

# Start with the Non Negotiables

There is 1 Question Every Coach Should ask their Team at the beginning of the season – this question then sets your player standards and non negotiables for the rest of the season

It's common practice among coaches to establish a list of non-negotiables, or coach standards, and share those with their team.

But, before you share your non-negotiables with your team, you should ask them one question...

In Week 1 of our Summer Coaching Series, my friend, JP Nerbun presented on his new book, *The Culture System* (get the book [here](#), I highly recommend it).

JP laid out a system for how to establish, support, and enforce your non-negotiables. Those ideas are what inspired this article.

Non-negotiables are used to establish what is acceptable and unacceptable in your team environment, and at their core, your non-negotiables are an answer to this question:

“What do I need from my team for me to be successful as a coach?”

If you're not sure what your non-negotiables are, spend some time considering and writing down your thoughts to that question, then whittle your list down to the top 3-4 things that are “non-negotiable” in your environment.

These non-negotiables are what you need from every player, all the time.

They must be clearly establish, constantly supported, and

continually enforced.

But, before you share your non-negotiables with your team, you should ask your team one question...

“What do you need from me to be successful this season?”

Asking this question, and getting your players' responses creates an easy transition to sharing your non-negotiables with them, and provides you with extremely valuable insight into your players!

JP shared this tip of asking your team the above question before sharing your non-negotiables, and I deployed the strategy the following Monday when I had my first practice with a new team.

We huddled up, I learned their names, then I asked them one question:

“What do you need from me to be successful this season?”

I had them discuss their answers in groups of 2-3, and let them know that I'd be calling on people randomly to share what their group discussed.

After a couple of minutes, I brought them back as a whole group, and I asked several players to share their answers.

Their answers essentially boiled down to three things:

Tell us the truth

Challenge us

Support us

I could not have asked for more ideal answers!

What more could a coach want? A group of players that want truth, challenge, and support.

I told them that I was committed to doing those three things for them, then I transition to sharing with them what I needed from them to be successful as a coach.

They were receptive and attentive as I shared my three non-negotiables, and we discussed what they looked like:

Be Locked-in (attention and focus)

Be Ready (on-time and prepared)

No Profanity (no cussing, racial slurs, etc.)

I'd shared non-negotiables with teams before, but I had not posed the question JP suggested before sharing my list, but after asking them what they feel they need from me first, I'll do it with every team!

It made them more receptive to my non-negotiables, and I believe it started us out on a very positive note.