

LEADERSHIP

THERMOMETERS VS. THERMOSTATS

Have you ever stopped to consider the difference between thermometers and thermostats? Both of these instruments are related to temperature. However, the thermometer can only tell you what the climate is; thermostats actually set the climate. Now, what does this have to do with leadership in a team setting? Think of the players on this team... most players usually join the team as thermometers. They want to be a part of the larger group, and they want to blend in. They want to earn playing time, earn the respect of their teammates and coaches, and not embarrass themselves. They look around and try to mimic the players around them in an attempt to fit in. They are simply a reflection of the climate, whether it is good or bad. This is a natural first step, and it is usually necessary for players to begin to learn their place and role on the team. However, there comes a point when we must all make that transition from being the player who is simply a reflection of the team climate, to a player who helps set the team climate! There will be times when you must turn up the temperature when passion and action are necessary, or turn down the heat when things need to “cool down” for the sake of the team.

There are times when being a thermostat can be challenging... when it is necessary to confront or “call out” a teammate who is acting selfishly, not following team rules and policies, or just not going hard in practice or games. However, that is the role of a thermostat, to change the temperature when necessary... and sometimes that means doing hard things! The primary traits that set positive thermostats apart is their relentless effort to do the right thing and to always strive to be a positive role model for their school and their teammates. This is how they earn the respect that makes others want to follow them. Ultimately, all coaches should strive to transform every player from a thermometer to a thermostat before they are finished playing!

1. Which are you more like right now... a thermometer or a thermostat?
2. Who are the top thermostats on this team? Why?
3. Do you have to be the best player on the team to be a thermostat?
4. What can you do to become more of a thermostat in your daily life?
5. What can you do to positively “change the temperature” of this team?

“If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” - Harry S. Truman