

# WHAT DRIVES WINNING

Brett Ledbetter

An Executive Book Summary By Ashley Bisson



## Who is Brett Ledbetter?

Brett Ledbetter is a former basketball student-athlete who now focuses his attention on building character development within athletes.

As you will make the connection in his novel, *What Drives Winning*, Mr. Ledbetter works closely with coaches and athletes at the high school, collegiate, and professional levels to gain a better understanding as to what makes athletes tick and the approaches that coaches are taking to build and develop student-athletes.



## Summary

Written in such a way that any individual who has ever dealt with the pressure of being a student-athlete will be able to relate to, *What Drives Winning*, is a novel of guidance and reminders of what it truly means to develop as an individual and not just an athlete.

Utilizing real student-athletes and meaningful conversations with iconic coaches such as Coach Mike Krzyzewski and Coach Don Meyer, Brett Ledbetter roadmaps the way to personal excellence.

*“What Drives Winning is long overdue. Brett masterfully articulates how character building is the ultimate prize in the pursuit of athletic achievement. The book is immensely practical and filled with time tested wisdom”*

Jim Loehr, renowned performance psychologist and best-selling author

# Significant Concepts

## Part 1

### Person > Player

The concept of Person > Player leads off *What Drives Winning*. It is during this concept that Brett Ledbetter highlights the importance of focusing on the process and character development rather than the results (such as the score of a game, the # of championships won, etc.).

Brett Ledbetter's focus of Character Development begins with breaking down a list of Character Skills (as pictured to the right). Brett Ledbetter was influenced by Carol Dwek, author of *Mindset*, to refer to these Character Skills as 'skills' and not 'traits' because "Traits sound fixed." (P. 6).

If athletes, students, student-athletes, and individuals are able to identify and pinpoint the Character Skills they strive to maintain, they not only develop as players, but as people. "What if every member of your team possessed these skills? How much better would you be?" (P. 7).

Ledbetter then continues to identify the importance of placing emphasis on identifying as a Person rather than a Player by outlining that an individual who identifies as a Player 1<sup>st</sup> views Failure as a Threat, whereas an individual who identifies as a Person 1<sup>st</sup> views Failure as an Opportunity (P. 46).

Result  
↑  
Process  
↑  
Character

<u>Performance Skills</u>	<u>Moral Skills</u>
Hard Working	Unselfish
Competitive	Honest
Positive	Respectful
Focused	Appreciative
Accountable	Humble
Resilient	Loyal
Confident	Trustworthy
Energetic	Encouraging
Disciplined	Socially Aware
Motivated	Caring

Process chart is from Brett Ledbetter's presentation on TeFTV, 9/28/2013. What Drives Winning

Ledbetter (2015). *What Drives Winning*. P. 7

## Key Quotes

Person > Player

*I want to be the PERSON she is...  
not just the soccer player.*

Ledbetter (2015). *What Drives Winning*. P. 17

"The person is more important than the play. And, ultimately, the person drives the player" (P. 16).

"When we start to prioritize the growth of who we are becoming as a person (over the result) that's where we find fulfillment. That's how we overcome the feeling of being empty" (P. 23).

"People who view themselves as Players first are defined by their results as a player. Which is why it's not 'OK' for them to fail" (P. 47).

"People who view themselves as a Person first are defined by how they handle results, which are in their control. So, they handle success and failure in a much more stable way" (P. 47).

# Significant Concepts

## Part 2

### Accountability

The second main component Brett Ledbetter discusses in this book is the idea of Accountability. Essentially: Focusing on our character skills, striving to become a person 1<sup>st</sup> and player 2<sup>nd</sup> is great... BUT... how do we make sure we accomplish this?

“One thing that’s really important to us is for our players to take accountability for their own development” (P. 76).

As outlined to the right, Brett Ledbetter identifies the Accountability Program Growth Cycle. Within this cycle are three stages: Prepare, Perform, Reflect.

#### Stage 1: Preparation

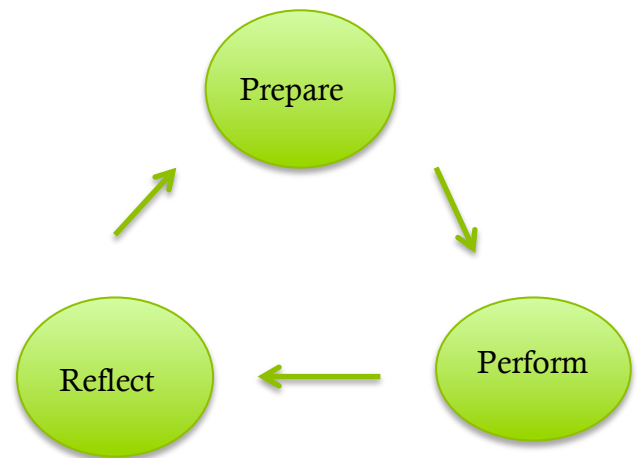
Identify what it is that needs to be worked on and devise a plan to work on it. (P. 77)

#### Stage 2: Performance

How an individual executes their plan determines the amount of growth that happens. (P. 78)

#### Stage 3: Reflection

If an individual completes the task they set out to do, they get the opportunity to set a new task/goal. If not, they must continue to work on that same task. This creates ACCOUNTABILITY. (P. 78)



*Accountability Program  
Ledbetter (2015). What  
Drives Winning (P.  
76).*

# Significant Concepts

## Part 3

### Performance

The third significant concept outlined by Brett Ledbetter is Performance.

This concept consists of 5 subcategories (P. 89):

- Positive
- Confident
- Courageous
- Resilient
- Competitive

In this section, Ledbetter highlights the importance of remaining positive, even when situations aren't going as planned. A big component of remaining positive involves the voice in which we outwardly speak with and the voice in which we speak to ourselves with.

"How we manage the time in-between shots is critical and having strong positive thoughts is critical" (P. 94).

The next subcategory of performance discusses confidence and how individuals define confidence in regards to themselves.

Three Questions (P. 112).

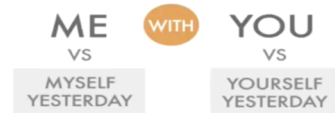
- What's your definition of confidence?
- How do you build confidence?
- Why do people struggle with confidence?

Ledbetter highlights the importance of thinking about confidence in a different manner- in a way that is within our control (P. 113).

The third subcategory of performance is "courageous". In this section, Ledbetter outlines "Courage > Result" (P. 129).

"Courage: Operating outside your comfort zone" (P. 131).

The fourth component of performance deals with being "resilient". In this section of the book, Ledbetter connects the idea of resiliency to opportunities. "Nobody wants to make mistakes. Basketball (like all sports) is a game of mistakes. What if you started to work on how you handle the mistake, instead of the mistake itself? The game provides a lot of **opportunity** to do so" (P. 153).



Finally, we learn about the "competitive" aspect of performance.

"What if we viewed competing as striving together? What if we actually viewed competition as a partnership?" (P. 170).

Ledbetter notes that when competing is looked at as a partnership, it changes

"Me vs. You"  
to  
"Me with You"  
(P. 170).

"What if we viewed competition this way? How would that help the internal relationships on your team? You've changed the opponent. You no longer look at your teammates as the enemy. They are your partners and you are striving together to make one another better" (P. 171)

# Connections to Leadership

Ultimate Takeaway:

Brett Ledbetter's *What Drives Winning* ultimately enforces the importance of taking leadership over one's self to ultimately enhance not only growth and development as a person, but also the teams and organizations and individuals around you to achieve more... TOGETHER.

Aspects of Leadership included in *What Drives Winning* include:

## Skills Approach

The skills approach to leadership shifts "our thinking from a focus on personality characteristics, which are usually viewed as innate and largely fixed, to an emphasis on skills and abilities that can be learned and developed" (Northouse, 2019, p. 43).

Most specifically in the Person > Player focus of the novel, Ledbetter identifies the importance of outlining and focus on developing character- similar to the Skills Approach of Leadership as outlined above. In this section, an emphasis is placed on character skills: both Performance Skills and Moral Skills. The idea is to work on developing the skills to be both a better "player" and "person" and contribute in a larger way to an individual's development, as well as the team's development.

## Situational Approach

The situational approach suggests that "to be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands of different situations" (Northouse, 2019, p. 96).

Brett Ledbetter spent a significant amount of time conversing with various student-athletes as well as collegiate and professional coaches, including Roy Williams, Mike Krzyzewskie, Brad Stevens, and Tom Izzo, to name a few.

The situational approach to leadership comes very much into play in this novel when discussing the role that coaches play in a student-athlete's development. In regards to *What Drives Winning*, the "situation" refers to each individual player on each team, as each player is different.

For example, "Any time I work with an athlete, the first thing I do is separate the person from the player" (Ledbetter, P. 4). Ledbetter also refers to situation in a manner that reflects each individual player's perception of defining terms such as character, etc. "Everybody has a different definition, so we want to make sure that we share the same meaning of the word" (Ledbetter, P. 5).

In order to get results out of a team, coaches are encouraged to focus on the PROCESS that comes with working with each individual and understand that each individual has a different mindset and idea of what drives them, therefore, encouraging and pushing the coach to alter their approach based on which player they are working with at any given moment.

## Path-Goal Theory

Brett Ledbetter's idea of Character drives the Process which drives the Result absolutely relates to the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership. The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership focuses on how leaders "motivate followers to accomplish designated goals" and places an emphasis on "needs and wants" as opposed to ultimately achieving the tasks (Northouse, 2019, p. 118).

# Critical Evaluation

Brett Ledbetter's execution of *What Drives Winning* is one of the most well layed-out books on Leadership.

Ledbetter translates REAL discussions, REAL experiences, and REAL conversations with REAL people into a guidebook of utilizing character development and growth as an effective way to achieve results.

As a former student-athlete, I am able to relate to this book on every level. However, for individuals who are striving to simply succeed in an organization, whether it be as a student or as a working-professional, this novel is transferable to many aspects of life.

The layout of the book makes it easy to follow. The depictions of conversations with real individuals make it relatable. The leading questions encourage deep thought and reflection, and the diagrams and charts utilized in the book enhance the concepts being discussed. This is a book I have read multiple times and find myself re-reading when I am looking for direction.

Whether an athlete or not, Ledbetter's *What Drives Winning* is a must read.



Ashley Bisson  
Star Rating of *What Drives Winning*

5 Stars.

## Food for Thought: Questions to Ponder as Mentioned by Brett Ledbetter

“Are the forces of sport moving your closer or further away from the person that you want to become?” (P. 18)

“What do you struggle with that’s preventing you from being all that you can be?” (P. 19).

“We ask (our athletes) to pretend that either their coach or a teammate is getting up to address the room full of people about them... We ask “What do you want them to say about you?”” (P. 75).

“What does change look like?” (P. 57).

## References

Ledbetter, B. (2015). *What Drives Winning*.

Northouse, P.G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.