Players First: Coaching From the Inside Out by John Calipari

Relationships With Players:

- Coach for the names on the back of the jerseys—not just the front.
- It’s a burden to be responsible for other people’s children - A heavy burden!
- Always think about how I would want my son to be treated by coaches.
- Have I done everything I can to show them the importance of being grateful for what they have?
- Players first—not just one, but collectively.
- No promises, just commitments. I can’t tell you what will happen, but I can commit to a course of action.
- What is your Why? Why are you playing? This is the key to motivation.
  i.e. Player says they are playing to help their family, so if they don’t practice hard, do they truly love their family and want to help their family?
- Few players are ready to be pushed—don’t come here if you want a pat on the back every day!
- Everyone likes it when you keep it real until you keep it real with them personally.
- Better to live close to campus and open your home for drop-ins or “Camp Cal” (Crash at coach’s house)
- I don’t want them to ever think that I don’t care—always acknowledge, always ask questions!
- There’s no Coach-time vs. Non-coach time—You’re ALWAYS their coach.
- The art of coaching is about convincing great athletes to change or surrender to coaching.
- Be in the present and develop trust—will you play for us? Will you listen? Will you allow us to define your game?
- Straight talk (Honesty) is an essential element of Players First.
- Don’t play for the coach, play for each other—essential to build this into the culture.
- Go as hard as you can and make plays. If it gets to crazy, trust that coach is here to pull you back.
- Are you going to play every possession like it’s a dogfight. Are you going to keep focus when you’re pushed to the limit? We’ll you vow to never give up on a teammate?
- The only thing that does not get publicized is discipline & consequences—Players First.
- Players must “surrender” and accept being coached. Leave it to those with experience.
- Every team needs to be coached differently and every player needs something different.
- When practice begins, ‘fail fast.” Players should try new things early. Coaches can correct.
- Engage players early in the training process. Send them encouraging and challenging text messages and stretch them, shape their mindset.
Players First: Coaching From the Inside Out by John Calipari

The Profession of Coaching:
- If you're serious about doing something, write it down
- Cal's goals—Get your body right and get right with God.
- Financial security is not having to talk and worry about money.
- Enjoy the game—You get to work in a gym and wear sneakers. How bad can it be?
- Cal never misses practices, EVER. Players have to know you love the grind. (UK budget allows it!)
- Cal's playing experience has nothing in common with players of today, but it teaches how to be fair.
- Higher purpose: Nurturer, Protector, Challenger, Teacher, Promoter, and Father.
- How would I want my son to be treated? Have to treat individuals differently.
- I commit to my team:
  - I will come every day ready to hold each player accountable
  - I will care about each player's growth
  - I will not give up on this team or on any player
  - I will pray for each of you every day
- Body Language—Be the happiest guys in the world. Have a ball. Smile. Laugh. Talk
- Always strive to learn more. Read daily and show your players you're willing to learn.
- Tap into others who can influence your team.
- Allow yourself to be coached—collect coaches to influence you.

Staff Management:
- Everyone is involved in recruiting, but assistants are not held to a specific quota. Jobs should not be determined solely on the decisions of 17 year-olds.
- Nothing we accomplish is a worth a thing if people are not appreciated and treated correctly.
- Staff members CANNOT add more to the HC's plate—take care of what your supposed to take care of.
- Wants staff who look at adversity as a challenge and failure as a learning opportunity.
- We either win or we learn.
- Every staff member must engage when a recruit stops by or visits. Show them you will care.
- All staff members must be able to add something unique that others don't bring.
- Assistants are filters and should determine what should get to the head coach.
- A good job is a job you can get.
Players First: Coaching From the Inside Out by John Calipari

Basketball Philosophy:
-Basketball is intimate like a family: SHARING the ball. HELPING on D. SACRIFICING for team.
-"Teamsmanship" - Character probably matters a little more than talent. Can’t be a "jag-off".
-Too often a system is extension of a coach’s ego—this is what we HAVE to do, no matter what be cause I have developed and perfected it.
-Adjust style to fit players, but the way Cal prefers to play is hard-nosed M-M and Dribble Drive.

Dribble drive Offense:
-Showcase individuals & allow for team play
-Each player has the ability
-No players is in the way of the drive
-Offense should be more of a reaction to defensive system—Pass ahead and play.
-Structure is in spacing and timing
-Make the easy play
-Adjust rules (i.e. Kidd-Gilchrist was average shooter, but amazing finisher. Cal instituted rule that if players did not pass ahead to K-G when he ran, they would come out. It also made K-G run!
-Impress by winning, not by the difficulty of shots and passes.
-However we want to play, we impose that on the opponent—not them.
-Fast-paced teaching—not going to feel sorry for players. You need somebody to sing “Kumbaya?”

-Fast feet, Slow mind. PGs have to be the storm, AND the calm within the storm.

-Offensive Objectives: 1. Drive for lay-ups & fouls, 2. Quality 3PA, Last is pull-up jumper. The best teams at all levels usually are the tops in 3PA and 3P%.

-Defensive Objectives: 1. Guard the basket, 2. Guard the 3P line, 3. Force TO’s, 4. Get every rebound, 5. No fouls Will take our chances with pull-up jump shots.

-Pre-Game: Keep it simple—assignments and how we envision the game will be played. Focus on what we will do and how we will play.
Players First: Coaching From the Inside Out by John Calipari

Recruiting Philosophy:
- Shooting is the least valued skill in the NBA - anyone can improve. Grit is more important than talent.
- Has yet to be around a successful team that was grim, humorless, or had guys go their separate ways.
- Talent alone doesn’t prevail—you have to have players willing to play the right way. When players go their own way or do something different than was talked about in a timeout, against good teams, you will lose.
- What is the player’s WHY for playing? Have to know it in recruiting and for coaching a player.
- What matter most is how you make the player and family FEEL. Do they think you’re real? Do you care?
- Recruiting is sales, but you cannot be fake. Create trusting relationships which lead to more sales.
- Recruiting allows you to meet people and to help people—you have to like doing that!
- You get a close look at families. Never make assumptions about marriage and family situations!
- Most important quality to look for is RESPECT—for teammates and authority. They have to care.
- Set boundaries with parents during the recruiting process. Will not talk with parents about playing time and number of shots. Anything else, academics & social adjustments, are fine. Parents’ job is to love their son. Coach’s job is to coach him.
- Prefers to wait on kids, rather than offer early. Too many factors can develop.
- Evaluates how much of a player’s ability is simply a result of superior coaching. He wants them to have been coached hard, but wants there to still be room to grow.
- Prefers to have good students, but wants “quick-twitch” thinkers on the court. Can the adjust on the fly?
- Doesn’t avoid the murkiness of recruiting, but goes in with eyes open. AAU and club ball is actually better for evaluation and seeing players against the best possible competition.
- Give players fair warning that they must give full effort on every possession—if not, don’t come.
- Prefers to “group” recruit and get players excited to come together. Prefers they visit together.
- Has taken a motto from Coal Miners—"we go down together, and we all come up together." Start early!
Players First: Coaching From the Inside Out by John Calipari

Observations about College Basketball:
- Doesn't like current system, but if you come to UK you either go pro or you graduate.
- For potential one & done players, Cal is happy for the program if they stay, disappointed for the kid if they don't get drafted.
- Counseling One & Done's: Give worst-case scenario and risks of staying. Challenge them to decide if they are prepared to be a CEO and make decisions. Give The Money Talk—save first million.
- College basketball is about people, especially the players. Do what's right for people.
- Two years of college and two years of college basketball would be better for MOST people.
- NBA should restructure rookie contracts for those who stay—most players want to get a degree.
- NCAA should allow schools to pay disability insurance (as a loan) to the top players.
- NCAA pays for coach's family to ravel to championships, why not the families of players?

The Role of Faith in Coaching:
- Cal's practice of Catholic faith has him attending Mass daily and praying for others.
- Take care of others' pain and feelings before your own.
- Players' chapel—doesn't attend because he doesn't want anyone to feel pressured. Come on their own.
- Faith keeps him on the right side of HARD coaching and from taking things too far.
- The urge to sin through pride, jealousy, ego, and envy exists and it's a daily battle
- Servant Leadership (Rob Greenleaf, AT&T in 70's)- Measure success by the success of those you serve.