

## The True Meaning of Leadership by Jeff Banister, Manager of the Texas Rangers

<http://espn.go.com/blog/buster-olney/insider/post?id=11034>

During a visit to the Seattle Seahawks' training camp earlier this month, on a quest to learn from one of the NFL's great leaders, I was humbled and excited to speak with Seattle coach Pete Carroll and share some thoughts about coaching and leadership. As a coach, I have spent numerous hours collecting as much information as possible on leadership principles. Our conversation was brief, but it was a difference-maker for me. Some of our talk was confirmation in what I believe in, the importance of "grit and gratitude" in championship organizations.

What exactly is grit? Grit is perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit is taught through a growth mindset, and for teams that have it, it can qualify as a huge advantage. We see this in the daily celebration of progress. With the Rangers, our core group of players loves to celebrate the small victories we see each day. Teams with true grit understand that the game is filled with challenges and failure and a long grind of 162-plus games. You know a team has it when each player, 1 through 25, exhibits this quality and each individual goes to another level of fight. Different players will step up on different nights, and the sole focus is on execution and there are no excuses or explanations. In baseball, grit shows up most on the bases in how hard a player runs down the line, when he looks to take the extra base, advances on a ball-in-the-dirt read or breaks up a double play.

Our best example of grit this season has been through the leadership and resiliency of our captain Adrian Beltre. He shows up every day with an unwavering commitment to getting the job done, no matter what. He has a complete commitment to the mission, and doesn't let distractions, the odds or the opponent affect his level of commitment. We also have had a number of players who have come back from injuries they suffered last year and have helped lead our team. Prince Fielder and Colby Lewis have taken grit to a level of fight that has been a model for all of us. Overcoming injuries that might have crumbled most, each of them committed to offseason programs, pushed themselves through pain and were totally focused on preparing for this season. These players have been selfless for the team and great examples of playing for their brother next to them.

I don't have all the answers, but I do know that today's players are more talented than ever, and they have high expectations of their leader. Coaching the 21st century athlete, you can't coach today's game by yesterday's rules. The millennial athlete needs for their leader to be a serving leader who focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of the people and the communities in which they belong. I believe a requisite of service leadership is gratitude.

In our organization, we try to cultivate this daily. Individuals need to experience a sense of appreciation for their contributions and be acknowledged for their efforts to the team. When doing so, it enhances the sense of well-being and goodwill among individuals and groups and creates meaningful relationships among team members. Our players this season have done a tremendous job of showing gratitude toward one another. We see this acted out daily when they celebrate a teammate's birthday by singing to them in the clubhouse, acknowledging milestones such as Fielder's 300th career home run or Beltre's 2,700th hit, or recognizing a player's first win or hit in the big leagues. These acts of gratitude are critical to our success and developing togetherness.

We believe in the adage that, "you are either growing or getting old." A pursuit is a difficult and long-term mission. The mission you are on must mean something to you, and you have to be committed to not stopping until you figure out a way to get it done. Grit and gratitude are catalysts of successful people, organizations and communities. They are essential winning ingredients to put you into position to achieve your goals, or in our case, win championships.

A few final thoughts on leadership principles we try to live by in the Rangers organization:

1. Leadership today is about authenticity, not authority.
2. You can lead only as far as you grow, and you will grow only as far as you let yourself.
3. Understand your "why." For me, it's to help and develop our team as we strive to be the standard-bearer for a championship organization.

I wish you all the best in your own leadership journey.