

32. Brooke Stoehr: A Coach's Leadership Lessons

Gavin Kelly

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Tonya Oaks Smith

Hi, everybody, and welcome to Beyond 1894 Louisiana Tech University's podcast. We are here today with Coach Brooke Stoehr of the Louisiana Tech lady Techsters. Coach Stoehr played as a Lady Techster, when did you play?

Brooke Stoehr

1998 to 2002

Tonya Oaks Smith

And she is joining us today to talk about coach the Leon Barmore story, which is the documentary that premiered last week during homecoming week. And we produce this documentary in our office University communication. So we're really proud of it. But I wanted the opportunity to talk to Coach Stoehr about leadership lessons that we can take away from Coach Barmore's example. So Thanks, coach, for joining us today.

Brooke Stoehr

Thanks for having me. It's a fun subject, and obviously one that's dear to my heart.

Tonya Oaks Smith

So you, you played for Coach Barmore, and we talked a lot. And you talked a lot during the past weekend about how special he he has always been to the program, tell us like what goes through your head, what do you remember from working with him as a student athlete, and then going into the leadership role?

Brooke Stoehr

I think I played the point guard position. And that's kind of a natural leadership position, in most cases, in basketball. And so for me, I always had to get my teammates where they needed to be what positions, what spots on the floor, they need to be at certain times, and just making sure that that, you know, happened. And as a point guard, your head coach communicates with you a lot on and off the court, and especially on the court. And it's important that you relay those messages, your your coach on the floor, and a quarterback so to speak. And so for for a point guard, you've got to be able to relay that message and the and communicate in the effective way that your head coach would want you to. And so for me, that was kind of a natural transition. I had a business degree from Louisiana Tech, I thought I wanted to coach growing up, but I didn't want to coach and teach in high school. And so it was

a natural transition. For me, I love to compete, I love to watch people achieve something, be able to bring a group together and watch them grow. And there are a lot of challenges with that. But I thought that would be something that I really could have a chance to give back and give to somebody what coach and his assistants gave to me as a student athlete here at Louisiana Tech.

Tonya Oaks Smith

So, so your business degree, so you had to take organizational development and things like that which are, to me really interesting, a lot of my master's work figured into that area, the organizational communication and things like that. One of one of the things that I took from watching the documentary was that individual human beings respond to different things. We're all incented by different things. And you lead both student athletes, and you lead your group of coaches, managers, trainers, all those humans. Tell us about how you, you know, deal with different personalities.

Brooke Stoehr

Well, I think that's probably the most challenging aspect, the coaching aspect, the X's and O's, that's, that's the easy part. managing people, I think, is the most interesting and difficult aspect of my job, because you're right, you have people ranging and you know, 18 to 22 year old females, you have a staff that comes from all different backgrounds. We have people from all over the world and different cultures and for us to be able to meld that together, and make sure that we're all moving in the same direction that can be really difficult. And so I look at the time frame number one, we have to have an expectation level of we're going to show up every day and we're going to give our best and everybody's best looks different. You know, my best looks different than certain people on my staff, my staffs looks different than certain individual players, certain individual players look different than their teammates. And we've got to give our, you know, our individual best in order to get our collective best as a group. So for us, it's understanding, hey, I've got to communicate with this player a certain way because she's going to read So you've messages differently than someone else, it doesn't mean we treat them any differently. We're treating them all fairly. But the way we go about communicating with each of them, is very likely going to be different. And so I think you've got to, number one, have a relationship with your players. We laugh about this all the time, I actually had a conversation with a player on Monday about this, we were talking about the documentary, and she'd come by my office, and I said, you know, I would have never done this as a player, I would have never walked in here to this office to coach bar more unless he called me and it didn't, we're in a different time, these these people, this generation, they want connection, and they want to get to know you. Now, there's a level of respect and a level of professionalism as a student and a coach that we certainly, you know, make known. But they need to know that we care about them before they actually care what we know. And in order to do that, you've got to spend time, not just in there, not just in our environment on the court, but you've got to, you've got to know Hey, what's going on with your family, and not in a nosy way, or we want to be in their business. But in order to connect and have those moments where we engage and earn trust, I think it's critical. And so for me, it's making sure that we spend an inordinate amount of time getting to know them, understanding them and learning how to communicate with them.

Tonya Oaks Smith

And it's the same way in an organization, you you. When you understand someone's backstory, you understand why they relate to things in a different way. You understand what's important to someone

else, you understand that traditional incentives might not work for every everyone, you know. And I think that that's, that's a thing that I learned from the documentary as well, because you could see, Coach Barmore treating players differently. But it's not. It is it is because to bring the best out of every individual, every individual needs a different thing. And that's and some people in our office respond very well to positive reinforcement. I am not a positive reinforcement person. You tell me what I do wrong, and I respond much better. It's a warped brain thing I guess I've got. But you know, there are also people that you can be much more direct with. And I'm, I would imagine that you have you have student athletes who who do that same, that very same thing.

Yeah, absolutely. We spend a lot of time we've used the Enneagram, as a tool to kind of understand how we are designed and wired as humans and individuals, and the importance of that, in our ability to communicate effectively. And we talk a lot about great teams have great teammates, and what that looks like for us of understanding how to be a great teammate. And that's knowing how not just as a staff communicate with our players, but how they communicate with each other, I can get upset because someone doesn't respond to something the way I think they should. But that doesn't mean that they don't agree or that they don't have the same feelings, it just comes out differently. And if I don't know that about them, then we can quickly it eliminates a lot of confusion, a lot of frustration. And if we don't learn to communicate and the ways that speak to each other, it's really difficult to be a great teammate. And I think that's one of the best things that we started doing a few years ago. And it's been one of the best tools for us. I think I'm a better coach because of it. I think I can understand my players better. And I think that they're starting to understand why I do things a certain way. I'm not just being picky. I'm I want things to line up for them in order for them to be successful. And in order for us to love and to serve them in a way that allows him to be successful academically, athletically and socially. I have to know how to reach them.

Tonya Oaks Smith

So you you just brought up service to our students. How do you how do you what did you take away from Coach Barmore that was a servant leadership on that that is a relatively new term and in the business structure, you know that we study this now. And I love using the word serve because that implies that there's a higher reason you know, that you do the things that you do. So help me understand that

Brooke Stoehr

he always used you know, he had lots of great quotes, but one of the things that you know, always go back too, he always said, if there was a decision to make be made about you or the program, that decision was made a long time ago. And I think he always put the program above any one individual. And he would say that about himself as well. And I think he just had a selfless way about him as he served us getting up, you know, early in the morning to watch film or staying up late at night. And I didn't understand all those things until I was on the other side of it. And I thought, Oh, they don't just roll into the office. And I mean, you know, that they're working and you know, that they're preparing, but there's just so much more like we spend an inordinate an ordinate amount of time thinking about our players, how do I make them better? What's going on with her today? Why did we react that way? How do we how can we make this group connect with this group? What does that look like? And I think just

his ability to show up every day and give great effort and demand great effort from everyone around him. There was a consistency about that, that I think, and I don't know, if you you think about the word consistency when you think about serving others, but I think that's huge. Just knowing what to expect, there, he wasn't, you know, up and down, we always knew that you came in. And I can tell you now he walked through that tunnel. And you know, we huddle before practice, and we have certain things that we do. And that was not the case, he came through the tunnel, we were all out there doing our normal warmup. And when he walked through the tunnel, we immediately went into I'm layups and I could take you through our pregame, or our pre practice, routine, still to this day, because that was consistency. And I think that consistency, we always knew what we were going to get from him. And I think that gave us confidence. And it gave us just structure and his ability to put together a plan and carry it out and allow the people around him to do their job. But demand the most from each of us was really, really big.

Tonya Oaks Smith

That that is interesting, in light of I tell my, my folks, my team, that my most important job is to make it possible for them to do their jobs, because I can't do their jobs. I can't do what Carter does, can't do what Gavin does, can't do what Tom does can't do. I'm not made to do that. But my job is to keep this stuff from rolling down on top of them. And I think that that that is a coach's position to you know, you hear a lot of things you and our our students don't necessarily need to hear those things. They probably hear it more now than they used to.

Brooke Stoehr

Right. Yeah, I think so. And the age we live in now wherever they get instant feedback, and they want instant feedback, I think this generation needs that. But I think there's so much of it that I would like to shield them from just because, you know, we talk a lot about, you know, Roosevelt's critic that you know, doesn't count. And if you're not in the middle of it, if you're not in the arena every day, getting beaten up and putting yourself out there, then, you know, you don't need to criticize, and I think I'm protective of them. But that's the world we live in. And I think that we didn't deal with a lot of those things. I know Coach Marmore and I've had those conversations now. He he would tell you that it'd be very difficult to not get I know how protective he was of us. Even then, when it was just a newspaper and article The next day, if it was in by certain time or the evening news. It wasn't immediate memes and you know everything else on Twitter and snap and whatever else social media you want to put out there. These young people deal with a lot and he was very protective of us. And I know, you know, I feel the same way about our players, they, they can experience a lot of things and educating them and teaching them what's important, what voices they need to listen to, and who they are and what really truly matters about them and their life.

Tonya Oaks Smith

One of the other things that I found was interesting. And and this will be interesting, given that they you're a woman in the field that you're in is is that it seemed like there was an interesting balance that coach achieved between his home and his work. And, and it's hard. It is hard to do that thing. Is that something that's even because I have an opinion that that balance is not achievable. And you have to figure out what's going to give, which side of the white is, you know, which side of the scale is gonna? Because sometimes this this thing needs attention. And sometimes this other thing needs attention.

Brooke Stoehr

Yeah, I think you have to do the one thing I've had to do, and it's very difficult as a mom, I mean, you know, this of their serious mom guilt, a lot of days. But I feel like I have 13, I have 13 Right now 13, big girls, and I have two little ones at home. And all 15 are extremely important to me. We talk a lot about and faint about family in our program and fame, we define families, people you love, you trust and you respect not necessarily blood related, obviously. But for me, balance is hard. I don't have a wife, or husband at home, that is, you know, picking up the rest of it. Scott, actually, you know, works on my staff. And so we're when I'm gone, he's usually gone. Sometimes we're not in the same places, we have a small village, my parents help out a lot. We've got people, great friends here in Ruston that help with our children. But there are days where I feel like I don't give enough attention to the My two at home, Aubrey and Cooper, or I give I spend more time with people that aren't my own children than I do my own. There are times where I feel like I need to be, you know, with my players more and I need to, you know, give a little bit here. I think there's, it's impossible, I think to be completely balanced. But I think you have to see what's most important and we involve our family and a lot of things that we do. I think that's great accountability for our for us and our staff and who we're recruiting. But I think it's great accountability for our players, I talk a lot about little eyes and ears are always watching everything you say and do. And so then that could be they're out to eat at a restaurant and a little girl or a little boy that they've spoken to at school or read to at school or they've seen at a game. If they see them in a restaurant, I think that's the coolest thing. They have an impact and ability to impact those young people and what they say and what they do and how they treat that waitress or that waiter, and just how they carry themselves. And so for us, I think that's really, really important that they're involved in that and that they're around. But I think it's really hard. I know what's most important to me, with my faith and my family, and my job, and I want to be great at all those. But it's really, really difficult. Some days I do, okay, some days I stink pretty bad. And I think that's with any of us in life, you're going to have great moments, you're going to have great success, you're going to have tough moments. But for us, it's the people that you have around you that you love you trust and respect that help you balance that out.

Tonya Oaks Smith

So it's not achievable.

Brooke Stoehr

I have yet to achieve that. And I like to achieve. So it's a it's a work in progress. I will say that it is constant. And, you know, I think it's something that you've got to continually try to

Tonya Oaks Smith

try to figure out it is it has always been lots

Brooke Stoehr

of balls in the air trying to juggle and not allow. Yep.

Tonya Oaks Smith

Can I please remove a plate right? So what what else if you had one thing that you could tell coaches, not coaches, just in general human beings that they could take away from either the documentary or

the, you know, or coach's life? One of the things that I take is Sophie and Ellie, His granddaughter's work in our office, and he came in one day to sign posters. And it was really fun to see them together. And I think that he has authentic relationships. And I think that's the thing that I would take away. So what would what do you think you would take away?

Brooke Stoehr

going back to Sofie and Ellie, that's two different people, Coach Barmore and granddaddy are two different people. No, but that's been really fun for me to see him in that in that same respect. But relationships are huge. And I think it doesn't matter if you're a coach or a teacher, your leader, those relationships that you build, whatever org organization you're a part of. That's what's really important because those are the daily moments that you have to build trust or to break trust or to build memories or to watch people grow or help somebody through something or receive help. Those are the aspects Except I go back to, he was always available for us, he made sure that the team was the most important thing, ultimately. And the one thing I know, I think it's just really hard to pinpoint one thing. But the one thing I know about being involved with a team that carries over into the rest of your life, no matter what you're always going to answer to someone, you're always going to have people around you that are counting on you, whether it's your family, your co workers, your boss, you're going to be counted on in some way. And so you've got to be able to show up, compete, give great effort, do your job, and be accountable for your actions. And I think that he did that for us. He modeled that he showed us that some days, we may. And I think we live in a world where accountability and discipline have a negative connotation. And I don't think that's the case. I think we all crave discipline, on some level, whether we want to admit it or not. And it's extremely valuable, that if we can teach those lessons at an early age, or right now where it's such a formidable age for their growth, then I think that helps with some heartache and some disappointments and learning to handle some failure later in life.

Tonya Oaks Smith

So we we haven't talked at all about the upcoming season. You told me earlier that you'll start November 9, right? You know, I'm not going to ask you about how your team is doing that. I'm not a sportscaster. That is not where I said although I did grow up watching the lady Techsters and I always thought that I would be a lady texter. Ha ha ha. I think everybody who grew up in North Louisiana thought that it's That's right, that that was your ambition as a young girl.

Brooke Stoehr

I do. I do have a kind of a fun story in fifth grade, September 9 1990, my fifth grade teacher had us do an assignment. And she said, I want you to write down what you predict you'll be doing on September 9 1999. So nine 999 999. And I'm a freshman here living in Harper dorm, I go to the mailbox, this is before talvez redone. And pull out a letter. It's from my fifth grade teacher. And I'm like, What is this you know, and so I open it up and read it. And my prediction said, I will be playing basketball at Louisiana Tech for the lady textures and I was a freshman here go and it was really cool. I keep that in my office. And I think it's you know, it's okay to dream. It's okay to have those aspirations. There was a lot of work that went into that, you know, leading up to that point, but I think that's kind of, uh, I always wanted to be a late texter and always wanted to be a part of the program and play for Coach bar more and then to have the opportunity to do that. And then now lead the program is, is something that is really special for me. And I don't take that for granted.

Tonya Oaks Smith

That's awesome. So we can come see y'all play in the TAC in

Brooke Stoehr

the TAC November 9, we've got a great schedule. Open up on the night. We have our annual education day game on the 11th that Friday at 11 o'clock, and that will be loud and fine and a lot of school kids there for that game. And looking forward to this group. This has been a really fun group to work with. They show up every day. They're really pull for each other. We've got nine new faces, a couple of returning players and Annaleigh Roberson and Kiana Walker who are going to be great players for us this season. Excited about the future and what what's going to come as we tip off on November night. Well,

Tonya Oaks Smith

that's great. And hopefully you'll see some future Lady Techsters in that crowd. Absolutely haven't too. Right. So Brooke, thanks for joining us today. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. And I would encourage everybody to go get your tickets to see the lady textures this fall. And if you haven't watched coach, the Leon Barmore story. It's available on our YouTube channel for free.

Brooke Stoehr

Incredible, I would definitely recommend watching a documentary. Lots of great memories.

Tonya Oaks Smith

And we look forward to hearing from you next time on beyond 1894.

Gavin Kelly

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