

HOOP THOUGHTS



coach bob starkey

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Monday, October 19, 2015

QUOTES, THOUGHTS AND CONCEPTS FROM GREGG POPOVICH



Another big thanks to Coach Steve Finamore for passing along this great list of quotes, thoughts and concepts from **Gregg Popovich**. Steve's a true student of the game and, as all the great ones do, loves sharing with other to help grow our game.

On what it means to play the right way:

1. "It mostly means that everybody is going to play unselfishly, respect each other's achievements, play hard enough every night to give yourself a chance to win, to fulfill your role."

2. "I don't want to go to practice with a bunch of problem players. Life is short, I can't imagine traveling around for 100 games with guys who are jerks. We do a lot of investigating and research before we draft a guy. These are adults; you're not going to change anybody. You're not going to take a jerk and turn him into someone who embraces the community. That's a waste of time."

3. "Sometimes being quiet and letting the player play is much more important than trying to be Mr. Coach and teach him this or teach him that. So I think as time evolves and you get older in the business you figure out what's really important, and you don't waste time trying to make people what they're not going to be."

4. "We have a practice, we've done it every year I've been there, we take the coaches on a retreat in September and we watch film for four days. And we begin with whatever team we ended with the year before, whether the first round or the finals or you won or you lost or whatever, and we go through that tape. So we took seven hours and went through Game 6, we took six hours and went through Game 7."

Following a loss:

5. "If you lose, you were less aggressive, and you didn't have the effort; that's all baloney. That's psycho-babble. You don't think Patty Mills and those guys played hard? You don't

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think Timmy tried to play hard? That's silly. They played better than we did. It's got nothing to do with effort."

Following a win:

6. "I know we didn't look pretty. I'm more interested in results than how we look. So I thought they performed well. [The Spurs] did a great job of finding the open man; hitting somebody with a little bit better shot. We only know how to play one way, and that's what we do. We didn't do anything different. We just ran what we always run, whether (Duncan) is there or not. If Tony was out or Manu was out, we run our same stuff."

7. "Each game is different, different people will play based on what's going on in the game on that particular night

8. "Coaches are sick puppies. There are always things you can improve and do better. You look at the film, try to keep your standard and get ready for playoffs."

9. "We're always trying to move the ball from good to great (shots). Penetrate for a teammate, not necessarily for yourself."

On how the Spurs with Tim Duncan, Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili have sustained greatness over the years:

10. "I think that it's a real simple answer. Nobody really likes it. They want me to say something different. It's a total function of who those three guys are. What if they were jerks? What if they were selfish? What if one of them was, you know, unintelligent? If, if, if. But the way it works out, all three of them are highly intelligent. They all have great character. They appreciate their teammates' success. They feel responsible to each other. They feel responsible to Patty Mills or to Danny Green. That's who they are and how they're built. I think when you have three guys like that; you're able to build something over time. So I think it's just a matter of being really, really fortunate to have three people who understand that and who commit to a system and a philosophy for that length of time. I don't know what else to tell you. It's on them."

11. "First thing we do is watch film, win or lose. I get on their asses. That's better than crying & saying, 'Oh jeez, poor me.'" We sent some messages to some people who weren't playing very good 'D' and, in the second half, we got that straightened out."

On Winning 50 games for the 16th straight season:

12. "I don't really care. You all have to have things to write about, I guess. It's better than losing 50, I guess. We're thinking about other things and we've just had a great group of guys for a long time. That's reason we've been able to win. Records and that sort of thing, streaks aren't really on anybody's mind."

13. "Wins are wins, but all of us want to be the last team standing. That's all that's really important to about six, or seven, or eight teams."

ON PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

14. "It's one of the most enjoyable parts of the business. You take somebody like Danny Green, who we've worked with for a long time. When you see somebody develop and come into his own, you feel like you did something worthwhile. It's one of the sources of

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satisfaction in the business, if you can see a young player grow and become confident."

15. "Relationships with people are what it's all about. You have to make players realize you care about them. And they have to care about each other and be interested in each other. Then they start to feel a responsibility toward each other. Then they want to do it for each other. We win or lose as a group."

After the Spurs won the NBA championship in 2014:

16. "If people are pleased with the way we played, I think that's great. And if people think it's good enough to learn from it and use it as an example, that's great. We just did the best we could to be who we are."

On Character: (17-23 were taken from the book "Forces of Character." By Chad Hennings)

17. "Being able to enjoy someone else's success is a huge thing. If I'm interviewing a young guy and he's saying things like, "I should have been picked All-American but they picked Johnny instead of me," or they say stuff like, "My coach should have played me more; he didn't really help me," I'm not taking that kid because he will be a problem one way or another. I know he will be a problem. At some point he'll start to think he's not playing enough minutes, or his parents are going to wonder why he's not playing, or his agent's going to call too much. I don't need that stuff. I've got more important things to do. I'll find somebody else, even if they have less ability, as long as they don't have that character trait."

18. "Work ethic is obvious to all of us. We do that through our scouting. For potential draft picks, we go to high school practices and to college practices to see how a player reacts to coaches and teammates. The phrase that we use is seeing whether people have "gotten over themselves."

When there's a guy who talks about himself all day long, you start to get the sense that he doesn't listen real well. If you're interviewing him and before you ever get anything out of your mouth he's speaking, you know he hasn't really evaluated what you've said. For those people, we think, *Has this person gotten over himself?* If he has then he's going to accept parameters. He's going to accept the role; he's going to accept one night when he doesn't play much. I think it tells me a lot."

19. "We also look at how someone reacts to their childhood. Some of these kids, as you know, had it pretty tough coming up. Once in a while somebody has had it easy, but for the most part a lot of guys have had some pretty hard knocks already. I like to hear situations where they had to raise a brother or sister, or where they had a one-parent family or a grandma or grandpa raised them and they still ended up doing pretty well academically in high school.

I like to see if they participated in some function in the community, or if they've overcome something or had a tough injury and came back. That sort of thing tells me what kind of character they have. I think all those things together tell me about their inner fiber. When I think about character I want to know about the fiber of an individual. I want to know what, exactly, they're made of; what's attached to their bones and their hearts and their brains. It's all those things that form their character to me."

20. "The other thing I'll do in practice on a regular basis when we run drills is I'll purposely get on the big boys the most. Duncan, Parker, and **Manu Ginobili** will catch more hell from me than anybody else out there. You know the obvious effect of that. If you do that and they respond in the right way, everyone else follows suit. The worst thing you can do is let it go when someone has been egregious in some sort of way. The young kids see that and you lose respect and the fiber of your team gets frayed a bit. I think it has to be that

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way. They have to be willing to set that example and take that hit so everybody else will fall in line. It's a big thing for us and that's how we do it.

21. "I go to bed every night and I don't worry about anybody on my team. I don't come to work in the morning and say, "Ah, jeez, I'm going to have to clean this mess up." It doesn't happen. Everybody else spends half their time cleaning up everything or trying to convince themselves that this guy and that guy get along and blah blah blah. When people ask me how I do it, I just think it's total logic. You don't have to be smart. I realize it's not easy but a lot of guys don't get it. When they have problems I say, "You did it to yourself." There are no problems if a team does the work ahead of time and uses character as a "true" component of selection."

22. "We spend a good deal of time discussing politics, race, food and wine, international events, and other things just to impart the notion that a life of satisfaction cannot be based on sports alone. We work with our players on things as small as how they talk to the media. Things as easy as saying, "I'm doing well" instead of "I'm doing good" when someone greets them. It seems like a little thing but it's important. My daughter still gets on me about that all the time when I say, "Oh, I'm good," and she says, "No, dad, you're well." It sounds better, like you really went to school and paid attention.

I think working on some guys' speech and how they react to the media really helps them have a more productive life. We do things on our team board like vocabulary and state capitals to see who gets them quickest before we start practice, just to get the guys thinking. Through those kinds of exercises you may find out that somebody's not included over and over.

When you finally figure out why – maybe a kid can't read very well – you get him in the room and you get him lessons. You have a little bit of a tough day because he's embarrassed as hell, but then the kid starts to learn how to read and feels pretty great about himself."

23. "I've been doing this a long time, and one of my biggest joys is when somebody comes back to town with their kids, or one of my players becomes one of my coaches, and you have that relationship that you've had for the last ten years, fifteen years. It might be only three years in some guys' cases, but the lessons they learned from you paid off – even if you traded them or you cut them. Years later they come back and say that you were right, that now they know what you were telling them.

I think all of that relationship building helps them want to play for you, for the program, for their teammates. Beyond that, from a totally selfish point of view, I think I get most of my satisfaction from that. Sure, winning the championship is great, but it fades quickly. It's always there and nobody can take it away. The satisfaction I get from Tony Parker bringing his child into the office, or some other player who came through the program and now I hired him as a coach and he's back. That's satisfying.

You can't just get your satisfaction out of teaching somebody how to shoot or how to box out on a rebound. That's not very important in the big picture of things. If you can have both I think you've got some satisfaction. It's one of the motivations. That's the selfish one I guess, but it's real."

24. "No one is bigger than the team. If you can't do things our way, you're not getting time here and we don't care who you are."

Posted by BOB STARKEY at 7:40 AM



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