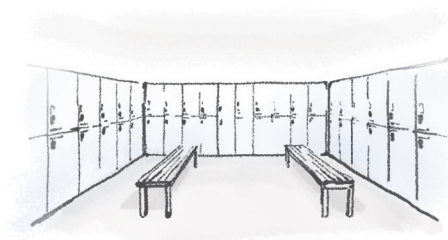


THE  
**LOCKER ROOM**  
**PLAYBOOK**



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO  
Heal Hurt, Overcome Adversity,  
and Build Unity

**DAMON WEST**

Bestselling Coauthor of *The Coffee Bean*

**STEPHEN MACKEY**

Player Development Coach

WILEY



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# A Note from the Authors

When we sat down to write *The Locker Room*, in the summer of 2021, we had one simple goal: to help people experience the “miracle of the Locker Room.”

The “miracle of the Locker Room” is a concept where, on healthy teams, people from all different backgrounds, with all kinds of hurts, histories, and hang-ups, come together and agree to six concepts:

1. A common goal that is bigger than self.
2. Making a mistake doesn't make *you* a mistake.
3. Diversity is not an obstacle to overcome, but our strength to overcome our obstacles.
4. The standard is the standard.
5. Hard days, truths, and conversations are endured, received, and had.
6. The success of the team is greater than the success of the individual.

We believe that any time a group of people makes this commitment, whether in sports or life, the conditions are set for that team or organization to overcome adversity, heal hurt, build unity, and ultimately, reach their goals.

With *The Locker Room*, we wanted to tell the story of a fictional team as an encouragement and example to help you or your team or organization visualize the “miracle.” Now, in *The Locker Room Playbook*, we want to equip you to experience the “miracle.”

This playbook is designed for individuals and teams, and while it is simple, it won’t be easy to get the most out of this playbook. It requires commitment, time, and vulnerability—and as we learned from Coach Smitty, “Authentic vulnerability is a strength.”

Every chapter of the playbook mirrors a chapter in the book, and the chapters are separated into three sections: *For Everyone*, *For the Individual*, and *For the Team*. Let’s look at how to use each section.

## For Everyone

In the “For Everyone” section, we identify the core lessons from the chapter, summarize the chapter, and provide deep-dive-teaching information. While the first two segments are meant to serve as a refresher for what you read and learned, the deep-dive-teaching portion is designed to offer some “next-step thoughts” on how you can apply the lessons of that chapter to your life and team. These next-step thoughts are connected to the chapter, but go beyond what we could cover in the book.

## For the Individual

In the second section, “For the Individual,” we invite you to do some personal reflection and work to connect the lessons of the chapter to your own life. There is space for you to write your own key takeaways, plus some reflection questions based on the chapter and deep dive teaching, as well as an exercise that will help you turn your ideas into action.

## For the Team

The final section, meant to be completed with other people, provides discussion questions and a group participation exercise for your team or organization. The questions have no “right” answers, only opportunities for you to share with each other, and listen to one another, in order to learn from the group. We believe that a team or organization can only reach their full potential when they listen to one another.

As with *The Locker Room*, our goal for *The Locker Room Playbook* is to help you experience the “miracle of the Locker Room.” We believe that if you commit to bringing the best of you to the lessons in this playbook and to your teammates, you will experience just that.

With Humility and Grace,  
Stephen Mackey and Damon West



# 1

## Eyes on the Prize



## For Everyone

### Core Lessons

- There are subtle signs when a Locker Room is broken, but even the best coaches may miss those signs.
- The pressure to win should not be allowed to blind us to the needs of our team.

### Chapter Summary

Coach Smitty is a well-respected coach with a winning team that could go all the way to a championship. But Coach Smitty has a problem: one of his star student-athletes has made racially offensive comments that were recorded and ended up on social media. Now everyone in the community and school is upset. Coach Smitty decides not to handle the matter in public, which causes further problems that he is not yet aware of.

### Deep Dive Teaching

In the story, Davey is not held to the same standard as his peers. The problems with this are pretty obvious from our armchairs, but what about when we're faced with such a situation in the real world?

In reality, it can be all too easy to take the route that Coach Smitty did by relaxing the standard for

the sake of a win. In this example, both Coach Smitty and Davey have allowed talent to outstrip character.

***The Standard Is the Standard*** The standard exists as a benchmark. Not everyone will have the same talent or skill level, but everyone can meet the same basic standards of integrity, fair play, and work ethic. These are zero-talent skills that every single person on the team can develop.

But the standard only matters if everyone is held to it equally. If the standard is one thing for the star quarterback and another for the water boy, then it's not really a standard at all. No matter who violates the team code, the standard must remain the standard.

***Talent Cannot Be Allowed to Outstrip Character*** Of the most successful people, the ones who make the greatest impact on their teammates and the world at large aren't necessarily the most talented. Instead, they are the ones who have the greatest character. Talent sets the floor, but character creates the ceiling. Or put another way, talent gets you in the door, but character determines how long you're welcome to stay.

When we place more emphasis on talent than character, it creates problems such as teammates held to unequal standards or "smaller" contributions



to the team being discounted. The most talented players must be held to the same standard as the least talented players. When talent outstrips character, the entire team pays the price in a lack of unity and trust.

## For the Individual

### **My Key Takeaways**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Journal Questions**

1. What signs have you missed that may indicate something is wrong with the culture of your team or family?
2. How would you have handled the Davey issue?
3. What similar crises have you had to handle in your life?
4. How can you work to be more aware of problems simmering beneath the surface?
5. Have you ever made racist comments? How did the response to the jokes or comments make it seem like an okay or not okay thing to say?

## Exercise

### ***Be a Journalist for a Day***

- Bring a notepad and pencil to practice.
- Write down as many details as you can about the people, the location, and what you actually do.
- Think about what details you would give if you were going to explain this locker room and practice setting to someone else.
- Look beyond the big picture to find the unique minor details about the people and location that would bring it to life in a newspaper or magazine article.
- Ask Who? What? Why? Where? and How? questions to help you see beyond what you *expect* to see, so that you can appreciate what is really there.

## For the Team

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What can go wrong if you focus too much on winning?
2. What are some signs that winning has become too important to the team?
3. Why is it important to balance goals so that winning isn't the only focus?