



# PYRAMID PROJECT

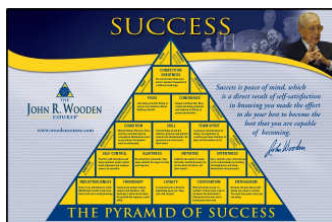
The "Pyramid Project" is a season-long project that is **essential to VABA's Character Development Curriculum, designed for every student-athlete** participating in the JBL or VDBL. This project is based on the inspiration of VABA, John Wooden, the greatest coach of all time. Rather than focus on winning, Coach Wooden focused on teaching his student-athletes these blocks. The result: 10 National Championships. Since Coach Wooden's philosophy was based on character development first, and this is also VABA's mission, we will attempt to utilize one of his favorite tools: The Pyramid of Success.

This is not a frivolous idea – this is a serious, essential part of the VABA winter league program carried out by the coaches on a weekly basis.

The project is simple. Coaches make copies of the Pyramids (see attached) and their blocks, beginning with the entire Pyramid and then the definition of "Success" (all blocks are included in your binder). At the beginning of each practice, the coach chooses a block to emphasize as the "Word of the Day. In a few instances, the words are different for the JBL than the VDBL (see the logo in the bottom right corner of the Pyramid block to see if it is specific to a particular league). Starting with the two cornerstones – ENTHUSIASM and INDUSTRIOUSNESS (VDBL)/HARD WORK (JBL), the coach progresses each week. At the end of practice, the VABA coach passes out the blocks and talks about their meaning. The student-athletes are *asked* to find a space on their wall at home (in their room, in the basement, etc.) and actually tape or attach the block to the wall in the same formation as the Pyramid of Success. With each week, the Pyramid should grow as the SAs add their blocks and build their Pyramid – and, most importantly, it should serve as a reminder about the values the VDBL attempts to build in each of its participants.

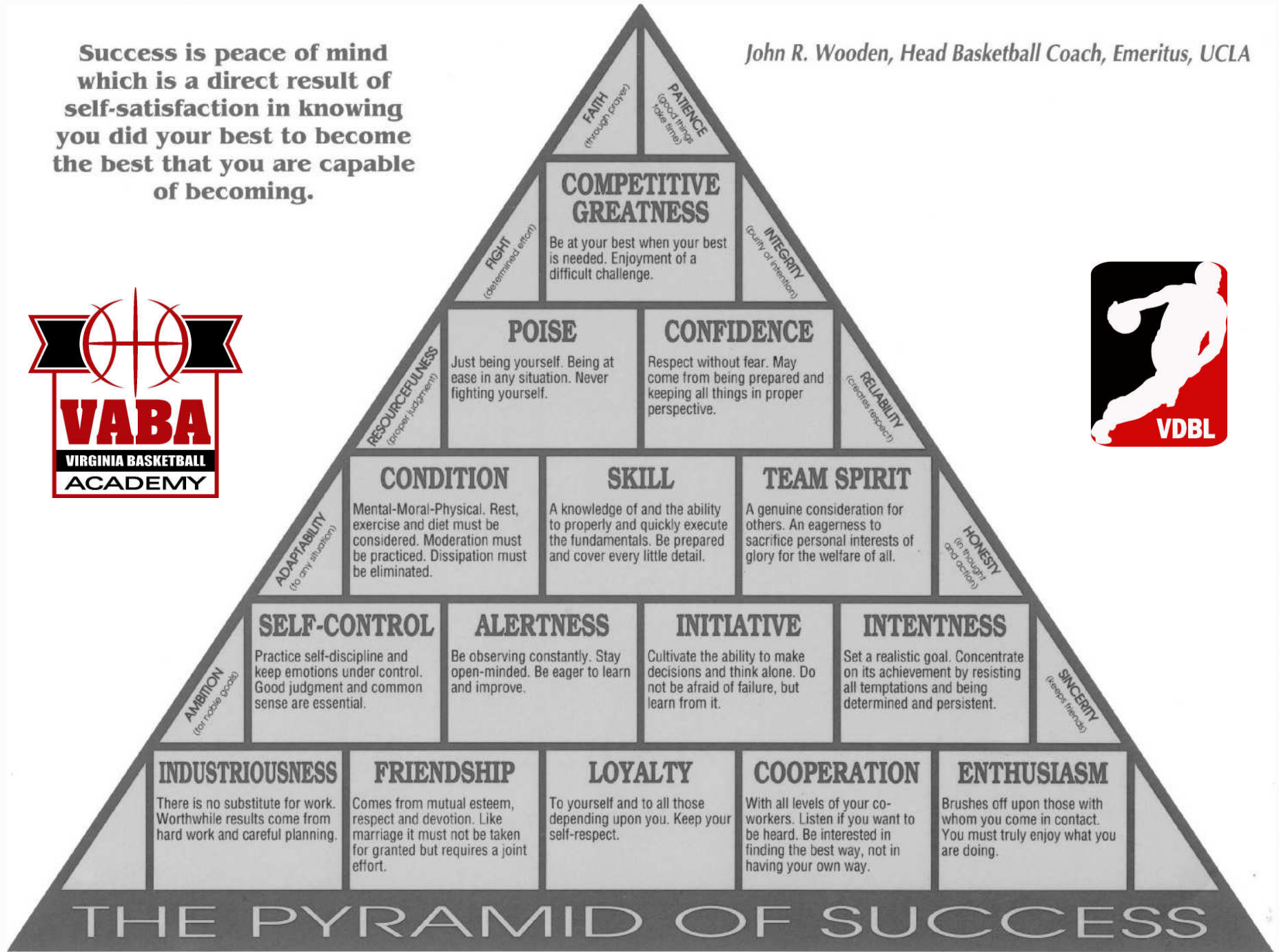
This may seem somewhat tedious or even a little corny...but it worked for the greatest coach of all time – and it will work for you and your team! Therefore, all VABA coaches are committed to carrying this out on a consistent, weekly basis with their S-As and reminding them to build their Pyramids at home.

**STICK WITH IT, AND YOU WILL SEE THE IMPACT IT HAS ON YOU AND YOUR TEAM!**

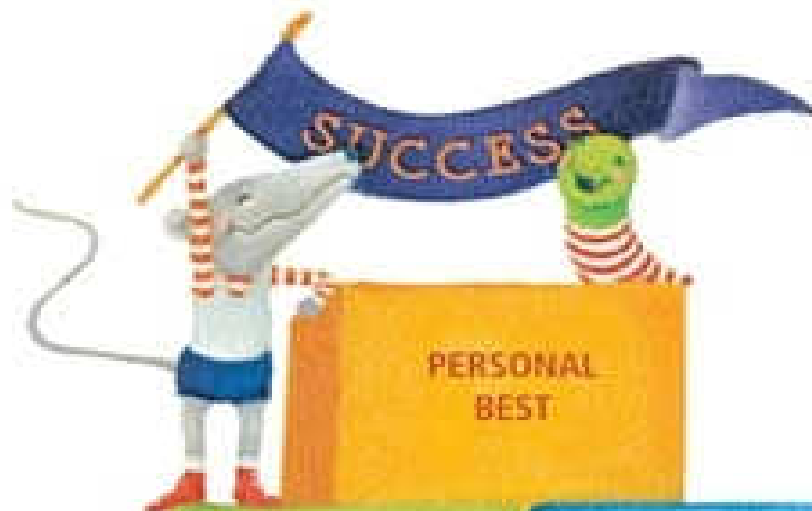


Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.

John R. Wooden, Head Basketball Coach, Emeritus, UCLA



Success is happiness in your heart, because you made the effort, 100%, to do your best!  
-Coach John Wooden



"Success isn't having trophies or toys. It isn't a medal or friends of your choice. What is Success? That's easy to see. It's trying to be the best you can be! Don't worry what others may have or might say When trying your best, Success comes your way."  
-Coach John Wooden



THE PYRAMID OF SUCCESS



# SUCCESS



**SUCCESS IS PEACE OF MIND  
WHICH IS A DIRECT RESULT OF SELF-SATISFACTION  
IN KNOWING YOU DID YOUR BEST TO BECOME THE BEST  
YOU ARE CAPABLE OF BECOMING.**

At God's footstool to confess, A poor soul knelt and bowed his head.  
"I failed," he cried. The Master said, "Thou didst thy best, that is success."

There is only one person who can judge the level of your success – YOU.  
Are you trying to win the game, or are you doing your best?  
WINNING AND LOSING ARE DIFFERENT FROM "SUCCEEDING" AND "FAILING."  
You must know the difference.

Are you listening to your coach as well as you can? Are you working & talking on defense as much as you can?  
Are you studying for your tests and completing your homework as well as you can?  
**ARE YOU DOING YOUR BEST?**

I believe this is what true success is. Anything stemming from *that* success is simply a by-product, whether it be the score, the trophy, your record or whatever. They are all by-products of success, but they're not what determines success; indicators that you perhaps succeeded in the more important contest.

That real contest, of course, is striving to reach *your* personal best, and that is totally under your control. When you achieve that, you have achieved success. Period!  
You are a winner and only you fully know if you have won.

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book "Wooden"*



# SUCCESS



**SUCCESS IS HAPPINESS  
IN YOUR HEART  
BECAUSE YOU MADE THE EFFORT,  
100% TO DO YOUR BEST!**

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# INDUSTRIOUSNESS

**THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR WORK.  
WORTHWHILE RESULTS COME FROM  
HARD WORK AND CAREFUL PLANNING.  
ENTHUSIASM + HARD WORK = INDUSTRIOUSNESS**

Simply put, you have to work and work *hard*.

Find one single solitary individual who achieved his or her own personal greatness without lots of hard work. Michael Jordan? More important than his physical ability is the way he has worked hard to improve any weakness he had. Anyone else you can think of who has achieved personal success and competitive greatness worked *hard*.

**SHORT CUTS:** Hard work is essential, and only you really know if you're giving it everything you've got. People who always try to cut corners will never come close to realizing their full potential and be as good as they could be.

**INDUSTRIOUSNESS** means that it is more than just showing up and going through the motions. Many people who tell you they worked all day weren't really working very hard at all, certainly not to the fullest extent of their abilities.

**INDUSTRIOUSNESS** means you are inspired to work, you want to work or else you have nothing to build on. You can work without being industrious. You cannot be industrious without work. **BE INDUSTRIOUS!**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book "Wooden"*



# HARD WORK

**THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR WORK.  
FAILING TO PREPARE IS PREPARING TO FAIL.  
ENTHUSIASM + HARD WORK = INDUSTRIOUSNESS**

Simply put, you have to work and work *hard*.

Find one single solitary individual who achieved his or her own personal greatness without lots of hard work. Michael Jordan? More important than his physical ability is the way he has worked hard to improve any weakness he had. Anyone else you can think of who has achieved personal success and competitive greatness worked *hard*.

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# ENTHUSIASM

**BRUSHES OFF UPON THOSE WITH WHOM YOU COME INTO CONTACT.  
YOU MUST TRULY ENJOY WHAT YOU ARE DOING.**

You have to love what you are doing to be enthusiastic about it; your *heart* must be in it.  
Without enthusiasm you can't work up to your fullest ability.

**DON'T WHINE. DON'T COMPLAIN. DON'T MAKE EXCUSES.**

If you don't enjoy what you are doing, it is almost impossible to have enthusiasm for them.  
You must have enthusiasm to prepare and perform with industriousness.  
Enthusiasm ignites plain old work and transforms it into industriousness.

Enthusiasm brushes off on those with whom you must come into contact, those you work with and for.  
**SUPPORT YOUR TEAMMATES! STAND UP, CLAP FOR THEM AND ENCOURAGE THEM.  
BE AN ENTHUSIASTIC ENCOURAGER! BE A POSITIVE PASSER!**  
You must have enthusiasm, especially if you're a leader  
or if you wish to become a leader.

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book "Wooden"*



# LOYALTY

## TO YOURSELF AND TO ALL THOSE DEPENDING ON YOU.

Loyalty to and from those with whom you work is absolutely necessary for success. It means keeping your self-respect, knowing who and what you have allegiance to.

It means giving respect to those you work with.

**RESPECT HELPS PRODUCE LOYALTY.**

How can you work to the best of your ability unless you have someone or something to whom you are loyal?  
Only then do you gain peace and an increasing ability to perform at your highest level.

Great loyalty was stressed on all my teams. Loyalty is a cohesive force that forges individuals into a team.

Loyalty is very important when things get a little tough, as they often do when the challenge is great. Loyalty is a powerful force in producing one's individual best and even more so in producing a team's best.



*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book "Wooden"*



# COOPERATION

**BE INTERESTED IN FINDING THE BEST WAY,  
NOT IN HAVING YOUR OWN WAY.**

**It takes a united effort to succeed.**

**In order to reach the full potential of the group, there must be cooperation on all levels.**

**This means working together in all ways to accomplish the common goal.**

**To get cooperation, you must give cooperation.**

**You are not the only person with good ideas. If you wish to be heard....LISTEN.**

**Always seek to find the best way rather than insisting on your own way.**

**All of this requires COOPERATION. It allows individuals to move forward together,  
to move in the same direction instead of going off in different directions.**

**Ten strong field horses could not pull an empty baby carriage if they worked independently of each other.**

**Regardless how much effort you exerted individually,  
the carriage wouldn't budge without their mutual cooperation.**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book "Wooden"*



# FRIENDSHIP

## REQUIRES A JOINT EFFORT

For success, either individually or for your team, there must be a level of friendship. It is a powerful force that comes from mutual esteem, respect, and devotion.

It isn't friendship when someone does something nice for you. He or she is simply being a nice person.

Friendship is mutual; doing good things for each other.

There's no real friendship when only one side is working at it.

Both must give for there to be friendship.

## FRIENDSHIP TAKES TIME AND UNDERSTANDING.

Rarely will you find in working toward a common goal that others will be able to resist friendship if you offer it sincerely and openly. However, you must be brave enough to offer friendship.

Toward the end of the Civil War, reparations were being discussed in the White House. President Abraham Lincoln was told by one of his advisors who favored punishing the South, "Mr. President, you're supposed to destroy your enemies, not make friends of them!"

Mr. Lincoln replied, "Am I not destroying an enemy when I make a friend of him?" He understood the tremendous force of friendship. Friendship includes others and adds strength to your foundation.

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book "Wooden"*



# INTENTNESS

## BEING DETERMINED AND PERSISTENT. PERSEVERANCE.

This word means determination & persistence. This word means tenacity & perseverance.

I will say that “intentness” is the ability to resist temptation and stay the course, to concentrate on your objective with determination and resolve.

**IMPATIENCE:** this means wanting too much too soon.

**INTENTNESS DOESN'T INVOLVE JUST WANTING SOMETHING. IT INVOLVES DOING SOMETHING.**

The road to *real* achievement takes time, a long time, but you do not every give up!  
You may have setbacks. You may have to start over. You may have to change your method.  
You may have to go around, or over, or under. You may have to back up and get another start.  
**BUT YOU DO NOT QUIT! YOU STAY THE COURSE.** To do that, you must have *intentness*.

Here's a little example of what I mean. In 1948 I began coaching basketball at UCLA. Each hour of practice we worked very hard. Each day we worked very hard. Each week we worked very hard.  
After many setbacks and frustrations along the way, we finally won a national championship. We never gave up and we stayed the course, and then we began winning many championships...one after the other.  
If we had given up or changed our attitude or allowed ourselves to lose our mental focus and determination these championships wouldn't have happened.

**BE PERSISTENT. BE DETERMINED. BE TENACIOUS. BE COMPLETELY DETERMINED TO REACH YOUR GOAL. THAT'S INTENTNESS. IF YOU STAY INTENT AND YOUR ABILITY WARRANTS IT, YOU WILL EVENTUALLY REACH THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book “Wooden”*



# DETERMINATION

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SLOW AND STEADY GETS YOU READY.**

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**Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book “Wooden”**



# INITIATIVE

**DO NOT BE AFRAID OF FAILURE BUT LEARN FROM IT.  
CULTIVATE THE ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS AND THINK ALONE.  
BE QUICK, BUT DON'T HURRY.**

You must not be afraid to fail.

Initiative is having the courage to make decisions and take action.

Failure to act (take action!) is often the biggest failure of all!

Keep in mind we are all going to fail at times. This you must know. None of us is perfect.

But if you're afraid of failure, you will never do the things you are capable of doing.

Failure is not such a bad thing if properly treated. However, blaming others or other things for my failures is not productive and only burns energy. Learn from each failure – small and big. Every failure is a great opportunity to learn and anticipate at least the next one and get and be prepared for it.

**RESPECT YOUR OPPONENT, BUT NEVER FEAR THEM.**

**YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR IF YOU HAVE PREPARED TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY.**

Never fear failure. It is something to learn from. You have conquered fear when you have initiative.

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# ACTION

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# ALERTNESS

**BE OBSERVING CONSTANTLY. FOCUS, CONCENTRATE, ANTICIPATE!  
STAY OPEN MINDED. BE EAGER TO LEARN AND IMPROVE.**

There is something going on around us at all times from which we can acquire knowledge if we are alert. Too often we get lost in our own tunnel vision, and we don't see the things that are right in front of us for the taking, for the learning.

Always be ALERT and seek to improve yourself and the team.

My favorite American hero is Abraham Lincoln. He had alertness. He once said that he never met a person from whom he didn't learn something, although much of the time it was something *not* to do. This also is learning, and it comes from alertness.

How do you know what to improve? How do you know you actually improved?

Simple answer – beg for feedback.

It is nice to hear “good stuff” or “very cool” as a feedback. Nice but nothing more. Sometimes you cannot learn anything from it. If it is good you know that already since you were working on it based on previous feedback.

Be eager to know what is NOT good, and be alert for teaching. That way you can learn and focus your “improvement effort.” Get prepared to receive harsh feedback. That should not be a problem at all. Tune yourself into “positive wave” and always try to extract value ignoring the way it was expressed.

Be observing constantly, quick to react, quick to learn, quick to spot a weakness and correct it or use it, as the case may warrant. As you strive to do your personal best, alertness will make the task much easier.

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA. Taken from the book “Wooden”*



# SELF-CONTROL

**Practice self-discipline and keep emotions under control.**

Self-control is essential for discipline and mastery of emotions.  
You cannot function physically or mentally unless your emotions are under control.

**DISCIPLINE YOURSELF AND OTHERS WON'T NEED TO.**

Remember, discipline isn't punishment. Discipline is used to help, improve, to correct, to prevent, not to punish, humiliate, or retaliate.

When you lose control of your emotions, when your self-discipline breaks down, your judgment and common sense suffer. How can you perform at your best when you are using poor judgement?

Remember, the best way to overcome disappointment is to not live in the past.  
To do better in the future you have to work on the "right now."  
Dwelling in the past prevents doing something in the present.

**COMPLAINING, WHINING, MAKING EXCUSES MUST KEEPS YOU OUT OF THE PRESENT.**

**AND THAT'S WHERE SELF-CONTROL COMES IN. SELF-CONTROL KEEPS YOU IN THE PRESENT.**

**STRIVE TO ALWAYS MAINTAIN SELF-CONTROL.**

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# CONDITION

**PHYSICAL, MENTAL, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL FITNESS.  
REST, EXERCISE AND DIET MUST BE CONSIDERED.  
MODERATION MUST BE PRACTICED. DISSIPATION MUST BE ELIMINATED.**

In any part of life – not just sports – rest, exercise, diet and drills will only get us so far.  
Only when we live a wholesome lifestyle will we see the greatest results.

I told my players, “We want to be in the best possible condition.” There was a time when I would say, “Let’s be in better condition than anybody else.” But I changed. If the other team was in good or bad condition, there was nothing we could have done about it. The other team is outside your control.

**But YOU CAN CONTROL YOU AND YOUR TEAM’S LEVEL OF CONDITIONING.**

Make the best effort to be in the best possible condition with the hope that we’ll be the best.”

The relationship between the coach and the athlete is about shared responsibility. One of the coach’s responsibilities is to plan and run an effective practice. The player’s responsibility occurred between practices. Your responsibility, as an athlete, is to understand that a lack of proper conduct, deficient rest and an improper diet would keep you from attaining and maintaining your best possible conditioning.

**YOU CANNOT PRODUCE YOUR BEST WITHOUT THE PHYSICAL CONDITIONING – BUT A FAILURE TO ADDRESS MENTAL, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDITIONING WILL LIMIT EVEN THE BEST OF PHYSICAL CONDITIONING.**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA.  
Taken from the book “Coach Wooden’s Pyramid of Success Playbook”*



# FITNESS

## ACT, EAT AND THINK RIGHT.

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I told my players, “We want to be in the best possible fitness.” There was a time when I would say, “Let’s be in better shape than anybody else.” But I changed. If the other team was in good or bad shape, there was nothing we could have done about it. The other team is outside your control.

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# SKILL

## A KNOWLEDGE OF AND THE ABILITY TO PROPERLY AND QUICKLY EXECUTE THE FUNDAMENTALS.

Skill is knowing what to do and being able to execute all of the fundamentals important to a particular task.

A skillful person usually also has a sense of timing and the ability to quickly perform a skill.

Take riding a bicycle as an example. You may know how to ride a bike, but if you don't respond to tricky situations, you might be in big trouble. There are many other similar activities in which we must know the Fundamentals of a skill and also have the capacity and concentration to execute the skill properly and quickly.

If you are going to be good at anything you must have a command of the fundamentals. Even a person who might not be fast or tall can become somewhat skillful if he or she WORKS ON THE FUNDMANTALS.

We cannot do much about our height or our I.Q.; however, we can affect our brainpower and physical potential through studying hard, listening and concentrating at school, training and practicing hard on the court.

God only made one Michael Jordan and one Mother Teresa. The rest of us didn't receive as much potential, but each of us can still become SUCCESSFUL. We might not become as significant as we aspire to be, but we can become the best we are capable of becoming.

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA.  
Taken from the book "Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success Playbook"*



# TEAM SPIRIT

**A GENUINE CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS.  
AN *EAGERNESS* TO SACRIFICE PERSONAL INTERESTS OF GLORY  
FOR THE WELFARE OF ALL.**

I once heard team spirit defined as a willingness to lose oneself in the group for the good of the group. I used that definition for a long time, but always thought that it felt short. It took a while but I finally figured it out. I changed the “willingness” to “eagerness.” Willingness is more like “I will if I have to.” Eagerness is an attitude of “I’ll be happy to sacrifice personal accomplishments for the good of the team.”

When we willingly do something, our heart isn’t completely into it. This slight reluctance holds us back AND it holds our teammates back. By contrast, when every member of a team *eagerly* performs every task, the group rises to a new level of accomplishment.

**TEAM SPIRIT MAKES OTHERS BETTER – AND TEAM SPIRIT MAKES THE TEAM BETTER.**

Team spirit is about enthusiasm and cooperation. Team spirit is consideration, respect and dignity for others.

**IF WE DISPLAY TRUE CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS, MOST OF OUR PROBLEMS WILL BE MANAGEABLE.**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA.  
Taken from the book “Coach Wooden’s Pyramid of Success Playbook”*



# POISE

**JUST BEING YOURSELF. BEING AT EASE IN ANY SITUATION.  
NEVER FIGHTING YOURSELF.**

My definition of poise is simple: being yourself. You're not acting.  
You're not pretending or trying to be something you're not.  
You are being who you are and are totally comfortable with that.  
**THEREFORE, YOU'LL FUNCTION NEAR YOUR OWN LEVEL OF COMPETENCE.**

Poise greatly depends upon two nearby blocks: confidence and self-control.  
Confidence comes from thorough preparation and enables us to be quietly in control at all times.  
**THE DISCIPLINE OF SELF-CONTROL USUALLY PRODUCES POISE.**

We get poise by having a solid foundation beneath us.  
Without the other blocks in the pyramid in order we cannot be a poised person or a poised player.  
**POISE AND THE NEXT BLOCK, CONFIDENCE, WILL BE THE NATURAL GROWTH OF HAVING  
THE LOWER BLOCKS IN THEIR PROPER PLACE.  
WE WON'T HAVE EITHER UNLESS WE ALSO HAVE THE OTHERS.**

**MAKE GOOD DECISIONS AND BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE.  
BE YOURSELF AND BE COMFORTABLE WITH WHO YOU ARE.**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA.  
Taken from the book "Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success Playbook"  
And "Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on the Court"*



# CONFIDENCE

**COMES FROM BEING PREPARED  
AND KEEPING PROPER PERSPECTIVE.**

You must have confidence.

You must believe in yourself if you expect others to believe in you.

However, you cannot have confidence (or poise) unless you've prepared correctly. Every block is built on the others. When all are in place, poise and confidence result. You don't force them to happen. They happen naturally from proper preparation.

**IT'S GOOD TO BE CONFIDENT, BUT NEVER OVER-CONFIDENT. DO NOT BE COCKY OR FULL OF YOURSELF.**  
Solid respect without fear is what you should have.  
Believe in yourself without being self-centered, intimidated or naïve.

You should go into every game with confidence and grace.  
You should be so sure of yourself that others around you can feel it, including your opponent, and they would wonder how you could be so well-prepared and so sure of your performance, even before the game started.

**IF WE HAVE CONFIDENCE, WE HAVE PREPARED FULLY  
AND ARE SURE THAT WE ARE READY FOR ANY SITUATION.**

**“Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.”**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA.  
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# COMPETITIVE GREATNESS

**BEING AT YOUR BEST WHEN YOUR BEST IS NEEDED.  
THE ENJOYMENT OF A DIFFICULT CHALLENGE.  
PRESSURE IS A PRIVILEGE.**

Competitive greatness is the pinnacle of The Pyramid. If we demonstrate all of the preceding building-block qualities, we have the potential for “success,” but without Competitive greatness, we won’t be the best we can be.

Having competitive greatness means enjoying a challenge, not looking for the easy way out.

Competitive greatness is going the extra mile in practice so you are prepared for the big moment.

Competitive greatness is having poise and confidence when the pressure is on, and enjoying tough situations.

Competitive greatness is being fully prepared for that moment when you must deliver to help your team.

**WE DON'T HAVE TO BE SUPERSTARS TO REACH COMPETITIVE GREATNESS.  
RISE TO THE OCCASION. GIVE YOUR BEST EFFORT.  
BE PREPARED AND MAKE THOSE AROUND US BETTER.**

*Words from Coach Wooden, 10-time National Champion coach at UCLA.  
Taken from the book “Coach Wooden’s Pyramid of Success Playbook”  
And “Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections on the Court”*



# PERSONAL BEST

**BEING AT YOUR BEST WHEN YOUR BEST IS NEEDED.  
THE ENJOYMENT OF A DIFFICULT CHALLENGE.  
PRESSURE IS A PRIVILEGE.**

Competitive greatness is the pinnacle of The Pyramid. If we demonstrate all of the preceding building-block qualities, we have the potential for “success,” but without Competitive greatness, we won’t be the best we can be.

Having competitive greatness means enjoying a challenge, not looking for the easy way out.  
Competitive greatness is going the extra mile in practice so you are prepared for the big moment.  
Competitive greatness is having poise and confidence when the pressure is on, and enjoying tough situations.  
Competitive greatness is being fully prepared for that moment when you must deliver to help your team.

**WE DON'T HAVE TO BE SUPERSTARS TO REACH COMPETITIVE GREATNESS.  
RISE TO THE OCCASION. GIVE YOUR BEST EFFORT.  
BE PREPARED AND MAKE THOSE AROUND US BETTER.**

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