



The Path to Excellence: Developing Warriors, Not Winners

Winners and Warriors?

What is the difference and how can we help your players adopt a growth mindset and a focus on process and performance over outcome?

Chief Content Officer at [Changing the Game Project](#), Reed Maltbie shares his ideas around intrinsic motivation and the dangers of being outcome-driven. Please take time to look over the full article on the following pages.

Bonnet Bay FC is very excited to announce that it will be launching the Bonnet Bay FC Academy in 2020 which will help guide our coaches, players and supporters on an exciting journey to being known as a **WARRIOR CLUB**, a club whose Teams and Players (and supporters) are defined by the **GRIT** (Courage, Conscientiousness, Perseverance, Resilience, Passion) they apply to every aspect of training, preparation and playing football. These are proven traits of successful people that will benefit us all in every aspect of life. Grit demands a toughness that must be balanced with **SOCIAL** traits (Empathy, Compassion and Solidarity) that produce well-rounded citizens.

The following article is recommended to all coaches as a starting point to help them adapt their thinking to tie in with these concepts. We will be providing free on-line access to much more information to help our club's development along this pathway.

There are a few club expectations we wish to remind all parents, coaches and other officials of at this time:

- Give all players up to and including under 18s equal match time across the season, hopefully in multiple positions. This might be achieved by an average across all games rather than on a strict weekly basis as long as the method is clearly communicated well to players and parents. We do need to keep all our players engaged.
- Let's recognise that every player develops physically and mentally at a different rate. They all need opportunities to develop at their own pace.
- Let's entrench the concepts of a Growth Mindset, Warriors and Grit into our club's language. This will also tie in with the work presented previously on the BBFC Formation (style of play).

We'd love to see a few premierships come our way in 2020, however achieving the things above are far more important as we create the ideal environment for all our members to **Belong, Engage & Grow**.

BBFC Academy

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Reed Maltbie

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What is the difference and how can you help your players adopt a growth mindset and a focus on process and performance over outcome?

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A few years back I was walking through the parking lot at a tournament my club was hosting. It was Sunday, late in the afternoon, which meant all the games being played were for trophies. I had finished my duty as field marshal at the fields for the U-10 boys' groups and was headed back to HQ to drop off my walkie talkie. I spotted the coach from the winning team of the third division championship game walking among the parked cars. He had effectively gotten out of earshot and view of most onlookers, except me. I was close enough to hear him and was looking right at him from the cars across the aisle.

I knew who he was because of how he acted at the final. He made a great show of talking about development and process to his players. He spoke about using this game as a way to get better, win or lose, when he prepped them pre-game. All through the game, he encouraged them to focus on play and not on the score. He was a model of development.

He subbed very little. In fact, I watched two of his players spend the vast majority of time on his bench, first upset about it but ultimately disinterested in the game as they found other ways to entertain themselves in the waning moments. I witnessed the same 9-year-old boy play in goal for the entirety of the match, his requests to "play the field" falling on deaf ears multiple times. I saw his leading scorer play every minute, so tired by the end he sat down during the time the other team had to chase the ball into the underbrush behind the goal. He could barely walk off the field after the game.

They won. Despite his greatest efforts to "focus on development", they still won. In his post-game talk to the parents, given as I waited for the scorecards, he talked about the marathon of soccer and the patience needed to succeed long-term. He used buzzwords and industry-speak to drive home his point that he was there for the sake of the children and their development as fine men.

It was a touching speech and the parents were eating out of the palm of his hand. It was well-played. He said what needed to be heard to ensure he was viewed a certain way by those who adored his tactics. He said what was needed to echo in his own head to ensure he could sleep at night.

But I saw him. Standing between those cars. Thinking no one was around to see or hear what came next. I saw him pump his fist wildly, kiss the team trophy as if it were the actual

World Cup, and unabashedly exclaim: “I did it! Another freaking trophy. Three straight tournaments this season and we dominated those other teams. This is the best season ever.”

No big deal. He didn’t demean the other team or even curse. He said nothing too terrible. Honestly, he said nothing bad at all. What he did say, though, spoke volumes of his true nature and also opened a window into the “long-term” effect he was having on his players.

He was a “winner”. His players were being developed, groomed, and taught to be outcome-focused winners. His words from the field and his actions in the parking lot were not aligned at all. In fact, his words on the field didn’t even align with his actions on the field either. He espoused development, growth, marginal gains, and all the other key things clubs want for their players, but he cared about one thing. Winning. At what cost?

He got another trophy for his mantle. What about those two players who are now indifferent to the game because they never saw the field? What about the player who begged to play the field but was stuck in goal the entire game? What was he willing to compromise and trade for winning a meaningless tournament? Apparently, quite a lot.

Our biggest problem isn’t that this generation gets too many participation trophies. The bigger issue is that we have a generation that only cares about trophies.

We have lost sight of true development. We have redefined success in a very poor way. As a result, we are so fixed on outcomes that we have a generation of “empty winners” when what we need is a generation of “tenacious warriors.”

Let me explain the difference between Winners and Warriors. Once you see the value of a Warrior Culture for your team or club, you will understand why I was disturbed by that coach’s actions in the parking lot that fateful day. Sadly, some of my feelings stem from my own singular focus on winning very early in my career. I recall my fist pumps and trophy kisses along my path of growth. I also remember quite well the times I bragged about “never having a losing season.” What an unfortunate mindset, and at what cost to my players back in the day?

In a values-based, purpose-driven team or mindset winning is not the focus, but the expectedly pleasant by-product. It is not “wanted” as the main desire but simply expected as something that may happen if things are done right. Winning and losing are both mere waypoints on the journey and both should be viewed with the same desire to learn from and grow from them.

Winning is also not the ultimate goal, but a simple step along the path in the ever-ascending journey to excellence.

Warrior cultures are not teaching winning; they are teaching competing.

Warrior cultures set themselves apart by how they view, approach, and even deal with winning. It is not the goal. It is part of the journey. It is accepted humbly and then they move on to the next day.

Great parents and coaches know that all warriors are winners, but not all winners are warriors.

That is worth repeating: all warriors are winners, but not all winners are warriors. The simple commitment to personal excellence, high standards, and an ethereal quest to be better than the day before makes a warrior a winner.

Breaking rules, taking shortcuts, using others for your gain, and finding the easy route that guarantees victory makes a person a winner, but it certainly [makes no warrior](#). It is

important that we strive each and every moment we educate to create true warriors in our children. Persons who live by unbending values, who cherish the challenge, who respect the nature of competition and who run headlong into the quest for excellence. We are obligated to intentionally create those kinds of players in every moment...even the solitary ones in parking lots.

It takes a certain set of traits and beliefs to develop warriors, but if you are deliberate you can create warriors in all your athletes. Here is a guide for knowing how to create warriors not winners on your team:

- **Warriors are purpose-driven WHILE winners are trophy-driven.** While winners seek the terminal moment on the podium with an object that will someday be rusty, dusty and sold at a garage sale, the warriors are driven by some inner purpose that stems from a need to seek excellence in all they do. Master the self and you will find real victory
- **Warriors are internally motivated WHILE winners are externally motivated.** It stands to reason, if you seek trophies, you seek something outside of you. Your drive is motivated by some external need that may be out of your control and is certainly not owned by you. Warriors, on the other hand, are driven by some inner quest. They wake up each morning starting fresh to make a better person than the day prior. Like New Zealand All Blacks legend Richie McCaw who writes "Start Again" in his journal each new day. This has nothing to do with the world outside of him and has everything to do with the world inside his soul...something he alone can own.
- **Warriors have a growth mindset WHILE winners have a fixed mindset.** I like to use the term I coined during my Masters Thesis to describe a winner's fixed mindset – American Idol Syndrome. He spends his entire life thinking he is special and endowed by some great being to win since the day he graced this planet. One day he loses and what follows is an epic meltdown, like on American Idol when Simon Cowell would insult some would-be singer, "but momma always said I was the best!" A winner doesn't see the loss as part of growth and a waypoint on the journey. He simply melts down and turns back to the journey. Steph Curry and his team lost a 3-1 lead in the 2016 NBA Finals and instead of tossing a colossal fit, they saw it as a chance to get better. They know losing is part of the journey and the only thing to do at the hands of a loss is to grow.
- **Warriors are process-oriented WHILE winners are outcome-oriented.** Winners always seem to have an eye on the end-game. They will cut a corner during training to get to the finish line first. They focus on the arrival instead of the journey. When we constantly have one eye on the goal, we only have one eye on the path. It is easy to take a misstep that way. Warriors embed themselves in the process. For them, the arrival is merely another moment along that journey and what is most important is keeping both eyes directly focused on the path itself. This creates a mastery mindset in warriors. The focus on each and every step means mastery of the journey itself. Returning to Steph Curry as an example of a warrior, even as the reigning three-point leader, he went into the 2015 offseason focused on honing his shooting skill even more. He was so intensely committed to the process, he shattered the single season three-point numbers the following year.
- **Warriors are values-based WHILE winners are glory-based.** A winner's core mission tends to be glory. If you judge success only by the number of trophies, you are a glory seeker. You tend to base your own existence, happiness, and core mission on how many trinkets you collect and how much glory you can have heaped on you. **Glory feeds the ego**, the ego disconnects who we are from why we are. In other words, we stop chasing that why, that inescapable passion to follow our life purpose and grow our soul. Instead, we chase those things that grow our ego. We become bigger than life, and more important than the world around us.

- **Warriors feed the soul with all they do.** They do it because they are rooted in strong values that remind them of why they do what they do. The [All Blacks](#) provide a great example of values-based warriors. All they do is rooted in the beliefs that better people make better All Blacks, that they should plant trees they may never see, that they should leave the jersey in a better place. For them, it is about serving the world with their unshakeable purpose and leaving an imprint that is bigger than themselves. It is about creating a legacy of excellence for generations to come. Seek values and you battle for something greater than glory or a trophies, you battle for something greater than you. You battle for a legacy of excellence.

I spent the better part of my playing career and the beginning of my coaching career as a winner. I didn't actually win everything, but I acted like a winner. I based my self-worth on glory, on trophies, on something external of me. Being a winner only served to make me feel hollow. I can recall winning big games and feeling empty the next morning, as if I had no idea of "what's next". I finally learned that success without purpose is like catching water in your hand: fleeting, fruitless, futile.

We have a chance to teach our children and our athletes the awesome joy of being a warrior. Of seeking challenge, battling for personal excellence, of striving to be a better person each day, and living and playing with a purpose and embedded in values. They have the opportunity to experience deep satisfaction in mastering the game, enjoying the journey, and being part of something bigger than themselves. We make this choice to create warriors not winners and we may not fill our mantle with trophies, but we will fill the world with happy, resilient, purposeful people who will make an impact beyond the game.

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**About the Author:**

Reed Maltbie is the Executive Director of San Diego Soccer Shots as well as director of Predator Prep Goal Scoring Academy. He holds Masters degrees in both Education and Sport Performance. An accomplished soccer player, he was a member of Davidson College's 1992 NCAA Final 4 Team. When he isn't coaching at the fields he is speaking to and training coaches, parents, and soccer clubs through the Changing the Game Project and his own champion culture building program, Unrivaled. Coach Reed also serves as an expert writer for [SoccerNation.com](#), [SoccerParenting.com](#), Amplified Soccer Magazine and is finishing the edits on his forthcoming book "What's Your Echo".

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