

Developing Team Leaders in New Zealand Rugby

**by
Dave Hadfield.**

The author manages his own company, MindPlus, in New Zealand. He is currently under contract to the New Zealand Rugby Union and works with representative sides' coaches and teams, academies and corporations throughout New Zealand. The article incorporates some material from Jeff Hansen, a psychologist at the University of Nebraska and was written in 2002.

Overview.

It is accepted by many that there is a real leadership vacuum within New Zealand rugby. This view has been expressed to me by coaches at schoolboy level, through NZ youth representative level, NPC, Super 12 and even at All Black level. Why this has come about is probably a complicated issue and there is no doubt a range of social, economic, and cultural factors which are implicated. My purpose here is not to try to solve why, but rather to put forward some points to ponder for coaches and players as to what we might be able to do about it.

It seems to me that being a leader for young people today is almost out of fashion. As a society we have long knocked over tall poppies, but it seems to be of recent times that even a youngster aiming for excellence in anything, whether it be academic, musical or sporting, tends to bring upon him or herself sneering glances, pooh-hooing and downright scorn from his peers and even so-called mates. These days it seems 'it's cool to be a fool'. This phenomenon also seems to be much more prevalent among boys than girls. So I believe there is a wider societal issue here and, regardless of what is happening in society generally, we rugby people have a problem that must be addressed. To compound the problem, many of our talented young players are appearing at Super 12 and NPC level at a very young age these days – often before they are twenty-one years old. And while we now have academies that are offering these young players some good values and information, they will never have the experience of playing in and captaining a club team while working at a 'nine to five' job. So many of the youngsters appearing at NPC and Super 12 level have not had access to the experiences which have developed many of the sport's leaders of the past.

I have no doubt that wiser minds than mine are considering this issue, but we really do need to get cracking and start to do what we can to train and develop leaders among our rugby fraternity. We also have some issues concerning the development of effective team culture, which is intertwined with team leadership, so I should perhaps consider this briefly.

Team culture and team leadership.

Team culture is all about the environment that is created within the team - the 'way we do things around here'. Team culture is based on the standards and values that form the basis of team functioning, without which a team has no 'behavioural guidance system'. The way that team members behave on and off the field is the reflection of team culture. Leadership is crucial to the formation of team cultural principles and it is critical in ensuring that the standards and values that are the flagship of the culture are understood, role-modelled, monitored and even policed at times.

If you want to change the culture of a team, then team leaders are crucial people in the process. As a coach, if you can enlist their buy-in, help and guidance in the change-management process, you are half way there. You can build a strong team from a small nucleus of team leaders who understand fully where you want to head and who are determined to assist you to build a sound team culture – allowing the rest of the team to follow along from the lead given by the leaders. As Jerry Lynch says in his book, *Creative Coaching*:

“You can’t legislate selfless team values; simply model what you can and let the rest join in when they see what they’re missing. This works in most cases. When it doesn’t, expose the player to the alternatives within the system and have the player decide what he wants to do, given the choices. A player may opt for leaving the team, which may benefit all involved. If a player is unwilling to fit into your team’s programme, be up-front with him. There’s no need to get upset or personal. Simply state it as it is and let the athlete know the team needs to move forward.”

When on this subject, I am always reminded about the story regarding a bloke who had a racehorse that kept veering off from going into the stalls, running crooked and following all the other horses during the race. He’d tried and tried to train this horse not to do these things but had failed utterly. This bloke’s best mate saw the horse run one day and said to his friend, “I know what’s wrong with that horse – he’s veering off, running crooked and running real slow. He’s got a lead deficiency. Give him some lead – that’ll fix him”. The horse owner said, “Where do I give it to him and how?” His mate replied, “Just behind his left ear, from my rifle.” Unfortunately, you may come across some players who are like that horse and, try as you might, you cannot get them to buy in to the team standards and values. In that case, harsh as it may sound and as good as the player(s) may be, the selection rifle may have to be loaded, cocked and fired, because the damage that he may be doing to the team culture will probably be outweighing the benefits that his playing talent brings.

Coaching approach and team leadership.

Coaches are undeniably important to a team's success. The coaches are the ones who recruit and select the athletes, train them to be physically and mentally tough and develop patterns of play and game plans. Effective coaching is absolutely critical for teams to gain and maintain an edge. However, as important a role that the coaching staff plays, teams rarely win championships unless the coaches are able to develop, trust and rely on the leaders within the team.

Why is team leadership so important? Well, because if you really want to succeed as a team, your players have got to help you - they must accept the responsibility of becoming co-leaders of the team. You might be able to achieve some success by ordering your players around like a drill sergeant or by getting them to do things because they are afraid of what you, the coach, will do to them if they don’t do what they’re told. We all know of rugby coaches who have had some success by taking an authoritarian approach, but if you think about it you will realise that most of them had their success some time ago. Many players today will not put up with what their forebears did in terms of being growled at and ordered around. They want to be respected, listened to and feel that they have at least some say in what goes on. Of course the players have got to earn the right to be given a say in what goes on and you should only give them the amount of responsibility that their maturity and knowledge levels allow them to cope with. Nevertheless, you should be encouraging the players to be more self-reliant and more self-responsible for a number of reasons, the prime one being that they are actually the ones who have to make decision for themselves on the field and it makes sense that they should practise this important on-field quality of self-reliance both on and off the field.

If you do have some initial success as an autocrat, I suggest you will struggle to translate this into long-term success and you will end up making a rod for your own back - and for the backs of those who follow you as coach if you have been the only one who holds the leadership keys; in addition, you will miss out on using the knowledge and leadership ability that exists (however dormant it may be) within the team. You may need to start off being fairly prescriptive if the team you are coaching is undisciplined or very inexperienced, but you should try as soon as possible to start developing real leadership within your team. It is also worth mentioning that some players may have been raised in a family situation where the stick was much more common than the carrot. Such players are used to being shouted at and punished and may actually respond better to the same sort of treatment – at least for a while. But what are the long-term implications of treating players in this way? I suggest that moulding more self-responsible and self-governing players will not be one of the consequences!

When the players themselves buy into your system, it makes your job as a coach so much easier. Instead of *you* having constantly to convince and ‘growl’ your athletes into working harder and doing the right thing, effective team leaders hold their team-mates accountable. They embrace the team’s ideals and standards and ensure that the team is heading in the right direction. Team leaders have the guts to stand up and say, “Come on mate, that’s not on, we don’t do things like that around here!” and ensure that team standards are upheld.

The benefits of having strong team leaders.

By developing and relying on great team leaders, you and your team will achieve several important benefits including:

1. High standards and motivation.

Effective team leaders set and maintain the standards for everyone else to follow. They consistently give it their all and demand that their team-mates do the same. This is especially important when you have new players joining the team. The newcomers often look to their senior team-mates to determine how ‘things should be done around here.’ If the senior players are slacking off and cutting corners, it is very easy for the younger people to do the same. If the senior players (to whom we most often look to provide team leadership) ‘poison’ new players with bad attitudes and selfishness, your team development and, consequently, performance will undoubtedly suffer.

Without effective team leaders, mediocrity tends to prevail. The unspoken team motto becomes ‘Do just enough to get by’ and ‘Near enough is good enough.’ No one steps up and sets the tone for the rest of the team to follow. Further, when some players are slacking off and cutting corners, no one is there to confront them constructively and let them know that their laziness or lack of focus is unacceptable and detrimental to the team.

2. The team will stay mentally tough during rough times.

Effective team leaders are able to help their team-mates to weather the inevitable ups and downs that occur during games and throughout the season. When adversity strikes, great leaders maintain their own composure; this keeps their team-mates under control and resolutely moving forward. Effective team leaders are great at reminding their mates of the team values of hard work and commitment, refocusing the team back on the task at hand and doing what they need to do to get

back on track generally. Good team leaders are a calming force who are able to help their team-mates adjust and self-correct.

Without team leaders, teams often crumble under adversity. They get frustrated and lose their composure. Additionally, when a team starts to fall apart, players tend to blame each other and isolate themselves from the team instead of pulling together and hanging tough. Players become focused on their own selfish agendas. This lack of leadership and mental toughness during adversity will really hurt a team with serious championship-winning pretensions.

3. Help you take the pulse of the team and provide input.

Effective team leaders help you know what is going on with your team. They keep you informed about how players might be doing, who is struggling and if there is any dissension brewing within the team. They play an important role in moulding and maintaining your team's chemistry. Not only do great team leaders keep you up to date on the pulse of the team, they can also provide you with input and feedback on changes you might be contemplating or ones you have already instituted.

If you do not have good leaders you can trust, you might miss some important things that are happening with your players and team. You might not know why a certain player suddenly is not playing well or why another might not be communicating with you any more. Further, it might seem like you have lost your players' enthusiasm and support but you are not sure why.

4. Help you oversee and handle discipline.

Finally, great team leaders accept the responsibility of keeping their team-mates in line and of insisting on adherence to team standards and values. If someone starts slacking off, good team leaders remind them about the importance of working hard. If someone is thinking about doing something that might be harmful to themselves or the team, effective team leaders step in and discourage the person from doing so. This positive policing role is especially important because, as a coach, you can only be with your players so many hours of the day. Obviously, you spend a lot of time with them at practice, but the rest of the time they have a variety of choices which you cannot constantly watch and monitor, nor would you want to. However, great team leaders probably tend to spend more time with their team-mates than you do and can be a positive influence on them, especially on those nights when athletes can be tempted to do things that could potentially have negative effects on themselves and the team, not to mention your team, club or association's reputation. Top-class team leaders look out for their team-mates and are willing to confront them constructively when necessary.

Selecting Team Leaders/Captains

Because team leaders are so important, you must take careful consideration in selecting and developing these people. What is the best way to select your team captain? Examine the following options and think about which one might be best for you and your team. The second one may sound a bit far-fetched to many, but just read on anyway.

1. Coach chooses captain.

Obviously, when you choose your own captain, you get to select the person who you feel will do the best job and with whom you can work most effectively. While this option will work well for

you, you may risk choosing someone who is not fully respected by his/her team-mates. Further, you take the awesome power of involvement away from your team by showing them that you do not value their input

2. Players choose captain.

A second option is to let your players vote for the captain. This, of course, has the benefit of showing your players that you respect them enough to allow them to determine the team captain. Further, they will likely choose the person they respect. However, I suggest you remind them up-front that this is not a popularity contest. They should vote for the people who they respect and who can effectively lead the team. The possible drawback is that your team might pick someone you dislike or do not think would be an effective captain. So there are obvious and very real dangers in using this technique, unless of course you have total faith in your team's ability to make the right choice and you are completely comfortable to go with whomsoever they pick.

3. Create a team-leaders group.

Another option is to have your players choose (or you determine) a team leaders group. Team leaders groups are typically comprised of senior players. The team leaders group meets on a regular basis to monitor the team, give input and feedback to the coaching staff and handle any discipline issues. Traditionally, New Zealand rep teams have often had a 'back seat' which consists of the players who have played the most games for the team. There is a natural tendency to assume that the back-seat will automatically fill the role of team leaders and in many teams this has been the case – these experienced players have set the standards and fulfilled team leader roles effectively. In the past the creation and changing of the guard among back-seats took place almost automatically. Most coaches did not talk too much about it. It was assumed that there would be a back-seat and that they would 'do the leadership business.' These days, however, I do not think you can take this for granted. It may well be that some of your most experienced players may not be capable or willing to act as team leaders and you may need to 'fast-track' less experienced players who are able to lead and who actually want to. As long as the 'non-leading' experienced players get in behind these younger leaders, there should not be a problem. I guess what I'm saying is that player experience should not necessarily be thought of as being directly related to maturity and leadership skills.

4. No official captains.

Some coaches believe that team leadership is important, but do not like the idea of naming official captains. Instead, they tell the team that each of them needs to feel like they are leaders. They do not need to rely on one person to lead them but they all should set the standards for the team. Each person should feel like he can step forward and lead when necessary. Rick Charlesworth, coach to the Australian women's hockey team who recently won the World Championships, is one of these coaches and has caused some eyebrow-raising in the hockey world with his 'no-captain' policy.

While these coaches do not name specific captains, they normally rely heavily on senior players to set the tone and provide them with input. This is not a traditional way to do things, but if you have a mature team that is full of leaders, you might like to consider it. New Zealand women's hockey coach, Jan Borren, has taken a slightly different approach recently by appointing a different captain for each game or series – in effect sharing the captaincy around the senior players. I am not sure how popular it was with the players, but it is certainly an innovative way of doing things.

5. Coach selects the captain after consulting with the team.

This may well be the method most commonly used by leading rugby coaches in New Zealand, although clearly the extent of the consultation with players may depend upon the maturity level of the team. For example, the coach of an U16 representative team may decide that the team members do not really know enough to contribute meaningfully to the choice, so he/she decides that the decision is best left to the coach. At senior club or rep level, even if a coach believes that it is his job to make the captaincy choice, it would probably be an unwise coach who did not canvass team opinion regarding who was the players' preference for the job. I have seen one coach hold a secret ballot for captain. The players voted anonymously and then handed their folded votes in to the coach. In that way, the coach got a good idea of how the team was thinking but still retained the decision-making power and none of the players knew (unless they talked to each other about it) who had voted for whom.

I am not suggesting that these are discrete options and that a coach must choose one or the other. As a coach, you will do what you think is best in your particular situation after thinking carefully through your options. For example, you may go with option five and consult with your team before you appoint the captain, but you may also set up an efficient team leaders group to help the skipper out with the leadership job. Some teams these days, increasingly at elite level, operate with co-captains, or in the case of the November 2001 All Blacks, a captain (Anton Oliver) with assistant captains (Scott Robertson and Tana Umaga – one a forward, one a back).

Leadership is not a Title.

Regardless of how you determine who your leaders are, they must understand that leadership is not a title. Your captains are not automatically going to be respected by their team-mates just because they have the title. They must earn their respect as well as maintain it throughout the course of the season. This is similar to the Maori concept of *mana*, which is a quality that a leader cannot actually gain for him or herself, but rather it is a quality that is bestowed upon a person by others because of the way that person is and the way he conducts himself. Formal leadership is not effective leadership and what a leader does and says is far more important than any title that may be given.

Michael Jordan said, *“A leader has to earn that title. You aren't the leader just because you're the best player on the team or the most popular. No one can give you that title either. You have to gain the respect of those around you by your actions.”*

The Responsibilities of Being a Team Captain.

Being a team captain is a very demanding and difficult job to fulfil and you must let your prospective team leaders know this at the start so they understand what they might be getting themselves into. As a coach you will rely on them to set the tone, keep you informed, give input on the team and handle discipline situations from time to time. They must act responsibly and maintain your trust. Further, their team-mates have many demands and expectations of the team captain as well. They must work hard every day, maintain an optimistic outlook when the team is struggling and be willing to communicate sensitive issues to the coach so that the team is being heard. These high, multiple, sometimes conflicting demands, make a skipper's job very stressful and demanding. In essence, the captain has to be the conduit between the coach and the team. When things don't go well, he can become the lightning rod for both sides. The specific roles and responsibilities of a captain are not the main focus of this paper and are well dealt with elsewhere.

The risks of being a team captain.

There are several potential risks in being a team leader. As a coach, it is good to sit down and discuss these with your prospective team leaders as well as your captain. Captains risk being unpopular with their team-mates at times because they may have to make a decision that their team-mates will not agree with or like in regard to discipline issues. They have to be comfortable being tall leadership 'poppies' and resist any attempts to 'chop them down.' However, the captain, team leaders and the rest of the team need to understand that the captain and team leaders are acting in the best interest of the whole team. Captains may not be liked all of the time, but if they do the right thing they will be respected and that is the key distinction to make. Being respected is the important thing! To be effective, team leaders need a decent amount of personal maturity. This quality can be very difficult to find when you are coaching at youth levels and, equally these days, even at elite levels.

Because they are role models for their team-mates, team leaders also have to be on their best behaviour all the time. A lapse in judgment or slacking off during practice can destroy their credibility in the eyes of their team-mates. Once a leader loses the respect of team-mates, it is difficult to regain it. Therefore, team leaders must continually model the appropriate team behaviour and hold themselves to a much higher standard. If they should make a mistake, they must be willing to front up, admit it to their team-mates and assure them that it will not happen again. Good team leaders also must respect the confidentiality of what is said by coaches and team-mates. A sure way to destroy a team is to break someone's trust and tell others things that were meant to be private

Leading by doing and saying.

There are two key aspects of team leadership that may be worth considering and I think this is a really useful and practical perspective by which to look at your budding or current leaders. The first is what leaders actually *do* and the second aspect is what they *say*. Sure, you can say that speaking is actually an action, but it is worthwhile considering the two things separately. The most important aspect of what a captain (or team leader) does is the impact that these actions have in providing an example for the rest of the team to follow.

"Leading by example is mainly about taking responsibility. Little do you know, but people are watching how you train and what you are doing. If certain players that you look up to are doing things half-way and not fully, it affects the rest of the team." (Kristine Lilly, U.S. National Soccer Team.)

'Lead by example' leaders start with having a great degree of self-control, pride, and responsibility. The mark of a truly great leader is the ability to lead him or herself first. Their work ethic, attitude, and mental toughness are so exemplary that they rub off on the rest of his/her team-mates. In essence, these players earn respect by how they conduct themselves and the consistent effort they give at all times.

Leaders by Example should possess the following qualities to be effective:

1. Belief and confidence in the team.

Leaders by example must believe that the team has a good chance of being successful. They must lead the team towards the mission, live the standards and values, buy into the coaches and team-

mates and have a sense of drive about what they are trying to achieve. They must believe that their coaches and team-mates are worthy of their best effort.

2. *Strong work ethic.*

Leaders by example are basically respected because of their compelling work ethic. They are self-motivated people who do not need a coach constantly looking over their shoulders. They are extremely dedicated individuals who pay the price for success. They have the self-discipline to do things that they may not always like to do, but they know ultimately that the work they put in will help themselves and their team. In many ways they are like the Energizer Bunny; no matter what you throw at them, they keep going and going and going...

"Leadership is getting players to believe in you. If you tell a team-mate you're ready to play as tough as you are able to, you better go out there and do it. Players will see right through a phoney. And they can tell when you're not giving it all you've got. Leadership is diving for a loose ball, putting your body on the line. That's the only way you're going to get respect from the players.(Legendary Celtic basketballer and current Indian Pacers' coach, Larry Bird.)

3. *Consistency.*

Leaders by example do not just work hard once in a while, but consistently give 100% on a daily basis. There are no days off or going through the motions for them. They are highly responsible and dependable people who do what is required of them and then some more. They do not just play hard when they feel like it or when it is easy to - they come to play every day.

"The second I ease back, particularly if I'm perceived as the leader of my team or my company, I give others an opening to ease back as well. Why not? If the person out front takes a day off or doesn't play hard, why should anyone else?" (Michael Jordan.)

4. *Composure.*

Finally, good leaders by example are able to lead themselves well. They maintain their poise under pressure. They are unflappable because they have such a high tolerance for frustration. They are optimistic in their outlook and look for opportunities, positive solutions and ways to get back on track rather than dwell on problems.

Leaders by example are definitely great people to have on your team. However, athletes who only lead by example fall short of their true leadership potential because a good portion of leadership involves communication and handling conflict and adversity. If a person only chooses to lead by example and does not get involved verbally, he is not able to adequately address many of the issues that leadership requires. Their role is certainly important and valued but, to be totally effective, you will need at least one 'talking leader' in addition to your leaders by example. However, keep in mind that many leaders by example are good potential candidates to develop into talking leaders.

Talking leaders need some of the following qualities:

1. *Ability to talk to the team as a group*

This is pretty self-evident. Obviously, they need to have some ability as an orator. We cannot expect all leaders to be Winston Churchill, but clearly they need the ability to hold an audience, control their speech volume, modulation and delivery and keep the team listening.

2. *Know what to say.*

Talking leaders need to know what to say in a range of situations. As a coach you'll want to guide leaders in the content of the things they talk about to the team, but the talking leader (especially the captain) needs a good handle on not only team standards and values, but also patterns of play, as game plans/tactical considerations.

3. Know when to speak.

It is important to know when to speak. A constant barrage of words will lose effect after a short time. Leaders who shout at team-mates will have to shout louder and louder to have effect. Leaders must choose the time to speak and say what they have to say as efficiently as possible. Among rugby players, long flowery speeches are best left for weddings and christenings - and even then, shorter is probably better!

4. Know the difference between emotional speech and informational speech.

This is especially true when talking to the team as a group, but also when addressing individuals. Leaders need to understand that there is a time to give information about what is required (e.g. at training, pre-game or at half-time) and there is a time to consider the emotional needs of the team and give inspiration. Leaders need to understand and consider both these needs.

5. Have good one-on-one communication skills

Talking leaders need to have some understanding (innate or otherwise) of basic human psychology. They need to possess empathy and display it by showing, through what they say to players, that they understand their feelings and their point of view.

Of course, the ideal captain has both 'leading by example' and 'talking' skills, but it is important to understand that you may not have anybody in your team who fits that bill. Clearly a 'lead by example' type can be taught improved communication skills and, if you have a young 'lead by example' type in your team, you really should be doing all you can to make sure he or she develops the communication skills needed to be a complete leader. On the other hand, a good talker who does not consistently lead by example is hardly the type you are going to want as captain, but he still may be able to play a leadership role. Of course if he actually drags the chain regarding upholding values, standards, focus, intensity etc, then you are probably not going to want him in the team, let alone as a leader – no matter how well he 'talks the talk.'

How can we train and encourage leaders?

I am not too sure about this one. Like others in the teams I am involved with, I am doing some thinking about how we can actually do something to train up and nurture leaders. Firstly, the advice will naturally depend somewhat upon the age and stage of the players you are coaching. Until a certain age, kids should be encouraged just to play the game. If a captain is needed, share it around and give everybody a chance to have a go – within reason. Remember also that the best player (although he might be a 'leader by example' in terms of how to play the game) may not always be the best captain! However, as players reach secondary school, it is time to start to think about what can be done to fill the thinning ranks of rugby leaders. Here are some thoughts.

1. Recognise budding leaders.

Learn to look out for and identify players who demonstrate leadership skills, not only those who show a desire to take a lead on the field, but those who demonstrate solid and reliable standards

and values off the field. Remember that inappropriate types can also display leadership characteristics as well, so obviously you want to be able to distinguish between leaders that embrace good values and those who do otherwise. If you have a look around your local secondary school you will notice some leaders who are definitely looked up to by other kids, but they are role-modelling all the behaviours and attitudes that we would want to discourage rather than encourage. You may be able to use the latent leadership potential in such kids and turn it to the good of your team – if the kid wants to change.

2. Nurture leadership potential.

If you find a player with leadership potential, do what the good gardener does with a plant – nurture the young leader with love and care. It is tough being a leader, especially in the current ‘tall poppy-bashing’ environment and, if our youngster is to grow into an effective one, he’s going to need considerable help along the way. So as a coach, you need to know about leadership yourself. If you do not know much about it or how to teach it, find out. There is a lot of material about leadership out there, including Coaching New Zealand material, and leadership is a part of CNZ courses. Probably you will have in your team a young ‘lead from the front’ type who is well-respected by his mates, and what you need to do is to teach him or her the communication and people-management side of leadership and clearly outline captaincy roles. But I am sure that most coaches have a reasonable idea of how to encourage young leaders already, it’s just that we have not recognised how important it is to do so and how serious our leadership situation has become. We now need to act urgently.

3. Use leadership courses or outside expertise.

Clearly, leadership courses may be outside the resources and requirements of youth teams, but for representative, NPC and Super 12 teams and those who have access to such resources, this may well be a helpful way of contributing to leadership development. There is a number of different types of course – some more oriented to outdoor leadership experiences (like Outward Bound) and others more focused on indoor activities and teaching rather than doing. With regard to cost, you will need to cut your cloth to fit your cap. If you are using outside expertise or leadership courses, try to ensure that the things the players learn are linked back to the reality of leadership in a rugby team. Theories are all very well, as is rushing-up-and-down-ropes courses or mountains courses, and both offer increased understanding of what leadership is and how to do it, but always remember the objective of the exercise.

4. Create the right environment.

As mentioned earlier, you should create a team culture where player input is welcomed early and often. If you are dealing with a rabble, then you will have to be prescriptive to start with – there is no doubt about that. However, if you continue coaching in that style once you have instilled some discipline, then how can you expect to encourage players to lead if you do not give them the chance to do so? Giving up some of your power and giving it to players is a prerequisite of encouraging leaders and it takes more courage than some coaches have got. So encourage your players to take ownership and to take on leadership roles, but be cautious that you do not give them more responsibility than they can handle and keep nurturing and guiding them.

Final Comments

If I am right and we do have something of a leadership vacuum among our current crop of rugby players, we need to consider what we can do about it and how we can do that, but first we need to understand something about the practical nature of team leadership and know how we can teach potential leaders to lead. We cannot change society’s ills overnight, although we can all play our part, but we *can* do something to recognise leadership potential, and nurture it within the group of



players we influence. If we do not do something, we may, perish the thought, fall into a bigger and bigger hole.

As Jeff Janssen says, “Internal team leadership is critical to your team's success. Take the time to evaluate your team leaders and captains and assess whether or not they are leading to their full potential and helping you take your team where it needs to go. Great leaders plant seeds of success in the minds of others. They keep people positive and focused no matter how frustrating or bleak the situation might be. Invest the time to cultivate effective leaders on your team. You never know how much their leadership might make a difference at a critical moment in your season.”

Good luck with your own leadership and with the development of leadership among your players.