And I wish this article were not necessary. If you're reading this, I'm sorry you're injured, or someone you care about has been injured. No ways around it, it sucks. It's miserable.

In my ~20 years playing ultimate, I've missed 5 seasons to injury. One high school season to shoulder surgery, one college season for a repeat surgery because I didn't do my PT right, and 3 club seasons due to ACL tears. I've missed shots at 3 national teams, including one World Games. My most recent ACL tear has precipitated an earlier than expected transition to coaching. My partner is a quadriplegic who broke his neck in a near-death diving accident in 2015, so I've also supported and continue to support someone navigating a life-altering injury.

So, here are my practical tips for how to win the battle against your injury.

The battle is both physical and mental. There are easier structural supports for the physical return to sport, but the mental aspect will be very specific to you and your injury. And no one can tell you exactly how to overcome your mental challenges.

A PT can program a workout for you, but I can't tell you what you need to battle the mental difficulties of returning to sport after a traumatic season-ending injury. What I can do, is offer some of my experience, and hope that some of it can help you pull through and get back to the field.

When I tore my first ACL in 2011, I was a 2nd year player on Riot, but still had a lot of strong friendships with my former teammates from my first club team, Brutesquad. That year, Brute had at least 4 players tear their ACLs, to the point that they made t-shirts for their gimp squad (and they gave me one, which was also truly special). It was a tragedy to have so many season-ending injuries on their team that year, but in some ways it was also really helpful because we had a little community, and we stayed in touch and could relate to each other's pain even when we were across the country from one another and competing against each other. At Nationals that year, VY Chow even taped my knee for me (maybe right before we played them?!).

Anyway, through all my injuries and wonderful notes from teammates and loved ones, the best message I received was from a dear friend, Stephanie Barker "Arker," who is no longer with us. Here's exactly what she wrote me:

> "I am physically in pain with the sadness that I feel for you....I can't even describe it. I am SO SORRY that this happened to you.
>
> I know there's not a lot anyone can say to make you feel better, and I know that you'll get tired of hearing "you're an athlete, it'll be OK, you'll be just as good as you were before the injury because you're such an in-shape person who will work hard for it"...so I'm not going to tell you that.
>
> All I'm going to say is that it sucks, the injury sucks, the pain sucks, the fact that your season is over sucks. Trying to coordinate your care and go through your pain in the ass insurance company sucks. Trying to make sure that you find the right doctor,the right surgeon, and choose the right graft, and making sure that you get surgery at the right time...it all SUCKS. It will mess with your mind...so take the time that you need to be sad, to mourn the loss of your season and all that you have worked for up to this point. Do whatever you need to do to wallow in self pity...you deserve some wallowing right now."

With each subsequent injury, I've gone back and re-read her note, and it rang true every time. So if you want to stop reading now, that's fine. You got the most important piece. :) Okay, now on to some tips.

Broadly, my tips:

- Let yourself mourn
- Let yourself mourn

- Let yourself mourn some more. Few of your teammates or loved ones are going to relate or know how to help you, so it's important to give yourself space to feel how you feel and work hard on your self care.
- Even though they want to be helpful, it's going to be hard for them to really understand your pain and your challenge. So whenever you can, remember your teammates do miss playing with you.
- Take care of yourself. Eat well, sleep well, drink water. Your body needs those basic things to heal.
- Go to practice to stay connected to the team and get creative with practice time (do PT during warmups!)
- Celebrate successes, share milestones with your teammates. Post-op, that milestone is going to be reducing your dose of painkillers, or peeing by yourself, or increasing your range of motion, or...you get the idea….then it'll be other things. It won't be anything super sexy for a while, so you're going to be miserable if you can't acknowledge small steps along the way. If you're more private, start a journal so you can track your recovery and have a place to share your challenges and successes.
- Become a student of the game. Watch film, subscribe to the women's ultimate film study group on Facebook, read articles about ultimate strategy.
- Learn to talk to teammates from the sideline (on D, start by always telling the mark where the next threats are and/or telling downfield defenders where the disc is. On offense, follow the play, echo calls and communication from the field, and encourage teammates to cut and clear at 100%)

So, how can I contribute to my team even when I can't play? I promise you it's possible.

- Taking excellent care of yourself to get back on the field is contributing to the team.
- If you're able to: throw all the time.
- If immobilized, hold a disc and practice switching grips or catching one-handed. And watch film. Pick one thing to pay attention to per half so you are actively learning. This could be a certain player, offensive cutting, defensive positioning, pull plays, etc.
- Ask your leadership how you can help (if you're in leadership, see the list below and consider giving injured players some or all of the below responsibilities)

At practice:

- Take notes and write practice recaps for any players who couldn't attend or who would benefit from extra information to review outside of practice.
- Listen carefully to what your leadership cues for each drill and help your teammates stay focused on those things.
- Visualize yourself in the scenarios your teammates are going through. Pay attention to drill explanations at practice and visualize yourself in those scenarios.

In competition:

Rohre Titcomb throws a backhand past Angela Zhu in the 2016 Club Nationals finals. Photo by Nick Lindeke.

- Lead the sideline
- Come out to the line to know the D and pass it on to everyone. If there's a turn, remind those on-field of what the D is.
- Bring water to players playing multiple points in a row
- Follow the play with your legs and remind your teammates to do the same
- Monitor team energy and focus and work to keep it on track
- When you notice your teammate do something cool, tell them. Extra points if you celebrate examples of things the team worked on in practice
- Scout opponents during byes (write down their top 3-5 most influential players on O, what offensive sets they run, including common pull plays, what D's they play)
- Update social media, tell the story of the weekend for your fans at home!
- Talk to the mark
- Make sure you take time to yourself. It's exhausting supporting the team. I like to tell people "100% or 100% off" – either be fully engaged with the team, or fully engaged on your self care.

Returning to play

- Get cleared by your PT or a Doctor
- Listen to your body, learn to understand its cues.
- For return to sport, make a plan that you and your PT agree on and follow it.
- For my ACL's, the progression went from running warmup to doing drills without defense to doing drills with defense but only playing the offensive reps, to drills playing both O and D, to scrimmage at practice, to playing limited points in a limited number of games at a tournament, to playing all games but a limited number of points in each game, to no restrictions. That full progression was about 4 months.
- If you can't play a full practice without any limitations, you shouldn't try stepping into a competitive context.
- If something feels weird, stop & assess. If it still feels weird, you must be willing to stop.

Mental hurdles are real, and the best way to get over them is with consistent preparation. If you have put in the work to get your body back to top shape, that trust in yourself and in your work can be the most solid foundation of confidence you'll get. For each of my recoveries I have kept a spreadsheet (or notebook) with all my workouts and when I'm nervous or doubting

my abilities I look back at all the workouts I've done and that reminds me that I've put the work in to get back to playing.

Like I mentioned, your mental battle is one you'll have to figure out on your own, but here two ideas to get your brain going:

1. **Develop a return to play test**

With all the weird mental stuff going on when returning to play, I found it super helpful to have a quick way of evaluating if I was ready to play at any given moment. My test is designed to make sure my knee is stable, because that's what I need to know when I'm competing post-ACL surgery. If my knee ever *feels* unstable, I do my test. If I pass the test then I return tp play. If I don't pass the test, I don't play. Simple, right?

I played full seasons in 2014, 2015, and 2016. I did that test hundreds of times, and most of the time I passed it and got back in the drill/practice/game. Occasionally I failed it and stopped, took my cleats off, and tried again at the next practice/track/lift. Over time, the consistency of it gave me confidence and helped me navigate all the times I felt "weird." If I had a physical play on the field, I'd take a moment, do my test, pass it, and then get back on the field, knowing with confidence that I was ready. Playing scared = increased risk of injury, so avoid that at all costs.

Now, the ONLY reason having a test worked is because I was truly willing to listen to it, even when my season was on the line. In the semis of nationals in 2016 against Fury, my feet got tangled with my defenders on an upline cut, and just like hundreds of other times since my 2nd ACL tear, my knee felt weird. It was in the first quarter of the game, and like every other season, Riot and Fury had been trading wins all season. It was a heated game. I took an injury (after some loud swearing, I'm NOT perfect), and went to the sideline to take my test. I failed it, so I stopped playing. I have the benefit of playing on an incredible team, who was mostly unphased when one of their captains and main handlers took herself out of the semis. Unflappable, we won on universe in a GREAT game, and our season wasn't over. I cleated up the following day for finals, took my test, passed it, and played in finals (which we lost on universe) on what I now realize was a torn ACL.

2. **Develop a mantra.**

This is what another dear friend, double ACL club member, and Hall-of-Famer Dom Fontenette uses, so you know it's good.

Her's is just a simple statement she tells herself in the same tone of voice every time she steps on the field: **"Strong strong strong."** It's simple, it refocuses her, and I've heard her say it so many times under her breath that it's also become a mantra of mine, too.

I hope some of this helps, and I wish you the best of luck. Yes, we can all use a little luck.

You're stronger than you know.

Mental Toughness: An Illustrated Guide

Melissa Gibbs

Mental toughness requires a lot of practice. When you add another layer to it, like an injury or worse, a long-term or season-ending one, practicing mental toughness is really, really hard. Here's an illustrated guide to mental toughness.

My mother recalls the events of my life better than I do.

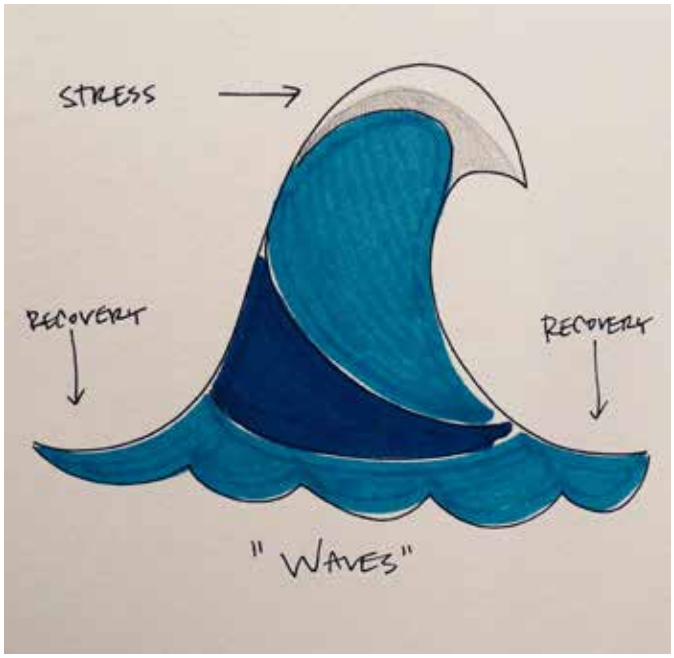
This Summer, I competed in the World Masters Ultimate Club Championships in Winnipeg. I tore my left ACL in quarterfinals and was in denial for the whole week before visiting the doctor for imaging. My mother proceeded to send me a card I received the day of my MRI results...she somehow knew it was an ACL tear before I did. Something in what I said or how I said it reminded her of my first experience with an ACL tear. My mother had to remind me about how I found out the day of my 16th birthday that I had needed surgery for my right ACL. That recovery was a very devastating and lonely time in my younger life.

Looking back, I find that experience to have shaped my future career with Ultimate. It gave me a resilience in failure and a sense of gratitude I wouldn't have known without it. My quirky doodles illustrate my favorite concepts from a book my club team, Heist, loves to read. With these ideas, I hope that you, too, will cultivate a practice of mental toughness. Strong mental toughness skills are what separate the good players, from the great. From The New Toughness Training for Sports, written by James E. Loehr, please enjoy.

Embrace Failure

The closer you are to achieving your desired success, the higher the stakes. That makes failure hurt more when you're off target. Living by the mantra of "make mistakes at 100%," you'll do a good job of avoiding the outer ring if you're giving your best. I found myself self-sabotaging a lot in college and unable to move closer to the middle target. I did this by blaming others and tanking my performance with unconscious intent. Don't make excuses and get out there and put in the work. "Don't be afraid of failure" is something I wish I could tell my perfectionist 16 year old self. It is the same message I want to tell my college captain self. It continues to be a message I need to tell myself. Failure is a guarantee when you're trying to reach goals that are reaching beyond what you think you're capable of. Rise up to the challenge. Do not be afraid that your path won't always look like a steady, even rise.

Practice Resilience



The path to achieving goals isn't going to be a direct line from point A to point B. In fact, we don't want or need it to be. There is a certain rhythm in seeing waves, constant small undulations, as our journey. An easy mental comparison, is the athletic training model of periodization. We increase the challenge to a difficult point, but then put in equal rest for growth. Rinse and repeat. If we don't allow the rest, we don't reap the challenge's benefit. We get to keep pushing the peak of the wave higher, the rest cycle must increase with it. It is necessary to understand this beyond the physical. You will make mistakes, how you respond is the important part. I didn't give my best one season as a captain. Instead, I re-evaluated my mistakes and outlined the areas I needed to improve. I changed jobs, lowered my too-high coursework and started sleeping more. I spent more time practicing and thinking about my teammates. ISU Woman Scorned went to nationals for the first time in program history my senior year.

Be Grateful

The post-its illustrate one of my favorite goal-setting positivity training techniques. Take the "I love to sprint!" one. Re-frame a negative thought into a positive catch-phrase to re-wire your thinking. Sprints are not exactly my favorite, but I love how they serve my goals. Stick the notes where you see them every day, like your bathroom mirror. One of my favorite gratitude practices, is to think about the gifts of my teammates and what they bring to our team. I write them notes of appreciation throughout the season or before big tournaments. I base these notes after the fact that I have had gratitude for them every day already. The last post-it note is my current Ultimate motto, "Pressure is a privilege." Not everyone is capable of even the pursuit of being a good player in Ultimate. As I count my umpteenth leg raise, months from doctor approval to run again, I am grateful for those of you who can. Get out there and get after it for the rest of us.

Mental Health

Laura Bitterman

As athletes, we often focus on our physical health and might neglect our emotional and mental health. How do we encourage our teammates to take care of their emotional and mental health? How do we help a friend and teammate get the support they need and deserve if we notice something is wrong?

As athletes and teammates, we form a health conscious support network for each other. We share workouts. We share sweat. We share goals. We share early weekend mornings. We share smelly car rides. And we share inside jokes. But despite our closeness, we don't always share when we are struggling. Our mental health is just not something that routinely comes up over hamstring stretches. But it should. It needs to. Part of being a leader is understanding how our minds are intimately tied to our performance on and off the field. Part of being a leader is making time for, and taking steps to, conscientiously prioritize mental health on our team. It will not only improve your team cohesion, but it is a fundamental step to keeping yourself and your teammates safe.

My love of sports and being an athlete has given me invaluable gifts - self esteem, unconditional friendships, a strong work ethic, time management skills, confidence, and I could go on. But these weren't unqualified gifts. Sports have as many unwritten rules as written ones. And as a young girl who liked sports, I had to learn them quickly. In order be accepted in this male-dominated space, I knew I had to police my behaviors carefully. Never let them see me cry. Ever. Keep my emotions in check, or be labeled a bitch. Never show weakness - mistakes were not permitted. This culture of toxic

Laura Bitterman catches the disc past a bidding Rohre Titcomb in the 2016 Club Nationals finals. Photo by Nick Lindeke

masculinity hardened me and left me guarded. I learned to laugh, or make jokes, even when things hurt me deeply. I overcompensated, became louder, and generally went on the offensive so I wouldn't be a victim or a joke to the boys. I developed a shield of humor that came from a fearful, aggressive place. In other words, I weaponized it as a means to protect myself. With this shield, I was able to trick myself into thinking my hardness was strength and resilience rather than the brittle shell of a hiding place. As an adult, I'm learning how to build upon the gifts, keep the humor, and lose the shell. These are things we can reinforce for each other, and journeys we can share.

As athletes, our self-worth is tied closely to our rank, and we can forget or suppress the other pieces that make us whole. This can lead to prioritizing physical strength over mental strength — to the detriment of our teams, friends, and families. We seek to always project power and confidence, and are often physically surrounded by our team, our friends. But being physically surrounded doesn't mean that we never feel lonely, or that we're not struggling, and it definitely doesn't mean that we're innately impervious to mental health challenges.

College is a time of transition: necessary change, growth, and its related instability. People are moving away from home for the first time, meeting entirely new groups of people, deciding on a career path, and maybe experiencing death in their families for the first time. These things can weigh heavily on a person's emotional well-being. For humans everywhere, psychological disorders can develop - or become exacerbated - during transitions. With the added pressures of performing well at a sport, long hours, pleasing coaches/captains, all while maintaining GPAs - it's easy to see how vulnerable, as athletes, we really are during this time. According to the University of Michigan School of Public Health, 33% of all college students show "significant" signs of mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression. Of those, 30% seek help. But, tellingly, for athletes that number is considerably lower – only 10% seek help. Is this because of years of conditioning? Is this the devastating result of our hard-shell-reign-it-in-never-cry programming?

We owe it to each other to flip this script- to support one another, and promote inner strength and resilience by thoughtfully prioritizing the mental health of our teams. Here are some useful strategies to get this conversation started.

1. Name it explicitly. At the beginning of the season, while you list your team's emphases/focuses, be sure to write "mental health" largely and boldly. Let your teammates know that mental health is on your radar. You will spend countless hours at the gym and on the field

together, but announce that you also plan to make space and time for strengthening your individual and collective emotional health.

2. Normalize it, and de-stigmatize it. Step 1 should help with this - Talk openly about mental health. Be conscious of the language you're using. Avoid using mental health conditions as adjectives. Review the statistics, a 2012 survey by the American College Health Association found that >30% of students over a 12-month period "felt so depressed that it was difficult to function." It also found that, over the same period, nearly 50 percent of students "felt overwhelming anxiety." This isn't rare, it is likely you or many of your teammates can relate to these feelings – It is okay to not feel okay. Let's put an end to this never-cry-no-weakness business once and for all.

3. Get to know your teammates as humans first, and as athletes second. Toward the beginning of the season, you could plan an activity where people share "their story." This could be in video form or in person. A short, 3-5 minute monologue that can help each of you understand each other. It is easier to be vulnerable, see others' perspectives, and resolve conflicts with one another when you take the time to understand where someone has been. **Humanize your opponents.** Provide the empathy to others that you hope they would provide to you. Give others the benefit of the doubt. Trust that their intentions are good.

4. Plan team activities without alcohol. I went to the University of Wisconsin – If I can propose this, your team can probably do this.

5. Plan times to be at the library studying together. Support each other's life successes outside of sport, academically and other extra-curriculars. Make it your priority to know a little about each person on your team, off the field - what matters to them?

6. Install both formal and informal check-ins. Pair up a younger/newer teammate with a veteran on the team. Be outspoken about teammates' accomplishments, big and little. Take time out of your practice day, or after a tournament day, to recognize some of the smaller things that someone has done that embodied the culture you appreciate about your team (or the culture that you'd like your team to embody). Celebrate, and name, the intangibles.

7. Start each practice with a mindfulness exercise. And start each tournament morning with one, too. On Boston Brüte Squad, I attribute a large part of our success in 2015 and 2016 to cultivating our mental game via team yoga prior to tournaments. A number of psychological studies support this type of practice. In fact, one study involved more than 200 Canadian athletes from the 1984 Olympics – They were evaluated for 3 major readiness factors: physical, technical, and mental. Of those 3 factors, only the mental portion was significantly associated with success at the Olympics. Mindfulness entails being aware of the present moment and accepting things as they are without judgment. When we are able to step outside of ourselves

and watch experiences come and go, rather than overanalyze them, we are able to intentionally shift focus to our performance.

Aside: In my work with Veterans who have severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), we use mindfulness as a means to help activate the parts of the brain that are critical to learning and memory (Hippocampus) and the parts of the brain associated with maturity/regulating emotions and behaviors/making wise decisions (Prefrontal Cortex). After mindfulness, while the Hippocampus and Prefrontal Cortex are more activated, the area of the brain that is responsible for emotions/survival instincts/immediate pleasure, the Amygdala, is less activated. What this means is, with mindfulness, we are able to train our brains to react to stress with a more thoughtful approach, and with less of an intense, knee-jerk emotional method – And more, we are able to increase our threshold for inducing our stress response.

As an athlete, this is relevant to us because the numerous physiological effects of mindfulness, like decreasing pre-competition cortisol (stress hormone), and decreasing heart rate, can put us in positions to optimize our performance – and keep us from becoming too anxious to accomplish our goals.

8. Recognize the signs and symptoms. I encourage you to read through the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety. While some of these may come as no surprise, it's worth reviewing for things that may not be as overt or obvious. It can be difficult to recognize mood disorders because people with depression often withdraw socially, or they could feel they don't want to "bother" others. Others will try to hide their symptoms behind smiles or jokes. I want to encourage you to take the onus off of the person suffering. Instead of telling your teammates to reach out if they're feeling sad/depressed, make a point of being proactive.

*If a teammate expresses a suicidal thought, indicates an intent or plan, or makes an attempt – seek immediate referral (e.g. nearest ER or campus hospital). A point to note is that a history of previous suicide attempts is one of the most significant predictors for future attempts.

<u>Signs and symptoms of depression</u>

- Low or sad moods, tearfulness
- Irritability, anger
- Feeling worthless, helpless, hopeless
- Appetite and sleep disturbance
- Decreased concentration, motivation
- Decreased interest in things once found pleasurable
- Social withdrawal, avoidance
- Thoughts of death or suicide

<u>Signs and symptoms of anxiety</u>

- Excessive worry, fear or dread
- Sleep disturbance
- Changes in appetite
- General uneasiness
- Pounding heart, sweating, shaking or trembling
- Impaired concentration
- Feeling of being out of control
- Fear that one is dying or going crazy

9. Have a plan. And discuss the plan with your team. Have each player list 2 family members or close friends that they'd like to be contacted in the case of an emergency. Prior to the season, know your campus and community resources. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK.

Burnout: Give Yourself a Break

Courtney Kiesow

As college seasons get longer and more intense, and athletes play at higher/multiple levels, there is increased risk for burnout, a chronic stress reaction caused by over-commitment and a lack of self-care. This article aims to define burnout, identify its causes, and offer some ways to prevent and treat it.

The topic of burnout is somehow both familiar yet unknown to us as ultimate players. We hear the term thrown around all the time, we know how it feels to be burned out, or know someone who took a season off because of burnout. Yet, as a community and culture, we've not admitted that burnout is as real and pervasive in our sport, just as in any sport.

I originally decided to write on the topic of burnout because in my 15 years of playing, with effectively one season off, I'd encountered it, my teammates encountered it, yet I knew almost nothing about it. What I did know was my personal experience; dreading practices, constant frustration in my performance, negative self talk, avoidance of any media or conversations about ultimate, and lack of motivation to train. Lucky for me, these feelings faded, but left me wondering if I'd ever love ultimate again and what I could do to prevent this from happening again.

To learn how other ultimate players perceive burnout I polled female ultimate players – most of whom currently play college ultimate or previously played college ultimate – about their experience with burnout. I've included some of their fantastic insight. I don't pretend to be an expert on the subject of burnout, but I hope you

find the information in this article helpful in recognizing, preventing, and treating burnout in yourself and your teammates.

What is burnout?

Burnout as a clinical term was first defined by psychologist Christina Maslach in the 1970's in the context of helping professions like health care and law enforcement (National Library of Medicine, 2017). It describes a state of chronic stress resulting from extreme commitment and neglect of one's own needs. More recently the term has been used in the context of sport to explain "the negative, amotivated, and exhausted states sometimes suffered by athletes as well as implicated problems with injury, sport withdrawal, and/or personal dysfunction" (Defreese & Eklund, 2017).

Burnout can be characterized by three main groups of symptoms: exhaustion, alienation/sports devaluation, and reduced performance. Exhaustion describes being drained, unable to cope, and lacking energy. It can also present in the form of physical symptoms like injuries, frequent colds, stomach upset, and fatigue. Alienation describes feelings of frustration, cynicism, apathy, and emotional distance from the sport/team/practices. Reduced performance is seen both on the field and off, including difficulty concentrating, a lack of creativity, and listlessness at practices or team events (National Library of Medicine, 2017.) Anything sounding familiar? I thought so.

Survey question: If you or someone you know has experienced burnout in ultimate, how did you know? What are the signs of burnout and how do you define it?

> *"I think of burnout as losing the answer to the question "Why do I play?" (Because it's fun, because I enjoy competition, because I enjoy working hard, because I enjoy this group of people, ect.) Or, maybe another way of putting it is that the answer to the "why" is no longer compelling." - Adrienne Baker*

> *"I define burnout as the feeling that doing something I once loved to do no longer seems like an activity I am actively choosing to participate in, but rather feels like an obligation or nuisance. When I am burned out, I dread going to practice, feel excessively tired (physically, mentally, and emotionally), and regret that I am unable to participate in other activities that I feel I would rather dedicate my time to." - Naomi Price-Lazarus*

> *"(Burnout) looks like a lot of different things. For me it's mostly been not feeling motivated to get up and work out and push myself both at workouts and practice. For others I've seen it look a lot more like depression, sadness, frustration, disappointment with the team and with themselves and struggling to find the joy in playing." - Alex Snyder*

What causes burnout?

While studying to be a nurse practitioner, I had extensive exposure to the idea of burnout in a work setting. I understood that long hours, patient demands, time pressure, and high stakes decision-making were all significant contributors, but I naively never extrapolated this to ultimate. But why would a sport we play for enjoyment ever cause us stress? We do this for "fun", so what's the big deal? Just chill, bruh!

But we all know that it's not that simple. According to the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), burnout in sport can occur due to various factors. "It is more easily broken down into internal factors like perfectionism, high expectations, or loss of love for sport, and external factors, which include physical exhaustion, excessive time commitments and even injury" (Markle & Scardino, 2014). As Missy Davey eloquently explained in her survey, burnout is caused by "lack of personal, intrinsic fulfillment when you don't feel the same return for what your putting in to it. Essentially, losing your love for something."

Commitment is one of the biggest contributors to burnout and Ultimate players are a committed bunch. We play 9-month college seasons, train year-round, play on two teams at once, spend all of our time and money on ultimate, play 7 games in a weekend… the list goes on. In college especially, ultimate players spend an incredible amount of time training for, thinking about, and playing ultimate. Rachel Johnson touched on this in her survey, explaining that burnout is caused by "not having/maintaining a balance between all aspects of life, over-engaging/obsessing, not knowing when to take breaks". According to the survey, the women currently playing in college train/practice an average of 11.4 months out of the year. That's about 2.5 weeks off per year, which for most is not sustainable. Professional sports have mandated down time for recovery. Ultimate does not.

In addition to time commitment, sport specialization can lead to burnout. Think about all of the former track, soccer, or basketball stars who quit their sport to play ultimate because it was just more fun for them. According to the WSF, specialization in a particular sport at a young age increases the likelihood of burnout (Markle & Scardino, 2014). Put perfectly and simply by Hannah Barnstone, "doing the exact same thing for a long time" causes burnout. Young women who play multiple sports are less likely to burn out and quit. With more women starting to play ultimate at the youth level, preventing and treating burnout will be increasingly important.

Survey question: What do you think causes burnout?

> *"High pressure to be at the top level, stay in perfect shape, be at a level the team requires as a whole as most teams don't look at people as individuals"- Anna Shanedling*

> *"I think there are two different types of burnout - a short-term type and a long-term type. I'd say short-term burnout happens after a brief period of intense drive and focus (e.g. a highly competitive tournament and the weeks leading up to it) when you finally run out of energy and need a short break to recover. Long-term burnout occurs when you*

put in a lot of work to improve but don't see any results, and you no longer enjoy the activity. In a team sport like ultimate, I think this can also be caused by feeling isolated in your motivation - when you feel that you are individually willing to put in an enormous amount of work, but that the rest of the team is not. This leads to feelings of frustration and futility, which I think are two key causes."- Michelle Chan

"Not enough time spent focusing on why we play and personally deciding to focus on the stressful, grueling, or hard parts of the sport." - Emma Flynn

"I feel like injury plays a huge role in burnout… When I have tried to come back too soon [from an injury] I was more likely to be in pain (or re-injure yourself), be frustrated with the game, and associate frisbee with pressure and stress rather than the fun it should be! I wish more of my teams had said: you are important and you are enough, that means you should take the time to take care of yourself." - Charlotte O'Donnell

"I think when too many areas of your life become dependent on one activity or aspect of your life it can cause burnout." - Sylvie Polonsky

How do we combat burnout?

Simply trying to power through burnout is usually ineffective and prolongs the issue. Whether you notice burnout symptoms in yourself, a teammate, or your entire team, it's important to acknowledge and address it.

As there are many causes of burnout, there are also many solutions. Here are just a few of the many ways we can prevent and/or treat burnout. Experiment to find the approaches that work for you or your team:

- Take frequent breaks - e.g. an extra day off, a shorter practice, more breaks during practices, a week off after a tournament
- Vary practice content if you're a team leader - e.g. mix up well known drills with new drills, add terms to scrimmages (one point per break throw, double score, etc), add in a non-ultimate drill or conditioning activity
- Encourage hobbies outside of ultimate and crosstrain with other sports
- Build, and find support in, a team culture of support and positivity - the topic of team culture is covered in other articles in this resource manual
- Communicate with a trusted mentor - whether it's a coach, a captain, a fellow teammate, a family member, etc
- Communicate with team leadership, and if you are part of leadership, communicate with the team, your coach, or a co-captain
- Foster social connections with both ultimate players and non-ultimate players
- Celebrate accomplishments, no matter how small

- Remind yourself why you love ultimate. Try writing a thank you letter to the sport of ultimate making a list of your strengths as an ultimate player, or listing the reasons that you started playing ultimate.
- Prioritize rest and recovery - sleep, nutrition, hydration, and attention to mental health are necessities for any good teammate.
- Pay attention to other mental health issues that can be exacerbated by burnout - Burnout can present as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Pay attention to these signs and consider seeing a mental health professional
- Be patient with yourself and your teammate(s) - Be kind and patient if a break is needed. Think about that time off as an investment in the longevity of your ultimate career
- Take more breaks! I know I already said it, but it warrants repeating because if you're reading this, you're likely an ultimate player who is resistant to the idea of rest. Not only is rest important for preventing burnout, but it's necessary to make gains and to perform at your best.

Sources: Rummelhart (2018) and Markle & Scardino (2014)

Survey question: What are ways that teams and individuals can prevent burnout? And how can teams/individuals deal with burnout if it happens?

> *"Recognize it, accept it, and know that it won't go away overnight; be kind to yourself. Sometimes small breaks and cutting back can help, sometimes people need a longer break/more separation. Re-evaluate why you play and then work to align participation/ team with those values. Know that it is OK to take a break" - Amber Sinicrope*
>
> *Switch focus. If it's a whole team, take a practice to do some team building that isn't related to ultimate. If it's an individual, find a different focus outside of the two practices you have per week and invest that energy elsewhere. Read a book, go bowling, learn to juggle, etc. Anything that can absorb that energy and put it into something else positive that doesn't push the limits of burning you out in a different way" - Sierra Barthen*
>
> *"Going back to the basics always helps for me. Taking a breath and a step back to remind myself of the big picture - that I play because it's fun, makes me happy, and provides a great social circle - instead of focusing on all the little things that are going wrong and making me frustrated. Just going outside and hucking on a nice day, or playing some casual, relaxed mini helps with that little mental reset and breather." - Michelle Chen*
>
> *"Communication - letting your teammates and leadership know that you are struggling is the first step. I think the best way to deal with burnout is to treat it like an injury, you have to temporarily alter your routine and do what's best for you." - Emily Hadel*

Conclusion

With more opportunities to play year-round, increasing training expectations, and a growing youth scene, among other factors, burnout is an increasingly relevant topic in ultimate.

Recognizing and addressing burnout is crucial to the success of your team. Check in with yourself and your teammates regularly and remember that it pays off to give yourself a break.

Feel free to contact me at ckiesow@gmail.com with any questions or comments.

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Avoiding Burnout

Grant Lindsley

Avoid burnout by asking yourself questions at regular intervals and cultivating a few extracurricular interests. Encourage those questions and activities in your teammates.

Playing College Ultimate can be all-consuming: we work out, eat, party, travel, and often live with our teammates. Tournaments happen in fall, winter, and spring, and then there's Club in the summer. The immersive, year-round package is wonderful. Until it isn't.

I remember taking a younger teammate out to lunch almost every week during the spring season to help him manage his time so he could stay on the team. It worked. He stayed, played great, and we even won the national championship. The next season, he quit.

Burnout is real. And it manifests in more ways than the typical image of the athlete who accumulates nagging injuries, feels socially oversaturated, and loses their emotional engagement.

How do you help yourself and your teammates live with balance? How do you create a culture of buy-in without suggesting that your teammates drop everything beside Ultimate and school? To consider these questions now is to assist yourself in answering another question later: how do you prepare for your inevitable retirement from Ultimate? Below are some suggestions.

Question yourself deliberately. We are creatures of inertia, which can work to our detriment when we've adopted an imbalanced schedule. Ask yourself at regular intervals: Am I playing Ultimate because I enjoy it, because I can't think of anything

else to do, or because I am scared of doing something else? What's my motive in playing: joy or habit?

It can be hard to be honest with yourself, so try discussing with someone whom you trust has your best interest at heart. Try writing pros and cons and general reflections. And don't overdo the self-questioning; just as a lack of reflectiveness can creep up on you later, so too can an abundance of self-reflection end up plaguing you with doubt. Ask yourself questions at the right time (before the upcoming season, not in the middle of it). That way, you can plan ahead and be fully present during the time you've committed to.

Prevent physical burnout. Engage in restorative practices. I took a 10-week introduction to yoga class my sophomore year that improved my balance so much that I stopped needing an ankle brace, which I'd worn for years, and increased my flexibility so that I could consistently reach my toes (and avoid hamstring pulls).

As a young athlete mostly interested in flexing in front of the mirror, I often neglected core exercises (the basis of balance and explosiveness) and lifting lower body (squats with low weight and good form, kettle-bell swings, single leg lunges, etc). Lift smart in order to boost your performance, but also lift in order to prevent the injuries that would keep you from performing at all. Gathering injuries is one of the fastest paths to burnout.

If yoga and weight lifting aren't your thing, experiment. What might you like besides Ultimate? Chances are good that some type of cross-training has transferable physical and mental skills that make you a better Ultimate player: the deliberate physical motion of rock climbing; the mental grind of distance running; the no-impact cardio of swimming.

Prevent social burnout. Make an effort to befriend people who don't play Ultimate. You won't share the same immediate common ground, and that's a good thing. They won't know what a breakside scoober is. Forgive them. My senior year, I lived with an offensive lineman on the football team who liked to ask my teammates what sport they failed at before playing Frisbee. "Oh, sorry, Ultimate," he'd say, and grin at me. It was a healthy dose of humility for a group that sometimes lives exclusively within its own walls and can take itself too seriously.

Plan a party that is co-hosted by your team and another sports team, maybe one that your team historically has beef with (the Lacrosse team in my case).

Live with friends who don't play Ultimate. This alone will offer you a natural respite that you may not always realize you need from the dramas and excitements of your team.

Prevent emotional burnout. Meditate. Five minutes a day even - consistency has more of an effect than intensity (ie, five minutes per day better than one hour per week). You'll find yourself less reactive and more focused, benefits that will extend to your teammates, your on-field performance, your schoolwork, and more.

You'll also find that the hardest part of meditating is sitting down to actually do it. Try to make a habit by incorporating it into a regular part of your day (eg, right after waking up). You don't need a bell, incense, or a special cushion in a cedar-paneled room. You don't need

to sit cross-legged. All you need to do is practice physical stillness in whatever position you find comfortable, and then try to keep watch of the mind while it has nothing to distract it. This process is by no means always peaceful. In trying to watch the mind, you might want to control it, and then you might realize how frighteningly little control you have over what you think. That's progress. Just knowing that much will translate elsewhere; you might see things you hadn't noticed before, like how you tend to ruminate about a difficult teammate during times when your mind would be better served by restful distance, or how anxiety isn't actually categorically bad, because a little bit is helpful in competition.

It can be unsettling at first to see how the mind moves so independently from the will. But in a way, it should be more unsettling to realize that that's been happening all along, and we weren't aware of it. What a gift, then, to learn we have room to grow.

Take advantage of the offseason. Unless you intend to lift weights and watch film and play a lot in order to improve for the upcoming season, find a way to take your mind and body off of Ultimate. Don't just move home at the end of the school year and spend your offseason missing Ultimate. Don't just say no to Ultimate for a while; say yes to something else.

If your offseason is summer, then plan ahead during winter. I'll never forget the month I spent before school living in a house with Sam Kanner, practicing with the Club team Sub Zero, and having nothing else to do. I would wake up late, walk into the kitchen where Kanner was already on his laptop, and say something like "Dude, we should watch Lion King again." He'd say no, and I'd ask why not, and he'd say he had stuff to do, and then I'd watch every day as he researched internships, fellowships, scholarships, and applied to all of them. Throughout college, he found internships in Europe and the US, often paid for, and yet he never missed a spring Ultimate season. It was the first time I'd seen a peer take advantage of life like this, and it changed me. I started to think strategically about the pockets of time (as a college player: fall, early summer; as a Club player after college: winter and early spring) in which I could immerse myself in new adventures without having to miss the core Ultimate season.

It's possible to take significant time off from Ultimate without ever missing a season.

Study abroad. Not everyone can afford this luxury. If you can't, there are plenty of ways to spend extended periods of time almost anywhere in the world without paying very much: volunteer at a farm, live with a family as an au pair, stay at a Buddhist monastery, etc.

If you don't want to miss a spring season (I didn't), then study abroad in the fall. You won't regret missing one (or two) fall seasons. Fall Ultimate seasons are forgettable. Even if you're a captain or fill a critical role on the team, know that the team might grow in unexpected ways during your absence. For example, if you're a captain, then elect a "fall captain" in your stead, a younger leader perhaps who is ready for some responsibility but not quite ready to be an official captain. That person gains experience that will benefit the team later on, and you get the valuable experience of taking a break from your familiar surroundings, concerns, and social dynamics. By leaving for the fall, you return to your team with new eyes.

And if you can't imagine a fall season without Ultimate, know that there's probably a team you could pick up with wherever you travel.

Support others' extracurricular activities. On close-knit teams, peer pressure can build to spend all free time together. As a leader, serve your teammates well by encouraging their activities outside the sport. Once, when I was a freshman and a senior had a presentation that conflicted with practice, our entire team took a break, changed into running shoes, and surprised him by jogging to his presentation, panting and sweating and cheering when he ended, and then jogging back to the field to finish practice. Cheering for extracurricular interests creates a more inclusive dynamic, which expands the team's horizon and brings it closer together.

Cultivate your identity outside of Ultimate. It's an unfortunate paradox that the more invested and successful you are as a player, the more difficult your eventual retirement may be. Hopefully, you're filled only with gratitude for the blessing it was to be healthy, young, striving for excellence, and engrossed in a sport that gave back to you even more than you put into it. But you might spend years after you retire feeling a vague listlessness, missing the sense of belonging and purpose that Ultimate offered.

Even with a long career, you probably won't own a pair of cleats by your 40th birthday, there are of course exceptions. That leaves a lot of life to live after playing Ultimate. This is where the strategies that avoid burnout play double-duty. If you've taken actions to avoid burnout - taking time to experiment and discover new areas of meaning and joy - then you've also intentionally developed your life outside of Ultimate and, therefore, prepared for life afterwards.

Even if you don't have an answer, it can be useful to ask: without Ultimate, how would I find meaning/competition/community/exercise?

If you draw a blank, that's ok. The Ultimate community is fun, internationally connected, and educated. It's also insular. It can be easier to be all-in than mostly-in, especially in college, when the immediate community of your team is so readily accessible. If you are beginning to feel that your involvement with Ultimate is unsustainable, take actions early so you can maintain a healthy commitment.

If you're all-in and don't feel a creeping sense of imbalance, that's ok! Being all-in isn't bad. Sometimes it's great. There is no golden amount of "in." The key is to monitor yourself - and if you have the capacity, monitor your teammates - to gauge whether the time and effort you're expending are too much, too little, or just right.

Concussions

Justine Crowley, DO

A brief guide for spotting concussions and next steps.

Concussions are scary and dealing with them is important. I am going to try to provide you with some guidance on how to handle an athlete with a concussion, as it will happen. Listed below are two links- one is a great place to get education (including a handout for parents) on concussions, the other is for a tool for a healthcare provider which you can print out and bring with you or give to your athlete.

CDC's Heads Up Concussion Education/Handouts[1]
SCAT 5[2]

Most teams don't have the luxury of having an athletic trainer imbedded with their team, and many also don't have access to one at all. So what do you do if you think you or a team member has one? A player who is suspected of having a concussion needs to be removed from play - PRACTICE INCLUDED! The player should not be allowed to practice until evaluated by a medical professional (athletic trainer or physician NOT chiropractor). And be aware, all states have a law about this for athletes 18 and under- Georgia's law includes 19 year olds - so ask your school about this. Some schools also have a return to play policy-ask your club sports contact person at your school about this.

We all love this sport and hate to let down our teammates by not being able to practice, but it's crucial we protect our brains and our teammates' brains.

If a player hits or has their head hit, they should be removed from play. If your team is at a larger tournament, there is often an athletic trainer there who can evaluate the player. IF the athletic trainer does not want to say yes or no about a concussion, play it safe and keep your athlete out.

For times you don't have an athletic trainer around these are guidelines:

The following instructions are for players who are not showing any of the red flags/ critical signs:

- If your team has access to an athletic trainer, the player should be evaluated as soon as possible afterwards. If you have access during practice, someone should walk the player to the training room if the ATC is not on the field.
- If you don't have access to an athletic trainer, take the athlete to your student health center
    - If you keep copies of the SCAT5 evaluation tool in your team bag (in a zip lock bag) you can bring that with you so the medical person will have a copy

Critical signs that need emergent evaluation:

- What is emergent evaluation? If no medical personnel at the field, call 911!
- Laying on the field not moving
- Having a seizure
- Vomiting
- Double vision
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms/legs
- Severe headache
- Losing consciousness (getting more confused, can't keep eyes open, etc)
- Increasing agitation/restlessness or fighting people who are trying to help

After the concussion:

- Player should be re-evaluated after being symptom free for 24 hours BEFORE starting to play
- Return to learn is also something ht
- Return to play is a stepwise process that is listed on page 8 of the SCAT5 form (link above)

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1 CDC's Heads Up Concussion Education/Handouts
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2 SCAT 5:
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SECTION V

COACHING

Team Seeks Coach: Hiring the Right Person

Alisha Stoun

Written from the perspective of a coach, how to hire and work with the right coach for your college team.

When I first interviewed for the UC San Diego Women's coaching position, I was a bright-eyed 24 year-old looking forward to making an impact on the lives of girls like me, when I was in college. I was surprised to meet the captains of a very different group of people.

My college team during my tenure consisted of fiercely competitive students who were learning the boundaries of their abilities and developing self-esteem by discovering a new sport. Our overarching player profile would suggest extreme athletes with moderate to low strategic understanding. I spent more time on the field than the classroom (Sorry, Mom). It was not unusual to engage the other team in mild verbal and physical confrontation. My team was comprised of predominantly white, heterosexual, cis-gendered women. We had a lot of themed parties involving costumes, boys, temporary tattoos, and a fair amount of cultural appropriation.

Fast-forward to meeting the UC San Diego captains. They brought a 30 page manifesto outlining their plans for success in the upcoming season. They asked pointed and pragmatic questions, with a restrained yet professional level of decorum. They mentioned their team wasn't particularly "competitive." Winning wasn't the most important thing.

Hmm...then why am I here?

I might be the most competitive.

This isn't going to work.

But as we dug deeper, it appeared they just lacked the coping skills to want to win, yet come up short. They didn't want to put themselves in the position of wanting something they could not have. They didn't believe they could succeed. Oh! We're talking about a confidence issue. I can help with that. I am the best at confidence.

As I continued to coach these girls I got to know and understand more about who they were and how they respond to coaching and motivation. School was a major priority. They studied. During. Tournaments. Their capacity to understand and implement strategy completely outstripped my own at their experience level. They were so focused and attentive during practice. They were not the fastest college team, and they are never the tallest. They shied away from physicality and aggression. They completely blossomed when showered with verbal affirmations.

"You cannot imagine the coach your team needs, in the same ways I could not imagine the team I needed to coach."

So I took their strengths and made them their foundation. I praised them. I told them, "This is what makes you great. Everything else will stem from this," and they listened. Year after year, confidence became more ingrained. Physical aggression no longer had to be taught. The team remains relatively focused with high strategic ability at their core. They continue to evolve, however, and are very different from the team I originally met.

More than half of the team is Asian American. I can't necessarily draw any conclusions from that, except to say it was a difference between my college experience and this coaching experience. The culture of the team is also much less heteronormative than my own college team. I'm not sure if that's a West Coast vs Deep South thing, a "times--they are a-changin'" thing, or a team-specific thing. It's probably some beautiful combination. I didn't realize that placing a whole heap of personal expectations on this team would severely limit the range of experiences they would live out, the types of people they would recruit, and my own ideas of what it meant to be an ultimate athlete. The people on this team teach me more about acceptance, respect, and resilience than I could ever teach them about Ultimate.

The take away from this personal aside is to communicate that your ideal isn't always spot on. You cannot imagine the coach your team needs, in the same ways I could not imagine the team I needed to coach. As I reflect on this experience, I realize how lucky I was to be given this coaching opportunity. For many young athletes, this is their first experience in a "hiring" and "management" position. The outcome of finding a coach is not always so serendipitous, so I'm going to introduce some best practices mixed in with some personal opinions to help provide guidance in terms of finding and working with a coach.

Choosing A Coach

You're in a leadership role on your team-- Congratulations! What an honor. Your peers trust you! They believe your personality is an integral part of an overarching

UCSD Psychos dance during halftime of the 2018 Stanford Invite Finals. Photo by Natalie Bigman-Pimentel

team culture that resonates with them. Let me guess-- you are welcome, determined, vocal, pragmatic, and fun at parties. Or maybe you're just really good at Ultimate. Your teammates believe you understand the team's direction, and possess the decision making ability to help them achieve their goals. If the season is deemed a failure, it all rests on your shoulders. Don't blow it!

Just kidding-- kind of. The decisions you make on behalf of your team are impactful, and should require careful planning. One very big decision that falls on your shoulders can be choosing a team coach. Perhaps your team hasn't had a coach in awhile, if ever. Maybe the team has expressed interest in searching for a new coach, or the current coach is stepping down. If you don't know where to start, let's lay out some important points for your consideration.

Identify the Ideal — Then Be Flexible

Identify who your team is and where they are headed. How do you get there? What kind of person can help you get there?

- Example 1: Our team is competitive, athletic, and raw. We need to improve our fundamentals- throwing, cutting, defensive positioning, strategy. We need a coach who understands body mechanics, can clearly articulate, and can show us different types of offensive/defensive looks to be able to adjust in games against various opponents. Overall, most of us perform better when someone is constantly providing feedback and has extremely high expectations of us.

- Example 2: We are a developmental B team with great retention. We focus on having fun on and off the field, and being a welcome place for any person. We need someone who can set challenging but achievable goals that are not necessarily based on winning. We need help keeping our team engaged at practice, while still having fun.

The right person for these teams is undoubtedly two different people, and there are ranges of coaches in between. When I was in college, I didn't know what kind of team we were. I just wanted to win. That's okay. It may take a coach coming to observe and tell you what they see. You may not know what you need to work on, but if the candidate has insightful observations, and concrete solutions for how you can improve, you're probably on the right track.

Next, start to hone in on specifics. Maybe you have 2 practices per week, but you're looking to add a day of conditioning and throwing. You'll need help running the conditioning practice, so you need someone who can commit to coming 3/week, or 2 people who can share the commitment. The captains decide they can attend pre-season tourneys without a coach, but will need someone to come to all 5 tourneys between January-April.

You will not find someone who perfectly meets your "ideal". Be open to differences. Perhaps you didn't think you could be coached by someone so loud, or so...old? If you knew exactly what you needed, you wouldn't be looking for a coach!

Interview & Reference

How to Interview

1. Ask the right questions
   - How would you describe your coaching style?
   - How much time are you willing to dedicate on and off the field per week?
   - What roles are you willing to confidently take and what roles are off the table? i.e. track, strength, throwing practice, structuring and leading practices, tournament strategy, calling lines, administrative duties
   - Regarding the above duties, which would you consider your strengths and which are perceived weaknesses?
   - What is your favorite drill and what skills does it focus on. (This is a good time to assess how clearly does the candidate explains things.)
   - Review the tournament schedule to be sure they can commit to those weekends.
   - Be sure your expectations are compatible- Are the goals for the season more social or competitive? Does the candidate have long-term goals or are they just looking to do this for 1 season and go from there?
2. Ask for references- and actually speak to the references.
3. Don't be afraid to go slow: Ask for them to observe your team and lead one practice as part of the interview process

Communicate at Every Stage

Remember, your coach likely has full-time responsibilities outside of this position-- a job, grad school, a child, maybe all of the above. Be respectful of their time. Let them know immediately if practice is canceled or moved to another location, try to help coordinate travel/carpooling for tourneys since you're already doing it for the rest of the team, set up fields (delegate a teammate) before practice, bring the proper equipment on time, every time, etc.

Share your attendance spreadsheet with your coach, so that they can design practice around how many players and which players are attending. Set the expectation of your team to cleat up and warm up on time so that the coach can always expect to arrive 30 minutes after designated practice start time, for example.

- **Negotiate the Dynamics:** Discuss fair compensation in a professional manner: parking passes, travel reimbursement, hotel costs, etc. Discuss preferred method of contact, attendance expectations (all practices, track, tourneys, etc). Stay in contact about who is coming to practice so that he or she can design an effective practice. Who determines the consequences (if any) for attendance issues? The more responsibility you give them, the more power they have. Try to balance the power dynamic by keeping much of the responsibility internal to the captains/officers.

- **Check in Regularly:** Are practices challenging or stagnant? Is there too much down-time between drills? Not enough water breaks? Is the coach happy with the team's level of commitment? Are practice numbers conducive to the practice design? Post-tournament is a good time to do a check-in.

- **Red Flags:** If coaches seem uncomfortable with the "why" question, red flag. If you cannot find the line between your teammates and your coach, that's a red flag. If the coach is over-involved in the social aspect of the team, red flag. If your coach engages in a verbal dispute with another team's player, that's a red flag. If a coach seems intimidated or hesitant to bring in other community leaders/professionals, they may not have your best interests at heart-- there is a difference between bringing in really good players and really good teachers, so be sure you and your coach can make that distinction.

- **Mutual Respect is Important.** If you have hired the right person you can trust the process and support the coach. If you disagree or question a decision, try to speak to the coach one-on-one before disagreeing or showing tension in front of the team. Keep your eyeballs in your head. The coach's success and the team's success necessitates it. We don't have to villainize someone just because it wasn't the right fit.

Conclusion

Ultimately (BAHAHAHA), coaching is a key element in your team's success, but only as key as you make it. A coach can only make or break a season if you let them. Take ownership of your team's success, and be grateful for anyone willing to come alongside and help you achieve it.

Coaching to Empower College Athletes

Shereen Rabie

What are our players or teammates capable of? As a coach or leader on a team, it is our responsibility to foster an environment that empowers our players or teammates to succeed. How can coaches and leaders change their approach so players are given the tools they need to succeed at the college level and beyond?

As a newer coach, I have a LOT of questions. What is the best way to teach defensive footwork? How do I explain cutting angles to players that are completely new to playing sports? How do I create training exercises that improve agility over the course of the season? What lines should I be calling and when?

I still have much to learn and definitely can't claim that I feel completely comfortable in my knowledge of the game every time I walk into a practice. I am not certain that everything I say makes sense to the team. I am not certain that we are training correctly every time we run a track workout. I am not certain that the strategy I am presenting is the optimal strategy for the team that we have. I am not certain of a lot of things. But I am certain of one thing: empowered athletes make the best kind of players.

When I first started coaching at the college level, I thought my job would consist of creating and communicating strategy to the team and cultivating the physical aspects of the sport in the players I was coaching. I formulated offensive sets, thought about the mechanics of movement, and created training schedules and workouts. I quickly realized that coaching is much more than that. I started to notice that when I spoke

too much, people started to drift out of focus and practices were less productive. I noticed that when I explained WHY we were running a drill a certain way, the players picked up the operative concept much quicker than if I had just told them HOW to run the drill. I noticed that when I made a drill or a conditioning set just a little bit harder than I had initially planned, players walked away from practice more satisfied in what they had accomplished that day. The most positive and consistent feedback I have received as a coach is that players appreciate when they are pushed beyond what they thought they could do. They feel respected and accomplished when they are provided with opportunities to perform at a higher level than what they were expecting. They feel empowered.

So, how do we, as college coaches, captains, leaders, empower our players or teammates? I don't pretend to know all of the answers to this question, but I can provide a few tips that have worked for me.

Explain Why

I call it "the robot effect." We've all seen it, when players run through the motions without critically thinking about what they're doing. They cut deep and under every single time they cut, never varying from their prescribed cutting angle. They run up the line in the dump set, even if their defender is poaching. They pull with the same edge every time, regardless of conditions or the defense being run. They play robotic Ultimate.

Never fear, the robot effect can be avoided! Rather than only telling players what to do, tell them why. Explain why we triangulate on the mark. Explain why we cut at certain angles. If you correct someone, tell them why you are making the correction. Example, "You should adjust your cutting angle, because right now you are cutting directly behind the thrower's mark and that it makes it very difficult to get the frisbee to you." It's important to give players the tools to understand the game beyond a superficial level. This deeper understanding of the rationale behind why we do certain things in Ultimate is what fosters a love and appreciation for the sport, and is what equips college to become leaders and grow in the sport. If a player understands the "why," they become more adaptable. They make certain cuts not because their coach told them to, but because they are adjusting to what the defense is doing and they are finding the open space. They make certain throws not because it's the throw they threw in a drill once, but because they made a conscious evaluation of where the throwing lane is, where the cutter's defender is, how much separation the cutter has, and

University of Texas Melee huddle

how big the margin for error is. They talk on the sideline not because their coach will get mad if they don't, but because they understand what a defender needs to know in order to adjust to the best position to take away the most immediate and largest offensive threat.

Explaining the "why" is the most basic step a coach (or any leader) can take towards empowering their team. Giving players the conceptual tools to build on to their foundational understanding of the sport is essential to fostering a sense of confidence and pride in how they play the game.

Push, Uplift, Acknowledge

"You can always run just a little faster than you think you can." This is what I often tell the players I coach. I can't tell you how many times I have edited workouts people have sent me to make them just a little longer, just a little more challenging, or to add just one more rep. Push your players. Push them to accomplish a little more than they think they can. Push them to work a little harder than they think they can. Push them to conceptualize a little higher-level strategy than they think they can. You will be surprised at what your team can do.

Step 1: Push. Create workouts that are just a tad harder than your initial draft, or add one more iteration of the drill you planned that challenges players to implement higher-level concepts. Obviously, don't injure your players, and adjust your planning to the timing of where you are in the season and how much the team has trained up to that point. But remember that your players are athletes and they are capable of a lot.

Step 2: Uplift. Often when I present a conditioning workout to the team, I am received with big eyes filled with fear and doubt. Been there. As a player, I remember facing track practice plans and thinking, "That's a lot, I don't know if I can do all of that." I also remember facing scrimmages with rules that challenged my conceptual understanding of the game and thinking, "We're never going to get through this." Coaches, queue uplifting words. Tell your team that they can do it and that you know what they're capable of. Tell them that they are strong, smart and fearless. If they don't believe it yet, they'll start to with repetition. I know it's corny, but your team needs you to vocalize that you believe in them. You are their #1 fan and if you won't push them and uplift them, no one else will.

Step 3: Acknowledge. Don't forget this step. In addition to telling your team what they can do, acknowledge the awesome things they have done. After conditioning, acknowledge the difficulty of what they just did and tell them they're awesome. If a player implements a concept in a scrimmage that you taught earlier in the practice, acknowledge it with a big "YES!" Currently, I'm working on writing good things that players do during games that often go unnoticed, like playing shut down defense, or really great sideline talk, and acknowledging those people during time outs or

after the game. It's things like this that give your players the satisfaction of knowing that you see their hard work and that you're proud of them.

Listen and Let Go

Texas Melee and UCSD Psychos in a spirit circle during 2018 College Nationals. Photo by Paul Rutherford

The final tip I have for empowering your players is to listen and let go. If, like me, you grew up playing Texas soccer, you know that the coaches were often autocratic in their coaching style. You did things because the coach said so, end of story. Feedback surveys for the coach at the end of the season? Forget about it. The opportunity for player meetings where you can receive direct feedback and have a conversation with the coach about how the season was going? Not likely. I remember the frustration that comes from not having any input into how the season went.

Don't be that kind of coach. Instead, strive to incorporate approachability and collaboration into your coaching style. Instead of formulating the team's strategic plan all alone, ask the captains or veterans on the team what they think, and actually listen and implement their opinions. Ask your players how they are doing, is everything making sense, if they have any concerns, are they having fun, etc. Hold player meetings. Ask the players what worked well and what didn't from previous years. You will never know how players are feeling about the season if you don't ask. And you will never get honest answers if you don't actively listen and implement some of their ideas. Obviously, you can't implement every suggestion or correct every concern you receive, and you can't have everyone commenting on the strategy you are implementing. Executive decisions have to be made. But, at the end of the day, you will do well to remember that it's not just your team. You have to be open to receiving input and feedback if you want to make your players feel like they have a stake and are involved in how the season progresses.

And finally, you have to let go. Giving players ownership of their team is important to empowering them. Let them make some decisions. Let them give each other feedback. Let them work together and figure things out without you spoon feeding everything to them. Some things that have worked for me are allowing offensive lines to call their own pull plays on the line; running scrimmages or drills where I don't say anything and the team has to figure out how to meet the end goal; giving certain players ownership of zone positions (e.g. push mark or deep deep); or letting captains or veteran players lead practices or explain certain concepts to the team. This concept will look different for every team depending on your leadership structure and the level of experience on the team. Loosening your grip on the team creates a culture of accountability and ownership. Instead of ending the season as

a group of players led by X and Y coaches or captains, you'll be able to end a season as a team that got to the end together.

Conclusion

If you've made it this far, thanks for reading! I hope some of what I said was helpful to you. I also hope that empowering college Ultimate players by giving them conceptual tools to understand the game at a deeper level, pride in their ability to accomplish great things, and the confidence of knowing that they can contribute to their team in meaningful ways will help to ensure the sustainability of college programs and the creation of leaders in the sport.

Takeaways from Coaching Womxn Athletes in the Context of Patriarchy

Zara Cadoux

Womxn are taught through patriarchy to internalize self-doubt instead of confidence, to believe strength is weakness, and compare themselves to other womxn in unhealthy ways. In order to coach womxn athletes well, we must understand what they are bringing with them and what that means for how we address team building, skill development, strategy, and messaging in order to guide each athlete from 'thinking' to 'doing.'

I am a cisgendered white woman who has coached primarily cisgendered white women. I use the term womxn athletes in order to acknowledge the varying experiences of cis, trans, non-binary, and genderqueer athletes playing in the women's division. This offering is situated in my own experience and analysis in order to push back against the notion of expertise and universal best practice, and to acknowledge that I also have blind spots. Pushing back on the ways I have internalized/naturalized the gender binary and understanding my cisgender privilege is an area that I am currently working on, in addition to continued work on my racial and other privileged identities.

Over my years as a coach, both in ultimate and in my professional life, a constant question I've explored is, "How do you guide a person or group to peak performance?" Coaches are called to constantly balance an environment for individual and collective peak performances — you cannot have one without the other. In order to cultivate our skills in individual and team performance for womxn athletes, we must understand the context of the patriarchal society that we live in. We do not arrive on the field as

blank slates, rather every athlete brings their complexities and experiences with them. Sports can be transformative for womxn athletes when they are able to move into their 'doing brain' and out of their 'thinking brain.' I know that in my own life, playing ultimate is a space where I have experienced liberation. For womxn in sports, there are many barriers to achieving this shift. In order to coach womxn athletes well, we must understand what they are bringing with them and what that means for how we address team building, skill development, strategy, and messaging in order to guide each athlete from 'thinking' to 'doing.'

Although this article focuses on athletes in the women's division, gender is not the only identity that has a primary impact on life experiences. In the ultimate community, our current gender-equity movement does not center gender identity or race which often leads to universalizing the experiences of cis white women and girls. **Approaching coaching with a feminist lens requires stepping outside of the gender binary and white feminist analysis.** We are called as coaches to have an intersectional lens that centers race, orientation, gender-identity, ability, and many other identities that shape a player's experience. For womxn players, these identities will intersect with each individual's socialization/indoctrination into womanhood and shift their experience of patriarchy. Patriarchy is racialized, heterosexist, ableist, and classist. For example, cis and trans women and genderqueer folx of color experience patriarchy differently than their white counterparts. As a white woman who has coaching primarily white women, I want to be careful in my offering on this topic. The purpose of this article is to provide an analysis, not to be taken as gospel for working with every individual or group. Depending on each player's intersectional identities, upbringing, personal values, etc., this may or not resonate.

Unpacking 'Best Practices'

Using Womxn Players As Our Baseline

As coaches, we must interrogate the way best practices have been framed. Often, best practices use coaching men as the default and advocate slight 'modification' for female players/teams. Flipping the script on this patriarchal assumption to a feminist framework is an essential first step in coaching. What happens if womxn players are the baseline for coaching? I believe that many of the takeaways I describe in this article offer a coaching foundation not only for womxn players, but for all players and teams. Patriarchy also impacts men athletes, though in very different ways. As I will describe later, men athletes are better at ignoring bad coaching, while womxn players are more susceptible to having unresponsive coaching affect whether they can play at their peak. As such, using womxn athletes as a baseline for best practices and centering womxn players in our work actually creates better, more intentional coaching for players of all genders.

Debunking the 'Good' Coach

When we think of the traditional archetype of 'good' coaches, we typically think of white men (regardless of the race of the athletes). We might picture him red-faced from yelling at his players, pacing with a clipboard, and berating those who don't do exactly what he wants. You

do not want to disappoint this man — and you know if you do you will answer for it. He exerts his dominance and this legitimizes him. The conflation of dominance with good coaching in the context of patriarchy makes sense and it is this ingrained notion that we as coaches with a feminist ethic must push back against.

Using intentional, strategic methods to motivate players instead of yelling word vomit is not 'softer' coaching for womxn players — it's good coaching. However, your womxn players, especially those from mainstream sports backgrounds, which reinforce patriarchal constructions of coaches, may interpret your coaching 'as soft.' Over the years, I've had womxn players ask me to yell more and that I wasn't providing enough feedback. These players, accustomed to being chewed out and receiving a flood of instruction, associated these behaviors with good coaching. One semester, I let the team captains convince me that more of a 'bro-like' approach would be motivational for the players coming out of high school lacrosse and soccer programs. When we tried this approach, what I saw was a group of very athletic players crumble as a unit. My co-coach and I recognized what was happening and shifted our messaging and demeanor. As a team, we started to perform better and individuals appeared to have more confidence. Still, the captains asked us to be harder on everyone, to mimic the behavior of past coaches even though we could see that this was not what the individuals on the team overall needed. These players conflated positive messaging with being 'soft' and their desire to be considered 'legitimate athletes' drove them to ask for coaching that would have been overall detrimental to the team.

Context of Patriarchy

bell hooks defines patriarchy as "a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence."[1] This system has a lot of negative implications for people across the gender spectrum; naturalizing the gender binary and heterosexism, creating visions of masculinity that are toxic and harm men (who in turn harm others), and normalizing a construction of womanhood as weak, lesser, and undeserving of humane treatment. These norms are relayed explicitly and implicitly through **cultural** messages, the **structures** that hold our institutions in place and maintain (white) men's power, the culture and policies of our **institutions**, our **interpersonal** interaction, and our **internal** reinforcement.

Womxn athletes, after moving through the cultural and societal obstacles that prevent many from playing sports in the first place, enter the playing field with socialized doubt about themselves and their worth. Internalizing the belief that your group is inferior and consciously or unconsciously behaving in a way that uphold the systems that oppress you is called internalized oppression. Womxn players battle internalized sexism, a result of receiving messages about their lack of worth their entire lives. In all but rare cases these messages have been reinforced by violence ranging from verbal harassment or abuse to sexual assault. Womxn players who haven't

1 https://imaginenoborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf

been physically harmed have been emotionally, and/or experienced the threat of physical violence (for example, being followed). For many womxn players, internalized sexism and heterosexism remains a subconscious experience and may not align with their stated sense of self. Overcompensation and denial are defense mechanisms and survival tactics that are often employed by womxn in the context of patriarchal messages and experiences.

"UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF INTERNALIZED SEXISM, HETEROSEXISM, AND HISTORIES OF VIOLENCE IS CRUCIAL FOR WORKING WITH WOMXN ATHLETES BECAUSE AS COACHES ARE WE ARE ASKING OUR PLAYERS TO LIVE FULLY IN THEIR BODIES DURING PRACTICE AND TOURNAMENTS AND PHYSICALLY EXECUTE TASKS."

Understanding the context of internalized sexism, heterosexism, and histories of violence is crucial for working with womxn athletes because as coaches are we are asking our players to live fully in their bodies during practice and tournaments and physically execute tasks. As coaches, our messaging and action cannot be crafted in a vacuum or blindly mimic the traditional archetype of mens' coaches. Experiencing oppression results in physical, mental, and emotional stress that impacts player's bodies and capacity to achieve peak performance. **If we want to do our jobs well, we must understand the broader context in which we are working with our athletes.**

How Does Internalized Sexism and Heterosexism Manifest?

Fear of Being Seen/Taking Up Space & Fear of Failure

Messages about women's worth and value in society are internalized over the course of a womxn athlete's life and can result in a fear of being seen/noticed. Wanting to fly under the radar, not step out too far beyond accepted boundaries, and avoiding risk can all be symptoms of this fear. The idea of playing to not lose instead of playing to win is important here. Often womxn limit what their goals are/what they are willing to risk to avoid the vulnerability of being seen wanting something or trying and failing, but in doing so box themselves in and limit what is possible. A common expression of a fear of being seen and/or taking up space is constantly apologizing and thus yielding to others. You may also see this manifest in your players if they seem afraid/unwilling to play all out, an aversion to setting goals, and a sense that they are technically doing their job on the field, but not pushing to do more.

Perfectionism

Womxn people are taught from a young age that they will be judged more harshly than their (white) male counterparts and that nothing short of perfection is acceptable. Performing tasks 'perfectly' also allows womxn to slip under the radar, relating to the fear of being seen listed above. Perfectionism is a symptom both of white culture and internalized patriarchy and tends to be particularly heightened in white womxn. This can manifest when a player is learning something new (like how to throw), tries once unsuccessfully and then states "I'm so bad at this." Because young womxn are often not afforded the room for error, growth, or

space to practice new skills, they are not socialized to value their ability to change as a process. Womxn athletes often want to execute the instructions exactly right the first time — and if not, feel that they have failed.

Surveillance

Womxn feel people looking at them in almost every space that they enter. They are sexualized by men and judged by womxn (this is a symptom of internalized sexism, see below in comparison). Womxn's bodies are constantly being watched and policed, from clothing to size to hair to make up to reproductive rights. Not only do many people socialized as womxn have a fear of being seen, but the reality of their lives is that they are constantly being seen in ways that dehumanize them. Understanding this context is crucial to recognizing the hesitancy that a womxn athlete may have to do something active in front of others. In contrast to many cisgendered male players, being watched (particularly by men) is often not motivating for womxn athletes. Questions to consider may be: Is this men's team practicing next to your team? Are you a male coach? Is there someone watching during a tournament who makes one of your players especially nervous?

Construction of Womanhood

Antiquated constructions of womanhood still box womxn athletes in. For many womxn, sweating is embarrassing, bigger muscles 'aren't attractive,' and being an athlete means you're gay (heterosexism operating as a branch of patriarchy). Just the idea of taking space on the field and owning it is difficult to grasp for a group of people who have been socialized to make themselves small. An internalized desire to remain attractive to cisgendered men, within the confines of this constructed womanhood, is often an obstacle that womxn athletes have to move through again and again — even if they have the analysis to know that it is. In many ways, to be a womxn athlete in of itself is an act of resistance against patriarchy.

Focus on the group over self

Womxn are socialized to feel responsible for taking care of everyone in their vicinity, physically and emotionally. Often, womxn will manage behind the scenes circumstances, pay attention to additional details, and work to quell negative feelings and/or interpersonal conflict in order to create smooth experiences for a group. This sense of responsibility to care for others and do the work of listening, noticing, care-taking is called emotional labor. This socialization of responsibility for the emotions of a partner and/or group can mean that without a sense that everyone is taken care of, womxn athletes may have trouble focusing on themselves and their performance. It also changes the way womxn play and relate to each other on the field. For example, many women's teams value using the whole team rather than elevating a few star players.

Comparison

One of the ways patriarchy is maintained is by keeping womxn focused on comparing themselves to each other. Who is the prettiest, who is getting the most sexual attention, who is

being recognized and getting awards, who is considered 'one of the guys'? It is a competition framed in tearing each other down instead of competing to make each other better. Not only are womxn comparing themselves to each other, they are trapped comparing themselves to men as the standard for almost everything: leadership, strategy, play style. Womxn who experience success under patriarchal standards often separate themselves from other womxn, maintaining that if they could do it anyone can.

Policing Other Women

Womxn reinforce patriarchal standards by policing each other. Interpersonal conflicts are quickly deemed catty and womxn players may often be cast as 'unreasonable.' A range of emotions may not be accepted; including any behaviors that deviate from non-threateningly friendly, smiling, and promoting harmonious exchanges — even if these exchanges are disingenuous. This policing reinforces all of the ways internalized sexism manifests. **These behaviors may include using the notion of spirit of the game to discipline others, prioritizing positive exchanges between teams in a spirit circle instead of discussing conflict, or shunning a teammate who expresses anger.**

Binary Thinking

Patriarchy naturalizes binary thinking. We are all constantly trying to organize information into black and white boxes — is something good or bad? Right or wrong? For womxn athletes, either/or thinking combined with perfectionism can be very detrimental. Athletes often move to delineate what they are and are not good at quickly. Womxn athletes may read into coaching messages, such as if you let them know they are doing well one day and don't say anything the next, an athlete could fear that they aren't doing well at all. Allowing for grey areas and growth opportunities is uncomfortable. Feminist thinking encourages us to live in the nuance and complexity of our lived experiences, which means a significant amount of unlearning binary thinking.

Group Awareness

A hallmark of being part of a marginalized group is the feeling that everything you say or do reflects on your group. Womxn players carry the burden of trying to prove they are worthy of being valued as athletes, and this burden may, at different times, weigh heavy on them. Wanting to prove that the women's game is 'worth watching' or that feeling every drop or mistake reflects poorly on your gender can easily interrupt an athlete's game and take the focus away from the moment at hand.

Self-Talk

In the famous book on sports psychology, *The Inner Game of Tennis* by Timothy Gallwey, Gallwey describes two selves within each athlete: Self 1 & Self 2. He refers to Self 1 as the 'teller' and Self 2 as the 'doer.' When athletes are operating at their peak, or in 'the zone,' Self 1 has been integrated into Self 2. In other words, athletes have moved out of thinking and into doing

because Self 1 is providing Self 2 with what they need to do their job and most importantly, Self 1 is letting Self 2 do their job. As coaches, our goal is to provide our athletes with the tools to be able to get to this integrated state consistently. In order to do that, we must pay attention to each athletes' self-talk. This is true for all athletes, regardless of identity — the relationship with the self is central to the mental toughness required to achieve peak performance in crucial moments. For womxn athletes, the barriers described in the last section, anchored in internalized doubt and a deflated sense of worth, have a significant effect on self-talk.

Here are some questions to help guide your understanding of an athlete's self-talk:

- How does the athlete's Self 1 talk to Self 2?
- What kind of direction, feedback, and motivation does Self 1 give to their Self 2?
- If Self 1 and Self 2 were actually two different people, how would we characterize their relationship?
- How does the athlete handle/bounce back mistakes?
- How does internalized sexism show up in self-talk?
- Does Self 1 trust Self 2?

Many womxn players have negative self-talk. Perfectionism is a particularly devastating factor in self-talk because often athletes experiencing internalized sexism are so hard on themselves that it becomes paralyzing. Many womxn athletes that are new to ultimate appear to be distraught if they don't do each new skill right the first time they try. I can't count the number of times I've been teaching a new skill and after one try a womxn athlete turns to me and says "I'm not good at this." Fear of being seen making a mistake compounds the unattainable standard of perfection, making many womxn players tense, tight, or rigid throughout their body — not an optimal state to learn a new physical skill. After a new player gets their feet wet in the sport, perfection and the fear of being seen may cause athletes to 'play it safe,' stick to things they already feel successful at, and avoid stepping out of their comfort zone when it comes to their individual skill development. The fear driving self-judgement becomes self fulfilling.

Self 1 and Self 2

In my experience coaching womxn athletes, the relationship between Self 1 and Self 2 can often be described an abusive dynamic. Self 1 is overly critical and controlling to Self 2. If the athlete's Self 1 and Self 2 were teammates and Self 1 said things like "you are terrible at throwing under pressure," "why do you always mess it up for the team?" or "you're not good at cutting," we would surely intervene. And yet, so often you will hear players describe their own skills by saying, "I have a terrible backhand," "I always mess up when the team needs me," or "I'm not good at dump D." Saying these things makes athletes feel like their skills are fixed instead of part of a growth process. Working with athletes so that they have more patience and grace with themselves will improve their performances, and it can also be healing. I believe that part of our role as coaches is to facilitate healing in our athletes' relationships with the

self; to help athletes feel that they deserve to show themselves the same level of respect and love that they show others. As coaches, we have the immense privilege of facilitating a process where the player learns to trust themselves.

Instruction & Feedback

When teaching a new skill, drill, or strategy, it is very tempting to describe every aspect in detail. We might be motivated by wanting our athletes to have all the information available, or we might feel that it establishes our credibility as a coach. Describing exactly what we want to see can result in an overloading of Self 1, overwhelming the athlete with expectations for what their execution should look like. As Self 1 attempts to over-control Self 2, an athlete's effort physically strains their ability to perform. Trying to incorporate all of the information at once, an athlete may find that their body is tight and uncooperative. This is especially true for womxn athletes who, through their internalized sexism manifesting as perfectionism, desperately want to do it right by listening to and implementing all of the directions at once. While men athletes also suffer from the information overload issue, they are overall more equip to ignore the majority of the instruction they are receiving — and often do — because they are bolstered by a secure sense of themselves as athletes. Womxn players are more likely to try to incorporate all of the feedback and adjustments they are receiving, and this can perpetuate the overloading of Self 1. Fully in the thinking, critical brain, this is an obstacle for womxn athletes to get into Self 2.

What this means for coaches is that it calls on us to be disciplined about what instructions we are giving, how many adjustments we are making, and when we choose to provide feedback and how. Players of all genders can benefit from this move to more intentional coaching. A classic time when ultimate coaches dial in on details is when we are working with athletes on throwing form. From calling attention to the snap of the wrist, to the way a player engages their core, to the angle of the step out, to the way a player winds up, to the movement of the arm from shoulder to follow throw, there is a lot that can potentially be adjusted. Instruction on learning to throw a forehand typically includes instructions like these: snap your wrist more, keep the disc level in your hand, keep your arm away from your body. Gallwey describes this kind of feedback as technical instruction and advocates a shift to awareness instruction (61). **Awareness instruction** is focused on providing the space for a player to experiment and experience what success feels like in their own body. It gives them permission to let go of judgement ("I'm doing this wrong!") and let it happen instead of making it happen. Resisting over correcting, coaches are there to guide a player to their own self-discovery of what a skill feels like to execute.

Here are some examples of a shift from technical to awareness instruction for throwing form:

- 'Keep the disc level in your hand' becomes 'notice the level of the disc as you move through your motion.'
- 'Keep your arm away from your body' becomes 'observe how your elbow is involved in your form.'
- 'Snap your wrist more' becomes 'what position is your hand ending your motion in?'

Finding an awareness instruction that gives the athlete space to play around with the skill without judgement until they find body positioning that works for them is the goal. Awareness instructions begin with words like notice, observe, feel, and sense or can be a question.

This does not mean offering a deluge of awareness instruction. Often when I'm coaching throwing form I observe for a while in order to try to locate an awareness instruction that I believe will allow the athlete to give themselves permission to shift. Athletes ask me for more feedback than I what I have given and I reinforce that I just want them to 'focus on the way their knee tracks with their foot,' and workshop from there. It is hard to resist this invitation to provide more, especially if you feel that your player is implying that more instruction will make you more credible to them as a coach. Remember that asking for more instruction can be part of the perfectionism monster; an athlete wanting to do it perfectly right and wanting to know what all of the parameters are. **The experience of self-discovery can be a truly uncomfortable one for womxn athletes, and that discomfort will likely be part of the process.**

Intentionally scaffolding learning to provide the space for players to explore new concepts also translates to working with the whole team. Creating an opportunity for everyone to learn together and build connections is critical. For example, when teaching an offensive system, players typically want to know what they should do in every scenario. Creating drilling situations at practice where players can experiment is crucial, because once you've set rules, womxn players are likely to try to follow them perfectly. Building in a balance between setting systems and supporting creativity and experimentation will be a constant negotiation.

When it comes to team play, this drive to follow the rules is coupled with the responsibility to the group and fear of taking space. Often labeled as 'aggressive,' womxn athletes shy away from taking space away from teammates. For example, in order to take care of the group, a cutter may defer to another player and abort a cut resulting in a stagnant offense. Playing within the system is often valued over individual achievement. These are not opposing ideas, but our socialization into binary thinking often makes players feel like they have to choose one or the other.

Reflection & Closing

All of us are affected and effected by systems of oppression. We live in the context of patriarchy. I am constantly challenging myself to step out of binary thinking, to remind myself that there is no one right way to coach, instead coaching is an iterative process that includes taking feedback and reflecting on impact. I've learned that I need to set clear expectations with my teams about how I will approach coaching them, how I will speak to players, and how I expect them to interact with me. I've learned that I need to be transparent when I break my own guidelines and be flexible and willing to shift the plan if it isn't working. I learn over and over that I need to be in touch with my own sense of ego, pride, perfectionism, fear of failing, etc. As a coach, it is up to me to model acknowledging mistakes without rendering judgement on my overall performance.

We, as coaches, will all make mistakes as we too are battling our own internalization of oppressive messages. We may be leading a team, but we are not immune to the same pitfalls our athletes experience. **We will not be good coaches because we position ourselves as all-knowing, we will be good coaches by approaching our players with confidence in our knowledge and the humility that we do not have all the answers.** As coaches of womxn athletes, we have the privilege of facilitating a space for our players to let their Self 2 take over, to step outside of comfort zones, to encourage creativity by removing barriers to peak performance. We need to challenge ourselves to talk less and provide feedback that heightens an athlete's awareness of their own process. Responsively coaching in the context of patriarchy calls on us to do our own self-work so we can empower our athletes to do the same — and in doing so be transformed by experiencing the liberation when Self 1 trusts Self 2, when teammates trust each other, and when players get to live fully in their bodies and achieve peak performance.

Resources

This article is based on a course I taught in 2018 with my friend Simon Pollock. Below are the readings we assigned for the class.

- *The Inner Game of Tennis*, W. Timothy Gallwey
  - Chapter Two "The Discovery of the Two Selves", pp. 8-14
  - Chapter Three "Quieting Self 1" pp. 14-32
  - Chapter Four " Trusting Self 2", pp. 33-44
  - Chapter 5: Chapter 5 "Discovering Technique" pp.50-57
  - Chapter Six "Changing Habits," pp. 65-72
- Measuring Success - Emily Baecher
- *Feminism is for Everybody* - bell hooks, Introduction (vii-x), Chapter 2 (pg 13-18)
- Without Limits Player Survey
- Ultimate Privilege Comic - Girls Ultimate Players Initiative (GUPI)
- Sorry - Jen Pashley
- How Exactly Is A Girl Empowered By A Sport? - Women Win
- How To Boost Girls' Confidence In Youth Ultimate - Kaia Roast

Line Calling

Manisha “Slap” Daryani

There is no one “right” method to line calling. Your team should use whatever method of line calling fits your teams’ needs and goals.

Line calling is often one of the biggest source of complaints for players, whether or not your program has a coach. The goal of this piece is to help you identify a system that may work best for your program in cases where you do not wish to have a single person call lines or just don’t have the resource of a single line caller (such as a coach).

A couple premises: there is no one “right” way to call lines. But, because line calling offers some of the most direct feedback to players regarding their role and importance to a team, allocation of roles (and with it a corresponding estimation of playing time) should be a reflection of your teams’ values and culture. Complaints most often arise when that culture and a player’s subjective sense of worth do not align.

Also, you’ll notice that I largely don’t talk “numbers” - i.e., the objective number of points a player plays. There is no question that players want to feel valued and often the feedback we hear is that “value” is determined by whether a player played 1 point or 10. The goal of this piece is to re-frame this discussion into how to identity other ways to make players feel valued.

So, before you implement any of the systems discussed below, you first need to know (or identify) what kind of team you have (or want to have). Each of the methods of line calling discussed below carries with it unique benefits and tradeoffs. Identifying which tradeoffs your team is willing to accept, and communicating the benefits, creates the buy-in necessary for each of these systems to work.

Suggestion # 1 - Self-calling lines (i.e., no one calls lines). This style is best suited for teams with players who have an objectively reasonable sense of their own skill sets and their teammates' skill sets and/or strong buy-in that players do what's best for the team.

PROS: This can result in the most equitable division of play time (if that is desired), and/or can be a great mentorship style of teaching. For example, more experienced players can encourage younger players to "get out there" by either passively sitting out points or actively encouraging younger players to play in their place. And without the pressure of having younger players go in when not mentally comfortable or physically exhausted, you ensure that every line is filled with players who are excited to play.

CONS: If your team does not have such self-aware players that are bought into a team mentality, self-subbing can result in certain players dominating play time and less confident players sitting out more and more as the season goes on.

Suggestion # 2 - O and D lines. Perhaps the most common system of subbing. The team identifies 9-12 players who will primarily play offense, and then remaining players play on defensive points. This is best suited for a team that does not have a lot of turnaround year-over-year because it requires a clear and thorough evaluation of each players strengths and weaknesses (not saying it's impossible, just difficult).

PROS: Can offer the same benefits of self-calling lines, but additionally offers players (particularly the O line) a clear understanding of what the team needs from them. This also helps build chemistry for the offense (which should be comprised of the most consistent players) that will help them respond to the different defensive looks they will see. This can also help the defensive players focus their training on the specific needs of their line.

CONS: This is not ideal for teams who are working to grow their players' skill sets holistically or teams that lack consistent players. Which is why this style can also result in multiple breaks if the offensive line isn't clicking, because the same players stay on point after point.

Suggestion # 3 - Pods. As noted above, players who play together a lot can learn each others' preferences and habits. Pod are meant to help build such chemistry between smaller groups of players as each pod will likely only have 5-8 players.

There are several ways to think about this, and for each system, team leadership or pre-identified pod leaders can explicitly sub players within the pods OR have pods self-call subs:

(1) Divide the team into a handler pod, and two cutting pods and alternate the cutting lines or play the cutter pods two points in a row. (You can also divide the handlers into two pods and alternate their pods every point)

(2) Divide the team into two or three pods, each containing handlers and cutters and rotate each in pod every point.

(3) Create "position" pods - handlers, under cutters and away cutters (can also include a utility position, or divide the handlers into resets and deep throwers) Each point a certain number of players are called from each position pod (EX: 3 from the handlers, 2 from the unders, 2 from the deeps).

PROS: Avoids the traps of the O and D lines, in that you are not reliant on certain players to execute offense/defense. Also, depending on how explicitly players are placed into pods, they are given very clear instructions as to their role (i.e., the pod of under cutters knows their role is to get the disc and put it deep, and deep cutters know their role is to time for deep looks).

CONS: Depending on the variation of skill on a team, pods can create unbalanced lines (to address this you can divide even further into veterans and rookies). Also, strict adherence to a pod rotation could conflict with conditions/situations of the game. For example, the rotation of pods could put a more offensive-orientated group of players in a point that necessitates more defensive-orientated players.

Special Considerations - Regardless of the system used, consider having a predetermined D line for junk or zone looks. It may "mess up" the rotation, but you can go right back into the rotation or skip a pod to ensure that players don't get gassed as a result.

While any of these systems can be implemented, even on teams that have a coach, let me also acknowledge that this is a non-exhaustive list of ideas for line calling. My goal is to highlight that the key to player satisfaction (and less headaches/complaints) is clear communication. So, no matter if you choose one of these systems, come up with something different, or even if you prefer to have your coach take full responsibility for line calling, remember that before any system is implemented, clear communication of that system to the team (especially before any tournaments) is key to ensuring that complaints/issues are minimized.

Good luck!

Coming at You, College Programs

Miranda Roth Knowles

Sometimes it can help to know what your rookies may have had in terms of a high school ultimate experience. Here's one high school coach's take on what she hopes her athletes are taking with them from their high school program to your college program.

My introduction to ultimate frisbee was through youth ultimate in the late '90s in the southeast. I've come full circle and this is my 6th year coaching my high school alma mater's girls' varsity ultimate team, with no end to my involvement in sight. I spend a lot of time reflecting on what was so impactful to me when I started playing at 16, how it changed my life and what I aim to impart to my student-athletes before they graduate. What do I hope for the young women I coach as I send them off to college?

Some of my athletes have been playing ultimate since 6th grade or, in second generation ultimate families, since they were born. Some of them have never played a sport before their senior year. My hope is that each senior graduating from our varsity or JV program leaves with a sense that she can play sports (any sport but especially ultimate frisbee) for the rest of her life. By the time they leave for college, I've usually already connected each alumna with her intended university's ultimate team captains and coach so that she can envision herself playing with that team and being friends with those people. It is not only an easy way to transition away from home, but it also provides some familiarity to schedule and routine in an otherwise unknown world.

These new alumnae have already spent almost as much time in the weight room and doing speed/track workouts as playing ultimate on the field, so they know how

to workout wherever they are with whatever is available to them. They won't get hurt training and they won't have to ask for help. This fierce independence also manifests as mental fortitude, an inner strength I hope will help protect them from people who hope to sway their decisions, take advantage of them or otherwise bring them down.

And speaking of not asking for help, these girls have confidence from ultimate that may otherwise have gone undeveloped. They are given leadership opportunities whether it be leading preseason workouts, warmups, film sessions, discussions, clinics, or camps. For example, we volunteer once a week at an afterschool program for refugees and three girls are tasked with coming up with and executing practice plans. My graduates may have captained, spirit captained or simply led by example in their play. Groove gals are strong in their sense of self and their purpose. I hope that this strength and confidence seeps into other areas of their lives so that they walk into difficult classes, job interviews, and dates with a sense of worth and a knowledge that they've been seen as good and strong already so others should see them that way, too. And it's not surprising that my graduated athletes become members of interesting, impactful communities - college teams, classes and relationships - that do well (and probably play ultimate well, too). Everywhere I've ever lived - Atlanta, Northfield, Seattle, Shanghai - I've immediately had 20 awesome, engaged friends upon arrival and this is exactly what I hope for my athletes as they graduate.*

Not to leave this to the end, but of course I hope to prepare my athletes to play college ultimate at as high a level as possible. **There is nothing quite like college ultimate** - to live with or near your teammates, to study together, travel together and work together, to strive for greatness from the fall move-in date until the last point of nationals...is there anything better? I hope my athletes leave Paideia with a sense that they can continue to belong to a special community, to be contributing members of great teams. I hope I've taught them the fundamentals of throwing and catching, of offensive motion, of person-to-person defense and of sideline presence. Of course my aim is much higher than that, though. I want them to step onto their first college practice with soft skills like confidence, competitive nature and flexibility to learn so that their college program can teach them even more than I ever could've. I hope they learn more from you because of what I taught them.

I hope you get to play with a Paideia Groove alumna someday, I really do. They take what my coaching staff (Anraya Palmer, Katie Franchot, Charlotte Cloyd, and India Stubbs...wow!) and I give them and run with it, literally and figuratively. They are truly good people and many of them are damn good players. They think the game well and think appropriately highly of themselves. They adore their teammates and care for them like siblings, like best friends, like partners. It is an honor to get to work with bright, hardworking young women at this time in their lives - 12-18 years old. They are primed to take my passion and expand, riff and improve on it. Look out, college teams - here they come!

*Last year at one of our spring practices some recent alumnae joined us and I asked them how many friends they made their freshman year at school through ultimate frisbee. The numbers ranged from 25-100. How many friends does the average freshman make in one

semester? And would they all dive in the dirt to save them from a turnover? Would they all be there immediately like a teammate would if something went wrong? This layer of ultimate frisbee team protection makes me feel so much happier as I send these young women off into a world that can be so difficult and damaging. Much less can hurt them with a shell of teammates around them.

SECTION VI

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Why Every Team Needs Glue

Sarah “Surge” Griffith

Every successful team has a glue player - the player who makes everyone around her better with her ability to do all of the little things right on and off the field. Glue players hold their teams together.

Most of my Riot teammates could tell you that watching ultimate highlight videos with me is zero fun.

Why? Because I don’t enjoy them at all. All I see are poorly executed throws, bad decision-making, and unnecessary bids. My idea of the perfect highlight reel would bore most people - smooth offense where no one holds the disc for long, nobody has to make a “hard” throw, and nobody has to layout or sky anyone.

My favorite types of Ds? Well, when I watch highlights of layout Ds, I mostly think about how that person could’ve been playing better shut-down defense so that a throw was never even attempted. Or how the poor throw was just asking to be D’d. My favorite Ds are “coverage sacks,” where everyone plays such shut down defense that the thrower has no choice but to throw the disc away downfield to nobody. Mmmm, yes. I’d watch a coverage sack highlight reel any day!

What’s the point? Besides that I’m no fun and can’t stand the brand of ultimate promoted on Instagram, Twitter, Ultiworld, and the like?

The point is that I don’t believe that the players who make big plays are the MVPs of a team, and I don’t believe that they make the best role models. My favorite players are “glue players,” the ones who do everything so right that nobody notices.

In the Seattle Fryz Youth Ultimate Club in Seattle, I coached Jac Verzuh and Claire Trop, who have been making big plays since they were 14 but are now catching the attention of the college and club scenes. Both of them will tell you that I was never

impressed by their youth heroics. When Jac made a great layout to save a pass, I would just tell them that if they were faster, they wouldn't have to layout. Or that "behind every great catch is a terrible throw!"

(Are you inspired yet?)

Instead, the players on Fryz that I lauded and highlighted were the likes of Nariah Sims and Michelle Yee, who've never been featured in an Ultiworld article, as far as I know, and have probably not blown up on Twitter for some exciting play (maybe! I'm not a Tweeterer, so correct me if I'm wrong).

When Fryz would watch film as a team, I'd stop to rewind over and over again so that everyone could watch - not the score or assist - but how it could not have happened without Nariah clearing wide up the far sideline, or throwing a crucial swing pass to get us off the trapped sideline.

I'd play back a D three times to show how, sure, such-and-such "got the D," but that's only because Yee had shut down her person on three consecutive cuts so that the throw we ultimately generated a D on was the only (bad) option.

These are glue players. These are the best players on your team. These are Darragh Clancy of San Francisco Fury, or Lucy Williams of Seattle Riot. It's Lien Hoffman of Boston Brute Squad (who people have finally caught on to), but she was the glue for her team long before being placed on any national team or Ultiworld all-club blah-blah.

Anyway, what are they doing (and not doing) that makes them so special? A million things! On the field, on the sideline, off the field, and everywhere in between:

1. Glue players show up. They don't miss practices; they don't skip workouts. They "walk the walk," and prepare/play like they're clawing for a roster spot every day, every season. They're humble, and they don't take shortcuts or expect special treatment.

2. Glue players are team-first. They don't get lured into the temptation of caring about worthless statistics like goals, assists, and Ds. They certainly aren't the ones re-Tweeting or Instagramming highlights of themselves. In fact, they are often players who don't stand out on the stat sheet upon first glance at all. But if you look at more nuanced, meaningful statistics, like offensive/defensive efficiency (which tell you what percentage of the time the offense scores or the defense gets a break when this person is on the field), that's where these players live.

Why? Because…

3. They play in such a way that prioritizes the team's success over their individual recognition. Something I always tell teams is "Cut for the offense, not for yourself/the disc." Glue players play for the team's offense/defense, not for themselves. That may look like:

- Swinging the disc to the "high" (upwind or break) side of the field to give the offense more advantages, rather than taking the easier low side (downwind or open side) pass
- Clearing hard after a cut to open space for teammates behind them
- Holding in the stack, on the sideline, or in the endzone set as the offensive scheme dictates when it's not their turn to cut for the disc

- Throwing to open people at stall 2-4 rather than holding the disc until 7-8 because they're looking for some hero huck
- Playing shut down/denial defense rather than baiting Ds
- Committing to the defensive scheme (If the team is forcing everyone "under," or back to the disc, then that's what they're working to do...all the time.)
- Pushing themselves as hard as they can at team workouts
- Attending to details at practices, like turning downfield to fake the next throw after catching a pass in a drill, or setting a mark after their offender makes the catch, or putting real pressure on a dump cutter so that the team is practicing against realistic defense

...and myriad other things that go overlooked or undervalued by most players and coaches who are too caught up in highlights and how many goals someone caught to notice who is really driving the team's success!

A lot of times you'll hear team leaders say something like, "We have to do the little things right," and they mean things like what I've listed above (sticking to the details of the defensive gameplan, or clearing space for teammates, etc.). This is all well and good, but honestly, those "little things" are the big things. If your players aren't executing these fundamentals, your team will never reach its potential. Those details are the difference between good and great, between winning a game and winning a championship.

So how do you create more glue players? Matty Tsang, the coach of San Francisco Fury, is one of my favorite role models for this. Matty is sparing and specific with his praise. He will sometimes do "shout outs" or acknowledgements of individual players after a practice, game, or tournament, but it's never "Oh, that layout was so cool!" or "Remember that great sky they had!" Because, who cares, really? Seriously. Those plays will inevitably end up on a highlight reel somewhere later, for me to be disgusted by how questionable or poorly executed the throw was. Good for them.

Matty's shout outs are for glue plays - reliable fill cuts for big yards (he has actually named this cut after glue players on multiple teams because he loves it so much), or somebody who committed to fronting their matchup because that was the game plan even though it's scary as heck to give that cutter the chance to go deep on you.

And anyone who has ever played for Matty knows that these shout outs are a coveted thing, because you know that what you've done was selfless and helped the team succeed, and that's an honor.

So if you want to encourage and create more glue players, start looking for them, giving them the credit they deserve, and making it an honor to be a glue player the way Matty does. When you're holding tryouts for your team, look for who is facilitating scores even if they're not always catching them. Look for who's eliminating their person from the offense with great positioning rather than bidding all over the place on D. Look for who shows up, and who you can count on. And then let other people know. Celebrate it. Glue playing is contagious - make people aware of when it's happening by calling it out and focusing on it, instead of the glory plays. Fill your figurative team highlight reels with glue highlights.

It's About the Process

Lien Hoffmann

We often define our success or failure by whether or not we achieve our goals for a season. How do we focus more on process? What does a successful process look like?

In the frisbee, sports, and working worlds, you will often hear about Outcome Goals versus Process Goals. When I was in college, it never crossed my mind to separate goals in this way. Goals were goals. It is an accomplishment to be able to identify and make goals at all, but the next step is making sure you have process goals to accompany your outcome goals and developing the mindset that comes with that type of thinking--process oriented thinking. Having the experience I've had as a player and captain on both my college and club teams, I wish I had been able to explicitly apply the Process oriented mindset to myself and my teams earlier on in my playing career. For example, our main goal in college was always to make Nationals. This was our most commonly verbalized goal and we didn't spend a lot of time explicitly stating how we were going to get there. My first year on the team, we lost in the game to go. All I remember is how sad and disappointed everyone felt. I have no recollection whether we played well or not. This is a symptom of being so outcome oriented that the evaluation of process, or how we arrived to that outcome, was lost. There were probably valuable things to take away from that game and from that season, but they are lost to me because my mindset and my focus were wrapped up in only the end result.

"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."
- John Wooden

Outcome Goals

Taking a step back, let's do a brief primer for those who are unfamiliar with the terms. Outcome Goals are fairly self explanatory. They consist of statements like, "our goal is to make Regionals/Nationals" or "my goal is to make the A team." As the name implies, these are goals that are based on results, are evaluated in a single moment, and are often not entirely controllable. They are binary: pass or fail.

Process Goals

"Never let 'good enough' be good enough."
- Abby Wambach

Process goals on the other hand, consist of statements like, "we want our defense to play at the same level of intensity/physicality no matter who we play" or "we want to make disciplined decisions on offense." They have more to do with HOW something is accomplished rather than WHAT is accomplished. These are goals which have a little more of a subjective flavor to them in that they are not binary yes/nos. Evaluating the success of "we want to make disciplined decisions on offense" is trickier than evaluating whether the team made Nationals or not. It is arguably possible to achieve Process goals, but the beauty and power of them lies in the fact that they are rarely ever accomplished. The value lies in the PROCESS of the team itself, and the mindset that will make your team greater than just by focusing on Outcome Goals alone. PROCESS is the vast majority of any frisbee season. It is the hard work you put into practices that make the culmination of a season so meaningful. Process is to outcome as practice is to tournaments. As lifting is to vertical jump. As off-season training is to making the team. Process is the journey. Outcome is the end. Process is the work that will determine your outcome, and that is why it is more important than the outcome.

College teams are special due to the transient nature of the roster. Sometimes the addition of a great player will boost the program during their tenure, but when they leave, the program suffers. To establish a program that can weather the in/outflux of talent, the focus needs to be on the process and development of players. Striving for your process goals is **NECESSARY** to achieve any outcome goals your team might have, but your process goals are **INDEPENDENT** of your outcome goals. Meeting your process goals doesn't necessarily mean that you will meet your outcome goals, but it **WILL** give your team a stable and healthy identity, and something controllable that they can always reach for.

"I really think a champion is defined not by their wins, but by how they can recover when they fall."
- Serena Williams

Growth Mindset

At its core, the most important aspect of Process is buying into the right mentality. This means encouraging players to have a growth mindset. If that term sounds cheesy to you, there are plenty of other, equally effective ways of framing it. It's about always trying to be better than you are, most obviously when you are not achieving your Outcome goals, but especially when

"Winning is fun... Sure. But winning is not the point. Wanting to win is the point. Not giving up is the point. Never letting up is the point. Never being satisfied with what you've done is the point. The game is never over. No matter what the scoreboard reads, or what the referee says, it doesn't end when you come off the court. The secret of the game is in doing your best. To persist and endure, to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
- Pat Summitt

you are. Complacency is the enemy of process. Process is about always striving to improve and chasing perfection, knowing that perfection is impossible. Those who internalize this know and are excited about the fact that the only way to get better is through their own hard work in and outside of practice. When you look at the best athletes/players in any sport, you will find that they are the ones who are constantly seeking self improvement. You will find that those players LOVE practice. Because that is where players put in the majority of their work to get better individually and as a TEAM. I can tell you that every single Brute Squad player loves practice and is excited to be there. If you have players who hate coming to practice and only want to show up for tournaments, this is evidence that they are not process/team oriented and need help shifting their thinking.

The Struggle

A natural part of Process and a growth mindset is struggle. In order to get better, you WILL make mistakes. You may lose. Losing and making mistakes are okay as long as you learn from them, and they are actually a necessary component of a healthy Process. As long as your team is trying their best and uses their mistakes to further improve, then you will be successful even if/when you do lose. However, there is a fine line between living this conviction versus using it as an excuse for your losses. On Brute Squad, we acknowledge that losing will always be an undesirable outcome. But if we can be proud of the way we played, if we play our game to our best ability and do the things we set out to do on the field, then we can still hold our heads high regardless of the end result.

Buy-In

Getting buy-in from players that the work they are doing now will pay off in the future is something that seems like a no brainer, but in reality is difficult to maintain over the course of a full season. Valuing and prioritizing Process is a powerful mental and cultural attribute that can be intentionally developed within your team, and it can go both directions. Top down: A team is a reflection of its leadership. Leaders must be bought in, lead by example, and exhibit/communicate the behavior they wish to see in others. Bottom up: The same message communicated/embodied by non-captain players can be more powerful than when it comes from leadership. Players may take for granted and expect the 5th year captain to be super committed to improvement - it's something that can be noticed and dismissed. However, if they see their peers buying in and committing as well, that observation is more relatable and

means they are capable of doing it too. But this kind of bottom up culture shift doesn't work if leadership is not also bought in.

Bonus Tip

Process can go all the way down into the basics. If your personal outcome goal for a game is to break the mark, the process focus is what things you can do to make that outcome more likely. Bigger fakes, quicker pivots, etc. Focusing on these process related things will help you achieve your outcome goal!

If you don't believe me, or need more firepower to convince your teammates, there are so many elite players and coaches across all sports who swear by this stuff (and plenty of talks/ books about this kind of stuff too).

"There's no way around hard work. Embrace it. You have to put in the hours because there's always something which you can improve."
- Roger Federer

Why Play Ultimate When The World Is On Fire

Hana Kawai

Climate change sucks. So does class oppression. Let's play frisbee.

Why Play Ultimate When The World Is On Fire?

The short answer to this question is I'm not sure that any of us should be. The long answer is somewhere below.

This season Seattle Riot actually played in a world on fire. August saw smoke and ash from wildfires throughout the Cascades, British Columbia, Eastern Oregon and Northern California leave the city for weeks in a grey haze. By the end of the day I could taste smoke in the back of my throat. For the team, it meant a few cancelled practices and indoor workouts, but it was a stark reminder of the reality of climate change in the Pacific Northwest.

We are at a critical time in history and we need to be able to face what's happening across the world. And let's be clear: We live in a broken economic system that uses structural oppression to funnel resources to a shrinking proportion of the population. Since this sport isn't separate from that world, in what ways is ultimate contributing to that process?

I have a strong, visceral memory from five or six years ago, standing on the sideline before a game in a small pre-season tournament. What am I doing? I'm spending so much time and money to play the same teams in the same tournaments for a trophy no one remembers by next season. There are infinitely more important things to be doing. And, in fact, all of those things have only gotten more pressing: global warming, Trump's hot mess of a presidency, the longest war in American history in Afghanistan, growing wealth and income inequality, the world's largest prison population, etc.

We all need and deserve to have a balance of joy in our lives, and ultimate can be an essential space for that. But we all need to spend time asking the question: Why do I play?

"Race and class segregation is not just where you live, but who you're connected with."

We're vulnerable to playing for the wrong reasons if we need ultimate to feel okay about ourselves, or distract us from broader issues in the world. If we rely on winning and dominating others to know that we're worth something. If we are drawn to hide in comfort and pleasure at the expense of everything else. We can see a similar pull as a broader community when players and organizers devote considerable time and money to elite levels of the sport: national and international competition, national teams, chasing the Olympics, etc. at the expense of investing in high quality local leagues, local organizing bodies and local competitive events. Particularly when local levels offer the most accessible level of play, with the most race and class diversity.

Race and class segregation is not just where you live, but who you're connected with. If ultimate is a primary place for those relationships to develop, who is missing? If you're like most ultimate players in this country, your team is predominantly white and affluent. While of course we can't and shouldn't rely on individual relationships to move our analysis, but holy shit we definitely can't surround ourselves with middle class white people and expect anyone to move on these issues. I've learned and taught my best lessons on race, class and gender in close personal relationships; where someone felt they could tell me if I messed up, or they messed up, or we could just be a little more messy together because we had the relationship to fall back on. And for me, ultimate is where I've gotten to create the type of relationships that make this work possible.

And ultimate is making all this worse when — among other things —its lack of race and class diversity maintains the isolation of white middle and owning class people.

And yet, here I am. Playing my 10th season of club ultimate. Coming off a World Club Championship and heading to Nationals this week.

Right now, here's where this falls for me:

- I play for the relationships.
- I play to stay healthy, emotionally and physically.
- I play for a chance to compete, and the opportunity to try hard for something with others.
- I play and organize to have a space led by and created for women.

Ultimate is not separate from or better than the rest of the world, and we need to leverage the relationships we build here to talk and learn and try to take leadership on big issues. We stay in ultimate because of these relationships: that's what teams are, that's what this community is. And right there is our opportunity.

This past spring, we tried this by running a storytelling event for the larger Seattle ultimate community on classism with AGE UP, a people of color led youth leadership, social justice and ultimate frisbee program based in Southeast Seattle. Five ultimate players from a range

of class and race identities shared their own experiences with classism and class oppression, within ultimate and beyond, for a room of over 100. Here are some of the highlights:

> A long-time Sockeye player talked about growing up white and working class in a wealthy neighborhood in Seattle, from his first travel tournament with a high school ultimate team to playing elite men's club today. On the need for teams to tackle class accessibility more honestly: "If wealthy people won't talk about money they do have, what makes them think anyone else will talk about money they don't have?"
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> A University of Washington Element alumni shared about growing up owning class, and their deep sense of guilt and shame around that experience. "I couldn't reconcile the values my parents had raised me with about equality and justice… with the plain truth that our family has access to so much."
>
> A Mixtape player talked about trying to explain to her Southeast Asian parents why ultimate was valuable for her, and described her own isolation as a young woman of color playing with an affluent, predominantly white private high school team. "I took personal blame and internalized these feelings of guilt for not having enough to provide for myself and therefore being an inconvenience to others."
>
> A Riot player talked about the intense pressure she feels to hide her areas of privilege, particularly as a mixed race person, and her recent efforts to donate to social justice organizing work as much money as she spends on an ultimate season. "I want to recognize that me being numb, being paralyzed, being silent, is what holds this system up."
>
> A recent Cambodian-American high school graduate talked about ultimate offering him a safe place to be, when things were hard in his family and neighborhood. "I truly believe that if it wasn't for [my sister] and ultimate I would not be alive... Ultimate has been very therapeutic through [the] years especially on those dark school nights where I just wanted to give up."

My immediate takeaways from the night were that we don't talk about class enough. That everyone, no matter their class position, is profoundly and personally impacted by class in this country. And that as a result we're all confused about what our class structure actually looks like, how it's upheld, and what other options we could possible have. In ultimate, we have an excellent chance to work on classism and the ways it shows up in our team cultures around money. Over the years, I've been trying to ask some of the following questions about teams and team culture:

- Are season costs transparent? Are they decided early enough to allow people to plan ahead for big costs?
- Does your team fundraising rely on personal donor networks? How do you divide the fundraised money?
- How do players talk about “being broke”? Is there an acknowledgement of players who have family safety nets and those who don’t?
- How do people respond when a teammate hasn’t paid or can’t pay dues?
- Do you address money issues only if someone asks, or are there regular check-ins and conversations?
- What broader sports club policies align or not with your team values?

And let’s also not confuse working on interpersonal dynamics around classism, like the list above, with eliminating class oppression. Our class structure allows a fractional proportion of the population to chase profit and accumulate resources — money, labor, land, etc. — at the cost of profound destruction to the environment and the majority of people worldwide. Because an ultimate community where all people feel welcomed and supported playing is still a community spending significant resources on a recreational sport.

Ultimate is part of this big beautiful f*cked up world. A world that is — seriously — going up in flames around us. We can’t afford to not leverage this community to address the big issues around us. And we get to do this without blame or martyrdom or condescension, but because we all need something better.

The consequences of not doing so are profound. We’re already seeing them.

And we get to have joy in our lives while we do this.

For me, that’s still ultimate.

Hana Kawai in the finals of the 2016 Club National Championships.
Photo by Paul Rutherford

Setting Your Season Long, Individual Goal

Kyle “Rex” McBard

Setting effective goals are hard. Here, we learn about “SMART” goals — Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound — and how we can utilize goal-setting to our advantage.

You usually have team goals for tournaments and sometimes even for certain games. You might even have a variety of short-term individual goals (“I will not let that woman break my mark on an around throw this point!”) throughout the season. The purpose (the goal, if you will) of this particular exercise is to set a season-long, individual goal for yourself. Yes, that’s a daunting task, but this article will guide you through it. Please also bear in mind that this is *any* individual goal relevant to the team and the season - it can be on-field or off-field.

Also, about halfway through the season, you and a coach should touch base about your goal and talk about how you’re doing — is it working for you, do you see your improvement, are you struggling with any aspects of the goal / this exercise, and/or any other questions/comments you may have.

Now, to the goal/exercise itself. So...what is a “good” goal? To help, we’ll use a common acronym, “S.M.A.R.T.”, which stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

The internet has a lot of articles about this format, but here's an overview:

S: Specific

This is the "who/what/why" part of the goal, with as much detail as possible. For example, instead of "throw better forehands," try "consistently throw leading passes to moving targets with OI forehands"; or instead of "I want to be rich," try "I want to make X-amount of money in annual salary". This specificity will help guide your actions on *how* you're going to accomplish your goal.

M: Measurable

Quantifiable metrics! Words like "high" or "fast" or even relative words like "faster" are very subjective, which makes it difficult to objectively say whether or not you are making progress on your goal. If you've used subjective metrics, then it's very easy for your mood/ hopes/fears to drive your perception of your progress, but with objective metrics, the data will speak for itself.

A: Attainable

There is a balance between reaching for the stars and setting yourself up for not-success. Make sure this goal is something that is reasonably achievable by YOU - and people are (spoiler) different! Factors will vary, in what you have available in terms of time, equipment, etc. and also in terms of what motivates you. The most important factor, though, is making sure it's a goal that you can actually accomplish - if you're not sure what you can do, you can always set a base-goal and a stretch-goal.

R: Relevant

Why do you want to reach this goal? What is the objective behind the goal, and will this goal achieve that objective? Is what you're trying to do relevant to this team / this season? Maybe you want to focus weakest area of your game and become a more well-rounded player; maybe your team needs you to excel in one area; as always there are a lot of factors and they will vary by person and team, but think about the context for your goal, and whether it aligns with your season goals / your team's season goals.

T: Time-Bound

What is the time period in which you want to achieve this goal? Deadlines tend to help things get done in general, but the other benefit of setting a time limit is that it will help give benchmark goals and also provide an external structure in which to set up the "how" part of achieving your goal — to achieve this goal, what do you need to be doing 6 weeks from now? 6 days from now? what could you do *today*?

Bonus listen if you're into it: http://freakonomics.com/podcast/how-to-be-more-productive/

Below is a form for goal setting specifically adapted for this manual! Feel free to convert into a google form, get leadership on board, and send out to your teammates or players! Let's get started!!

Setting Your Season-Long, Individual Goal

PLEASE NOTE We do recognize that some of these questions may be difficult to answer, or you may feel unsure about how to answer them. That is totally okay! Your answers don't need to be perfect, and even if you think you have no idea how to answer something, we do want you to try. When you check in with the coaches later on in the season, we will go over your goal and can help with any parts you're unsure of, and/or you can reach out to your teammates before/while filling out this form and bounce ideas off of them (general thoughts, how to make your goal "S.M.A.R.T"-er, etc.) Remember: They're doing this exercise too! You're all in it together :)

Also, as you're going through this form, please feel free to go back and modify your answers; you may realize halfway through that you really don't want to work on the area you thought you did, or you want to change the specifics of your goal, and it's totally fine to scroll up/down and rewrite.

1. What is an area in which you would like to improve?
Some ideas to get you started: throwing, catching, marking, downfield defense, under cuts, deep cuts, handler cuts, sideline presence, sideline advice

2. What about this area do you think is the "weakness" or "area that you want to improve"?
What's happening now that you want to change? For example: if your goal-area was catching, is the disc bouncing off your hands? are your hands closing on air? are there certain types of catches that you struggle with?

3. Now let's rephrase it: where do you want to be?
For example: if your goal-area is throwing, and the "weakness" is "I throw the disc into the ground", rephrasing it to "I want to throw the disc so it hits my receiver in the chest"

4. How is your goal Specific?
What is your goal accomplishing? "Be better" is not a very specific goal; "be better at defense" is also not specific; "be better at denying the unders" is more specific; "don't get beat under more than 3 times in any given game" is even more specific.

5. How is your goal Measurable?
Measure facts, not perceptions; "I want to jump higher" v. "I want to increase my vertical by 2 inches."

6. How is your goal Attainable?
While we do believe the sky's the limit, there are sometimes uncontrollable factors that may prohibit success, and opting for that goal is actually just setting yourself up for frustration; "I want to be able to be heard clearly when yelling across three fields, within a month, even though right now no one can hear me yelling from ten feet away" might be a bit tough.

7. How is your goal Relevant?
Contributing to both your individual skill set and also the team overall skill set; becoming the best "behind-the-back" thrower is probably not the most relevant skill set for contributing to team and individual on-field success.

8. How is your goal Time-bound?
Our end-time is the end of our season, so that helps with this one, and we'll be checking in at the halfway point (both in general and also about these goals) but are there any benchmarks that you might want outside of that hard-set end-time?

9. Okay, as a refresher, state your goal :)
We haven't actually done this part yet!

10. What are some ideas of specific ways you can work toward your goal?
Don't worry about being "right" or knowing exactly what you need to do — sometimes the reason you chose a goal is because you want to improve and don't know how. This is to get those wheels turning in your head; throw some ideas out there! :)

Embracing the Process

Jenny Fey

Ultimate is a sport that contains lots of challenges. Whether it's to improve your own personal skills or to fulfill larger team goals, the entire journey is a process. Learning, struggling, overcoming challenges, succeeding, failing — these are all a part of the process. Let's embrace it.

Getting better at something is addictively exciting. One of the beautiful realities of ultimate is that it is not (quite yet) a sport that most people pick up as kids. Almost everyone who plays gets to be a newcomer sometime in their adolescent or adult life, which means they are coming to this new activity with a fairly conscious awareness of their own development. Often, what hooks people early on is the thrill of making an exciting play - catching the disc in the endzone for the first time or getting a run through block - and the subsequent realization of hey, maybe I could be good at this. Then, because of that same freshness, there is a huge expanse of potential improvement to be tapped into. This may mean a lot of quick gains early on as players figure out how to read the disc, learn to set the same force as the rest of their team, cultivate a workable forehand, lay out for the first time, etc. This may also mean a plateau of progress lies ahead of them as the skills they are trying to master become subtler and the athletic demands of meeting their own standards become greater.

Meanwhile, they must also reckon with the significant reality that ultimate is a team game. In fact, it may be the teamiest game out there since you are required to use teamwork to score (callahans aside.) You cannot go it alone in ultimate, which is why the community is so essential to the experience of the sport (another element that hooks

people.) But this can also be a source of frustration for some players who, while working on their individual development, want to experience a level of competitive success that their team cannot yet provide. Returners may start to resent the burden of nurturing rookies, forgetting how recently they were themselves in those not-yet-broken-in shoes.

"THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN CONTROL IN ULTIMATE (SUCH AS OUR ATTITUDE AT PRACTICE), AND SOME THINGS WE CAN'T (SUCH AS THE STRENGTH OF OUR COLLEGE PROGRAM WHEN WE GET THERE), BUT ONE THING IS FOR CERTAIN: THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT ON AN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM WIDE LEVEL."

To be honest, learning to balance my own twin desires for personal growth and team connectivity took awhile, and I often wish I had spent more time investing in the growth of others, especially at the small college I attended where inexperience with the sport was the norm, but enthusiasm for it was too. I think I realized too late that my own ultimate experience was inextricably connected to the ultimate experiences of others and that more people invested in the game (at any/every level) would only benefit the community I so valued. Similarly, I also regret the times I let anxiety about performance limit me in processing and accepting good feedback when it was available. It is easy to confuse a perception that one is succeeding at ultimate with actual gains: if I look good while I'm playing, or at least if I don't mess up, I must be playing well.

In short, growing and improving is a complex and beautiful challenge. There are some things we can control in ultimate (such as our attitude at practice), and some things we can't (such as the strength of our college program when we get there), but one thing is for certain: there is always room for improvement on an individual and team wide level. Rather than stressing about personal weaknesses or nonideal circumstances, the key to handling the ups and downs of getting better at ultimate is to embrace the process. Embracing the process frees up mental and emotional space to tackle growth with clear thinking and motivated energy. Here are some tips about how to do that:

Have A Growth Mindset

Psychologist Carol Dweck developed this social science concept which rests on the idea that failure is not evidence of weakness or inability but the exact ingredient needed for improvement. Failure is necessary: no one learns when things come easy. It is also temporary! People with growth mindsets do not see their abilities as fixed and they have more optimism about what they can accomplish. They take more risks, knowing that challenging tasks will allow them to struggle, process, and grow.

Time and again when coaching ultimate I have encountered players who are afraid to mess up or to step outside their comfort zone, and it is these players that seem to stagnate the most. Often this happens because someone will decide to define themselves as a player based on one point in their development: e.g., I'm an O line handler with a wicked high release backhand and a good first step, but a mediocre flick huck and I'm only ok at defense. My response would

be, “Well, what will you be next week? next season?” If you only lean into what you already know how to do well, you will continue to do those things well without adding other skills or strengths to your repertoire or letting your ultimate identity evolve.

Evaluate Yourself Without Being Judgmental

In his book *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Timothy Gallwey writes about this distinction. He says judging is “the act of assigning negative or positive value to an event” - an emotional process - while evaluation can simply be a cognitive process. It is important to think carefully about errors that happen and to not shy away from them (see fear of failure above), to talk them out with experienced players and coaches, but not to see them as indicators of one’s value. Use errors as data points that you store to get the clearest picture of the inner workings of the sport. Analyze and reflect, but do not be overly critical - that’s just baggage that will take you further out of the game.

I see this often with players who are uncomfortable with their throws. Apologies after turnovers (heck, even after incompletions just during throw arounds) are red flags of a judgmental approach to self-evaluation, and so are noticeable increases in frustrated behavior (yelling, cursing, etc.) Frustration and embarrassment are natural responses and we all deal with them, but the more we can take a clinic, detached view of our play, the more we will be psychologically prepared to make adjustments.

Remember Why You Play

Hint: not because it’s easy.

Fun, yes - ultimate should always be a positive force in your life or it’s time to take another look. But it should also be challenging. Being on either side of a blow out game is massively unrewarding. Battling close to the end, regardless of outcome, is what gets our hearts pumping. Challenges can also be smaller scale and personal: seeing times improve on the track or throws become more accurate, etc. Simply because it takes a lot of investment and effort, it is worth doing.

Pushing Your Best to Be Better

Katelyn Travaglini

Veteran players often struggle to improve during the college season because newer players must be taught the basics. This presents a challenge where coaches and leaders must find techniques to continue to develop these players.

Improving the best player on your team is a difficult task for anyone, regardless of experience. I am often drawn to the infamous post-game interview with Allen Iverson. When asked about his effort at practice Iverson responds, “We talkin’ about practice, not a game, not a game, not a game, we talkin’ about practice... How the hell am I supposed to make my teammates better.” Iverson is lamenting about the difficulties of playing with less skilled players and performing at his best for practice. This is the same dilemma facing every college team at the start of a new season. Challenging the best players against their teammates must be more specific and focused for growth. Drills can also be tailored for the tiers of talent that are on the team. And if possible, challenge the best players on skills outside of direct game play. Each coaching challenge requires a bit of individual attention, but should reward you with a team that improves across skill levels, as well as a top tier player who understands their team better.

Specific and Focused Practice

Focused practice for each skill can be a great way to challenge the best players on your team. For example, it is easy for your best player to out-read a less experienced player and catch the disc above them. It is a challenge to out-read, catch with the outside hand, and highpoint the catch with a close-out step that attacks the disc. As

a coach, have your returning players set a personal goal during each drill at practice. If you see a player losing focus, challenge them with a tougher matchup or with some constraints. Each drill, no matter how simple, is an opportunity to improve: cuts can always attack better angles (sealing out a defender first then attacking the disc); throws can always be shaped to make the catch easier (hitting the outside or inside shoulder on outside-in pass or inside-out throw); a defender can always work to have their footwork position their body better (rather than relying on outright speed to win matchups).

Specific Drills for Specific Skills

All drills do not need to be equal for every player on the team. Players can be broken up into handlers and cutters, and even further into levels of disc competency for any drill. For example, a new player may be tasked with throwing a dump pass that is flat and to a good space, while a veteran handler should be pushed to remain balanced, step around the mark, and shape a throw that is advantageous for the offense. Identifying these goals as a leader or coach beforehand for each specific group will help them learn and improve as well as succeed within their current skill level. Celebrate the small successes at each level. Success is defined differently for each level of player.

Set Up Veterans for Failure

Success should not be easy. Veteran players have the tendency to become complacent with their skills and stop growing. Comfort is the enemy of progress. Set up situations for the best players to fail. If you have the luxury of better players in the area, invite them out for some practices and explain what their goal is. If that isn't an option, see if the best player is still the best when tired. Play or drill with the same person having to defend multiple times in a row until they cannot rely on their athleticism. Take away their quicker step and see if they are able to position themselves correctly to defend. Being able to make the correct decisions when tired, not only is relevant for tournament situations, but shows the true tendencies of the player. Failing is one of the best motivators for the competitive athlete.

The ability to continually push for improvement is what separates the good from the greats. Jordan, Kobe, and Lebron have all been described as the most relentless person at practice. As team leaders, it is our job to find ways to bring out the best in our best players. This is our challenge. By giving specific challenges during each session, creating drills with specialized groupings, and finding the point of failure for our teams stars, we can push our stars to the next level.

Imposter Syndrome and The Confidence Gap

Gail Reich

Imposter Syndrome and The Confidence Gap play a role in many parts of life, including Ultimate. Women, especially in a leadership roles, tend to question themselves in a way that men do not and this can be limiting. Taking risks, not feeling like you need to be 100% sure to take action, is a key factor in overcoming these issues. Learning to trust one's self and utilize one's resources will go a long way for women in Ultimate.

At league this past weekend, I made a call: a guy on the other team was out of bounds. He started with both feet in bounds, but by the time he actually caught the disc, he was on his back, and his back was on the line (and even a bit out of bounds). He argued with me that both of his feet were in, that I was wrong. I tried my best to lower my defenses and explain that the rule is that the line is out, and it only matters where your body is touching the ground as you stop rotation, gaining control of the disc. He eventually slowed down and recognized that he didn't know these rules and agreed that he was, according to those rules, in fact out. Discussion was over and the point played on. Except that I continued to think about that moment and felt insecure — because when I make calls, I almost always question myself for a second, worrying that I could be wrong. And then I was worried that this other player thought I was a jerk because of my tone of voice and how emphatic I was about the call. After

the game, to calm my insecurity, I even approached the other team's captain to make sure that he knew what had happened and that I wasn't trying to be mean, but just to make the rules clear (which I think is important). I have played Ultimate for ten years and at some of the highest levels, and I still worry about making the best call and how others perceive me when I make a call. I know that I am not alone in this experience.

Imposter Syndrome

This pattern of insecurity is known as imposter syndrome. Here is a definition courtesy of Wikipedia:

> Impostor syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a "fraud." Despite external evidence of their competence, those experiencing this phenomenon remain convinced that they are frauds, and do not deserve all they have achieved. Individuals with impostorism incorrectly attribute their success to luck, or as a result of deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent than they perceive themselves to be.

This is a real thing that many people experience, myself included. In fact, when I received an email asking me to write an article for this guidebook, I thought:

> Wow! What an honor to be asked. I can't believe they asked me though. It is probably just because I have talked to Michelle a lot lately about organizing tournaments and I was on her radar. She thinks I am experienced in Ultimate — boy did I fool her! Well, I guess I have played for ten years now, but honestly I remember reading the first version of this guidebook while I was a total n00b playing for GungHo (Northwestern University's team, I was a graduate student trying to keep up with the kids 8-12 years younger than me and learning Ultimate basics at a much older age) and that doesn't feel that long ago. I guess on paper I just sound like I know what I am doing, so I am going to have to figure out how to contribute something meaningful and sound like I know what I am talking about.

As you can see, imposter syndrome can really inhibit confidence, which is also a key factor in leadership. Who wants to follow a leader that doesn't seem confident? Self-doubt can make you feel stuck and prevent you from being the leader you are capable of being. If that wasn't tough enough, women have the extra added benefit (note: sarcasm) of being affected by the Confidence Gap. While we can all, I hope, rationally recognize that women and men are both equally competent, men tend to overestimate their abilities and performance, while women tend to underestimate both. This Confidence Gap exacerbates imposter syndrome in women. In addition, women also worry more about being disliked, appearing unattractive, outshining others, or grabbing too much attention.

The Confidence Gap

Maybe I shouldn't have been, but I was shocked when I learned the statistic about how women won't apply to a job when they don't feel 100% sure that they can fulfill all the qualities listed, but a man will apply when they feel 60 percent sure. Men think that they will figure it out and women feel like they already need to know everything. A 2014 Atlantic article quotes a study that found that men negotiate salaries four times more often than women do, and when women do negotiate, they ask for 30% less on average. While men do experience self-doubt, they just don't let it get in their way. Also, men's leaning toward honest overconfidence ends up proving to be more successful. And success correlates just as closely with confidence as competence — so it is no wonder that there is still a lack of women at the highest levels. It isn't that men don't ever experience self-doubt, they just don't let it get in the way.

Manifestations in Ultimate

I believe that these statistics about the Confidence Gap not only apply to the business world, but also apply to other areas in life, including the Ultimate field. One thing I have noticed, is that men and women have different tendencies in unstructured Ultimate. For the most part, at anything that is pick-up or league where no one is calling lines, whether women have met one another before or have never met, women are often careful about playing time and not offending others. Women will start rotations so that everyone feels that they have enough playing time, and will communicate that. Men will simply take playing time and stay on as much or as little as they want until someone says something — if someone says something directly at all. This is so fascinating! But sometimes the way men and women operate doesn't just run parallel, but actually comes into direct conflict with one another. One example I can discuss from experience is from organizing Chicago's high school league, CUJO (Chicago Ultimate Juniors Organization), in 2016. According to my record, that year there were 19 coaches, 4 of whom were women. (Sidenote: If you didn't already know, I am a woman.)

But first a little context: Over the years, even the male coaches who seem to respect me and women in general have taken the authority to do what they want, while the female coaches will ask. I have had female coaches let me know if attendance will be an issue, while male coaches will just not show up and tell me they took it upon themselves to handle it, even when I have informed them that attendance is information I need to know ahead of time, for example.

Back to the story: In 2016, there were two male coaches (who ironically had one of the only all-male teams in this open league), who made being a female leader a challenge. Their team was playing another team (obviously), and I was walking by and heard their players screaming the stall count. I know screaming stall counts isn't technically a rule, but it is poor Spirit. This was true yelling, and not necessary. I approached the opposing team's coach and said that I noticed some poor Spirit and they echoed that yes, it was very annoying to them and that it was an issue. They had asked the coaches already to ask their players not to yell, but they did not listen. They decided to take the higher road, speaking to their players about poor Spirit and asking their players to simply rise above and ignore it. I, however, was not

going to ignore it. I worked very hard to develop ideals around good Spirit in this league, and I was not going to be complicit with their behavior.

I approached one of the two coaches on the team where players were being unspirited, and I nicely stated that I felt like yelling was unnecessary, and that while it technically might not be a rule, that I thought it was unspirited — and since I was the one running this league, I asked that it change. I can't even articulate the feeling that came over me while this gentleman not only ignored me, but refused to make eye contact with me to even acknowledge my existence in the space that I took up next to him. It was cold, hurtful and utterly disrespectful. The team's yelling didn't stop. I felt powerless. Needless to say, these coaches ignored some other requests of mine, including keeping me posted on attendance, throughout the rest of the season. Over the time that I had known them, they had acted as though they believed that they knew better than me, or did not respect the authority that I held. They made me wonder, am I just not a good leader? Do I not exude enough authority? Is it me? Is it because I am a woman? Is it because I am younger than them? I questioned myself.

So I turned to my fellow board members. At the time, I was on the Ultimate Chicago Board of Directors — which was composed of half women and half men. In unison, they relieved my doubts by letting me know that they thought I was a good leader, and that these men were, in fact, wrong. They went so far as to being supportive in having them ejected from the league! It's not that I didn't know that these men were wrong — but I questioned myself immediately, and questioned their culpability only secondarily. I also feared taking such an extreme action as asking them to leave the league; and then I questioned why I needed the board to tell me that, in order to have confidence in my leadership skills. Self-doubt filled my brain quicker than my ability to objectively analyze the situation. And those are some of the sneaky, sometimes difficult to pinpoint effects of Imposter Syndrome and the Confidence Gap. And yes, sometimes you need an outside source to point it out to you — and I have had to learn that sometimes, that is okay.

What does all this mean?

I think this means that knowing there are currently more men (70%) in our sport, we have to continue to work on getting more women (30%) involved. But it also means that we have to learn to trust ourselves more and bravely take on leadership roles that we grow into rather than waiting until we are 100% sure all of the time. And what that really boils down to is vulnerability. Taking risks. Being brave. (If you haven't already, I recommend checking out Brené Brown's TED Talk on vulnerability, which is one of the most viewed TED Talks ever.) I think it is recognizing this Confidence Gap and challenging it.

One of the best things I have done was to take a huge leap and volunteer to TD a large USA Ultimate tournament. I felt completely out of my league and had no idea what I was doing — or I at least felt that way. But I figured it out, and it led to running more tournaments and gaining more confidence. The second tournament I ran for USAU was Club Nationals, which is arguably one of the biggest deal tournaments in the country. When I was told by the USAU staff that it was one of the best run tournaments they had had so far, it felt incredibly validating.

(Although I also believe much of the credit goes to both luck and the amazing volunteers, but then again, I did find those volunteers...)

The same Atlantic article I quoted earlier talks about a psychology professor, Richard Petty, who studies confidence. He says that "confidence is the stuff that takes thoughts into action." He goes on to say that other things also come into play if taking action is scary or difficult, such as courage or persistence. If confidence is the belief that one can succeed, and then that turns into action, and then continued success strengthens the belief in ability, then confidence builds on itself. The tricky and important thing is continuing to take action through failures because those are inevitable. If we let our insecurities get in the way of action, then confidence building ceases. We can always learn from our failures, and that information is what leads to future successes and confidence building.

But it all starts with being vulnerable and starting to take active risks, which is something that men are already doing much more than us women. The phrase "fake it 'til you make it" is real. If you do things enough times, you can actually feel like you know what you are doing (because you do actually end up knowing what you are doing). Perfectionism isn't conducive to taking action. We don't need to know 100% of what we are doing to learn and get better — that builds through experience, and men trust this process and themselves more so than women do. If we can learn to do the same, I am excited to see what will unfold in the future of our sport.

People aren't born into their identities. They form over time, through experience — and you have a lot of control and power in creating them. There are tons of articles floating around in the world about many famous, talented people who had a lot of self-doubt, feeling like an imposter both before and even after they "made it." As others earn your trust, you can also earn your trust. Don't be ashamed to ask for what you want, to advocate for yourself, to make calls, to own authority, to get playing time or to take on big leadership roles. And remember that you have other people and resources to help you along the way. Leaning on one another, supporting each other, this is not weakness — in fact, it is one of the strongest and bravest things we can do!

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Photo by William Brotman

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HOLLY (GREUNKE) DENECOUR

Holly started playing ultimate in 2001 on her high school club recreational team. She went on to play for the University of Wisconsin Bella Donna from 2002-2007. She captained the team to their first semi-finals appearance at College Nationals in 2006, and was the Callahan runner-up in 2007. After college, she moved to Colorado and played for the women’s team Rare Air (pre-dating Molly Brown). She coached Bella Donna in 2008, then moved to Austin, TX in 2009, where she continued her career playing on Texas Showdown. She captained the team to back-to-back semi-finals appearances at the Club Championships in 2012 and 2013. She currently lives in St. Paul, Minnesota.
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TULSA DOUGLAS

Tulsa started playing ultimate at Amherst high school and continued at St. Olaf College. She currently coaches at NUTC and plays for Boston Brute Squad. She's interested in mental resilience, equity, dogs, and being outside.

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KAYLA EMRICK

Kayla started playing ultimate at Oberlin College, where she oversaw her first A/B split in 2012 as a player/coach. She started coaching in 2013 at the University of Wisconsin where she helped form Bella Donna's current B-team, Atropa. Currently, she plays for Atlanta Ozone and coaches Emory University's A-team, Luna. Emory split A/B for the first time in program history in 2017.

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JENNY FEY

Jenny started playing competitive ultimate in Arlington VA in 2001 as a highschool sophomore. She has spent the bulk of her club career with DC Scandal and has represented the US on the U20 Girls (2004), Beach Mixed (2015), and US Women's National Teams (2016). She teaches psychology and literature to high school students, coaches club youth in the DC area in the summer, and just had her first kid!

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MELISSA GIBBS

Gibbs played for Iowa State University where she was all-region college player from 2004-2009 and captained the 2009 team to college nationals (first in program history!) Gibbs played on the Chad Larson Experience Mixed Club for many years winning a Gold medal at the 2010 World Ultimate Club Championships and a silver medal at the 2009 Club Championships. Gibbs has also played with three women's teams/ seasons and currently plays for Heist (2016-2018). In 2017 Gibbs earned another Gold medal with Team USA at the 2017 Women's Masters World Championships of Beach Ultimate.

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SARAH "SURGE" GRIFFITH

Surge has been playing ultimate since 2004, starting out with University of Michigan's Flywheel, where she captained for two years. She moved to Seattle in 2008 and played with the Seattle Riot women's ultimate club for 10 seasons, captained for two, and won two world championships. She has also been a member of three USA National teams, and won gold in Colombia, London, and Poland. She now plays in San Francisco, with Fury.

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LIEN HOFFMANN

Lien is currently in her fifth year of playing for Brute Squad (club). She previously played two years of club with Nemesis and five years of college with Northwestern GungHo.

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MEGAN IVES

Ives really dove into Ultimate at the University of Colorado, Boulder on its women's team, Kali. She got the amazing opportunity to play at the U24 World Championships for the USA Mixed team, and has played 3 seasons with Molly Brown, her current team. Ives has experience captaining, spirit captaining, and being an unapologetic rookie throughout her ultimate career and has spent some time attending and organizing equity discussions/events.

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RACHEL "ROJO" JOHNSON

Rojo started messing around with the frisbee back in high school in Colorado but was shocked upon arrival at the University of Mississippi to find there were rules, strategies, & tournaments involved in this crazy sport. After becoming irrevocably hooked to the sport & graduating from Ole Miss, she attended Elon University for graduate school & helped the Wild Rumpus reach DIII Natties. She spent the next 5 seasons playing with Phoenix Women's Ultimate & started assistant coaching Elon Wild Rumpus in 2014, heading up the chaos as their head coach since 2016.

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RENA KAWABATA

Rena is from Vancouver, Canada and identifies as a woman of color. She graduated from the UBC Thunderbirds program and played 7 seasons with Vancouver Traffic. She now lives in Seattle, WA and has been working as an equity trainer for over a year. Lately she has been thinking about doing a PhD in Social Justice Education.

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HANA KAWAI

Hana plays for Seattle Riot, runs All Girl Everything Ultimate Program (AGE UP), once kidnapped a cat and has definitely read more Octavia Butler than you.

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COURTNEY KIESOW

Courtney has been playing ultimate since 2002, played in college for the University of Wisconsin 2004-2009, and on multiple club teams since. She currently lives in Minneapolis, MN, plays for Minneapolis Pop, and is a coach for Carleton Syzygy.

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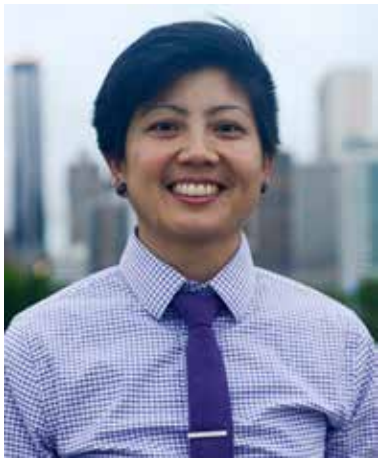

ANGELA LIN

Angela has played ultimate since 1996 - in the College division with Georgia Tech and University of Georgia, Club division with Ozone (Atlanta) and LOL (Bay Area). She's also played in the Master's division with BKFT (Bay Area). Angela was an alternate for the US World Games team in 2005 and has represented USA in the Master's division at WCBU (2015, 2017) and WUGC (2016). At the 50th Anniversary Event at Nationals, Angela will be inducted into the Ultimate Hall of Fame, Class of 2018.

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GRANT LINDSLEY

Grant played at Paideia High School and Carleton College. He also played with San Francisco Revolver, Minneapolis Sub Zero, and Atlanta Chain Lightning and was a member of US National teams in ‘06 and ‘08 (Jr) and ‘17.

KYLE “REX” MCBARD

Rex is from Berkeley, CA, and loves facilitating improvement, talking about talking, being outside, and doing any sort of puzzle. She is currently in her 12th year of playing ultimate (spanning high school, college, and club) and her 7th year of coaching (Berkeley High School and then UCB Tarts). Ultimate has been the backdrop for many personal growth moments, and she loves it as an encouraging environment to work on so many areas of life (communication, grit, love, trust, physical effort, mental effort, silly-string fun, and more!).
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CHELSEA MURPHY

Chelsea Murphy hails from Amherst, MA and has been playing ultimate for way too many years to share. A highschool eastern champion, a jr. worlds gold medalist, and a two-time club national champion, she’s played frisbee from middle school through high school, college and club (both mixed and women’s). She currently plays for Brute Squad and fun fact, is left handed.
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ANNA NAZAROV

Anna has been playing ultimate since the fall of 2003 when she found this sport at UCLA. These days she plays for Fury and coaches the UC Berkeley women's B team.

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CAROLYN NORMILE

Carolyn Normile is originally from the Philadelphia area and now works as a mechanical engineer in Pittsburgh. She played Ultimate at Lower Merion High School from 2009-13, and then at the University of Pittsburgh from 2013-18, serving as captain for three years. Carolyn was a two-time member of the women's U24 National Ultimate Team in 2015 and 2018. She traveled with the first All-Star Ultimate Tour of top women college players across the US in the summer of 2015. This is her fourth year on the nationally-ranked club team AMP from Philadelphia. In 2018, she was a finalist for the Callahan and was named D1 Women's Player of the Year.

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ANRAYA PALMER

Anraya has been playing ultimate for about 8 years. Anraya played college ultimate at the University of Georgia (UGA). After college she played 2 years of club with Atlanta Outbreak and currently plays for Atlanta Ozone. She also coaches the varsity women's ultimate team at Paideia. She believes in the growth of our sport through visibility and opportunities for women, minorities and youth.

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SHEREEN RABIE

Shereen played 5 years of college Ultimate for the University of Texas Melee. She captained Melee her 4th year & assistant coached her 5th due to an ACL injury. Shereen played club on Texas Showdown and captained the team during the 2014 club season, where they placed 4th at WUCC in Lecco, Italy. Shereen attended UCLA for law school and played on the LA-based mixed team, 7 Figures, and assistant coached UCLA BLU (2016-2017). Upon graduating, Shereen returned to Austin and is currently in her second year of coaching Melee. Shereen coaches Melee alongside Kayla Ramirez, her teammate and former Melee co-captain. Shereen also coached at the club-level for the first time, returning to Showdown during the 2018 club season. Yeehaw!
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GAIL REICH

Gail Reich is a private practice psychotherapist and freelance photographer living in Chicago. She has played at the collegiate, club and masters level over the last 10 years. She has played many fun tournaments (her favorite is Paganello) and has coached at Ultimate Peace. Gail was formerly active on the board of Ultimate Chicago for 6 years and now spends her organizational energies tournament directing for USA Ultimate events and is the Girls' National Outreach Director (GUM).
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MIRANDA ROTH KNOWLES

Miranda Roth Knowles has coached and played ultimate frisbee all over the world since 1998. She currently coaches Paideia Groove, Atlanta Hustle and Atlanta Chain Lightning.
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SAMANTHA SALVIA

Sam stumbled upon ultimate frisbee as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University. She captained Stanford Superfly to a national championship in 1999 and found a home on Fury for over a decade. Since “retiring” from Fury in 2010, she has coached and consulted with multiple teams, captained the 2016 USA Womens Masters Team to a gold medal in London, is a founding board member of the non profit Ultimate Impact, leads workshops for Positive Coaching Alliance, works as a water resources engineer, and is a mother of two.

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ERYNN SCHROEDER

Erynn currently lives in Charleston, SC and is playing with Atlanta Ozone. She grew up in Minnesota and attended the College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University. She has played on two national teams and was a part of the 2015 All-Star Ultimate Tour.

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ALISHA STOUN

Alisha has been involved in competitive Ultimate since 2007. She played Womens at the University of Florida, she has played Mixed Club in SoCal for the last 7 years, and she has coached the UC-San Diego Women’s team since 2013.

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CASSIE SWAFFORD

Cassie grew up an avid basketball and soccer player in Columbus, OH and began playing ultimate during her junior year of high school. She captained Ohio State Fever for four years and helped them win the program's first national title in 2014. She currently resides in Washington state where she spends her time playing with Seattle Riot and loving on her animals in the beautiful PNW!

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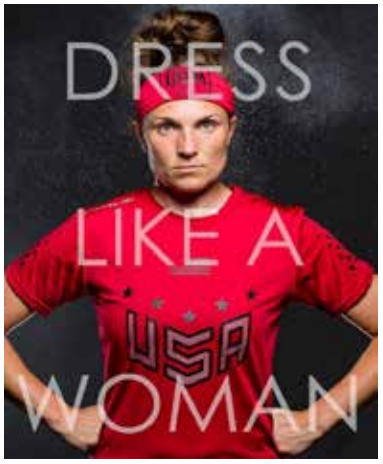

ROHRE TITCOMB

Rohre has had 2 shoulder surgeries, 3 (R, L, L) ACL surgeries (hamstring graft, hamstring graft, patellar graft). Rohre played for Dartmouth Princess Layout throughout college (one season left-handed due to shoulder surgery), handled for Riot 2010-2016, served in Riot leadership 2011-2016, and now coaches Seattle Riot and the Whitman Sweets. She is a 2x beach world champion, 2x WUCC world champion with Riot, 1-time WUGC world champion, and World Games Alternate 2013. Owner of Five Ultimate, Seattle Cascades, Aria Discs.

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KATELYN TRAVAGLINI

Katelyn started playing ultimate in 2007 at the University of Florida with the women's team FUEL. Playing her first club season in 2008 with Florida's LaYuma, followed by playing with other women's and mixed teams including Raleigh's Phoenix. Her current team is Atlanta's Ozone. Katelyn has coached the University of Florida's women's team since the fall of 2016.

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RUSSELL WALLACK

Russell began playing ultimate at Tiina Booth's day camp as a 10 year-old in 1999. His playing career has included playing opportunities at Amherst High School and Kenyon College, on the US U-20 open team, and on Bodhi ('08), Machine ('10), and Ironside ('11-'16). Russell is a coach at NUTC, has organized and run clinics in Denmark, the Czech Republic, and Germany, and now co-coaches The University of Massachusetts men's ultimate programs with Tiina Booth.

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ALYSSA WEATHERFORD

Alyssa played five years of college at Western Washington University and then started coaching in 2011. She made Seattle Riot in 2007, and continues to compete. White, LGBT, not a steady class, female, non-religious, able bodied.

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JENNA WEINER

Jenna started playing ultimate on a marching band intramural team in undergrad at UC Berkeley before playing with the Cal Men's B team her junior and senior years. She continued to play ultimate in graduate school at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she played a year with the UNR Women's team. She also plays with Reno Cutthroat, a mixed club team out of Reno.

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ALAINE "SHAKES" WETLI

Shakes played for Fever from 2013 to 2017. She recently graduated from Ohio State in 2017 with her Masters in Mechanical Engineering. She played club with Santa Maria, Rival, and recently plays with Columbus Cocktails.

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