

The University of North Carolina Women's Soccer Team's Core Values

Coach Anson Dorrance (2006)

People who make a living from studying what makes organizations excellent usually boil their consistent success down to the group living a powerful set of core values. So if you were to read **“In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best Run Companies”** (by Tom Peters et. Al) or **“Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies”** (by Collins & Porras) or **“Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don’t** (Collins) or even **“The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People** (Covey) or **“The 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management”** (Smith), and these might be the best of the books by the brightest minds, . . . what these people are trying to teach us is this: there are certain principles of behavior that produce extraordinary results.

Every year when I meet with the rising seniors each week in the spring our discussions center around our core values and what they can do to live them and how they can help drive everyone within the culture to live them as well. Human nature being what it is, some leaders embrace the personal and public challenge of our discussions and some don’t; just like some people within the culture live the core values and some just don’t have the strength.

What we are trying to do now is collect our core values under an umbrella of quotes that are meaningful to us (coaches and rising seniors). Obviously since I have been reflecting on this longer and with a better understanding of what kind of behavior will positively effect our culture (because I have seen quite a bit in coaching the past 25 years) much of what you are going to digest are ideas that have inspired me. Still every rising senior has made contributions or is sold on these ideas because we ask them to review them in the spring. We need them to embrace and live what we have collected below because our culture and core values are only as strong as our leaders and what they endorse and drive as acceptable behavior.

So over the past 25 years, since our program began in 1979, what are the best elements of our tradition? What are our core values?

The Core Values

1. Let’s begin with this, we don’t whine. This individual can handle any situation and never complain about anything on or off the field. (*“The true joy in life is to be a force of fortune instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”* **George Bernard Shaw**).
2. The truly extraordinary do something every day. This individual has remarkable **self-discipline**, does the summer workout sheets from beginning to end without omission or substitution, and every day has a plan to do something to get better. (*“Roosevelt, more than any other man living within the range of notoriety, showed the singular primitive quality that belongs to ultimate matter, the quality that medieval theology assigned to God: ‘he was pure act’.”* **Henry Adams Theodore Rex – Desmond Morris**).

3. And we want these four years of college to be rich, valuable and deep. This is that focused individual that is here for the “right reason”---to get an education. She leads her life here with the proper balance and an orientation towards her intellectual growth, and against the highest public standards and most noble universal ideals, she makes good choices to best represent herself, her team, and her university. (*“College is about books. And by the word books, the proposition means this: College is about the best available tools—books, computers, lab equipment—for broadening your mastery of one or more important subjects that will go on deepening your understanding of the world, yourself and the people around you. This will almost certainly be the last time in your life when other people bear the expense of awarding you four years of financially unburdened time. If you use the years primarily for mastering the skills of social life—as though those skills shouldn’t already have been acquired by the end of middle school—or if you use these years for testing the degree to which your vulnerable brain and body can bear the strains of the alcoholism with which a number of students depart campus, or the sexual excess that can seem so rewarding (to name only two of the lurking maelstroms), then you may ultimately leave this vast table of nutriment as the one more prematurely burnt-out case.” Reynolds Price*).

4. We work hard. This individual embodies the “indefatigable human spirit” and never stops pushing herself. She is absolutely **relentless** in training and in the match. (*“The difference between one person and another, between the weak and the powerful, the great and the insignificant, is energy – invisible determination . . . This quality will do anything that has to be done in the world, and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities will make you a great person without it.” Thomas Buxton – Philanthropist*).

5. We don’t freak out over ridiculous issues or live in fragile states of emotional catharsis or create crises where none should exist. The best example is the even-keeled stoic that is forever unflappable. The worst example is the “over-bred dog,” that high maintenance, overly sensitive “flower” that becomes unstable or volatile over nothing significant. (*“What an extraordinary place of liberties the West really is . . . exempt from many of the relentless physical and social obligations necessary for a traditional life for survival, they become spoiled and fragile like over-bred dogs; neurotic and prone to a host of emotional crises elsewhere.” Jason Elliot An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan*).

6. We choose to be positive. Nothing can depress or upset this powerful and positive life force –no mood swings, not even negative circumstances can affect this “rock”. (*“ . . . everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way. And there were always choices to make. Every day, every hour, offered the opportunity to make a decision, a decision which determined whether you would or would not submit to those powers which threatened to rob you of your very self, your inner freedom; which determined whether or not you would become the plaything of circumstance . . . in the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person (you are is) the result of an inner decision . . . therefore, any man can . . . decide . . . that (this) last inner freedom cannot be lost.” Viktor E. Frankl Man’s Search for Meaning*).

7. We treat everyone with respect. This is that angel that goes out of her way to never separate herself from anyone or make anyone feel beneath her. *“Class is the graceful way you treat someone even when they can do nothing for you.” Doug Smith, Mgr ('86)*
8. We care about each other as teammates and as human beings. This is that non-judgmental, inclusive friend that never says a negative thing about anyone and embraces everyone because of their humanity, with no elitist separation by academic class, social class, race, religious preference, etc. *(“No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . . any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” John Donne For Whom the Bell Tolls).*
9. When we don’t play as much as we would like we are noble and still support the team and its mission. This remarkably noble, self sacrificing, generous human being **always** places the team before herself. *(“If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. The way in which a man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity – even under the most difficult circumstances – to add a deeper meaning to his life. It may remain brave, dignified and unselfish. Or in the bitter fight for self-preservation he may forget his human dignity and become no more than an animal. Here lies the chance for a man either to make use of or to forgo the opportunities of attaining the moral values that a difficult situation may afford him. And this decides whether he is worthy of his sufferings or not.” Viktor E. Frankl Man’s Search for Meaning).*
10. We play for each other. This is the kind of player that works herself to death covering for all of her teammates in the toughest games. Her effort and care (her verbal encouragement) make her a pleasure to play with and her selflessness helps everyone around her to be a better player. *(“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Note given to me by Rakel Karvelsson (UNC '98)*
11. We are well led. This is the verbal leader on the field that is less concerned about her popularity and more concerned about holding everyone to their highest standards and driving her teammates to their potential. This person competes all the time and demands that everyone else do as well! *(“Not long ago, to ‘believe in yourself’ meant taking a principled, and often lonely, stand when it appeared difficult or dangerous to do so. Now it means accepting one’s own desires and inclinations, whatever they may be, and taking whatever steps that may be necessary to advance them.” William Damon Greater Expectations).*
12. We want our lives (and not just in soccer) to be never ending ascensions but for that to happen properly our fundamental attitude about life and our appreciation for it is critical. This is that humble, gracious high-achiever that is thankful for everything that she has been given in life, and has a contagious generosity and optimism that lights up a room

just by walking into it. (*“Finally there is the question of whether we have a duty to feel grateful. Hundreds of generations who came before us lived dire, short lives, in deprivation or hunger, in ignorance or under oppression or during war, and did so partly motivated by the dream that someday there would be men and women who lived long lives in liberty with plenty to eat and without fear of an approaching storm. Suffering through privation, those who came before us accumulated the knowledge that make our lives favored; fought the battles that made our lives free; physically built much of what we rely on for our prosperity; and, most important, shaped the ideals of liberty. For all the myriad problems of modern society, we now live in the world our forebears would have wished for us—in many ways, a better place than they dared imagine. For us not to feel grateful is treacherous selfishness. Failing to feel grateful to those who came before is such a corrosive notion, it must account at some level for part of our bad feelings about the present. The solution—a rebirth of thankfulness—is in our self-interest”*. **Gregg Easterbrook, *The Progress Paradox*.**)