

## Player Accountability

Accountability is the first step in the process of setting yourself apart as a leader. It means you say what you will do and do what you say.



- Accountability (noun): The fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility.
- Accountable (adjective): Required or expected to justify actions or decisions; responsible.

The Oxford Living Dictionary gives the above definitions for the words accountability and accountable. As you can see from these examples, accountability simply boils down to being responsible for your actions or decisions (good or bad). It is an important concept to learn for life as an adult, as it

makes you understand that only you are responsible for whatever actions or decisions you take, and consequences stem from these actions.

### *Accountability in Sports*

"Being there every week for my teammates is really important to me. It's about accountability." — Peyton Manning, NFL Pro-Football player

The above quote, from one of the greatest professional-football quarterbacks of all time, sums up accountability in sports. Making sure you take care of **your** responsibilities on and off the field puts you in the best position to perform consistently well so that your teammates and coaches can rely on you.

Accountability in sports is about setting a standard of excellence in how you go about learning your craft. Whether that's learning your playbook inside and out, working on free throws at your neighborhood hoop, or getting to training early and staying late, it's about ensuring that you are doing the right things to improve your performance.



It is also about owning your performance — the bad as well as the good — and not making excuses for your performance. If you set a standard at which you expect to perform but don't achieve it, hold your hand up and acknowledge it. Then, turn your attention to doing better next time by focusing on correcting your mistakes.

Do not replay those mistakes in your head! Studies show that those who do will take the next two plays off and render themselves useless as they battle the mistake in their mind. Those mistakes are behind you now — Move forward. The top players have figured this out. They do not dwell on game mistakes but adjust immediately to put their full focus on the task at hand: winning.

## ***Accountability and Leadership***

Acknowledgment without excuses and setting a standard of excellence are important elements in leadership. If you think of yourself as a leader, or want to be thought of as such, you need to set an example that the other members of your team can follow. This is applicable not only to the appointed captains or vice captains, the more-experienced senior team members, or the starters. It is applicable to all members of the team.



“There can be no leadership where there is no team.” — Leif Babin, Navy Seal Commander

The reality is that even the least experienced teammates, third stringers or players at the end of the rotation need to take accountability seriously. Their contributions are vital to the team’s success. They create a good environment and push the other players physically, technically and tactically during practice sessions. If these players were to slack off, the level of the entire unit would drop, limiting the team's chances of success. As an

athlete, you want a reputation, just not the wrong one.

## ***Holding your Teammates Accountable***

In the same way that making sure your teammates can count on you is important to success, you should also hold your teammates accountable for their performances. It is what winning teams do. If every individual is made to pull their weight, the process of winning becomes easier.

A player lets his team down when he sees a teammate taking a shortcut to success but says nothing. Don't be afraid to let your teammates know if you see them slacking, but first make sure you aren't slacking as well. If your team wants to be successful, it's important to have these conversations.



## ***The Accountability Mind Set***

Accountability is a skill that every athlete can learn. If you want to become more accountable, there are things you can do to get better. The first step is to stop and take stock of where you are currently. After this, you must figure out what you would like to achieve.

Start by answering questions like the following (honestly):

- 1 After you make a mistake in a game, do you find yourself saying, “That’s on me,” or, “It was my fault,” to your coach and teammates?
- 2 Do you make sure all the trash under the bench is picked up after practice and games? Or, do you think that is someone else's job?

3 Have you ever thanked fans for coming to see the game — regardless of your playing time and performance?

You do not need a "hat-trick" or 20-point games to demonstrate accountability with coaches, fans, family and teammates.

Self-reflection is important. It enables you to understand the behaviors that create your sporting results so you can try to correct them. If you are a kicker on your football team and can't consistently make the 45- or 50-yard field goals that your team needs, is it an issue of leg strength or technique? How do you go about correcting that issue — more reps on the leg press during workouts or changing how you approach the ball? Maybe getting feedback from your coaches or teammates will help this process. Start by asking questions, and most people will be willing to help.



Next, goal setting is important to crystallize the new standard you have set. For instance, as the kicker, you might then decide on a process goal, such as spending extra time after practice to make 30 50-yard field goals per day. Setting a performance goal, such as improving your field-goal percentage at those distances from the previous season, will also help you to hold yourself accountable

and ensure you maintain a set standard of achievement.

If you want to improve and execute consistently, make sure that you have an accountability mindset. It will allow you to get the most out of your talent, and it's also an important lesson to learn for your future, whether you continue playing a sport or not.