

Forming Storming Norming and Performing

The coach scratched his head and pondered the past season. What had happened? Wonderful High had traditionally been the best team in the entire state. Everyone knew that. This year, Wonderful High had the best bunch of returning players they had ever had. They were a close-knit group with lots of experience and playing time. It was also a very deep team. Right up to the first game of the season the players were practicing hard and striving for starting positions.

Two games into the season, one of the starting seniors was injured and forced to miss three games, but a sophomore filled in and played excellently. When the senior was healthy again, and immediately reinserted into the lineup, the Wonderful High Lions suddenly became the Wonderful High Pussycats. The coach worked the team hard, but the players weren't motivated and missed assignments and the substitutes became lethargic. The lions were losers in four of their last five games.

Research has conclusively determined that — all groups go through stages of development on their way to maturity.

What remains a problem to most coaches is how to recognize these stages. How do teams succeed or fail to progress through these stages on their way to successful or unsuccessful performances. Maybe it's time the coach from Wonderful High explored some old but important stages of group development. Most coaches will be able to visualize these stages at work within their own teams.

FORMING. All groups go through a forming stage; but what does this stage look like? Indeed, a lot of testing takes place in the forming stage. Members of a team try to determine what their limitations are and what they might have to help the team achieve their goals. The forming stage is a nervous time for most team members. Here is the beginning of relationships and all members go through the anxious process of deciding who on the team they will attach themselves to. This forming phase can be considered as "fight or flight" in which members must decide whether to stay and struggle or to quit the team. During the forming stage, team members notice each other, take on meaning for each other, and begin to influence each other.

Coaches should realize that they are part of this process of forming relationships as much as any other member of the team.

The direction a team takes toward achieving its goals begins with relationships.

Problems which develop in the forming stage will likely lead to a season full of problems. The team may never resolve the conflicts that appear in this stage unless the



Forming Group Cohesiveness to Win!

coach is aware of the aspects of group dynamics which lead to information. At this stage coaches need to:

- A. Help develop healthy relationships with the coach and with team members.
- B. Encourage team members to clarify their reasons for playing.
- C. Guide emerging leaders on the team.
- D. Create a comfortable atmosphere of sharing and doing the team's work.
- E. Help the team establish meaningful goals and provide ways to achieve them.

The forming stage is crucial and must be passed through healthily before a team can move successfully into the remaining stages.

STORMING. Imagine for a moment that you are sitting in a boat in the middle of a beautiful lake. A tranquil and relaxing summer afternoon. As you drowsily sit in the boat and fish you casually notice an enormous grey thunder cloud. Before you can stow your gear and race to shore, the thunderhead is upon you. By the time you reach the shore, you are wet, frustrated and totally bewildered. The weather started out as being beautiful; but what happened?

This is exactly what the storming stage of group development looks like.

Unless you see it coming, it can destroy all chances of team success.

This stage is characterized by conflict and a time for personal gain. Little success can be expected unless the team pulls together and works cooperatively. During the storming stage is demonstrated excessive competitiveness and team members may exhibit jealousy and hostility towards each other. Disruptive cliques develop as friction increases, anxiety mounts, arguments ensue and effective communication decreases. Without action, by the coach, the possibility of general collapse exists.

Clearly, this stage can be a negative experience for a team. However, storming can actually be a healthy, growing experience and is a normal part of all groups. The

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storming stage needs to happen; but if a coach allows it to become too intense, or lets it go on too long, it will be destructive.

A coach would do well to prepare for this stage. The storming stage is very real. Its positive effects need to be encouraged and its negative effects discouraged if a team is to perform optimally. Coaches often make the mistake of continually forcing team members to compete against each other during this stage (fight for a position), when cooperation is necessary.

NORMING. After storms, a calm usually occurs. So it is with teams. If they have worked effectively through the storming stage, the team naturally eases into the norming phase.

The norming stage is a time when resistance is over and group feelings and cohesiveness develop, new standards evolve, and new roles are adopted.

The team begins working together as a cohesive unit with mutual support, cooperation and integration. During the norming stage, an almost family-like structure begins to evolve. Remember the Pittsburgh Pirates a few years ago — winning the World Series to the tune of “We Are Family”? This feeling of “groupness” leads to finding ways to achieve goals. Conflicts within the team tend to stabilize and team goals become cooperative. Coaches need to support these emerging patterns of norming and cohesion.

PERFORMING: Little needs to be said about the performing stage. We have all seen teams which have reached it: when athletics becomes art, performance becomes aesthetics and competition becomes creativity. It is the Los Angeles Lakers fast break, the Edmonton Oilers scoring machine, or the passing game of the San Diego Chargers. The performance stage is achieved when structure is internalized by team members and each individual feels a responsibility to the team, its tasks, and its goals.

The performance stage carries no guarantee of self-maintenance. Crisis will continue to arise and the performing team may find itself suddenly back in the storming stage.

A perceptive coach will slowly work his team through the various stages of group development and then maintain the performing phase. A team may not always go undefeated, or may not even have a winning season; but if it has experienced the forming, storming, and norming stages in a healthy fashion, it will perform to the best of its ability.

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up with this in mind, and oriented toward that end. This automatically rules out the 12 rep system a few coaches are currently advocating — you simply cannot get really strong off such a schedule. While weights can be used for conditioning, aerobics, etc., their chief contribution lies in developing bigger, stronger, and faster athletes. Do not expect

optimum results if the training program is not oriented toward the nurture of strength.

2. Usable athletic strength springs from the legs, hips, and back — thus the majority of training effort should be centered there. Exercises that affect this area should come first in a workout schedule while the lifter is freshest and strongest. After this priority need has been met, less vital areas can be trained.

3. A schedule should concentrate on exercises that work a related group of muscles at one time rather than isolating on a single muscle. This not only saves an awful lot of time and energy (for instance, compare a BFS workout with the long list of exercises required for a routine that utilizes a couple of exercises for each separate muscle), but also produces stronger and better coordinated muscles because of a natural grouping working together.

4. A workout routine should incorporate some type of flexibility in its system rather than stubbornly hammering away at one fixed approach. For example, there are any number of good set and rep systems (5x5, 3x10, 5-4-3-2-1, etc.) but to pick one and continue solely with it will eventually result in mental staleness and a progress plateau. I have been recently following in my own workouts the BFS technique of 3x3 one week, 5x5 the second week, 5-4-3-2-1 the third week, and a “wild card” workout the fourth week. After 37 years of dedicated training, any approach that has me feeling fresh and eagerly awaiting each workout has to have something going for it!

5. True athletic strength cannot be derived from weight training alone. The areas of flexibility, speed, reflex training, and endurance also have to be continually worked on in order to be able to most efficiently utilize his strength. Most people would regard the sport in which I competed for 30 years — Olympic Lifting — as a pure strength sport. But even here a good amount of time had to be devoted to developing flexibility and reflex speed. This type of multi-faceted approach is one thing that really impresses me about the BFS system.

6. Do NOT be misled into following the fabulous workouts and flashy titles publicized in some of the more sensational type muscle magazines. In most cases, they tend to produce “pretty” muscles that may not be nearly as strong as they look. Moreover, anyone going to school or working would no have time to follow these routines anyway. Concentrate on the development of strength and let muscle size or shape come as a consequence.

I suppose most men by natural inclination seek to find an easier way or some “magical” solution toward a desired goal. Consequently, I have seen many systems and solutions appear on the scene promising such, only to give way in turn to some newer system. Maybe we all occasionally need to be reminded of the necessity of that inescapable ingredient John Houseman talks about in his TV commercials: “the old-fashioned way — HARD WORK!”