



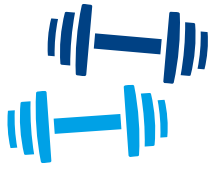
SPORT TEAM  
FUNDAMENTALS™

# INTRODUCTION

*LEADERSHIP shapes CULTURE and builds CHARACTER  
for OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE.*

Helping Coaches  
Prepare Their  
Teams for What  
Lies Ahead  
and Adjust to  
What Unfolds  
on the Journey  
to the Summit.





# RESOURCES INCLUDED

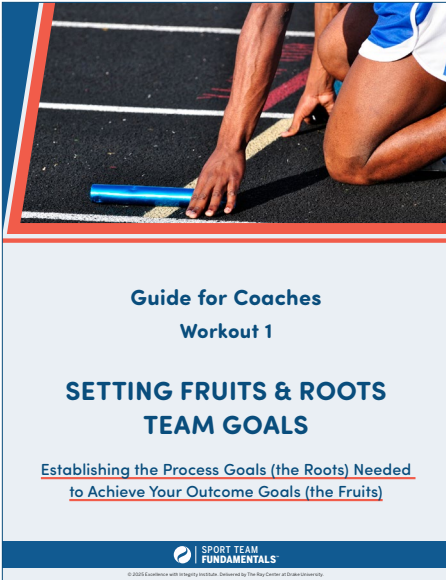
## TEAM CULTURE WORKOUTS

are the core resources designed to help you develop the essential strengths of team culture and character. Research-based Excellence with Integrity TOOLS® summarize the essential knowledge and strategies and serve as guidelines to establish and practice shared habits and mindsets.

Each workout topic includes 1) a **Guide for Coaches** and 2) a **Team Playbook**.

The **Guides for Coaches** provide the detailed steps for implementing the team culture workouts. These are supported by instructional videos that explain the knowledge and implementation insights for each workout.

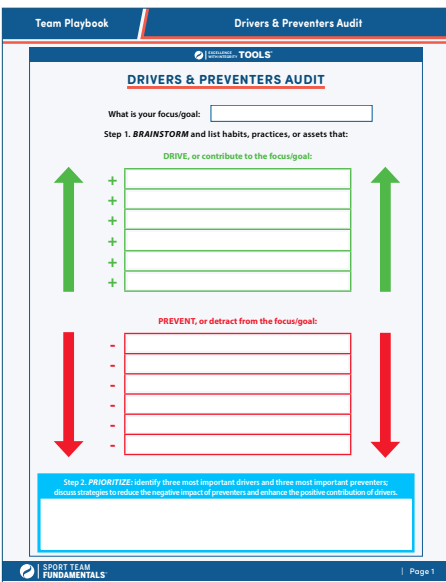
The **Team Playbooks** include the Excellence with Integrity TOOLS®, tool-based reflections and worksheets for use by the team during workouts and as extensions and reinforcements throughout the season.



## TEAM CULTURE AUDITS and OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE SELF-STUDIES

are a set of simple instruments for coaches to benchmark the balance of demandingness and responsiveness in their work with the team and the development of specific strengths of team culture and character. These tools help coaches and team members identify actionable insights on what to stop, start, continue, or improve.

An [instructional video](#) shares best practice approaches for when and how to use these tools.





## INSIGHTS FOR SHAPING PARENT CULTURE

[instructional video](#) focuses on strategies for shaping intentional team parent culture to reinforce the habits and mindsets coaches are developing within their teams. In particular, it provides suggestions for improving clarity of communication and expectations within the team parent culture.



## TEAM CULTURE AND CHARACTER QUOTATIONS

serve as succinct *before*, *during*, and *after workout* reminders and reinforcements around the targeted strengths of culture and character.

An [instructional video](#) provides coaching insights on the strategic use of quotations with team members and parents in support of the team culture and character needed to achieve excellence with integrity.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

### Training

To maximize your utilization of Sport Team FUNDAMENTALS™ resources, we recommend professional development workshops to help you learn strategies for implementing and integrating workouts with your coaching staff and team members. Workshops can be customized to address specific workouts and can vary in length to adapt to your schedule. Contact us at [raycenter@drake.edu](mailto:raycenter@drake.edu) or 515-271-1910 to schedule your training workshop.

### Assessment

The success of any culture-building initiative is directly tied to the fidelity and consistency of its implementation. For continuous improvement from season-to-season, we recommend our Sport Team Culture Survey to be completed at the end of each season by coaches and team members.



## KEYS TO SUCCESS

▶ **Read the Sport Team Fundamentals Background Brief.**

You will find the Brief later in this Introduction. It will provide an overview of the theory behind the workouts and will help you get the most from the workouts.

▶ **Consider your Team Goals and your Team SWOT.**

Review Workout #1 and Workout #2 to get a broad sense of your Fruit and Root goals and your team's SWOT. This will help you decide what you're trying to accomplish and what strengths of culture and character you most need to address.

▶ **Review the Base-To-Summit Plan.**

This list of numbered workouts intentionally laid out in the four main parts of the season provides the fullest plan that utilizes all resources included in the package (see below).

▶ **Consider anything you will want to adapt or abandon in your plan.**

You may choose to simplify or adapt which workouts to use and when to use them, based on your team goals, team SWOT, and the timeline of your season. The Simplified Base-to-Summit Plan (see below) is an example of a condensed but robust team culture development plan.

▶ **Decide what you will want to focus on first.**

Which strengths of culture and character will the team need first. Which team asset is likely to get exposed early as the weak link? What will quickly cause problems if not developed? These considerations will inform the order of the workouts that is best for your team and your goals.

▶ **Prepare to introduce, then revisit and recalibrate continuously.**

Each workout is designed to introduce a skill or competency. For mastery, you need to plan for enough time to reinforce it so that your team is ready before that asset is needed. Once the workout has been introduced and the initial work has been completed, this asset must be continuously revisited, recalibrated, and practiced throughout evolving conditions to become a stable asset of your team.

▶ **Monitor and measure throughout to determine adjustments.**

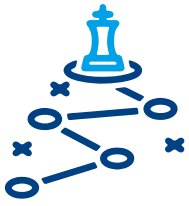
The essence of acclimatizing team culture approach is balancing demandingness and responsiveness. Figuring out whether the balance is right for the particular circumstances of your journey requires an ongoing dialogue with your team to seek feedback. Conducting the Measuring and Monitoring Audits throughout the journey will guide your efforts with specific insights on what to start, stop, continue, or improve.

▶ **Keep notes on your implementation insights and adjustments.**

The Sport Team FUNDAMENTALS approach has been developed over time with high performing teams and coaches. None of them figured it out in one season or after one summit experience! Your notes on timing and positive (or negative) implementation experiences will help you calibrate the tools and strategies to your future team and future summits.

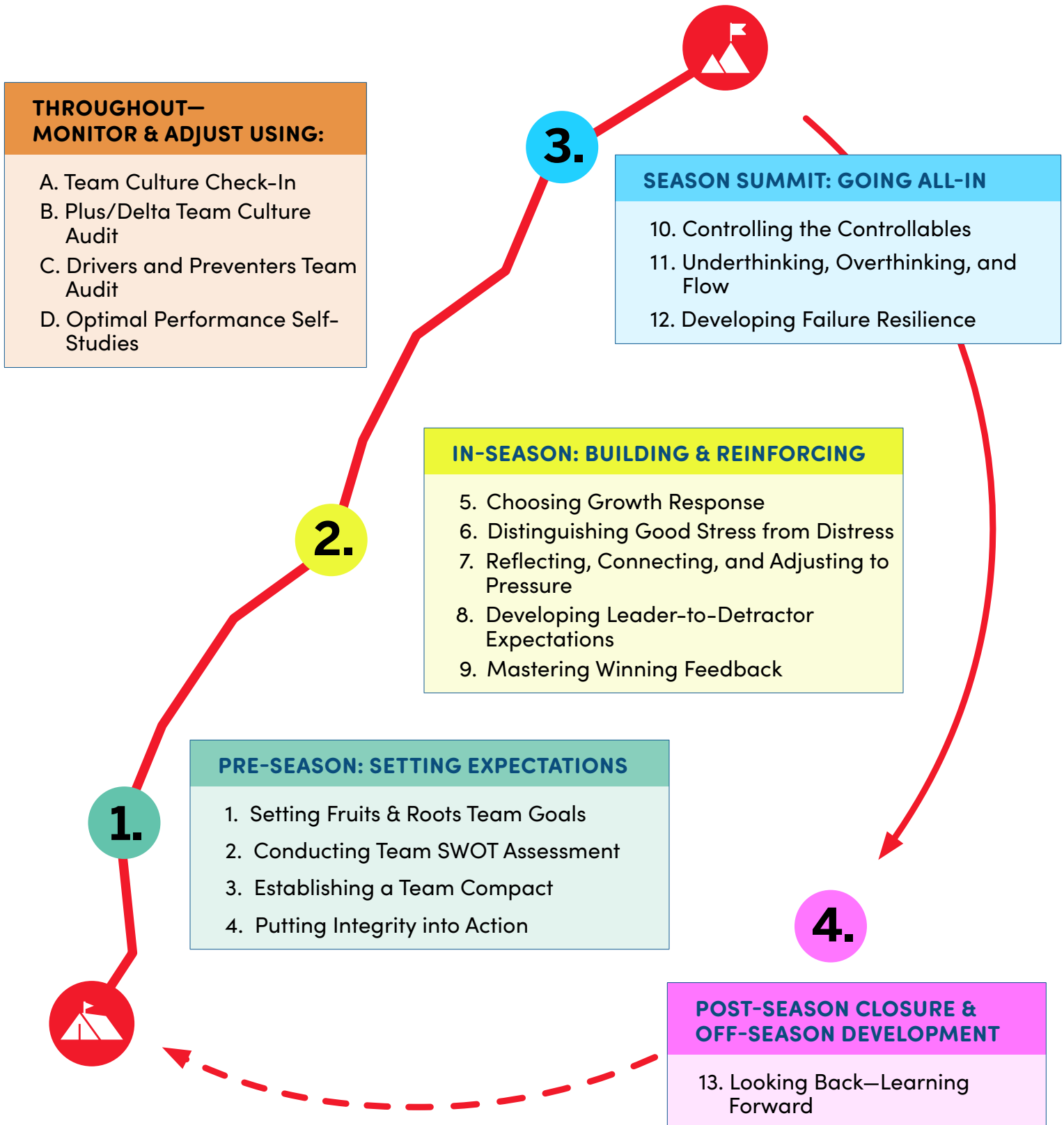
▶ **Make these resources your own!**

Most importantly, make sure that the way you utilize these resources meets your needs and the needs of your team wherever you are in your journey to your summit.



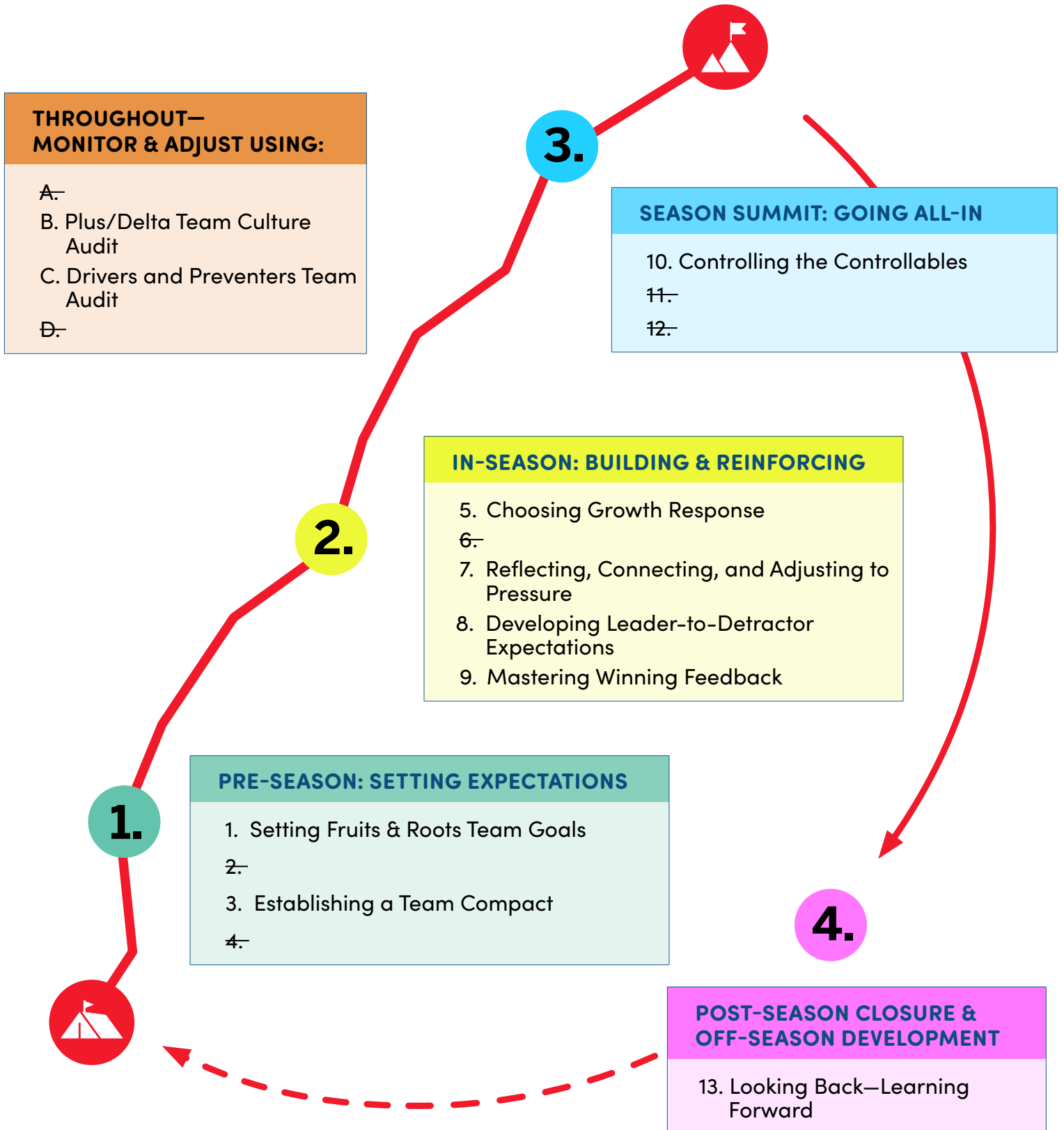
# BASE-TO-SUMMIT PLAN

Below is the full list of workouts included, numbered for easy reference. Implementation is flexible: follow as laid out or create your own plan by selecting the topics and the order that fits your team this season/year. Adjust as events unfold.



# SIMPLIFIED BASE-TO-SUMMIT PLAN

Below is one possible example of how you can condense your implementation plan.





## BACKGROUND BRIEF

The materials in these resources are based on 25 years of applied research and development in various educational, workplace, and sport environments by Matthew L. Davidson, Ph.D., Vladimir T. Khmelkov, Ph.D., and their colleagues at the Excellence with Integrity Institute. Over the years, we expanded our grounded theory framework, designed new assessment instruments, and developed and implemented a vast range of instructional resources that help leaders develop the strengths of culture and character needed for optimal performance.

We received feedback from many athletes and coaches who successfully implemented our work in competitive collegiate athletics and in pre-collegiate settings. We are grateful to all of them for their dedication and contributions to our work. We are also grateful to our talented partners at The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University.

### OUR APPROACH

In 1969, the University of Nebraska hired Boyd Epley as the first intercollegiate strength coach at a time when most everyone believed that strength training would *undermine* athletic performance. Less than a decade later, the National Strength Coaches Association was formed in 1978, still fighting the prevailing opinions of the day, which believed that building strength would undermine rather than aid athletic performance. Fast forward to today, strength and conditioning programs are an essential component of every college athletic department, every professional and Olympic sport, and most high school and pre-collegiate experiences. What started with one coach in Nebraska is now the art and science of diverse strength practices that are customized to the athlete, the sport, the style, and conditions.

At the Excellence with Integrity Institute, we believe that the science and practice around the ***formation of character, culture, and leadership*** has the potential to impact pre-collegiate and intercollegiate athletics much



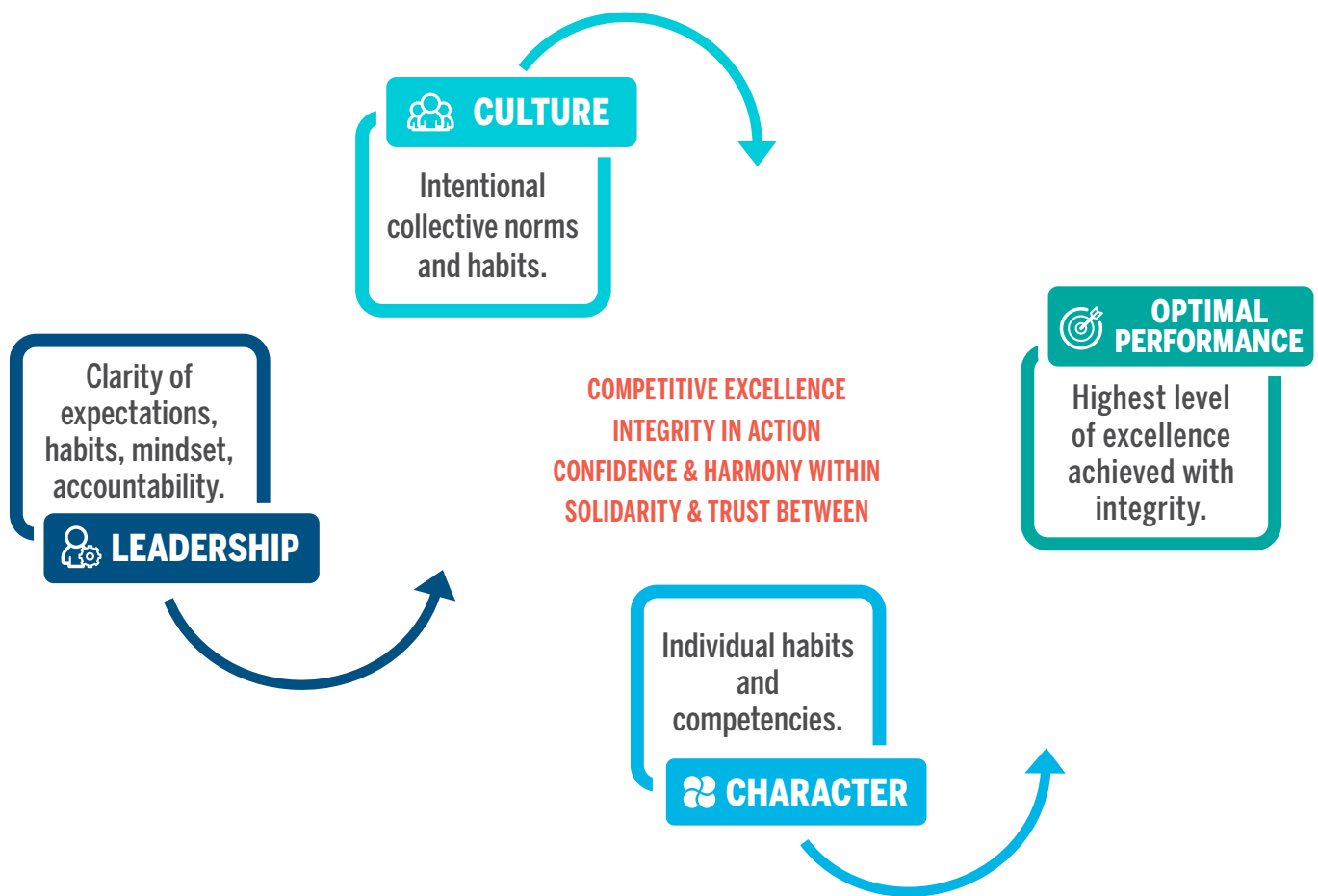
like the physical strength field has done over the last 50 years. What was once defined by myths, half-truths, and un-truths is now becoming a critical facet of individual and team performance, with the potential to enhance or undermine physical strengths, athletic ability, and team strategy needed to avoid injuries and achieve success. In a very similar way, the twin goals of **avoiding injuries and achieving success** form the foundation of our focus on strength and conditioning for team culture and character.

As the emphasis and importance of athletics increase, and the competition is more intense, coaches need to work more intentionally and deliberately to ensure that their teams and student-athletes have the culture and character needed to maximize their potential to avoid injuries and achieve success in an environment of increased media coverage, public scrutiny, and competitive pressure.

Coaches have always known the importance of culture and character strengths such as teamwork, leadership, accountability, and integrity. Talent obviously plays a role in the success of individuals and teams, but talent will always be strengthened or weakened by the strengths or weaknesses of culture and character on the team. We have now developed a better, more systematic understanding of what strengths of culture and character contribute to optimal performance, as well as what culture and character weaknesses undermine optimal performance and lead to psychological and moral injuries. And we have developed the tools and strategies that will help you strengthen your team's culture and character.

What is team culture? In simple terms, culture is our **collective values in action, our way, our collective norms and habits**. Culture is our values in action—not simply our stated values, but our operational values, what we truly value as reflected in our actions. For example, I can say my team values accountability, but if team members are rarely or inconsistently held accountable for their actions, then our operational value (loose standards and expectations) is more real than our stated value of accountability. Knowledge about our professed values isn't enough to shape our culture; all of us ***must practice*** our values every day. That's how culture is intentionally created and sustained.

Leaders shape culture →  
 Culture builds (or corrupts) character →  
 Character drives Optimal Performance –  
 the highest level of excellence we can achieve with integrity.



This model helps to frame the fundamental *WHAT* and *HOW* of shaping culture and character.

Four interdependent areas of strength form the foundation for optimal performance: excellence, integrity, solidarity, and harmony. These strengths of culture and character are both *needed for* and *developed from* the work we do to prepare our team for competition and from competition itself. These are what high performing coaches target for development to ensure their teams achieve success safely.

## WHAT?

### STRENGTHS OF CULTURE AND CHARACTER

#### *Needed To Summit Safely*

#### Competitive Excellence

Effort, Drive, & Grit  
 Attitude, Determination, & Persistence  
 Toughness & Resilience

#### Integrity in Action

Courage  
 Respect & Responsibility  
 Accountability & Discipline  
 Fairness & Compassion

#### Confidence & Harmony Within

Presence & Poise  
 Self-Awareness & Regulation  
 Acceptance & Adaptability  
 Growth Focus & Mindset

#### Solidarity & Trust Between

Safety & Belonging  
 Unity & Strength  
 Communication & Teamwork  
 Leadership



Below are the four main types of leadership practices that high performing coaches utilize for building the strengths of culture and character in their teams. The practices include: shaping **clarity** of expectations, developing intentional **habits**, providing **accountability**, and reinforcing **mindset**. These coaching practices are how coaches develop excellence, integrity, solidarity, and harmony in their teams.

## BY HOW!

### Clarity, Habit, Accountability, Mindset → Performance

#### LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR SHAPING CULTURE



The third core element in the art and science of team culture and character development is an understanding of **when & where**. To capture the dual goal of performance and safety we think about a team journey as the process of *acclimatizing team cultures to summit*. Competitive seasons are a journey from base to summit, from the pre-season to the post-season.

The famous quote says, “It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.” Competitive teams need lofty goals and the challenge of new summits to overcome their weaknesses and forge new strengths of culture and character that will not be developed pursuing only the “low peaks.” Competition means “striving with”—with teammates and with worthy opponents—to bring out new levels of strength and to develop our abilities fully.


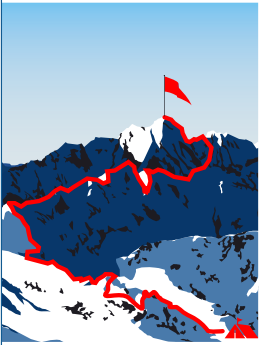
The journey of a season is always marked by the inevitable highs and lows, victories and defeats, and culminates with a further elevated pressure at its summit. Coaches operate as expeditionary leaders guiding their teams towards new heights, new challenges, and uncharted territories, and they have a responsibility to ensure that teams can summit safely—without physical, mental, emotional, or interpersonal meltdowns or breakdowns. This requires that they adjust their focus to match **when** and **where** they are in their journey.

**WHEN & WHERE:**



Coaches aren't just doing some good, nice, important work on culture and character, developing some nice assets that could help in life in the future; it's about intentionally developing the strengths of culture and character *needed* specifically for *this* team, specifically in *this* season, and for the specific *parts* of the season. If we don't properly develop assets like psychological safety, leadership, resilience, self-awareness, accountability, then we should not be surprised when we don't reach our performance goals or when we see breakdowns and psychological injuries within the team and among its members.

There are many nuances to the emerging art and science of shaping culture and character strengths for optimal performance. But the essence of the approach can be summarized as the continuous intentional process of balancing demandingness and responsiveness. On the journey of a season, from pre-season to post-season, coaches must apply pressure sufficient to forge the team and the individual assets needed for the challenge. But they must be able to respond, temper, and adjust when the demandingness is no longer landing with or working for the team. What was optimal in the pre-season may not be in the middle of the season. What was too demanding in the pre-season may be perfect as we approach the post-season (or vice versa).

Helping Coaches Prepare Their Teams for What Lies Ahead and Adjust to What Unfolds on the Journey to the Summit.

**ACCLIMATIZING TEAM CULTURE FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE**

Coaching that is both

Demanding

AND

Responsive

creating

Team Confidence and Trust

needed to summit safely—to achieve

Excellence with Integrity!

Optimal performance coaching requires an ongoing dialogue between coaches and team members to balance:

- **demandingness**, which reflects the coaching practices used to forge a culture of competitive excellence and drive the team towards greatness; and
- **responsiveness**, which reflects how coaches listen, observe, and determine necessary adjustments to the intensity, duration, and tactical effectiveness of their coaching practices and strategies.

The **workouts** presented in this resource are activities designed to help you engage your team in the development of culture and character. They are organized to help you target different steps in the journey of a season from base to summit, from pre-season to post-season. Team culture is always a work in progress. By helping you shape your team culture, these resources will ultimately help drive the performance of your team, while doing it safely and with integrity.

To use this resource effectively, remember to:

1. **Target where you are on the journey from base to summit.**

If you're in the pre-season, you might have more time to dig deeper, or implement additional workouts. If you're in the middle of the season having just experienced a couple of tough losses or big wins, you might choose a different workout or return to earlier ones to match the challenges or opportunities in front of you.

2. **Be intentional and consistent.**

Like in strength conditioning, a heavy dose of team culture development in the pre-season won't inoculate your team. To truly impact your team culture, you must consistently address culture where it is most needed, continuously targeting weak areas like you would weak muscles or weak strategy. As Pete Carroll once said, "If you're not coaching your values each day, then those aren't your values."

**SPORT TEAM FUNDAMENTALS™**

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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.