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Making of a team: Role of it's leader. Shane Warne's Rajasthan Royals  
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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The case study examines a team sport and draws implications for Organisational functioning to illustrate the challenges and issues in team formation and the role of a leader in doing so. The case focuses on Rajasthan Royals (RR) which is a cricket team of the Indian Premier League (IPL). By using the sports context the case encourages critical thought on concepts like team formation, team leadership, team effectiveness and managing diversity in team.

**Design:** The case study contains a descriptive account of building of a team and how leadership in team aided the process. The account is based on secondary sources of data reflecting multiple perspectives of coach, players, and critics along with the reflective account of the leader.

**Findings:** The concept of 'shared leadership', various roles of a leader, importance of productive team culture, motivation, coaching, handling diversity and team effectiveness have been illustrated.

**Practical Implications:** The case is designed to represent the challenges one can meet while building a team and in playing the role of a team leader. Through this case the perspective of 'leadership as a process' is presented as against the oft accepted understanding of 'leadership as a person'. It also posits strategies that can be adopted to inculcate team identity, team commitment and also lays the foundation of a productive work culture where teams can flourish. In doing so it gives an opportunity to critically understand and apply these concepts in the organisational scenario.

**Social Implications:** It gives an example of a passionate leader who not only built a winning team but also empowered individual team members.

**Originality:** The case study draws its strength from a sport and provides insight into the team building issues pertinent in organisations today. The case can be used in Undergraduate Graduate classes (to discuss topics like team building and leadership) as well as in training managers to understand issues in team building.

## Introduction

In 2008, Shane Warne was named the captain and coach of Rajasthan Royals, a cricket team in the Indian Premier League (IPL). From the captain of an inexperienced team, he went to become one of the iconic captains in the IPL. During that season, Rajasthan Royals went on to amass 13 wins out of 16 games (Table 1), winning the IPL title in its inaugural year. It was an unexpected fairy-tale ending in the annals of the IPL history.

The following case is based cricket and illustrates the issues and challenges of team formation and the role of it's leader, Shane Warne, in doing so. **Team: Constituents and challenges in team formation**

Teams today are everywhere. A collective does not become a team just because one chooses to call it so. What then is a team and how is it different from other forms of collective like the working group? Different conceptualizations have been rendered. For instance, (Babbington-Smith, 1979) defined team as, '... a group in which individuals have a common aim and in which the jobs and skills of each member fit in those of others, as- to take a very mechanical and static analogy- in a jigsaw puzzle pieces fit together without distortion and together produce some overall pattern.' Still others like Katzenbach & Smith (1993) understood it as, '... a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.'

Team thus consists of a small group of people (usually 7-9 members) with a common purpose, complementary and interdependent skills and roles, mutual accountability, clarity in role and contributions of each member, satisfaction from mutual working, realization of synergies and empowerment of individual member and collective work product (Higgs, 1999) as against a working group that is typically characterized by individual accountability, individual work products and different although not complementary skills/roles. A team thus is a Gestalt, where the collective is greater than sum of its parts.

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One way to assess the requirement for a team is to look for three indicators: , first, complexity of the task and the need for different perspectives in completion of the task (Drexler & Forrester, 1998). Second, teams are required when the set goals are larger than mere aggregate of individual goals and third, teams become necessary in the context of risk (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2004). Critchley & Casey (1984) suggested that teams work best in situations that characterise high uncertainty and risk and where complexity and choice is maximum, typically conditions requiring strategic problem solving and planning.

## The Background: Rise of Twenty20 Cricket in India

Twenty20 cricket, (T20), is a short version of cricket, with 20 over per inning as compared to the usual 50 overs. Since, its launch, T20 has spread across the world with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) launching the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2007 after winning the T20 World Cup in 2007 at South Africa.

During the sale of the IPL franchises, the selection of players in each franchise was through an open auction held in Mumbai on February 20, 2008. Consequently, eight franchises that fielded teams in the competition were named; (1) Chennai Super Kings, (2) Deccan Chargers, (3) Delhi Daredevils, (4) Kings XI Punjab, (5) Kolkata Knight Riders, (6) Mumbai Indians, (7) Rajasthan Royals, (8) Royal Challengers Bangalore.

## **Team - Rajasthan Royals**

Rajasthan Royals represented the Indian city of Jaipur and was comprised of 18 players; 10 from India, 3 from Australia, 3 from Pakistan, 1 from South Africa and 1 from England. Right from the beginning it was considered the weakest of all teams with scanty chances of even competing with other teams. One of the main reasons for writing it off was that unlike other teams that had popular powerful International players, Rajasthan Royals was composed of many inexperienced players like Swapnil Asnodkar, Dinesh Salunkhe, and Siddharth Trivedi who were unknown in the international arena. The team had very few seasoned players like Graeme Smith, Shane Watson and Shane Warne. Shane Warne was named the captain and the coach of Rajasthan Royals.

## **Warne as a Captain of Rajasthan Royals: Shaping a Winning Team**

One of the most unique challenges of team based work is the role of a leader. It is unique mainly on the account that the leader's important role of directing the team is antithetical to collaborative team work (Morgeson et.al, 2010). Many thus contend that leader in its traditional understanding as a power centre does not encourage in team work (Carson et.al, 2007). Still other believe that leader is an integral part of a team (Pearce & Conger, 2003) although the role and concept of a leadership in a team is, 'a dynamic interactive influence among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organisational goals or both.' This then provides an alternative to the individual leader action and highlights a holistic form of dispersion of responsibility and leadership within a team (Bolden, 2011). Still others believe that a leader of a team had various roles to play during the formative period of a team. For instance, Hackman (2002) believe that a leader of a team has various roles to play, that of an initiator of action, a model, a negotiator, and a coach. Each of these roles in reference to the case is illustrated in Table 2.

The stakes and challenges on Warne as a captain of Rajasthan Royals were high. The biggest challenge was to bring the team together. Team inclusion and motivation comes from a climate of interpersonal trust, member awareness and commitment towards jointly held values, goals and a clarity as to how participants will act and support each other (Morita & Burns, 2014). It is this collective commitment to the goal, and its joint ownership that gives rise to leadership that is shared amongst team members. By being in charge of their behaviour, their role and by being individually and collectively accountable members feel unity and a part of collective. This in turn is considered the beginning of team building and of the empowerment process where 'shared leadership' a characteristic of team leadership can emerge (Jones et al., 2012). Shared leadership is understood as the 'process of leadership' (Pearce & Conger, 2003) where the objective is to lead and influence one another to the achievement of group /organisational goal rather than a leader who act as a centre point of power and influence.

The primary task before Warne in bringing the team together was to create ways in which members would feel included and their team identity strengthened. From the initial stages of team formation, Warne included every player in the process of team building. There were several meetings in which Warne closely studied individual players and utilized their unique capabilities to its best. He also sought the opinion of the director of coaching Darren Berry and accordingly crafted specific roles to the team members. His way of chalking out and communicating the role expectations to individual team members was unique where he crafted his innovative document, 'What is my Role.' (Espncricinfo, 2010) This document described and established everyone's identity and specified their roles, clearly illustrating how each fitted in the team. For instance, his identity was 'the leader of the pack' while Shane Watson was identified as 'the enforcer' and Yusuf Pathan was called as 'the statement maker'. The expectations according to the roles were clear. These were reinforced every time the team went out to play. In one instance when the team lost to Mumbai Indians the need to

stick to one's role was taken up seriously by the team. Darren Berry the chief of coaching remarked about that incident later, 'When we lost to Mumbai Indians in the away game, people got away from what they were supposed to do. We had a real serious talk that night and said, "This is not good enough. Tonight you played how you wanted to play, and this is a team. People got a bit self-ish, did what *they* wanted to do. There's our game plan. Where does it say 'Slog across the line'? Let's play our roles in the next game.'" (Berry, 2008)

Research has consistently shown that clarity regarding roles of team members is an important means to declare the very existence of the team (Michelman, 2004). It is this clarity that defines the collective, fosters interdependence and raises the possibility of appreciating the skills and place of others. By drawing roles to optimise individual strengths a 'goodness of fit' is achieved which in turn demonstrates the leader's intention to enable all team members to 'belong' in the team and succeed at their work (Garfield & Stanton, 2005).

Another concern that Warne handled was huge diversity between the team players. The team had players who were very different from each other both in terms of cultural backgrounds, experience and expertise. This could have been potential source of misunderstandings and miscommunications. Warne seemed to have realized this. Based on clear goals and expectations, he encouraged open communication (Michelman, 2004). As a captain he gave special personal attention to each of them and made efforts to reach out to them at all occasions both on and off the field. A major impediment to fully achieve this was language barrier. There were two members in the team who only spoke in Hindi. Communicating with them was challenging. As an Australian, he did not know Hindi but he learnt Hindi to communicate with these teammates. This effort was applauded by the cricket fraternity as well as his team members. The communication gap was bridged by his efforts. 'Incredibly, his devotion to the team, and especially to the young players in it, even includes learning the Hindi language so he can communicate better - and not just the Namaste [G'day] that is about as far as most expatriates living in India can go. Example: 'Ab tu jaake batting kar' [Now you go and bat], Warnie the linguist was heard telling Ravindra Jadeja during a net session the other day with such nonchalance that he never turned to see if anyone noticed.' (London, 2008)

Warne also stressed and relied on his man-management skills more than the prowess with the computers. With the advent of computer technology and its analysis capability, coaching methods had evolved. Warne understood the need of technology but also believed in preserving the human touch of frequent face to face conversations. 'He kept his game-plan minimal illustrating it through a white-board with four or five points for each game. On the day of the match, the team would meet for an average of between 15 and 30 minutes and Warne would use videos to highlight the strengths of his players taking wickets or hitting sixes' (Berry, 2008). He wanted players to go on the field cognisant of their strengths as well as the strength of other team members. This went on a long way to create an element of trust for superior levels of participation, cooperation and collaboration. Trust comes from a confidence in effectiveness as a team (Ross, 2006). Showcasing one's strength and strength of other members of the team improved trust and aided building relationships.

Warne also handled inexperience and self doubt of several team members in varied ways. The inexperienced players in the team were raw, weary, insecure and circumspect. To give them support Warne would try to be physically present with them both off and on the field. He rarely enforced any formal or informal hierarchy in the team and during matches he would not miss an opportunity to run to them to give a word of encouragement (Bal, 2008). The presence of the captain during those moments helped the youngsters significantly and calmed their nerves. Warne also empowered players by putting them in a position to experience success. Experiencing gradual and sure successes nourished the morale and facilitated good performance. The experience of personal growth boosted their beliefs and self estimation in their eyes as well as in the eyes of their teammates. His encouragement was evident when he remarked to his team members, "The first thing is to be pa-

tient, which is probably the hardest thing to do. Don't worry if blokes are whacking you out of the park because you still have the opportunity to get him out next ball.'(Clark, 2011).

Warne adjusted his coaching styles to meet different needs of different players. For example, with Graeme Smith who was an established player, with a successful history as the captain of the South African team, Warne would provide him space to play and enjoy his game. With the star players he would usually pitch in with his opinions and suggestions when needed. For the inexperienced cricketers he would give suggestions to improve their game and construct chances for them to realise their worth and potential.

Yusuf Pathan commented on his approach of captaincy, '...Shane Warne wants us to be like a family. It helps on the field, you know. When we practice, we do it intelligently and give it everything. And all the players are out of their country, away from family. So we try to hang around together. It's a like a small family we have here... That is our strongest point of our team. Warne is particular on it. If anyone is down or having some personal problem and is interested in talking, we approach it together and try to help... Before a game, it's just 5-10 minutes. No video analysis and stuff like that. Just dwell on positivism and get out there with a frame of mind. Even when we lost the first match last season and people wrote us off immediately, we weren't bothered. Then we won a few matches and it kept going on. We knew we could reach the semi-final stage and let's take it from there.' (Veera, 2009).

Warne also realised the importance of positive work culture in improving efficiency of the team. One of the important characteristic of productive work culture is the accountability and transparency of the system (Erkutlu, 2011). Transparency was established as Warne, never played favourites and relied on the players merit and what each individual brought to the game (Espnricinfo, 2011). It so happened that during the team selection, there was pressure on him to pick certain players in the team. Although he was sensitive regarding the expectations of the franchise holders, he made it clear that in case of selecting favourites, he would take the next flight home. Such instances showed his integrity and work ethic. He earned huge respect among his team mates as a 'fair' captain. Selection on the basis of merit made them feel confident of their own skill, develop respect towards others talent and reinforce their trust in Warne. Warne also led by example and the love for his game was one big example to follow, 'I just play because I love playing and I try to take as many wickets as I can.' (Rajasthan Royals, 2011). Known for his never - say - die spirit and high performance he stood as an inspiration to many in his team.,

Research has consistently shown that creating strong identification with the team, actively coaching team members, identifying individual strengths, development of individual and team skills, publicising strengths, setting agreed upon group norms, clear and consistent signalling and feedback and creating organisational culture conducive to open communication improve team performance (Gardener et al., 2011). Performance effectiveness (the team's productivity, efficiency as well as the personal growth of team members) is one of the three dimensions of understanding team effectiveness (Katzenbach & Smith, 2005). The other are, attitudinal outcomes (team members satisfaction, commitment and trust in management); and behavioural outcomes (reduced absenteeism, turnover or improved safety). Hackman (2002) listed several conditions that made teams efficient which include clarity in terms of members of the team, their roles, a compelling vision, enabling structures like work design and code of conduct, supportive organizational context like reward systems that facilitate team work and effective coaching of team members in formulating and following team processes.

### **Postscript**

The hard work put in by him, team members and his support staff paid off with Rajasthan Royals winning the inaugural IPL in 2008. In the words of much respected journalist Sambit Bal, 'Every Rajasthan player you meet speaks about Warne's ability to inspire and visualise, his positive think-

ing, and his human touch. Warne hasn't so much imposed himself on the team as he has lifted it. In every match Rajasthan have found a new hero (Bal, 2008).

On May 6 of 2011, after much speculation Shane Warne declared that he was retiring and that it was his last season for Rajasthan Royals. Rajasthan Royals gave their leader a rightful farewell by beating Mumbai Indians by 10 wickets on May 20, 2011.

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**Table**

**Table 1: IPL 2008 Result**

Team	Group matches														Knockout	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	SF	F
Chennai Super Kings	W	W	W	W	L	L	L	W	W	L	W	L	L	W	W	L
Deccan Chargers	L	L	L	W	L	L	W	L	L	L	L	L	L	L		
Delhi Daredevils	W	W	L	W	W	L	L	L	L	W	L	W	NR	W	L	
Kings XI Punjab	L	L	W	W	W	W	W	L	W	W	W	W	L	W	L	
Kolkata Knight Riders	W	W	L	L	L	L	W	W	W	L	L	L	NR	W		
Mumbai Indians	L	L	L	L	W	W	W	W	W	W	L	L	L	W		
Rajasthan Royals	L	W	W	W	W	W	L	W	W	W	W	W	W	L	W	W
Royal Challengers Bangalore	L	W	L	L	L	W	L	L	L	L	L	W	W	L		
W – Win, L – Loss, NR – No Result																

Source: Original document extraction.

“2008 Indian Premier League,” en.wikipedia.org,  
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**Table 2: Various roles of the team leader.**

Role	Behaviour	Examples from case
Leader as an initiator	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gets the group started.</li> <li>2. Proposes different ways of approaching goals.</li> <li>3. Understand, modify and develop a team culture.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warne encouraged discussions in the team talks.</li> <li>2. He allowed them to put forth their views and ideas regarding match situations.</li> <li>3. Inculcating the passion for the game, enjoying each other’s game.</li> <li>4. Performance was paramount and promoted openness in the team.</li> </ol>

Leader as a model	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leading by example.</li> <li>2. Set same standards for themselves and the team.</li> <li>3. Communicates vision and expectations clearly.</li> <li>4. Understands team members' thinking.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warne instilled discipline in the team.</li> <li>2. He practiced what he said to the team.</li> <li>3. He never played favourites with anybody and followed meritocracy.</li> <li>4. He asked the players to enjoy the game and shed their inhibitions.</li> <li>5. Setting clear standards for performance.</li> </ol>
Leader as a coach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provides perspective to the range of issues.</li> <li>2. Able to tell the truth while remaining completely constructive.</li> <li>3. Excellent listening skills.</li> <li>4. Develop trust and confidence.</li> <li>5. Forge relationships in the team based on mutual understanding and mutual benefit.</li> <li>6. Continuous improvement and empowerment.</li> <li>7. Communication and interpersonal competence.</li> <li>8. Heightened sense of inclusion.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He gave them honest opinions about their game which helped them develop as cricketers.</li> <li>2. He trusted his players' abilities and backed them to do the job.</li> <li>3. He made sure that the youngsters experienced success.</li> <li>4.. He didn't coach the senior players explicitly but gave them increased autonomy to enjoy their game. Gave them suggestions when needed.</li> <li>5. He learnt a new language, Hindi, to communicate with the players who didn't follow English.</li> <li>6. He provided many opportunities to establish and promote a collective identity as a team even outside the game.</li> </ol>
Leader as a strategist	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creates shared visions for the team.</li> <li>2. Devise roles for the individuals.</li> <li>3. Handle conflicts better than anybody.</li> <li>4. Collaborative and analytic competence.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warne vision was to make Rajasthan Royals a great team space and succeed.</li> <li>2. He devised roles for each member in a unique way.</li> <li>3. He dealt with the players' egos and training very effectively. Devised different training strategies for differently experienced players.</li> </ol>



