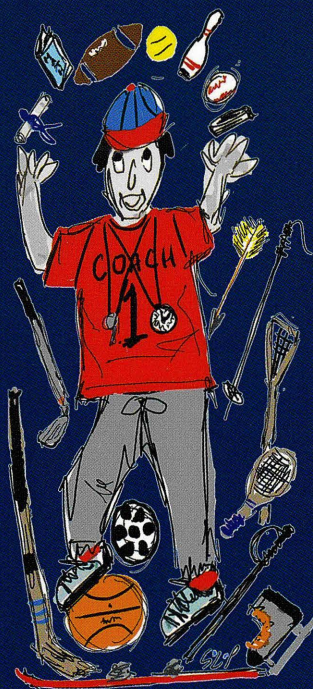


**A Coach Is...
Reflections on People
Who Have Impacted Our Lives**



Jay and Maureen Jorgensen

*Foreword by Seth Greenberg
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Foreword

The concept of this book came for a group of players that played basketball at Fairleigh Dickinson University. More than 35 years after their playing days were over, they decided to start a non-profit corporation called Teammates 4 Life Foundation. It was our goal when starting the 501(c)(3) organization to raise money to help other members of our community that had fallen on hard times as a result of cancer. It was not just members of our basketball family, but any member of our fraternity in the New York/Metropolitan area we had a connection with that could use our help. The focus of Teammates 4 Life is to provide financial and moral support for former college athletes who are battling cancer. Over the past several years we have helped with meals, trips to doctor offices, a gift basket to bring a smile to people going through that difficult time in their lives.

Why did we start Teammates 4 Life in the first place? We realized that over 35 years after we had played together, we still had this unbreakable bond, shared experience even though we were all living our own lives. We realized that even though we weren't playing hoops anymore we still were connected in a way only teammates could understand. We also understood that the lessons we learned through those experiences helped make us the people we are today. We realized the adversity we faced playing basketball was so valuable in our life's journey together. We learned the value of hard work, commitment, and perseverance together. We learned the sacrifice it takes to be successful and most importantly what it is to be a teammate. That lifelong bond is bigger than basketball or sport – it is now about being a lifetime teammate to others.

The Coach has long been the centerpiece of the team, and a coach can have tremendous impact on others. A coach plants seed to help others grow and develop. It doesn't have to be a coach you play for, or even who has that title in front of their name. Everyone has had someone in their life that has given them advice, guidance and helped them grow and develop. Your coach could be a parent, a mentor, a teacher, a leader, or a counselor. But more importantly, a coach is someone who impacts others in a positive way and builds bridges for others to cross.

I pursued a career in coaching because of the tremendous impact coaches had on me. I still remember being at the 5 Star Camp listening to Hubie Brown and being mesmerized. Coach Brown's messages and his ability to teach, but more importantly the importance he put on playing hard and playing to your strengths, cemented my desire to become a coach. I recognized the value of striving to be the best version of yourself, while at the same time working on your weaknesses.

My first coach was my dad, who taught me to get lost in the game and to be a good teammate. Getting lost in the game was enjoying the opportunity to help make the game easier for others. To play the right way and be inclusive to everyone.

My middle school coach was coach Loucks. He taught me responsibility, accountability, and that coaching wasn't criticism. He would challenge me every day to be the best version of myself. Being almost right was wrong – he stressed that I should strive to always do things the right way, and not cut corners. He was tough, but fair. He didn't sugarcoat things and was always there for me. He just wanted me to be the best I could be.

My high school coach was Irwin Stewart. He taught me patience and respect. Sometimes things don't happen as quickly as you always want it to happen, but patience is part of the journey. I was a person that didn't understand why everyone wasn't as in love with the game as I was. I would often get frustrated and not see others had different priorities and things they cared about in a similar way that I cared about basketball. It was important for me to respect that we were all wired differently and had different passions. He taught me to balance respect and patience. Through his guidance I learned that even though someone has different passions it didn't mean they didn't care. That lesson has served me well in my coaching career.

My college coach was Al LoBalbo. He was an old school, hard-nosed coach. He was a terrific teacher and was meticulous in his preparation. Coach knew exactly how he wanted us to play and what we needed to be successful. What a valuable lesson for a player that had a desire to pursue a career in coaching! The simple concept of repetition and mastering the fundamentals. The idea of why we should always go back to the fundamentals because one should never lose sight of the fundamentals. It was monotonous for sure, but what was important to him became important to us. The foundation of our identity became instinct because of our daily practice routine.

To say Coach LoBalbo was demanding is an understatement. He held us accountable to the program's standard, which in turn made us keep each other accountable. He felt the standard was the standard, and he would not lower his standard. It's funny, because when I was a senior, I vividly remember a meeting I had with him. He said to me, "when you become a head coach you will be doing the same things we do every day, and you will demand the commitment from your players to embrace the standard you set." I must admit that the success I had as a coach was in part due to exactly that.

When Virginia Tech moved to the Atlantic Coast Conference it was my message to our players everyday that we weren't an opponent in the league...rather we were there competing to win. The standard was the standard, and that standard enabled us to not only beat the University of North Carolina and Duke University multiple times, but it also enabled us to build a winning program and culture at Virginia Tech.

The ability to inspire and understand the value of reinvention and perseverance is such a valuable lesson, and my mother Marilyn Fleming taught me that. She is as tough a person as I have ever met. After my parents divorced my mother went through a long-term relationship that didn't end well. Instead of feeling sorry for herself, she transferred from her career as an artist into selling real estate in New York City. She would not let her situation paralyze her. She was determined to reinvent herself at an age where most people were getting ready to retire. She was, as she calls herself, "a tough NYC broad," and she attacked her new calling in an inspiring way. Now, at over 90 years old, she still is in the real estate business and works six days a week. Her fearless approach to the challenges of life is such a valuable lesson, and I witnessed it firsthand.

This inspiring woman gave me a road map, when I was fired at Virginia Tech. Having been let go from the profession I loved and having a wife and three

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daughters to provide for, I had to reinvent myself and move forward. I couldn't throw a pity party, but instead I had to persevere. Perseverance, resilience and dealing with adversity that I had learned from my coaching experiences enabled me to pursue and embrace my new profession and passion in broadcasting.

Coaches don't need to wear a whistle. Anyone can play the role, but most importantly impacting someone in a positive manner is what coaching is all about. I can say as I've been on both sides of this I would not be where I am today without the coaches that invested in me. I hope I passed some of those same lessons on to my players over the past 34 years. I can honestly say that that there wasn't a day in my coaching career that I didn't take that as my number one responsibility.

The stories in this book give wonderful examples of how coaches have influenced our lives. I'm sure that as you read them you will undoubtedly find yourself thinking of someone – a coach, a teacher, a mentor – who had a similar impact on your life. When you do, honor that individual by “paying it forward.” Pass on that impactful moment to somebody else you encounter. Make a difference in that person's life. In that way the spirit and mission of Teammates 4 Life will continue to grow and help those former college athletes who are battling cancer.

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