



## KEYS TO YOUR DEVELOPMENT

**A** true athlete understands what it means to not just work, but work harder; not just set goals, but surpass them; not just seek improvement, but demand it; and not just dream, but dream a champion's dream.

A true athlete understands he will tackle every challenge head-on, every day. Athletes don't take days off. A true athlete is always ready – physically, mentally and emotionally. The body can't get what the heart doesn't want. A true athlete understands that in order to perform, he must have prepared day in and day out to seize the moment. It's all about blood, sweat and tears. To discover if you are a true athlete, we present to you eight qualities of a champion. Once you've read each, ask yourself: Are You Ready?

### MAINTAINING BALANCE

**STUDY:** When a college coach visits a prospect's high school, the first thing he checks is the player's grades. If the grades aren't there, the college is going to have a hard time recruiting you.

**DIVERSIFY:** Burnout is a possibility in any sport and maybe even more so in lacrosse because of the long hours and bruising injuries. Find other interests. No one can concentrate on lacrosse 100 percent of the time. Take a break once in a while.

**INNER CALM:** By nature, lacrosse players must have a violent streak. But remember this streak ends when you walk off the field. Use lacrosse as your release. Don't wear it as your personality.

**HUMOR:** Don't take yourself so seriously. The ability to laugh at yourself or your mistakes will help achieve a healthy perspective on what you are trying to accomplish.

**PATIENCE:** You cannot have everything at once and you should not try to get everything at once. Understand that you will work toward your goal at a natural pace.

### BEING COACHABLE

**LISTEN:** There is no more important key to being coachable than actually listening to the directions being given to you.

**ABSORB:** Think before speaking. Do not form a question and blurt it out right after instructions are given. Understand the instructions and then ask a question.

**REACT:** Don't wait to be told to do something over and over again. Once you are told one time, take initiative. Complete the task and do it over again without being asked.

**LEAD:** You always hear the term "coach on the field." Well, that's because he's a coachable player. The coach trusts him because he follows the directions.

**BE MOTIVATED:** You don't have to be a high-motor guy, but you must be ready to react when given an assignment. Throw yourself into that assignment until it is 100-percent complete.

### BEING A LEADER

**HONESTY:** In order to gain trust, you must be honest with yourself and with your teammates. Admitting a mistake or sharing the blame is a way to demonstrate to your teammates that you are an honest and truthful leader.

**RISK-TAKER:** In order to become a leader, a player must step up and step out of the group. This can be a risk. But if you have self-confidence, your teammates will follow.

**INSPIRING:** Leading by example doesn't work every time. A true leader has to step up and be heard. He must inspire his teammates with his thoughts as well as his actions.

**A LISTENER:** A leader is not just someone who barks commands, but a player who can listen and quickly digest information from his teammates and coaches.

**FORWARD LOOKING:** A leader can't dwell on what has happened, but what can happen if the team unites.

### BEING DISCIPLINED

**SELF-STARTER:** Don't wait for someone to tell you what to do. Take initiative and accomplish the task at hand without being told to do so.

**SET GOALS:** There has to be a reason to be disciplined. A player who sets goals can then figure out what he must do to achieve those goals.

**POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Stumbling blocks will inevitably get in the way. Being able to recognize and overcome those stumbling blocks will help you become disciplined.

**BE RELENTLESS:** Don't get distracted. If you have a daily mantra, put that before all other decisions. Always ask how what you're doing now is going to help you achieve your goal.

**DETAIL ORIENTED:** Understand that it is the small details and the small tasks that make up the big picture. Don't cut corners or you will not be prepared when the big task is at hand.



## GAINING RESPECT

**HARD WORK:** There is no way around it. If coaches and teammates see how much you put into it and how much you get out of it, they are going to respect your efforts.

**LIVE UP TO THE HYPE:** Don't just be a talker; be a doer. Everyone knows someone who can talk a good game, but to get respect you need to shut your mouth and let your skills do the talking.

**BIG PLAYS:** If you are the guy making the plays, you are the one getting respect from your opponents and your teammates. A couple of big scores go a long way toward garnering respect.

**RESPECT OTHERS:** Treat those around you how you would like to be treated. Be respectful of, and listen to, the coaching staff. With that comes more trust from the coaches and, in turn, more respect.

**NO NEGATIVITY:** Find the positive in every situation and overcome the obstacles that are thrown in your path. People respect those who can overcome adversity.

## SUCCESS

**SET GOALS:** Don't be afraid to aim high when setting goals. But also understand you need to start with small steps and that your goals should be achievable in order to build confidence.

**DO THE RIGHT THING:** Always keep your short- and long-range goals in mind during your daily life. Remember, every action has an equal positive or negative reaction. Constantly ask yourself how what you do today is going to help in what you want to achieve tomorrow.

**BE OPEN-MINDED:** Absorb what those around you are saying. If it fits into your goals, digest it. If not, don't be afraid to throw it back.

**SOUND MIND, SOUND BODY:** A race car can't win on bad tires. Similarly, an athlete cannot perform to his abilities without having his body in top physical shape. Dedicate yourself to the weight room.

**LEARN AND MOVE ON:** Don't dismiss your mistakes. Everybody makes them. But those who ultimately succeed are the people who learn from their mistakes and do not repeat them.

## BEING COMMITTED

**PASSION:** If there is no internal passion for the sport, there won't be the level of commitment necessary to succeed.

**DRIVE:** A committed athlete doesn't have to be repeatedly told what to do. He is the one telling and showing others what to do.

**PATIENCE:** Greatness is not thrust upon you. Athletics are not video games where you can power up by hitting the right button. A committed athlete knows that reaching his goal can be a journey, and he must be steadfast in that journey.

**ATTITUDE:** How you act and react affects you and those around you. Committed athletes surround themselves with like-minded individuals. The commitment you have can help inspire another athlete.

**NO EXCUSES:** Do not allow any excuses to enter your mind. The minute you do, weakness will soon follow. It's easy to give up. It's hard to never quit.

## MENTAL TOUGHNESS

**CONFIDENCE:** Walk into every situation knowing you are going to give your best, and then do your best.

**FOCUS:** Don't be distracted by the periphery. Keep your eyes on the prize and make every effort to reach that prize. Eschew instant gratification in favor of long-term goal planning.

**COMPOSURE:** Players get knocked down. Players get beat. A mentally tough player knows this is not the end of the fight, but just the beginning. Players must learn to not get down on themselves after a loss or even a bad play.

**RELAX:** Pete Carroll used to make his players read "The Mental Game of Tennis." Phil Jackson had his players do Tai Chi. Both methods are designed to get players out of their heads and back to their natural and practical reactions. To be mentally tough sometimes you have to let go of your mind and let your body do the work.

**COURAGE:** It takes courage to succeed. Failure is often the much easier option. But a mentally tough player understands what it is to step up, take accountability and put 100 percent behind a task without knowing the outcome.