



## SECRET LIFE OF TEAMS

# A Letter From A Head Coach to Team Members

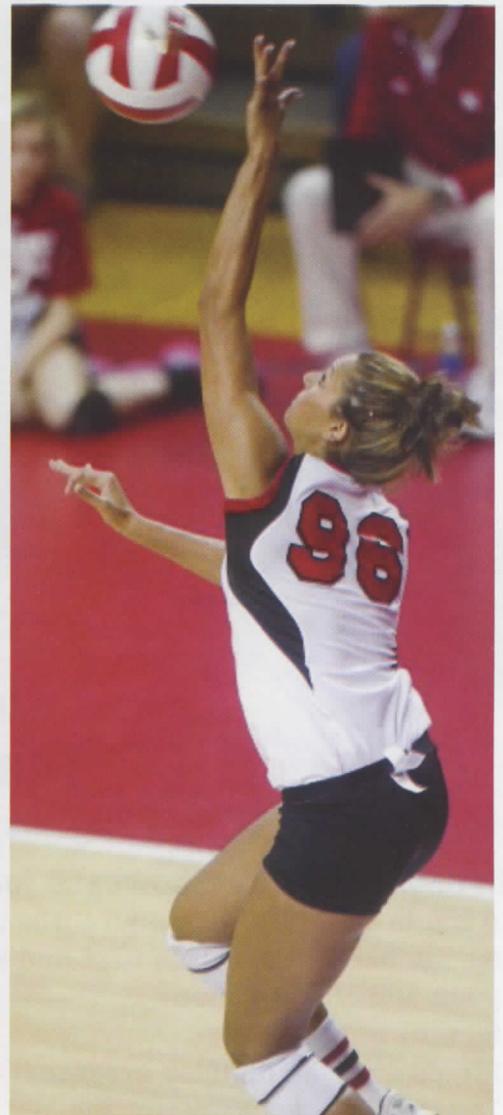
Terry Pettit

**A**s we begin the fall season I wanted to address the behaviors that will give us the opportunity to have the most success this season.

We have 12 very competitive people on our team. I anticipate a regular rotation of nine players: a setter, a libero, two middle blockers, two left side hitters, a right side player and two defensive specialists. That leaves three players that will provide depth or who might also be situational substitutions. Some of you will be in roles that you have dreamed of and some of you may be challenged with a position or role that is unfamiliar.

Your competitive spirit is one of the primary reasons that you were recruited to this team. One of your responsibilities is to compete as hard as you can for a position on the court. Another responsibility is to cheer and support your teammates as hard as you can when you are not on the court. These behaviors are not options to consider but rather the DNA of our culture.

If we are to have a successful season, we will not be the same team in December that we are now. Having said that, teams do not develop or get better by just announcing their intent to do so. Teams get better when individuals commit to behaviors that



leverage their strengths and address their weaknesses. This is much harder than it sounds because it requires a level of consistent commitment that is much greater than anything you have ever done. It also requires courage and the willingness to be uncomfortable for long periods of time.

Some of you will be asked to change footwork patterns. Some of you will be asked to communicate in a more assertive voice. Some of you will be asked to alter your posture or become more dynamic in your approach. All of you will be asked to perform and execute when you are fatigued. Your improvement may not be in a straight line, but if we are to be successful, your commitment to new behaviors has to be unwavering. If you do not make that commitment now, you are likely to let go when fatigue, injury or doubt enter the equation.

Talent is a given. You would not be here if the coaching staff did not believe that you have the talent to compete and excel at this level. Talent combined with being coachable is our base position. In fact, being coachable may even be more important than being talented.

Some of the tasks of the coaching staff are to train your movement patterns, your fundamentals, your understanding of the game and your adjustments to such a degree that you can respond as quickly as possible during competition without thinking. This requires perfect or deliberate practice, which requires repetition and error correction. This is not always fun. Fun is defeating a worthy opponent because you are prepared.

A great example of our preparation is our commitment to our base position. Base position is not just a place on the court where we are positioned to defend overpasses, setter attacks and quick attacks. It is also a commitment to posture, attitude, recognizing situations and being persistent.

Great players (aka great teams) love working to be in base position and they are as alert to the possibilities that might occur in the middle of the third set as they are at the beginning of the match. Average teams skate to a position on the court but as the match evolves their posture and their alertness begin to wane. Great teams can change their base position and make adjustments on the fly or as directed by the coaching staff. Average teams are locked into a specific place on the court.

We are a talented team, but we may play several teams that have more athletic talent than we do. We will, however, not play any team that has a stronger commitment to the behaviors that lead to championship volleyball than we do.

These behaviors include but are not exclusive to our commitment to:

**Our coachability**

**Our competitiveness**

**Our eye contact when communicating with teammates and coaches**

**Our communication on every contact**

**Our understanding of how we can be successful**

**Our alertness on the court and while waiting to be on the court**

**Our trust that if we are relentless in our training we will get better**

**Our understanding that while great volleyball is deceptively simple it is one of the hardest and most rewarding things to accomplish.**

If we can do all of these things with a consistent passion for getting better and do it not just for ourselves but because we are lucky enough to have teammates who have also made this commitment, we will have made the first step in moving from talented to extraordinary.

Embrace the opportunity with your teammates and coaches!

The Journey To Extraordinary Coaching can be ordered at [www.terrypettit.com](http://www.terrypettit.com).

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