

Teamwork and co-operation – why they will always be sport’s dream ticket

SPORT

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Though the word ‘collaboration’ was tainted by the Nazis, its synonym, ‘co-operation’ has remained clean. Thank God. It is the expression of our Trinitarian nature – the virtue, the ability, to work together toward a common goal.

As we all know, you cannot tie a bow, put the little backs on your pierced earrings, peel potatoes – or anything – with just one hand. With two, there is no problem.

The slogan Together We Make a Difference – TWMAD – was something I learned as a Clapham College schoolboy. It was one of the best lessons that has helped me achieve so much.

“Loyalty is a cohesive force that forges individuals into a team”, wrote John Robert Wooden (1910–2010), an American basketball player and head coach at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Nicknamed the “Wizard of Westwood,” he won ten NCAA national championships in a 12-year period as head coach at UCLA, including a record seven in a row. No other team has won more than four.

Oxytocin is a chemical in our body which generates and is generated by feelings of love, bonding people together. Any manager that can convince his club to respect and appreciate everyone – from the star striker to the boot-cleaner – will be able to release this oxytocin in his squad and lead a great team.

“You stand up for your teammates. Your loyalty is to them. You protect them through good and bad, because they’d do the same for you,” motivated Lawrence Peter ‘Yogi’ Berra, an American professional baseball catcher, who later took on the roles of manager and coach. He played 19 seasons in Major League Baseball – all but the last for the New York Yankees.

“Individual commitment to a group effort is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilisation work,” declared Vince Lombardi, head coach and general manager of the Green Bay Packers, who led the team to three NFL championships and to victories in Super Bowls I and II (1967 and 1968). Because of his success, he became a national symbol of single-minded determination to win.

Michael Jordan’s biography on



Richie McCaw leads the All Blacks famous Haka challenge to their opponents

the official NBA website states: ‘By acclamation, Michael Jordan is the greatest basketball player of all time.’ He reminds us that ‘talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.’

To put it another way, “The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team,” said Phil Jackson, an American former professional basketball player, coach, and executive in the National Basketball Association. Jackson played 12 seasons, winning NBA championships with the New York Knicks in 1970 and 1973.

“Collaboration allows teachers to capture each other’s fund of collective intelligence,” Mike Schmoker, a former administrator, English teacher and football coach, said. He has written several bestselling books and dozens of articles for educational journals, newspapers and for *TIME* magazine.

“It takes two flints to make a fire,”

stated Louisa May Alcott, an American whose ‘sport’ was writing novels and short stories, best known as the author of *Little Women* (1868), its sequels *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo’s Boys* (1886). As they say, you cannot tie a bow with just one hand.

“To me, teamwork is the beauty of our sport, where you have five acting as one. You become selfless,” mused Mike Krzyzewski, a college basketball coach. Since 1980, he has served as the head men’s basketball coach at Duke University, where he has led the Blue Devils to five NCAA Championships, 12 Final Fours, 15 ACC Championships, and 12 ACC regular season titles.

“The way a team plays as a whole, determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime,” warned Babe Ruth, regarded as one of the greatest sports heroes in American

culture and considered by many to be the greatest baseball player of all time. In 1936, Ruth was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame as one of its ‘first five’ inaugural members.

“Being a good teammate isn’t about recognition. I do it because it makes me whole and complete,” stated Dwyane Wade, who, at the 2008 Summer Olympics, led the United States men’s basketball team, commonly known as the ‘Redeem Team’, to capture the gold medal

The legendary All Blacks rugby team remains successful decade after decade by focusing on building a strong unified team consisting of the best people. The New Zealand team considers themselves to be one captain and fifteen leaders. Everyone has a turn to speak, offering an equal voice and equal contribution to the team. The All Blacks trust their members to do what needs to be done, and thus their members become leaders, rising to the occasion and proving they are worthy of that trust.

There are no superstars in the All Blacks. Though there are some players that have led their team to victory more than others, have more seniority, have better skills – at the end of the day they all pitch in to clean up. Even the top players sweep the dressing room after each match, because no one is too big or too important to do the ‘lesser’ tasks.

“Building a baseball team is like building a house. You look for the best architects, the best builders, and then you let them do their jobs,” stated Pat Gillick, who won a national championship in college while pitching for the University of Southern California (USC). Gillick

was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in 1997, the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2011, the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame in 2013, and the Phillies Wall of Fame in 2018.

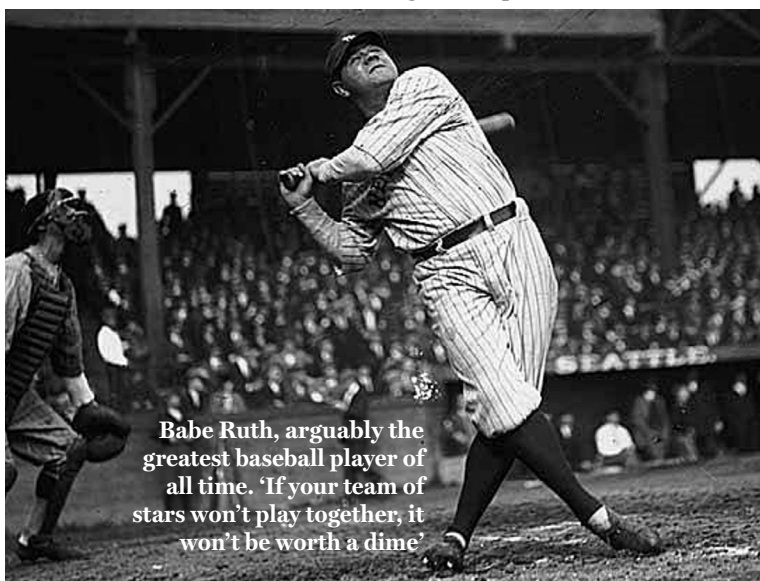
“I don’t believe in team motivation. I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on the field and be prepared to play a good game,” stated Tom Landry, an American professional football player and coach. He was the first head coach of the Dallas Cowboys in the National Football League (NFL), a position he held for 29 seasons.

A wise leader – perhaps just of a family or parish council – surrounds his or her self with people who know more than they do on different dimensions of life. Might there be schoolmates with whom you could reconnect? Have a think. A team of allies-in-life can be marvellously life-enhancing.

“One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team, but one man cannot make a team,” Kareem Abdul-Jabbar reminded us. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was voted by ESPN cable network as the greatest basketball centre of all time. In 2008, they named him the ‘greatest player in college basketball history’, and in 2016, they named him the second-best player in NBA history behind Michael Jordan.

In 2012, Abdul-Jabbar was selected by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to be a US global cultural ambassador. In 2016, President Barack Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of freedom.

In a couple of weeks, we will focus on Grit – no, not as in ‘sand’ – more as in ‘guts’.



Babe Ruth, arguably the greatest baseball player of all time. ‘If your team of stars won’t play together, it won’t be worth a dime’