

Amrita Cricket Team: A Case Study

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***Abstract:* This paper examines the effect of self actualized managers on the team performance in the English premier league football. We find this by evaluating the managers using the 12 traits of self actualized people presented by Abraham Maslow and drawing conclusions from the statistics of their overall performance and results in the English premier league. We have taken Sir Alex Ferguson, Manager of Manchester United Football club for our study. He has won 38 trophies during his tenure which is not even close to other managers in the Premier league. We conclude from this that a self actualized manager does not only win trophies but also makes sure they build a team that is going to serve the club for many coming years with a mixture of young talents and experienced heads ,resolve conflicts and tend to stay in the club longer and reap benefits in the long run. Whereas, the managers who are not self actualized have been sacked many times by the clubs as they tend to make teams unstable and fail to build teams for the future.**

Key Words: transformational leadership; motivation; team spirit; change management

A transformational leader is the one who change the culture of an organization by first understanding the culture of the organization and then realign the organization's culture with a new vision and revision of its shared assumptions, values and norms [1].Transformational leaders integrate creative insight, persistence and energy, intuition and sensitivity to the needs of others to "forge the strategy culture alloy" for their organizations. Bass demonstrates the relationship between leadership and culture by examining the impact of different styles of leadership on culture. He argues that transactional leaders tend to operate within the confines and limits of the existing culture, while transformational leaders frequently work towards changing the organizational culture in line with their vision [13]. It is argued that the visionary and inspirational skills of transformational leaders motivate followers to deliver superior performance [Nicholls, 1988; Quick, 1992]. Culture is always in the process of transformation and change and a transformational leader is responsible for creating a new culture in the team which should be taught to the new member. This case study deals with the character traits of a transformational leader who changed the existing culture of a cricket team and ensured that the

new culture leads to the success of the team and also improvement of the members of the team, both mentally and physically. This case study also deals with the efforts taken by him to improve the team, the difficulties he faced while changing the culture and also about the impact of the changes on the team as well as the individuals.

INTRODUCTION

A university cricket team which had favoritism, seniority issues, senior junior fights, lack of success, lack of victories was changed single handedly by a man who had passion for the game and who was a rare mix of will power and determination and leadership, taught the team the need for team work, united the team, motivated the team and filled them with confidence, lead the team from the front and taught the people that team is much more important than individuals and restored faith in them. His passion, vigor and innovative ideas helped him and the team achieve heights that was never achieved before and his methods are still practiced by the college and the team for bring glory to the university.

PRE-BARATH MURALI ERA

During the initial years, there was no team for cricket, there were only a few individuals who came together to play cricket for the university. There were no proper selection trials, people who were favorite to the seniors were the next in line for a spot in the cricket team irrespective of their skills. The team majorly comprised of the final year engineering students only and a few third-year engineering students, adequate opportunities were not given to the first and second year students. The team also had slots for captain's friends and well-wishers who knew nothing about cricket and also lacked the skill to get into the team. Players tried to get closer to the captain to get a spot in the team than performing in the warm up matches and net sessions. Another problem the team faced was the attitude of the players. Many players believed that their spot in the team is permanent and in turn never turned up for practice or attended any team meetings. As a result, the team did not even know the concept of team practice where each and every member of the team participated in the drills together. There were several fights where the students fought for a spot on the team rather than for better performance of the team.

FIRST INNINGS

It was around this time in 2007, when Barath Murali joined Amrita University, as an engineering student, when the cricketing atmosphere in the university was nothing more than mediocre. Before joining the college, he used to play for a cricket club that was owned by his uncle, and this was where he learnt his basics from. Due to his experience with sport, he was a renowned all-rounder who had been selected to play for the district team thrice. He was selected as a bowler who could also bat to a certain extent (lower middle order) but was never given a chance to bowl in the district matches. He was selected to bat in the top order but due to his lack of good technique, he couldn't play against quality bowlers, ending up with fewer runs. The selectors used this as a reason to remove him from the team. He was an excellent fielder back then and many of my coaches called him "Jhonty" (Jhonty Rhodes). In 2007 he was in the probable list

(top 30) in both Under-18 and Under-21 categories for the district team. That is when he got the opportunity to join Amrita University. So, he gave up the opportunity of playing for his district team and came to Coimbatore.

Barath Murali came to the university with lots of dreams and hopes but was sad to see that there was no cricketing action till January 2008. He was very eager to perform for his team but was not provided with enough opportunities due to seniority issues. He was a person who showed commitment in whichever activities it was that he did. He did the same while fielding for the team and in turn was noticed by the captain due to the efforts he put on the field. He was soon, as a result, called up to the team. He was a man of strong beliefs and value system which he doesn't give up for any reason, which made him different from rest of the people. He preferred not to follow a group if he felt that the group was going in a wrong direction, which led to him being isolated by his own classmates. He was given chance in the upcoming tournament but due to lack of team practice, he failed in the two innings which he batted. But he was a man who took inspirations from his failures as failures had always taught him life's most important lessons.

With no matches for the next 8-9 months, he took up the initiative to conduct a tennis ball cricket tournament between different engineering departments so that he and his team mates could get adequate match practice and which would further help them regain their form, helping them be match fit when the tournament came around. Due to the initiative, he took, his talent and the leadership ability he had, he was selected as the cricket team captain of his class. The leadership quality in him made him realize that the talent pool he had under him was inadequate, as a result of which he began to mentor the team and focus on the mental aspects of the game. He motivated everyone to play their own natural game and chose different individuals who suited to play in different situations. He was a quick learner and understood that some people need to be motivated, while few need to be challenged, and few others were self-motivated.

All his efforts proved to be fruitful as his team of ordinary players emerged as the champions of the tournament. But amidst the tournament a few seniors wanted to be part of the team which was led by Barath, but his team mates and class mates strongly opposed it and he was the one who had to convey the bad news to seniors. The result of it was alarming as he was dropped from the university cricket team for 2 years since the seniors took it as lack of respect. But the sportsman in him was not yet ready to give up. He channelized all the aggression which was in him and joined another sport, which was power lifting. The result of his passion and determination was tremendous as he emerged as the University Powerlifting Champion in 2009. And in the final year, he was called back to the team at that time all he wanted was to enjoy the game.

One thing that still continued happening was senior players missing the practice session but Barath saw this as an opportunity to provide chances to new young players. This provided ample opportunities for young players to connect with the game, helping them exhibit their skills to the captain and coach. During one of the matches in the tournament, Barath injured his eyes and was

rushed to the hospital and got stitched and came back to continue playing since his team needed him and showed tremendous fighting spirit just like his idol Anil Kumble, who came back to play despite of a broken jaw. His commitment, dedication and determination didn't go unnoticed as the team lauded him and he was respected by all his juniors. During the game, he was given antidotes and painkillers due to which he felt drowsy. Yet he managed to play the entire game and leading the team as an example but failed to win the match. However, Barath was quite successful in winning the hearts of people, thanks to the commitment and dedication he exhibited.

Some of the testimonials by his team mates are mentioned below.

- a) Ravi” The way that you made some final seniors, MBAs out and took 4 of the first years, created a climate in the team that talent is important than seniority to be in the team. Behavior of Pradeep in bus while going to match in Coimbatore for “kovai vizha”, which is a cricket tournament played between colleges in Coimbatore and you not minding it, going with his decision, showed me the stubbornness that a captain needed.”
- b) Aswath”When we were going for CDCA tournament we had a small interaction within our team about Prithvi a senior player being dropped from the side. You gave a perfect reason why he was dropped from the side. You said, he didn't perform well in the practice matches. And even though he was a senior player he was dropped. I really liked your reason...and I thought it would be great if it follows in the future also.”
- c) Vivek” Two years back the selection was purely based on seniority i.e you have to be a final year for getting into the team. but it all changed last year when you took over as captain. the seniority priority changed the team's selection was based purely on those who come regularly for practice and those who perform in the regularly conducted practice matches.

He was also regarded as a confident cricketer and a team player who was willing to take calculated risks at the right time. All of his team mates wanted him to come back to Amrita University again for MBA so that they could share more such time with him and learn more from him as well. He was considered as one of the cricketing legends that the university had produced owing to his hard work, dedication, and passion for the game. The inputs that he gave to each and every player and also the team proved to be critical in improving the individual performance and the team performance. Barath motivated players, imparted discipline to the team culture and also brought out the latent talent in many players.

SECOND INNINGS

Due to the persuasion from the juniors and the high quality of education provided by the university, Barath came back to the university for his second stint there in 2011 for doing his MBA. But that was the time when two equally talented engineering students were fighting with each other for captancy. Then from nowhere came the idea of election, which resulted in the

splitting of the cricket team into groups, escalating the problem to a whole new level. Another problem that the team faced was the lack of key experienced players. 6 players from the previous 11 had shifted to another college leaving the team in jeopardy. This was the time Barath took over the team and was assigned to captain the 'B' team in the inter campus tournament. Inter campus tournament comprised of two teams each from different Amrita campuses which includes Amritapuri, Cochin, Bangalore and Coimbatore.

'A' team comprised of the best 16 players available in the university and it was difficult for Barath to even set up a B team as they were no good talents left. He, however, didn't lose hope and set up a team of 4 MBA students and 12 Engineering students. As for the inter campus tournament, 8 out of the playing 11 were debutants for his side. After seeing the performance of one guy who was part of Barath's team, the A team captain wanted him in his side and since authorities had no hope in the B team, Barath had to leave him to play for the A team. That player was not supported by the captain of 'A' team when he was not in a good form, it was Barath who motivated him, filled him with confidence, improved his batting technique and made him a better player and even the player wanted to play under Barath's captaincy.

During the net sessions, Barath evaluated every player, understood their strengths and weaknesses which helped him choose different players for different match situations and scenarios. On the day of the finals, of the inter campus tournament, was the finals of power lifting championship but since none of the authorities had hope in Barath's team, they asked Barath to prepare for power lifting finals. This made him and his team more tough and determined and began playing for their pride. When Barath chose to stay with the team rather than going for an individual event, which he could have easily won, it showed how selfless he was. The team selection was purely based on the form and how seriously the players took practice and how sincere they are to the team. So, he had to drop one of his classmates for another youngster which even his classmates applauded as it showed Barath's commitment towards the team which further portrayed the leadership quality in Barath where he reinstated that the selection was purely based on merits.

The tournament was in a knockout format and it shocked many people as the B team won their matches and reached the finals but A team lost in the first match itself. His strategy of planning the targets for every 5 overs, field placements for each bowler, right fielders at right positions proved to be critical for the team's victory. But then he had a difficult task in hand which was to inform a senior player who might be playing his last match for the university, that the player won't be a part of the team for the finals but luckily for Barath, the player understood that and stood aside from the playing 11 but kept on motivating and encouraging the team from sidelines. However, success eluded from the team in that tournament as they lost the match but proved many authorities wrong that it's not about individual abilities but it's all about team work and dedication. Also, the player who was taken from Barath's team by the A team captain went on to making his place in university team.

The next tournament was scheduled for January, which was a few months away but Barath understood the importance of practice as well as the importance of the team practicing together. Thus, he started the camp from November itself. He also informed all the players to be back from the vacation 10 days prior to the tournament and only 14 players turned up. He personally dialed up each of the missing member and enquired about the reason for missing the practice which showed his caring nature about his team mates and his love for the team and the game. Few of the players were least bothered about the game and turned up for the practice two days prior to the tournament. These players were not fit, did not report for practice and neither did they show the passion and dedication towards the game, which made Barath take stringent action against them by dropping them from the tournament squad.

This was the time in which Barath was introduced to leadership class in which he was introduced to many prominent leaders and also from the discussions with the Dr. Rajiv Prasad, faculty of Amrita School of Business; he understood that a leader should be an inspiration to others. He also took feedback from the team mates about their strengths, weaknesses, role in the team, their competitor and also what they want to achieve from the cricket camp. This helped Barath to understand his team better and also point out to players about the areas where they had to improve helped the players understand the areas they had to focus on. While the team captain was adamant about picking a player who never turned up for practice sessions and bunked practice as well as tournaments for other reasons, Barath was totally against it and wanted the selections to be fair and free from favoritism. But, eventually he got inside the team and on the very next day he got late when the team was going for the tournament and started arguing with Barath in the bus. He even did not communicate the message from the dressing room to the batsmen about accelerating the score and this led the team to a small score. He came with suggestions at the turning point of the match to which Barath didn't listen to and unfortunately, the team lost which made the guy turn against Barath and also criticize him for the failure which Barath ignored. While analyzing the post-match data, Barath found out that people who regularly practiced and showed passion for the game ended up with good statistics when compared to the rest.

The next tournament was lined up within next week and the team started their practice. Barath was aware about the talent which the guy who turned against him had. So, instead of motivating him, Barath challenged him for scoring more which brought out the best in him and also made him take up responsibilities in the team. This shows the leadership ability of Barath where he understood everyone in the team and inspired them in different ways, enhancing the performance of different players.

Another problem that the team faced was the form of an experienced player who had been performing well for past 2 years or more. He had missed a match, skipped few practice sessions due to exams and when he came back to the team, he was in a poor form which led to him getting out quickly in the next few matches. So, Barath wanted to exclude him from the team. He first consulted with the captain and a senior player who did not appreciate Barath's decision.

After doing the cost benefit analysis, he decided to go ahead and drop the player; he then wanted to convey the news to the player. He took the current captain with him to make him understand how to handle such situations lest something happened in the future. After explaining everything to the player, he left the choice to the player and also said that he was willing to sacrifice his spot for him which again showed Barath 's selflessness. Barath was successful in making the player understand the situation and as a result he opted out from the playing 11. The team lost that match and it was the last match for Barath for the university team and many appreciated him for the effort he had put in for the team and let Barath know that he had selected the best possible team for the tournament and that they had utmost confidence in him.

THE ONE FOR THE FUTURE

After the tournament, just like in any other game, Barath analyzed it and came up with a conclusion that lack of match practice and inability to handle the pressure during the matches led to the loss. The team had hardly played any practice match with strong and competitive teams. Also, he found out that there were no good players to replace the core players who left the team and also the captain lacked some experience. Another major problem he found was that there was no continuity in practice and no players took the practice matches seriously. All the answers for the above problems were found by Barath himself who was striving for excellence. He started a tournament called Amrita Premier League in the year 2013, which would help the players attain match practice, give them chance to handle pressure situations and also unearth new talents. The cricket players were divided into 4 teams and they played each other in round robin league and the top two teams played against each other in the finals for the trophy.

In the beginning, the management of the institution was reluctant to accept the proposal and the budget estimated by him. In another 3 days, he put in twice the hard work and came up with an alternate proposal that was sent to the dean as well as the management. His will power, perseverance and determination proved to be rewarding and resulted in the acceptance of the proposal which kick started the inaugural edition of the tournament. He had to conduct the tournament in a very short span of time. He designed the posters and banners himself, and also collected the quotations for trophies and medals. Barath designed the tournament in such a way that the players got more exposure and chose captains in such a way that they could become the successor to the current captain provided they get enough match experience. This was a step taken by Barath to ensure that the future of the team was safe even in his absence which shows his extreme passion for the game. Along with the help of the coach and his fellow cricketers, he set up the tournament and also participated in the game.

During the tournament, there were instances when Barath had to step back from the game as he didn't want to indulge in a fight or ruin personal relationship with players as a player wanted to pursue personal success rather than contributing towards team's success. The very same player accused Barath for organizing the tournament for his own fame and victory, which did hurt Barath very deep because people failed to understand his motive behind conducting the tournament. But thanks to Barath 's mentors who guided him at the right moments and asked

him consider it as the other player's lack of maturity. Due to the campus placements, Barath was unable to attend the finals of the Amrita Premier League, but his efforts became fruitful as players got chances to play a tournament, the captain and future captains got match experience and got chance to deal with pressure situations and also the tournament unearthed a large number of quality, young talents who needed to be nurtured. Everyone in team and the authorities showered praise on Barath for taking the initiative and also for making the tournament a huge success.

Barath's success was not confined to the time when he was captaining his side alone but his success reverberated even after he left the university. The effort he had put forth for the team, the practices he enabled, the methods he adopted were continued to be practiced by the captains who followed his path. The way he shared power equally among the players, where every individual could contribute to the decisions taken in team is also being practiced till date. The talents he unearthed during his tenure went on to become renowned players in the university. His methods of planning for every match, motivating and challenging players upon requirement, the importance he gave for practice have been continuously practiced by the players who have followed him.

Amrita Premier League is still being conducted in the university with the same vigor and now additional auctions for players are also conducted for selecting the teams still providing experience for players. These auctions also play a crucial role in finding new talent. Now the tournament is no longer a 3-day tournament but has expanded to a tournament that lasts for a week. The success story of the team continues as they travel in the same route as told by Barath. The university team became the runners up in the Sastra south zone tournament for two successive years. The team owes the credits for their success to the contributions by Barath. Even after passing out from the university, he manages to keep in touch with the captains, follows the university cricket team and goes to see their matches whenever it's possible for him which shows that even though years have passed, his passion for game has not reduced even a little.

While mapping the case and the activities done by Barath Murali for the university cricket team to the full range of leadership model we find that during the initial phase when he was only a player in the team, there was no proper team discipline as all the members behaved the way they liked which constituted the Laissez-Faire method. There was management by exception, where talented players thought that they were superior to the rest and in turn took the spot in the team for granted and hence rarely showed up for practice. Also, the contingent reward system was followed, where people who played well were rewarded and the rest were not taken care of. If the players failed to perform, then they would lose their spot immediately without any more chances.

But after Barath Murali taking up the captaincy, the whole system changed dramatically. Individualized consideration was given to every player in the team. The team members were

closely watched and personalized suggestions were given to them regarding their game and their attitude towards the game. Each member was intellectually stimulated by the captain by giving them importance while taking decisions during the match and also after the same. Some of their suggestion and ideas were implemented in the field which gave them a sense of belonging and in turn resulted in better team work. Some of the players were motivated, some were challenged both mentally and physically which brought out the best in them. This was how inspirational motivation was given to them. Finally, in the idealized influence, the captain himself set the example before his team mates by being ready to sacrifice his spot in the team for a better player, showing discipline in the field and also outside, showing passion for the team and more over became the vital component of the team that held the team together.

CONCLUSION

A captain should be a person who leads the team from the front and becomes an example to the rest of the team. Barath is the perfect example for both, where he disciplined the entire team and motivated each and every player in the team. He was an inspiration to the players and also believed in the principle of “the more you sweat in practice the less you bleed in battle”. He was also the one who was responsible for making the team play as a team as well as unearthing plenty of talent in the university. His mode of selection in the team is still being practiced in the university which is now rid of seniority and nepotism. The captains make sure that the team practices using the same techniques as professed by Barath, even today. Many of the captains, who led the team after Barath, set him as a benchmark and tried to attain success with the routines which Barath practiced. His preparations before every match was very much appreciable and played a key role in the success of the team. Barath was a person who took calculated risk during different situations and also made decisions and took them without the fear of failure.

Life of Barath and his impact on the university cricket team is an excellent example of the leadership qualities of a person and how it can impact a team. He focused on the improvement of each and every player on the team and made sure that all the players had improved themselves in every aspect of the game. The success of the team and the performance of the players were a result of his hard work and planning, which was much lauded even after he left the university. He is still remembered by everyone for the countless contributions he made to the team. A leader is a person who knows the way and who shows the way. In that aspect, Barath was a person who knew the limitations and also the steps that had to be taken, to overcome those limitations. He paved the way to glory for a mediocre cricket team which consisted of ordinary talents. Just like any of the other eminent leaders he made ordinary people do extra ordinary things and he made sure his team focused on a goal and motivated them to do their best to achieve that goal.

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