



SPORT TEAM
FUNDAMENTALS™

LEADERSHIP. CULTURE. CHARACTER. PERFORMANCE.

Pre-Season

Guide for Coaches



FOCUS:

Visualizing our **what** (goals) by **how**: our culture norms and expectations.

MINDSET:

“Declare your intentions, then make it happen.” ~ Unknown

“Success is achieved twice: once in the mind and the second time in the real world.” ~ Azim Premji

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SETTING FRUITS & ROOTS TEAM GOALS

Establishing the Process Goals (the Roots) Needed to Achieve
Your Outcome Goals (the Fruits)

COMPETENCIES:

Goals
Goal Achievement
Personal And Collective
Responsibility
Work Ethic
Attitude
Effort

TOOLS:

Acclimatizing Team Culture Map
Fruits and Roots Goal Templates
3C Team ROOT Goals Overview
and Planner

WORKOUT AT A GLANCE

Overview: The journey of a season begins by determining what goals the team aspires to achieve. Far too often teams simply identify lofty outcome goals they “hope and wish” to achieve without also calibrating the process goal commitments that the team will need to achieve their outcome goals. The purpose of this workout is to engage the team in a visioning exercise that is designed to generate both outcome goals (the FRUITS) and the process goals (the ROOTS). While it’s true that “the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step,” no sane leader takes a group on a journey of any length without determining their destination first! Acclimatizing team culture approach is all about preparing your team to push themselves to new heights—but doing so without unnecessary physical, mental, or psychological injuries. The FRUITS and ROOTS workout helps teams determine the summits they want to pursue, and the levels of personal and collective commitment needed for a successful summit.

Timing Rationale: The sooner the team develops a clear, shared understanding of the team’s performance goals, the sooner the team can begin to develop shared commitment and consent for the kind of daily commitments and expectations will be required. Early work around goal setting is essential to establish a deep *why* for everyone on the team. *What are we trying to achieve? How common (or uncommon) is this goal? What will it take from each of us and all of us to pull it off?* If we have clarity about both the OUTCOME/FRUIT goals and the PROCESS/ROOT goals at the outset, then the team will start the season with solid understanding of the rationale for our team habits, mindset, and accountability.

Delivery Prep: This workout can be done in as little as 15 minutes depending on the levels of input and engagement coaches desire from the team. As an initial workout in the early days at the start of the season, the FRUIT and ROOT goals may simply be presented to the team, with an opportunity for the team to affirm, clarify, and challenge. Then, the FRUIT and ROOT goals may be revisited throughout the season for praise and polish reflections. The workout can be broken down into two 15-minute workouts, (15 for FRUIT outcome goals, and 15 for ROOT process goals). If more time is available and there is

a desire for deeper dialogue and input into the goals, 30-45 minutes will allow for small group discussions followed by whole team discussion on both the outcome and process goals. Be sure to get your goals down in writing, on a whiteboard, Post-It Paper, or whatever you have available. The goals should be regularly reviewed, evaluated, and updated.

COACHING POINT:

Spending time on FRUITS and ROOTS will allow for important goal focus for teams of all abilities and performance expectations. A team that aspires to “win a championship” that is young, inexperienced, and has no history of winning is setting a very high ceiling. So, the team must prioritize commitments to their ROOT process goals, ensuring accuracy and fidelity around them is set, measured, and monitored. For example, physical conditioning, strategy practice, along with attitude and effort must increase to a point where the floor (what we can do every day) gets closer and closer to what was previously our ceiling—our very lofty, near impossible performance goals. Whereas a team seeking to repeat as champion will likely need even more nuanced ROOT goals to achieve such a feat—more selflessness, more resilience as other teams seek to knock you out, and different trust in each other. Talking about FRUITS and ROOTS is all about developing aligned and calibrated goals for this season and this team, and each team’s particular circumstances.

WORKOUT INTRODUCTION

INITIAL COACHING POINT:

This workout may benefit from introducing (or reconnecting to) the idea of acclimatizing team cultures to summit. You may introduce this briefly at the outset as a setup for the workout focus on FRUIT and ROOT goals. Or, you may choose to reinforce this concept at the conclusion of the workout, or even as part of the ongoing coaching towards mastery. The entire mindset around FRUIT and ROOT goals is to help teams see that FRUIT GOALS ensue (result) from ROOT goals; but ROOT goals benefit greatly from a series of sequential FRUIT goals whereby the team can test themselves, benchmark progress, and recommit to achieving their next FRUIT goal by focusing even more intensely on the improvement of their ROOT goals.




Setting up the concept of acclimatizing team culture for this workout coaches might adopt or adapt some of the following key ideas:

- ▶ The journey of every season can be thought of as preparation to summit a high peak, which is often accomplished by summing a series of successively more challenging peaks in preparation for one's ultimate summit.
- ▶ Lofty BHAGs (Big Hairy Audacious Goals) help push teams to new levels of personal and collective accomplishment. But these bold aspirational goals take more focus, preparation, and persistence. We can think of it this way: we might be able to hike a small mountain or hill in our local park without any preparation at all. Heck, we might be able to take your grandma and your puppy and make it up to the top and be back safe and sound with no stress or danger—and maybe even take a few nice pictures to share on social media. But if we decide to summit a peak on a serious mountain, with difficult terrain, unpredictable weather, and high elevation, we need a totally different level of preparation, a different mindset, and a different time commitment.
- ▶ When mountain climbers seek to summit high peaks, they acclimatize themselves through a series of preparations that require “time under tension.” During this process they push themselves up the mountain and intentionally plan ways to respond, recover, and adjust to keep finding balance between the demands of the climb and what their bodies can handle. As we ascend in elevation, extra pressure is applied to us mentally and physically, and we must monitor and adjust so that our systems are prepared to handle the pressure. This is similar to the pressures teams experience when they compete for lofty goals against strong competition. The pressure of competition increases as you go after loftier and loftier goals, and if we're not used to the pressure and trained in the pressure, we won't respond well to it. But if we expect the pressure, and adjust as needed along the way, we are strengthened by it and are ready for the toughest of competition and the loftiest performance goals.

- ▶ This is how we can think about the journey of our season: we need to talk about the lofty and challenging FRUIT GOALS (the performance goals) we want to achieve. But in order to achieve those performance goals, we're also going to have to set some ROOT GOALS (the commitment, or process, goals), which represent our shared expectations about **how** we'll prepare, respond, and adjust to the pressures and challenges we're going to experience along the way.
- ▶ So, that's what we're going to do here at the outset of our season: visualize and decide upon two kinds of goals—FRUIT GOALS and ROOT GOALS.

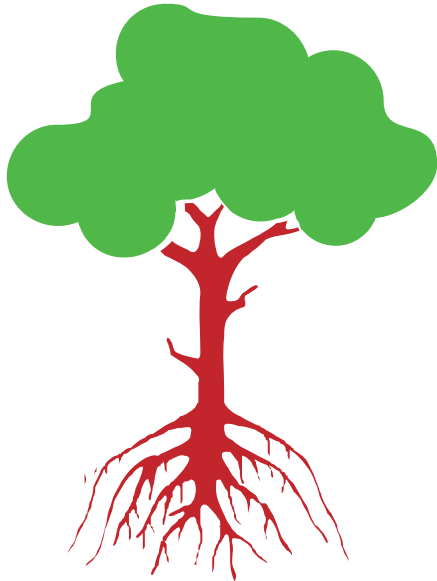
WORKOUT STEPS

1. **Introduce the FRUITS and ROOTS Goals Planner** tool to your team. This planner is based on the idea that teams achieve their performance goals (the FRUITS) through a deep commitment to their process goals (the ROOTS). FRUITS that we want to harvest come from our labors to fortify the ROOTS of our shared way. We will start by visualizing the FRUIT goals we want to achieve, because these will determine what we need to commit to do altogether as a team to realize those goals.



ROOTS AND FRUITS GOALS PLANNER

Instructions: Write the outcome goals you want to achieve in the green box (THE FRUITS).
Write your process goal commitments in the red box (THE ROOTS).



THE FRUITS

THE ROOTS

2. Break the team into pairs or small groups to **identify their performance goals (the FRUITS)**. As you break the team into pairs or groups, consider ways to maximize opportunities for building con-

nections and community around the team goals. Make sure team FRUIT goals are specific and detailed (be undefeated at home, have the fewest unforced errors/turnovers, be top five in our region, etc.). Goals may include victories over specific opponents, place finishes at various tournaments, and school or league records. Coaches may give prompts to push thinking, or leave it free-form to see how motivated, focused, and aligned the team is with each other and with the coaches.

COACHING POINT:

Coaches can begin with their own set of goals for the team, which the team would affirm, add to, clarify, and/or challenge. Or, coaches can let the conversations get rolling, then feather in the nuances and particulars of their own more detailed performance goals for the season. The goals should be lofty and bold enough to really challenge the group; some should ideally be seriously challenging “stretch goals.” It can be helpful to think about strategic goals over the course of the season leading to your ultimate summit, as these provide opportunities for acclimatizing your team culture. Goals can be added, refined and/or recalibrated along the course of a season, but what matters at the outset is that the team develops a shared sense of the nature of summits this team intends to pursue. This will convey the aspirations and ambitions coaches have for this team, which will in turn inform the kinds of ROOT process commitments that will be needed by the team.


3. Once your team has a detailed set of performance FRUIT goals, then the team needs to **reflect on the process ROOT goals**. ROOT goals ask the team to consider the strengths of culture, character, and team commitment that will be needed for accomplishing our FRUIT goals. Initially, the pairs and groups can brainstorm in a free-form way, simply thinking about what we will need to do better or differently than our past teams, and the competition we will face to be prepared for the outcome goals.

COACHING POINT:

FRUIT goals ensue from ROOT goals. So, as a team we pursue our ROOT goals knowing that our FRUIT goals will ensue. We are very intentional about naming our FRUIT performance/outcome goals. But, once we have the outcome goals set in our sights, we let go of them and focus our attention completely on ROOT process goals. Why? Because these are what lie most directly in our control on a day-to-day basis, and if we have high fidelity to our ROOT goals, our FRUIT goals will be accomplished.

ROOT goals should include the team's physical conditioning, as well as psychological conditioning (safety and trust, attitude, effort, toughness, etc.) and sociological conditioning (collective confidence, camaraderie, commitment to shared goals). Coaches can use the exercise as a test to see what their team understands about the ROOT commitments required for the FRUIT goals they want to achieve. And/or they can provide some prompts before or during to draw out the depth and nuance they desire from the team.

4. Once the team has brainstormed some of their ROOT goals, coaches can challenge the team to reflect more deeply on their goals by introducing the 3C TEAM Goals (and Planner).

 EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY
TOOLS®

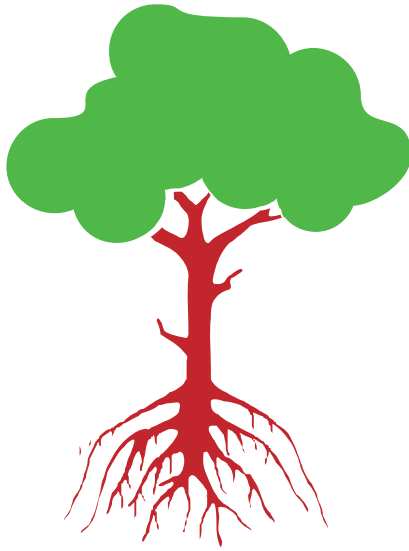
3C TEAM GOALS

Target your process goals—**THE ROOTS**,
needed to achieve your outcome goals—**THE FRUITS**.

Commit Goals
The **MINIMUM** commitments we know we can make to our overall goals.

Challenge Goals
STRETCH commitments for us, which wouldn't be easy, but would really move us toward our overall goals.

Crush-It Goals
The **SUPREME** collective commitments and sacrifices we might make to achieve our overall goals.



Adapted from Melody Wilding (2021)

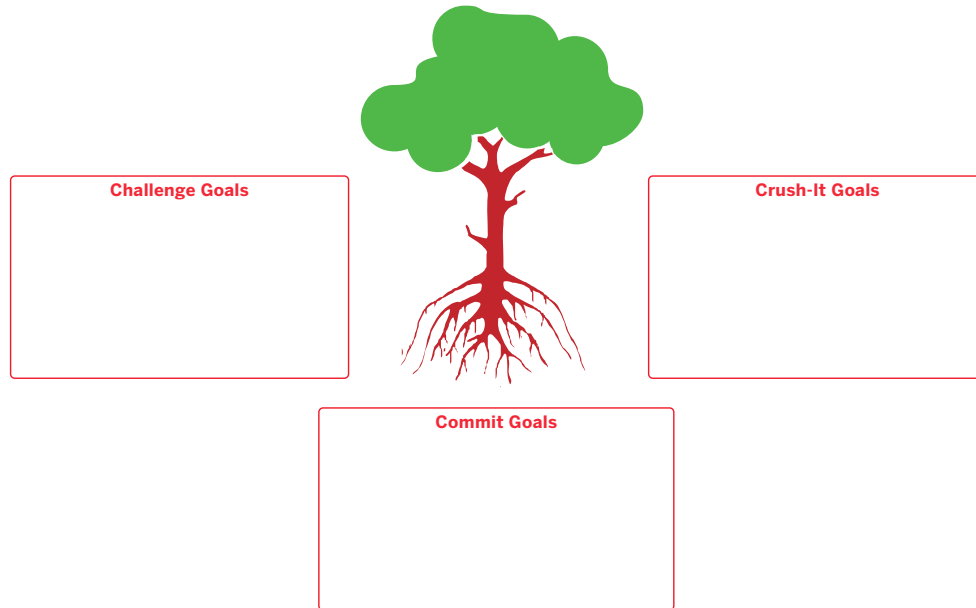
The introduction of this concept and tools helps the team to reflect deeper on their process goals, establishing the team's collective commitment to a set of minimum commitments, and then challenging the team to think about how badly they want their performance goals and whether there is anything additional they can visualize that would stretch them to prepare, sacrifice, and commit at an even higher level. *Are there extra physical conditioning commitments the team could make (diet and nutrition, sleep and rest, strength and endurance)? Are there stretch- or supreme-commitments the team could make in our psychological character and culture strengths as a team (socializing together, having hard conversations, creating an ego-free environment, no complaining, etc.)?*



3C PROCESS GOALS PLANNER (THE ROOTS)

Instructions:

Write your process goal commitments in the red boxes (THE ROOTS), indicating the Minimum Commitment(s) in the COMMIT goals box, your Stretch Commitment(s) in the CHALLENGE goals box, and your Supreme Commitment(s) in the CRUSH-IT goals box.



Adapted from Melody Wilding (2021)

COACHING POINT:

The goal of visualizing FRUIT and ROOT goals with your team is to motivate, persuade, and empower your team to buy-in to the vision you have for what they can accomplish together. At the outset of the journey you're (re)establishing their understanding and consent for where the team intends to go and the costs associated with pursuing these summits. Coaches should be careful imposing or forcing Stretch or Crush-it Goals on teams, which can serve to "crush the team morale" if the team isn't ready.

Helping the team see the various levels of ROOT goals is an important early step to their growing understanding. If the team isn't all-in yet, build on the Commit Goals and keep

seeking to get the team to desire more from themselves as they pursue their goals, reminding them always that the FRUIT goals they desire will ensue from the ROOT goals you're pursuing.

5. Once you've refined your FRUIT and ROOT goals, look for opportunities **to secure personal commitment from each team member**. This is where personal goals are appropriate, given that you have set the overall team performance and process goals. The individual team member can reflect on "I commit to do (or not do) [what] as we seek to fulfill our ROOT goals of having (for example) a relentless, no drama, quick recover culture?" This step allows coaches to see which team members have an aligned understanding of what these goals will demand of each team member. Personal goals like "start every game or lead the team in scoring" are red flags that team members are still focused on their own goals first! Whereas personal commitments like "keep my head up, no pouting, be the first off the bench, put the effort in on my conditioning" show a team member who is locked into contributing to the ROOT goals of the team, which in turn will contribute to the team accomplishing its FRUIT goals.

STUDENT-ATHLETE KNOW-&-DO TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ FRUIT goals represent the outcome or performance goals we desire to achieve.
- ▶ The more rare, uncommon, and bold our FRUIT goals, the more we must focus on fortifying the ROOTS to support these outcome goals.
- ▶ The ROOTS goals are the physical, psychological, and overall team culture that will be **needed for** the pursuit of our performance goals.
- ▶ We need shared goals (FRUIT and ROOT) so we're unified as a team in what we're committing to achieve, and our collective commitments to realizing those goals.
- ▶ Bold FRUIT goals don't have to mean pressure and stress and anxiety because we trust that the FRUIT goals will *en-sue* from our ROOT goals.
- ▶ We'll focus on what we can control in our ROOT goals, and if we do what's in our control—what we've committed to, for, and with one another—we'll take ourselves to new heights, and probably achieve our boldest goals too!
- ▶ Your personal goals should be aligned with our team FRUITS and ROOTS. You matter, and so do your teammates. But we're committing ourselves to the famous wisdom about TEAM that says, Together Everyone Achieves More.

BEFORE-DURING-AFTER CONNECTIONS: **COACHING TOWARDS MASTERY**

- ▶ The FRUITS and ROOTS goal process is designed to offer the team a visualization of the summits the team is seeking to achieve, and the commitments those summits will take. The process is a form of consent from the team: “We know where we’re going and what it will take.”
- ▶ Continuously cultivating understanding, consent, and buy-in from the team for the goals is essential.
- ▶ Find ways to make FRUIT and ROOT goals a visible part of the team culture, then look for opportunities to **reinforce the connection** between the outcome FRUIT goals and the process ROOT goals before, during, and after practice and competition.
 - **Before** a practice, game, or situation, refer to the ROOT goals highlighting how those process goals will be *needed for* and/or *developed from* the team (for the whole team, or in particular ways from particular team members or groups).
 - **During** a practice, game, or situation, look for teachable moments to affirm, clarify, or challenge what you’re seeing in action and how it meets or falls short of the ROOT goals, which will in turn jeopardize the team’s FRUIT goals
 - **After** a practice, game, or other situation, highlight praise for what you saw in the team that positively reflected the spirit of the ROOT and FRUIT goals, remembering that when we focus on pursuing the ROOT goals, the FRUIT goals will ensue—but often not immediately. As long as the team can see the areas for polish (things we can do better or differently in the future), then the team will keep improving towards its goals.

- ▶ Reviewing before sets and resets expectations as a quick visualization (“Remember, this is likely to get tested or be needed in this situation”).
- ▶ Highlighting quick praise and polish around the teachable moments while things are unfolding expands understanding and brings accountability.
- ▶ After action review helps to deepen applied learning and prepare for better response the next time the team is tested in similar ways.

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About the Consortium

Almost two decades ago, the Excellence with Integrity Institute and The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University, created a consortium partnership to advance our respective visions and missions. Together, we pursue strategic opportunities in youth leadership, employment readiness, athletics, education, and organizational development in community and workplace environments.

The Institute's main focus is on research and development of instructional and assessment tools and strategies that help leaders shape culture, build character, and achieve optimal performance.

The Ray Center's main focus is on coaching, training, and expanding our collaborative implementation projects across Iowa and around the globe.