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Context to the nugget

Viren talks about his journey from being a player to a captain including some of the non-game elements that are required to move from being a successful player to an effective captain. He discusses how important it is for the captain to lead by example. He also talks about how one has to use different approaches to motivate and develop different players with varying personalities.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In your journey, you were part of the Indian team and then you went on to captain the Indian team in hockey. What's that delta from being a good player to being a good captain? What are some of the skills, muscles that need to be built, to make that jump?

Viren Rasquinha (VR): One is, you have to have certain skillsets that win you the respect of your team. So, playing, you don't necessarily need to be the best player in the team, but you need to be the best in your role. So, in a cricket team, you can't have 11 guys who are good batsmen. There is a balance that needs to be brought to a team. You need good batsmen and good bowlers and good all-rounders and a wicketkeeper, etcetera. Same with hockey. I was a defensive midfielder. In my 180 matches, I never scored a single goal for India, but I was the best in my role as a defensive midfielder. I think, that's important, that your role in the team should be well defined, you should be the best, and your skillset should win you their respect.

I think, it really helps if your communication is good with the team, both one-on-one as well as with the entire team as a whole. I think, third, it's important to be fair to everyone. And last, but not the least, I would say, it's important for the captain to lead by example. So, if it's pushing yourself in training every single day, pushing the team and going through the hard grind every single day, every single team meeting, every single training session, every single match. That's something that came very naturally to me. I have always been extremely determined and push myself every single day. I will not be happy if I give anything less than 100% in whatever I do. So, I do few things, but I make sure that I do it really well. So, I think, for me, again, I have been lucky that I have always got along with everyone. I love being around people. I hate doing anything in isolation. I don't care if I am the team leader or not, but I just love to be part of a team.

DJ: What differentiates the great captains from the good captains? Where is the edge that some captains have, who sort of go on to become really legendary?

VR: I think, it's just about your personal rapport and inspiration. And, I think, that's what I said about you have to be good not just with one-on-one with an individual, but with getting the best out of an individual as well as the team as a whole. Because finally, the team needs to be better or bigger than

the sum of its parts. You don't need the big names and the big stars in the team always. And you must understand that everyone cannot be the star in the team. There might be one, two, or three of them in a team of 16, but when you bring that entire team together, the final output should be more than the sum of the individuals. It's a skillset of the captain and the coach to bring out that best, to inspire them. It's about dealing with people and individuals, and we must remember that every individual is different. So, you might need to give *gaalis* to one guy or you might need to put an arm around the shoulder of another guy, but, I think, understanding the mentality and the attitude of people is something that's very important.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key takeaway is that developing a player or the leader has to be specifically tailored to the unique context of the individual both in the context of the bespoke development need that each person might have but also in the context of the development approach. Each person is unique and responds to a different set of cues and unless one recognizes the individual nuance, development efforts can often be futile. As Clay Christensen says, one size might fit nobody in such contexts.

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End of nugget transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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