Changing the Climate and Culture in a Struggling Athletic Program

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Michael Gulino, CAA
Director of Athletics (Retired)
Byram Hills School District (NY)
mjgulino88@gmail.com

Steve Young, CMAA
Director of Athletics
New Rochelle School District (NY)
syoung@nredlearn.org
Why was the Program Failing?

Assess the situation

• Lack of administrative support
  ➢ Did they ignore the problem?

• Poor coaching – results/relationships
  ➢ Did team(s) reach their potential?
  ➢ Was the emphasis on winning only?

• Overinvolved parents
  ➢ Were they supportive of the coach/program?
  ➢ Poor behavior at games?

• Student-Athletes
  ➢ What was their level of commitment?
Potential Causes of Failing

• Academics
  ➢ Were there expectations for athletes?

• Leadership – was it visible?
  ➢ Athletic Director
  ➢ Coach
  ➢ Captains

• Coach-Centered vs. Athlete-Centered
  ➢ Transactional vs. Transformational?

• Lack of vision
  ➢ Were there goals and objectives?
Characteristics of Negative Culture

• Lack of Leadership
• Lack of trust amongst one another
• Lack of accountability
  ➢ Team members “cutting corners”, not giving their full effort
• Team members resent their place/role on the team
• No one is looking out for the best interests of the students
What is Positive Culture?

The Way We Do Things Here

Everyone buys into the mission, vision and expectation of the organization
What Does a Positive Culture Look Like?

- Led by caring athlete-centered coaches
- Everybody is working together
- There is support for one another
- Unwavering support from the administration
“You cannot merely expect culture to be a natural occurrence; it has to be made a part of your everyday routine.”

Mike Krzyzewski, Head Coach
Duke University Men’s Basketball
Anatomy of a Change: New Rochelle Boys’ Soccer

• A program that always had talent but lacked direction on the field.

2013 Season – The Low Point

• Discovered an ineligible player and 3 wins were forfeited
• A fight on the field resulted in an opponent’s jaw being broken
• The team was banned from post-season play (Administrative decision)
• Many officials refusing to work our home games
• Coach was replaced in the spring of 2014
Fight stops White Plains-New Rochelle soccer game; boy’s jaw broken

By Vincent Z. Mercogliano; 10:25 p.m. EDT October 9, 2013

An altercation just before halftime of White Plains’ boys soccer game at New Rochelle on Wednesday resulted in a broken jaw for Tigers’ junior Ozzie Escobedo.

Police were called to the scene and Escobedo was taken to Westchester Medical Center to have surgery on his broken jaw, according to White Plains coach Marcel Galligani.

“I saw the kid absolutely throw a haymaker and punch him in the face,” Galligani said.

“There was a foul across the field, there was some arguing and pushing and shoving, and next thing you knew, the guy just threw a right hook,” he said. “It was absolutely uncalled for.”

Both benches were cleared, but the situation was controlled quickly and no other punches were thrown, according to Galligani and New Rochelle athletic director Steve Young.
Transformation

Spring 2014
Named a new coach with no prior coaching experience

“New Rochelle High School Athletic Director Hires Varsity Soccer Coach with No Experience Coaching”

New Rochelle Talk of the Sound
June 25, 2014
A New Beginning

This is not just about soccer. We care about you as people.

Introduction of the new coach (Spring 2014)

• Gathered all boys interested in participating
  – House Principal
    ➢ expectations of student-athletes
  – Director of Guidance
    ➢ academics
  – Director of Athletics
    ➢ Mission, vision and goals
The Process

Structure that was not related to anything on the field

Keys to Success

• Academics
• Summer workouts
• Dress code on game days
Success Comes Quickly

2014 Season

• Team advanced to the Sectional Quarterfinals
• Coach was selected as the League’s Coach of the Year
• Team received Honorable Mention for the Sportsmanship Award awarded by the Westchester Soccer Officials Association
Worst to First

2016 Season

Section One Class AA Champions
(1st since 1996)

Regional Champions

New York State Class AA Champions
(1st since 1986)
(This happened in 3 seasons!)
New Ro soccer goes from rock bottom to state champs

An incident-plagued 2013 season left the New Rochelle boys soccer program reeling, but a new philosophy and a new coach restored respectability and led to the first state title since 1986.

NEW ROCHELLE – By the time the New Rochelle boys soccer team reached halftime of the New York state Class AA semifinals, they had already exceeded the wildest of expectations.

No one saw this once-troubled program achieving this kind of success at this juncture, and with the Huguenots trailing Long Island champion Calhoun by three goals, they could at least take solace in that.

Coach Jarohan Garcia and assistant Gustavo Barbosa surveyed the group and saw some players on the verge of tears, overwhelmed by the notion that this was the end. Neither coach had ever been in that situation before, so they resorted back to a more familiar setting.

“My fallback was always, ‘What would you do in the classroom?’” said Garcia, who’s been an English and ESL teacher at New Rochelle since 2007 but didn’t start coaching soccer until 2014. “Every decision that we’ve made is based on, ‘How is this going to benefit the players?’”
NEW ROCHELLE WINS TITLE, ENDS DROUGHT

Championship 29 years in the making

MIKE ZACCHIO
MZACCHIO@OHD.COM

MIDDLETOWN — When the final horn sounded at Faller Field on Sunday, New Rochelle junior defensemen Felipe Tobon fell to his knees, covered his eyes and sobbed. Senior midfielder Ethan Marley ran into the arms of goalie Evan Goldstein. Illuminated against the setting sun behind him, but neither of those were on the list of concerns for the fourth-year head coach.

"I'll take it," Garcia said of his post-game shower. "I'll go take an ice bath if they ask me to at this point. I put them through hoops. They can pretty much ask for whatever they want — within the realm of legality, of course."

The title was New Rochelle's first...
“The good-to-great leaders begin the transformation by first getting the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figure out where to drive it.”

Good to Great
Jim Collins
THE BYRAM STORY

- “Dodge City”
- No Systems
- Anger
- Poor Sportsmanship
- Low Participation Numbers
- Girls Program
- Minor Sports

- Coaches: Revolving Door/Ethics/Professionalism
- No Leadership
- Nepotism
- Facilities
- Parents Out of Control
ATHLETIC STUDY

- What happened?
- Convene large, diverse group of stakeholders
- Look at every aspect of the program
- Public Meetings
- Consultant
- Focus Groups: students, teachers, administrators, business owners, real estate, clergy, seniors, alum, empty nesters.
- Generated a Report
- 6 month study
ATHLETIC STUDY OUTCOMES

• Institutionalize Dates and Systems
• Communication Plan
• Internal Structures
• Identify a Champion for the Program
• Teachers as Coaches: Recruitment, Retention
• Transparency
IDENTIFY PROGRAM SYSTEMS

- Preseason Meeting
- Coaches Meetings
- Award System
- Coach Evaluation System
- Student-Parent handbook
- Middle School Parent-Student Orientation
- Athletic Advisory Council

- Athletic Leadership
- Celebrations
- Program Philosophies
- Unified Booster Organization
- Blue Crew
- Standardize: Medical Clearance
- Communication Systems
**WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF CHANGE?**

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The Tip of the Iceberg
Managing the Hidden Forces That Can Make or Break Your Organization
David Hutchens
Illustrated by Bobby Gombert
THE “TIP OF THE ICEBERG”

• What You See May Not Be What You Get
• Invisible Forces On The Surface
• Cause & Effect: How Things Connect to Each Other
• Identify Unintended Consequences
• Causes That Drive Behavior
• Resource Utilization
The Iceberg Model

EVENTS

Patterns & Trends

Systemic Structures

Mental Models
RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF COACHES

• Teachers As Coaches
• Professional Development
• Create A Model Of Qualities
• Evaluation System
• Mentoring
• Longevity Stipends
PROBLEM:
INCREASE NUMBER OF PARENT CALLS

• Not Understanding Systems
• Due Dates
• Procedures
• Program Guidelines and Regulations
• Expectations
• Missing Due Dates
• Issues with Athletes Attending Out of Season and Pre-season Practices
SOLUTION: LOOK BELOW THE SURFACE

• Town had gone through a major change (#3 fastest growing community in County)

• Realized 60% of students entering the program were the oldest child in the family.

• Youth Sports had Expanded
  • Solution
    • Institute “8th Grade Student-Parent High School Athletics Orientation Program”
    • March prior to entering high school
Leadership Lessons Learned

• Quick, Sustainable, Systematic Changes
• Vision - Stay Flexible
• Get The Right People On The Bus
• Anyone Can Steer The Ship - Lead Do Not Manage
• Take Care Of The Little Things, Big Things Take Care Of Themselves
• Human Capital - Invest Time and Money In Human Resources
• Ask The People With Their Boots On The Ground
Leadership Lessons Learned

- Respectful Dialogue
- Convene “The Untouchables”
- Institutionalize Systems
- “Evolution As Much As Revolution”
- Sharpen The Saw
- Create Chain Of Command
- It Is Not About You
- Find A Mentor
- Gain Respect and Accountability
THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING

Mike Gulino, CAA
mjgulino88@gmail.com

Steve Young, CMAA
syoung@nredlearn.org