

Sports psych evaluation on we are marshall

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We Are Marshall We Are Marshall is movie about the Marshall University football team of 1970, who almost all died in a plane crash coming home from an away game. The only members of the team that remained were the players left at home because of injuries, and one coach who drove home because of a recruiting trip. Normally Sports Psychologist could find things to work on with any team but with a new coach coming in to rebuild the program who just suffered an unruly loss the issues are heightened by the pain, struggle, and stress to win for those who could no longer play.

The Marshall Heard struggled with adapting and accepting different leaders, having the motivation to win even though they were all mainly freshman playing against teams of mostly juniors and seniors, the new and old players working together to have a common goal, sticking together and developing team cohesion and, honoring the other players. There were so many things this team had to overcome to find the common will to win. Cooperation was a main concept that the Heard had to achieve in order to have success at anything after this tragedy.

Not only did they have to get their teammates to cooperate with each other and the new coaching staff, they also had to get cooperation from the student body and the school board. After the plane crash the school board decided that it will be best for everyone if they suspend the following season and give the school time to grieve and get back to normal. When the remaining players heard about this they decide to rally the school together to get the board to allow them to play the following season.

They got the student body to chant, " We are Marshall," outside of the meeting of the school board when the final decision was being made to not

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have a season. With the cooperation of all of their peers the Heard was allowed to continue on with the season as previously planned. Before we even get in to cooperation with the entire team these few players remaining had to present a common goal to the student body and organize an event so that they school would allow the team to have a season so they could honor their teammates in the following season.

A big struggle with this program was having strong leadership, and following the leadership. The players who were left had to deal adjusting from being just part of a team to leading a new team of freshman. They had their times when leading was tough for them, Ruffin a player who was left at home because of a shoulder injury stepped up and became the main captain and leader of the team. Ruffin had times where he didn't lead by example and because he felt like the new players did not respect his former teammates he blew up and picked a fight.

Later on in the movie Ruffin's shoulder injury returns and worsens, he is told that he cannot play the second half of the game. Although many players would sulk in there injury Ruffin showed his true colors and his leadership ability when he went out in the second half and was his team's biggest cheerleader. He did everything he could to help his team out even though he would not benefit from it. Ruffin led his team with pride and he expected the team to play to the best of their ability to honor the players from the previous year who could no longer play.

Also in We Are Marshall the president filling in since the true president of the University also died in the plane crash as well, lead the school and had faith in the new coach and the team to turn things down although he was getting

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criticized for it. He approved hiring a new coach and for the recruiting to start, he got the NCAA to make an exception to the rules stating that freshmen could play so they could have a team. He lead by example and did everything he could to help the football program. When the town and some board members questioned his decisions he stood by them and did what he believed to be the right thing to do.

Motivation was very important for this team. The players who remained from the year before were motivated by their friends, coaches, and teammates they lost. These players felt a sense of duty to these players that they needed to play well and get things back together for their teammates who could no longer play. These upper classmen and the coaching staff had a hard time getting this type of motivation in to the new players. Ruffin and other returners had times where they tried to get the freshmen to understand what they were working towards but the freshmen just didn't have the same loyalty and connection to the old team. According to Vlachopoulos, athletes with high intrinsic motivation have better self-appreciation and are more successful in their activities compared with their intrinsically less motivated mates" (Bollok, Takacs, Dobay & Kalmar, 2011) You could see this, because Ruffin had an internal motivation to play to the best of his ability to honor his teammates who died, he had more of a drive to do well and he expected everyone else to do their best too. The coaching staff saw this struggle as well, they could see that the whole team was not motivated to get the job done. Before one game the coaches had the team meet them at the memorial of six players who lost their lives and were too badly deformed after the crash to identify who they were who had

been buried together because " They are still a team," said Dr. Aldred P. Wallace in an article from The Herald newspaper after the accident . There he talks to them about what happened and how those players literally gave their lives to do what rest of them were doing.

This pep talk stirred up something in the boys and that night they won their very first game. Along with the trip to the cemetery also came group cohesion. When the coaches talked to the team about what happened with the team before them and got the new players to have respect and feel a tie to the players who were no longer alive the group gelled better. Once the whole team respected the passed players and coaches they found a common goal. Watching this film the game after the trip to the cemetery was so different than what had been shown previously.

Once this group found their cohesion and commongoalsthey succeeded. The dynamics of this team differed from any other team in the NCAA at the time. At this time it was against NCAA rules to allow freshmen to play. As if being the youngest team competing in the NCAA at the time wasn't enough of a challenge, as previously stated they had some players who had a lot of respect for the former players and those who figured they didn't know them so they didn't really matter. Team members and team dynamics have to depend on and support each other to accomplish a shared goal"(Chandel 2) without good team dynamics it makes it a lot harder to get your goal achieved. Obviously every team has differences on it but usually not things that could set them back as bad as these could. Being the youngest team to take the field came with all sorts of challenges, lack of experience, smaller

players, and less maturity. At the beginning these new kids had little respect for others and what had happened, this caused a divided team.

Once the team was all on the same page and they got their differences sorted out they performed well, better than anyone expected. Communication is key in any team sport, but when players have baggage and built up frustration and aggression it is even more important. The remaining players had some held in frustration for a number of different reasons resulting from the plane crash. This came out at random times such as, during practice, in the locker room, and even in the dorm.

Not only was communication needed on the field it was needed outside of football. If the remaining players could have better communicated their feelings about the crash with their new teammates and got them to understand what they were going through they may not have had so many problems becoming a team as they did in the beginning. Once the importance of the players of the 1970 team was understood by the freshmen they worked with their upperclassmen better. They had a mutual understanding of what needed to be done and why and this helped them succeed.

In the movie *We Are Marshall* a team must overcome the challenges of having a completely new team and coaching staff as well as the challenges a coach and a few players have in dealing with the loss of the rest of the football program. Every sports team has to adjust each year to maybe a few coaching changes or new freshmen coming in but to have to rebuild an entire new program is completely different. The Heard of Marshall faces issues anywhere from team cohesion to leadership changes. New players

have to step up to help the new coach out and the coaches have to try everything they can think of just to keep the team from killing each other.

This movie is one of the greatest stories of a team overcoming adversity and coming together. ASHVIN M. CHANDEL Role of Group Dynamics in Team Sports, : Indian Streams Research Journal (June ; 2012) Bollok, S. , Takacs, J. , Dobay, B. , & Kalmar, Z. (2011). External and internal sport motivations of young adults. Biomedical Human Kinetics, 3(1), 102. Retrieved from <http://versita.metapress.com/content/J27L830PG4223742> Withers, B. (1970, November 16). The crash. The Herald- Dispatch. Retrieved from http://media.herald-dispatch.com/mucrash/index.php?p=1_61