

*The Gold Standard by Mike Krzyzewski*

1. Pressure-filled moments like this one are about who your team has become.
2. Had made us worthy of winning. There is a time to call a play and a time to let them play.
3. A whole that is truly greater than the sum of its parts.
4. You do not select a team, you select a group of people and then work together to develop into a team.
5. Teams don't instantaneously become, they evolve. To do so, you need time, goals, and competition.
6. I really mean the way you spend the time. I mean the quality of it, the focus. When you are given the responsibility of building a team, you must make time for certain things. Time to form relationships. Time to establish their importance later on. You come to realize what they really meant and how critical they actually are.
7. Team building is an ongoing process, and, in a way, all of these "times" should be happening together throughout your team's life span.
8. Often the difficulty lay not in finding the answers but in asking the questions.
9. Who: are we playing against? Will we bring together to face that competition? Do we represent?
10. What: are our particular challenges? Was missing in our recent losses? Is our motivation?
11. Why: was the old system not working? Do we care?
12. How: do we change a culture? Do we prepare to meet our challenge? Much time do we have to prepare?
13. Team over talent. Collective identity over individual ego.
14. But Jerry and I both believed that it was our current system that was flawed, not the players. This system was no longer conducive to winning.
15. It doesn't guarantee success, but it guarantees you a chance.
16. There are certain personnel components that I believe will make any team better, in basketball or business.
17. There is no substitute for talent.
18. A team needs some people with experience – veterans. Often those who have been in a particular business the longest are ignored, their contributions replaced by those of the newest up-and-comer. But it's

the veterans who have the deepest level of institutional understanding and who can pass the experience on to the other members of your team. The veterans area also those who grasp the concept of legacy. Legacy asks the question, "Who were you? Did you win? Did you lose? Did you do something special?"

19. Youth brings a certain excitement to your understanding that helps keep the team and you, as the leader, fresh.
20. Youthful enthusiasm is an essential element for any team.
21. More important, we had to select people who could come together and become one solid force on the defensive end of the court.
22. What are the core competencies that your team needs to accomplish your goal? The answer to this question will assist you in choosing the people your organization needs to go forward.
23. Willing to give of themselves to become part of something bigger.
24. I knew he had been talking to former Olympians and coaches in asking those hard questions and studying hat changes needed to be made.
25. I believed that my time to head up an Olympic team had passed when they began using professional players in 1992. No way would anyone bring in a college coach to lead professional superstars.
26. You've already done so much in your career, I said, and this is a risky undertaking. Why did you decide to do it.
27. Because I love the game and the game's been good to me.
28. We owe the game.
29. He described to me his vision for the next Olympic team, how he planned to completely turn the culture of USA basketball around.
30. Of course, there are anxieties that come along with undertakings like this one.
31. But throughout the entire process, when the numerous questions arose, rarely did I know immediately how they would be answered. I just felt confident that the answers were there and that we could find them.

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32. But that night at Michael's there was an immediate and very special connection, one rooted in both a love of the game and a love of our country.
33. Leadership can be lonely. But I believe you can fight the loneliness by finding kindred spirits and surrounding yourself with those people who will bring out the best in you. Jerry and I provided that for one another.

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34. When building a team, the members of that team need to be explicitly told what the parameters of their commitment are going to be, what is expected of them. The honesty and openness of your initial communication with these individuals lay the groundwork for the future of your relationships. In team building, you want this foundation to be one of trust and forthright communication.
35. In choosing our people, we sought out individuals with a standard of excellence.
36. The twelve players selected have incredible talent, and more importantly, we think this team has excellent leadership, great versatility and balance, and very good chemistry, which are critical parts in building a great team.
37. We never worry about what might happen, we look forward to what will happen. We could not allow our team progress to be stifled by what ifs or the pressure or outside expectations.
38. Anticipation. Not expectation.
39. Remember that choosing your people is the first decision you will make as a leader. Take the time to make it a good one.
40. But be sure that all these individuals are united by a foundation of character that will make them want to give of themselves to be a part of something bigger.
41. My comprehension of context was not focused enough for this endeavor. So I became an avid student of the international game.
42. Since James Nesmith invented the game in 1891, the United States had spent many years teaching it to the world. And the world had learned it well. Now, we had to accept the fact that we had something to learn from them. We were at a point where understanding this context, for us, meant shedding the arrogant belief that the game belonged to us and that it was ours to claim. We had to adapt to the new landscape, or quite simply.
43. However, since we did win in 2000, we did not immediately recognize the need for change in our methods and training. Winning clouded our thinking.
44. When you don't have the time to properly prepare, difficult tends to become impossible.
45. They had complex systems that had been put in place over the course of their considerable time together. As a result, international teams were able to play together instinctively. It was crucial that Jerry and USA basketball had an understanding of this context as they put

together a program that would allow us to develop instinctive play as well.

46. I think it is a mistake to automatically preclude from your team individuals who have been involved in a past failure. In fact, failure can be an essential step on the path to success.
47. Taught me failure was not a destination.
48. How to test m limits and change them.
49. Beijing reminded me of one of the primary things the 2008 Beijing Olympics were about; an opportunity for a country to prove itself a contender among the world powers and to put its progress on display. And what an impressive display China put on.
50. By learning how we got where we were, we also learned how to get where we wanted to be.
51. Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it.
52. While context gives you a sense of where your endeavor falls within the larger picture of your industry, perspective should provide a feeling of humility in the pursuit of the goal. Where context brings seriousness and focus, perspective keeps you humble.
53. Proper perspective also adds depth to your mission. It moves you beyond the superficial and taps into the emotion we all want to feel.
54. Imagine how much better your team can become if you can engage the mind and spirit of each individual and, even more, imagine the level your team can achieve if you share the same mind and spirit.
55. Selfless service. What makes teams great is selfless service.... It's putting the needs of someone else before yourself. On the basketball court that may be diving for a loose ball or taking a charge. On the battlefield it may be running into a wall of bullets or putting your life on the line for someone.
56. Three things about selfless service: it's about being a part of a cause greater than yourself, it's what makes great teams and leaders, and it's tough. If these three young men could do...
57. How ego can be a good thing, but you have to come together to form a team ego that is greater than each player's individual ego. I talked about tow being better than one only if two can act as one. And I talked about building a trust among team members that would create the ability to react at a moment's notice, with no questions asked.
58. Context should serve as your guide in what you do on the court.

59. This sense of perspective should guide your team's behavior and the way in which you relate to those around you. Your team should appreciate the fact that your actions and words off the court are still a reflection on the entire team, on your brand.
60. To be a world-class champion, you have to have both context and perspective. You have to understand how big and how small you are, and be able to internalize both.
61. Context defines your moment, and perspective allows you to make the most of it.
62. The single most important factor in bringing a team together is the formation of relationships.
63. Talk is contagious.
64. I try to instill three systems. Our offensive and defensive systems comprise those X and O strategies that we implement on the court. But most important of all is our system of communication.
65. I emphasize honesty in forming strong systems of communication.
66. Communication brings about trust.
67. Eventually two people who communicate and trust one another develop the ability to act as one.
68. When you are in the heat of competition, time is precious, and you need to be able to operate at a moment's notice.
69. Respect is a fundamental building block for strong relationships.
70. You don't demand respect, you earn it.
71. Communication, trust, and respect.
72. Team members begin to learn that coming together is not just a sacrifice – but that it has its rewards.
73. In a team environment, the talent and expertise of the person next to you is not a threat, but an opportunity.
74. But that being said, it is also natural for things to be shaky at first. The learning curve has to do primarily with being in uncharted waters.
75. In a new group, allowing time for personal connections to develop is essential.
76. Bonding does not just happen on its own. Time must be dedicated to the process. Conscious effort must be made. And remember that relationships cannot be cemented solely in your team's meetings or at practices. There have to be other chances to connect.

77. Give your team members these chances to interact off the court or outside of the boardroom in a less serious environment that allows room for one of the greatest relationship builders of all: humor.
78. In truth, humor is a huge part of how I have related to all my teams. Humor is also an effective tool in combating short attention spans.
79. Often call the little things. People call them that, but these details require big-time commitment, organization, and planning.
80. Specializing in meticulousness and allowing the leaders to lead and the players to play.
81. If you as the leader never have to worry about the things that can beat you internally, imagine how focused you can be on your external competition. Because of Sean, the players and coaches never had any distractions. (*Assist*).
82. I wanted to immediately establish a set pattern of communication. For the next three summers, we would gather in a hotel meeting room prior to every single practice.
83. Had we all merely assembled on the team bus and drive immediately to a practice we would start out disjointed, with everybody on a different page. But by having that meeting, when we arrived at the gym, we were one.
84. I called him a number of times during his recovery.
85. Often leaders take for granted that gifted people like these NBA players automatically have the confidence that they need to perform at the highest level.
86. But even champions need someone to believe in them.
87. What happens in Vegas, repeats in Beijing.
88. I will never forget the video that they arranged to have playing in each of our hotel rooms the night after our exhibition games against the Canadian National Team in 2008, prior to leaving for the Olympics. On it, Steve and Elaine both bid us good luck, and then members of the Wynn Las Vegas staff that had tended to all of our needs for three years came on-screen, one by one, with their best wishes for our endeavor.
89. Foundation of communication, trust, and respect, you can find that something else grows: caring.
90. Just remember Mike, you are as good as they are.
91. No, I'm serious, he clarified. What I'm saying is that you are as good at what you do as they are what they do.

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92. As a college coach, I like to think that I help boys become me. But I did sometimes question what I had to offer to this group, who were already men and had found much success in the NBA.
93. A challenge of this magnitude can bring about fear, and that fear can change you.
94. His support encouraged me to be myself even in the face of this new challenge.
95. The people at Duke were accustomed to my wife and daughters being at games, practices, trips, team functions, and recruiting dinners.
96. I also wanted them to know that I was comfortable with their family and friends being a part of our team, too.
97. Not every Bryant or Anthony or Redd or Boeheim will have the chance to participate in something like this, but you do. You have come into this as a representative for your entire family.
98. As a leader, if I excluded them from what we were trying to do, I would have put those families and my players in a bad position because I would have been setting the families up to be a distraction. Those outside support systems should never be made to feel like they have to compete with the team. Having them be a part of things is a benefit to everyone.
99. But Chris and I know that no one else could have provided the level of comfort for you that we did. You had your basketball family with you, and I hope you know that we had your back. Bill was a great observer and student.
100. I was like a quarterback who never got sacked.
101. When you feel alone, you act alone.
102. When something is presented as a rule, you can't own it. You can't live it. Standards, on the other hand, are lived.
103. These are things for which we hold one another accountable.
104. Leaders should remember that not all the good ideas have to come from the top, and they should be secure enough to change plans based on the input of the team.
105. We are going to distribute notebooks and include in them some documents that would be of the utmost importance to us for the next six weeks. I believe in visual reinforcement; things take on new meaning when you can actually see them in front of you.
106. You have to know what you're going for and sometimes you have to see it. The first page of our notebooks would be a full page picture of an

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Olympic gold medal, an image that would be displayed on the large screen of our meeting room every time we met. That's our goal. And we want you to see it every day; we're going to look at it every day.

107. You share a lot when you are on a team, but the primary thing that you share is your common goal.
108. Whenever you are going toward a destination, you have to have a road map. How do you get there?
109. Communication and trust. I said to my guys, "When we talk to each other, we look each other in the eye....other the truth, and we treat each other like men."
110. To be a good builder of teams, you need to identify these crucial moments and take the necessary measures to ensure that they accomplish what you intend.
111. That you fully prepare for impact moments the right away.
112. You have to give your team the opportunity to contribute to your collective identity. And they did.
113. I think being on time is going to be huge.
114. Dwayne had been unable to play because of his injury.
115. For his voice to be one of those heard at our standards meeting put him right back in the middle of things where he belonged.
116. Collective responsibility.
117. This would be another standard.
118. A joint focus on defense and rebounding.
119. But really for this next thirty-five days, I'm going to live my dream and have this become the greatest team to ever play defense on this planet.
120. Defense would become another standard to which we would hold another accountable.
121. Having a standard of performance. As a team, we needed to play every possession.
122. We had to hold ourselves to a level of hunger in our performance that made us worthy of winning.
123. If we communicate and we're connected, we can defend anything they put out on the floor. Being connected as a unit means being unselfish. It's not about me, it's about us.

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124. With regard to playing time, I told them, "There's no way I can satisfy what you would normally want."
125. I'll talk to any of you face-to-face, I'll try to keep explaining your roles. There can't be any "stuff" where you don't think I believe in you or you wonder what the staff and I are doing.
126. Unselfishness and flexibility became our standards as well.
127. Part of the character of all my teams: care, enthusiasm, pride.
128. When LeBron James spoke, everyone was silent. "I think we've got to be a no-excuse team."
129. Gold Standards
130. No excuses: we have what it takes to win.
131. Great defense: this is the key to winning the gold. We do the dirty work.
132. Communication: We look each other in the eye. We tell each other the truth.
133. Trust: we believe in each other.
134. Collective responsibility: we are committed to each other. We win together.
135. Care: we have each others backs. We give aid to a teammate.
136. Respect: we respect each other and our opponents. We're always on time. We're always prepared.
137. Intelligence: we take good shots. We're aware of team fouls. We know the scouting report.
138. Poise: we show no weakness.
139. Flexibility: We can handle any situation. We don't complain.
140. Unselfishness: we're connected. We make the extra pass. Our value is not measured in playing time.
141. Aggressiveness: we play hard every possession.
142. Enthusiasm: this is fun
143. Performance: we're hungry. We have no bad practices.
144. Pride: we are the best team in the world and we represent the best country.
145. It was no longer about merely meeting expectations it was about exceeding them.

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146. These were the things that our 2008-09 Duke Basketball team would do all the time and the things for which our Duke players and staff would hold one another accountable.
147. Great defense and rebounding: it starts here. We do the dirty work.
148. Confidence: we believe in our own abilities. We believe in each other.
149. Confront immediately: we let nothing linger.
150. Communication: we look each other in the eye. We tell the truth immediately.
151. Trust: we have each other's back.
152. No excuses: we have what we need to win.
153. Poise: we have winning faces. We show no weakness.
154. Dependability: we can be counted on.
155. Collective responsibility: we win and lose together.
156. Enthusiasm: we bring energy every day. No bad practices.
157. Respect: we are always on time. We prepare for every opponent.
158. Flexibility: we don't complain. We can handle any situation.
159. Intelligence: we take good shots. We are ware of team fouls. We know the scouting report.
160. Care: we give aid to a teammate immediately on and off the court.
161. Aggressiveness: we play hard every day.
162. Represent our program off the court.
163. Unselfishness: we make the extra pass. Our value is not measured in playing time.
164. We are this Duke team: the time is now – not the past.
165. Family: no one is closer.
166. Pride: we represent the best program and the best school in the country.
167. Take the time to establish standards. And take the time to write them down. These standards will define the character of your team. If you choose to have standards meeting, remember how important it is to have multiple voices bring that meeting to life.
168. Standards are not rules issued by the boss; they are a collective identity.