

Unlocking potential to build a winning dream team with the UMass Lowell Men's Hockey Head Coach, Norm Bazin

DREAM TEAM LEADERSHIP SERIES



Norm Bazin is currently the head coach of the University of Massachusetts Lowell River Hawks men's hockey team. Since 2011, Norm has led his teams to multiple national tournament appearances including an NCAA Frozen Four in 2013. Norm has been recognized as NCAA Coach of the Year a total of five times over a career where he has managed 243 total wins. We sat down with Norm to get his take on what it means to be a dream team leader and how he has built winning teams over the course of his career.



As a championship-winning coach, what are your secrets to creating a successful team?

I try to find the right people for the right roles. It's not always the top players that succeed, but the right players put in certain positions. I try to coach my players to have the right mindset to succeed. We have guys come here with success in mind. They don't just come here to participate, they come here to succeed and leave their best on the ice, and for that, I'm really proud of them. Lowell is a hard-working town. It has blue-collar roots, stretching all the way back to the Industrial Revolution. There's always going to be urban campuses that have more glitz, but the Lowell campus has substance. We've been in the Hockey East Championship game six times in the last nine years, winning it three times, and that's more than any other team in our league. At UMass Lowell, you find student-athletes that want to be here and want to be a part of our mission and compete for championships. We're proud to represent the city of Lowell and the University. We make no bones about it, we're at peace with who we are, and we focus on being the best team we can be. We allow players to make mistakes early on and learn through competing. That culture creates lessons they remember and learn from quickly.

What does having a dream team mean to you?

I've coached for a number of years, 24 to be exact, and the most talented team I've ever coached had the absolute drive to compete. That selflessness was such a joy to coach, there was no question that everyone there was going to do the right thing for their team. It's all about unity towards a common goal and there are several things that can impede progress to becoming the best team. At some point, all of the best teams decide that it's not all about them and put the team goals before personal accolades. As a coach, you can never have all the talent you want, so you have to make sure you work to make your players the best they can be within your system.

How do you attract top talent?

We attract people that fit our needs and fit our place. Our kids are grittier and high in character. We attract the right players for the right roles and we concentrate on that. Our focus on their development is what helps them get signed into the NHL. We run a professional atmosphere and make it very competitive by giving our players no choice but to compete to get into the lineup every weekend.

How does culture impact the success of a team?

Culture is so important. First, we recruit people of high character and that enhances our culture within the locker room. They have to make good choices all week long and are challenged every day to make team-first decisions. We run an ego-free locker room that believes in the team goal first and foremost. We've found that this creates teams that can succeed at the end of the year.

Do you have any advice for other leaders?

Have a direction on how you are going to create high-performing teams. Every team will be different, but having a clear and concise mission as to what you're trying to achieve will help you in the long run. Some of the most productive and successful companies have as little as one word as their mission statement. If you can relay yours in a clear way to your employees and set your expectations, a lot of them will reach or exceed your expectations.

