

Act As If

In December, Rutgers basketball coach Mike Rice was suspended for three games for a violation of athletic department policy. Associate Head Coach David Cox was named head coach in his absence.

This circumstance would be difficult for any team. Cox realized that it was his responsibility to have his team ready to play in spite of their head coach's absence.

After a Sunday morning shootaround the Rutgers basketball team returned to their locker room where Cox was standing in front of the team.

"Are you guys ready to play?" he asked. "Because I'm ready to play!"

Then, he ripped off his clothes and stood in full Scarlet Knights uniform.

Basketball coaches are not like baseball coaches who are required by rule to be in uniform. Basketball coaches customarily wear suits for their games. Here Cox stood in full Rutgers uniform- sneakers included.

Later that evening, Rutgers defeated UAB 88-79. I attribute that victory to the leadership provided by Cox.

What did Cox do?

He acted as if.

Surely his players were questioning if their new coach would be ready.

Cox conveyed just how ready he really was. He was so ready that he was dressed as if he were about to take the court as a player.

"It was like he was going to go out there and play," senior Austin Johnson said.

"It was amazing. It revved us all up. Everybody was ecstatic. From that point on, he had us."

It is unknown whether or not Cox was comfortable assuming the role as head coach. It is unknown whether or not he may have been nervous. None of that matters. What really matters was how he acted- as if he was ready to play.

Once his players saw how serious he was, they were sold. They had bought in and they too were ready.

Cox's actions conveyed a key point - You must act as differently than how you feel.

Acting a certain way is the most prescribed method when it comes to changing an attitude. Motivational speaker Rob Gilbert says, “Actions change attitudes, motions change emotions, and movements change moods.”

For this reason, Peak Performance Coach Brian Cain instructs baseball players to do what he calls the ‘Peacock Walk’ on the way to home plate for an at bat. Rather than walk slowly with hunched shoulders, a sunken head, and bad body language, a baseball player should strut towards home plate with their shoulders back, head up, and a mentality as if it were impossible to fail.

Winners understand that there are times in both sports in life that you must fake it until you make it. Winners act like they are confident even when they are not. Winners act like it’s impossible to fail even when it is.

Nike once had a “Be Like Mike” campaign around Micheal Jordan’s Air Jordan sneakers. While everyone wanted to be like Mike, Mike was acting like a winner long before he became “Mike,” and long before he had his own Nike sneaker.

In my book Our Time- A High School Baseball Coach’s Journey, I wrote about the world’s most confident fourth grader, who when told by his teacher that he was forbidden to draw a picture of God because no one knew what God looked like, replied, “When I get done with my drawing everyone will know what God looks like!”

Act as if you are the most confident person in the world.

Act as if it’s impossible to fail.

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