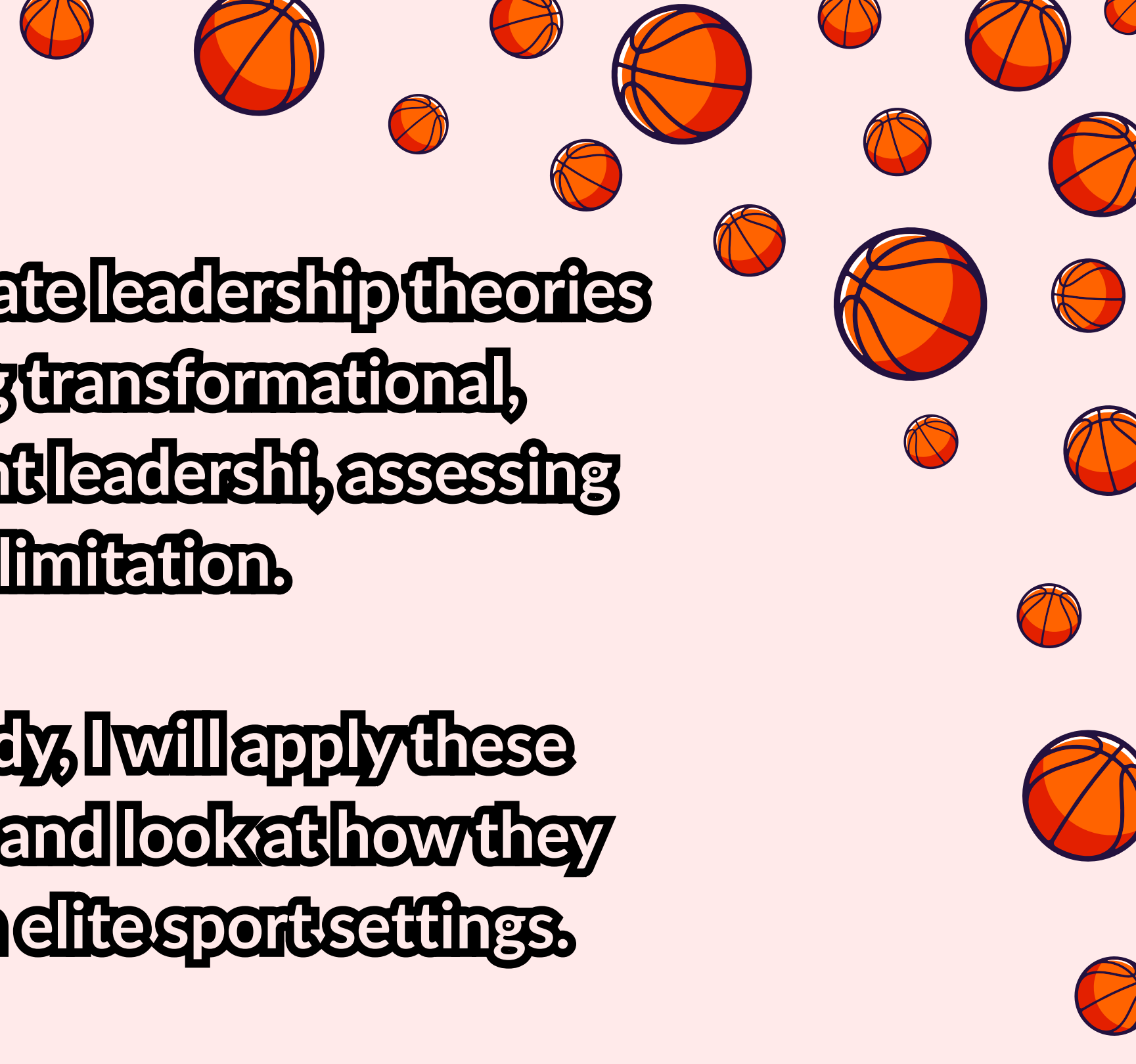


John Wooden



(Putz)

Sophia Poveda-Oates 2204258

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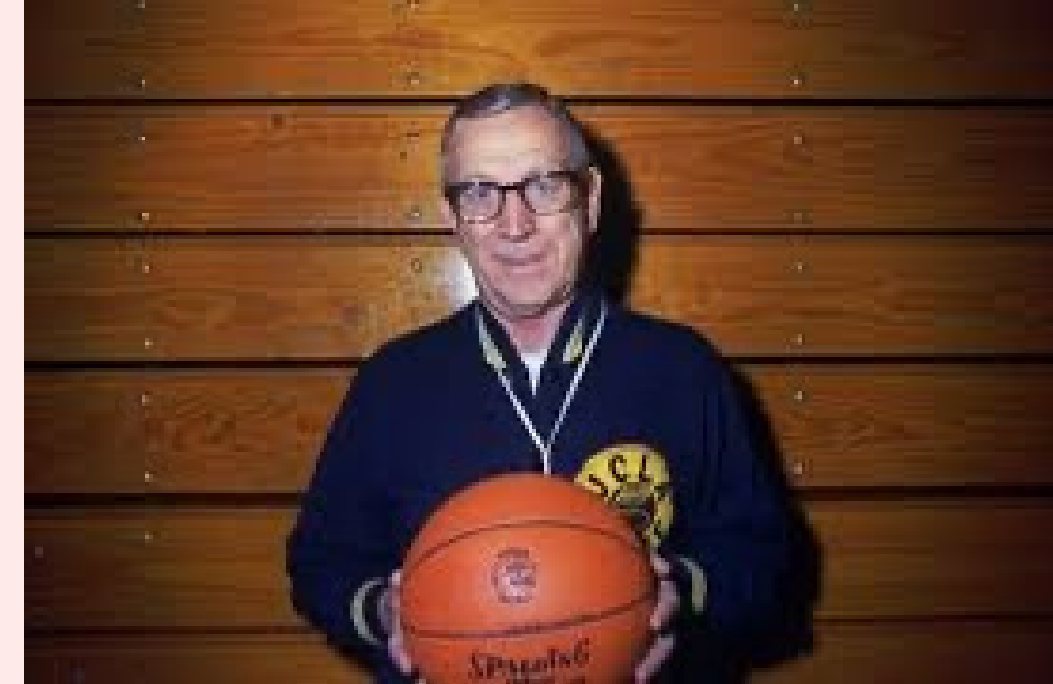
This presentation will critically evaluate leadership theories within a sport content. Exploring transformational, transactional, situational and servant leadership, assessing both their strengths and limitations.

Using John Wooden as a case study, I will apply these theories to real leadership practice and look at how they help explain effective leadership in elite sport settings.

Finally, I will assess the practical boundaries leaders face and determine which leadership approach appears most appropriate and effective in contemporary sports.

John Wooden as a case study in sports leadership

- John Wooden was Head Coach at UCLA (1948–1975), achieving sustained elite performance and competitive dominance (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004).
- Wooden developed the Pyramid of Success, a leadership framework looking closely at character, discipline, and personal excellence over outcome-based success (Wooden, 2001).
- His coaching behaviors reflected structured teaching, consistency, and high behavioral standards (Gallimore & Tharp, 2004).
- Wooden's leadership approach demonstrates alignment with principles later conceptualised within transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985).



John wooden shows examples of servant leadership, which was first introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf (Greenleaf) by making wellbeing and personal development of his athletes a clear priority. This highlights the respect discipline and teamwork he has with his team

He famously taught players basic skills for preparation (trial of shoes and socks) to lower injury rates and improve attention to detail.

this shows servants leadership where the leader serves followers first to improve growth and performance.

although servant leadership can be time consuming and less directive which some learners can argue it can limit efficiency in high pressured environment.

critically, this helped coach wooden building strong bonds of trust, cohesion and long recognised success at UCLA (10. NCAA championships)



Wooden shows great examples of systematic leadership during his well structured coaching plans, especially with the pyramid of succes. Which shows step by step guides for producing amazing personal and team result.

His approach highlights organisation, prep and consistenc. For example, detailed planning and clear expectations for the players to lead with.

Wooden summarised his systematic approach by saying:

“failing to prepare is preparing to fail” (Wooden,2005)

This leadership approach allows cons performance, clear expectations and long term success at UCLA.

Although, a highly systematic approach might limit player development and flexibility which is vital in sports environments to that level.



The pyramid of success (1948)

(Zipper)

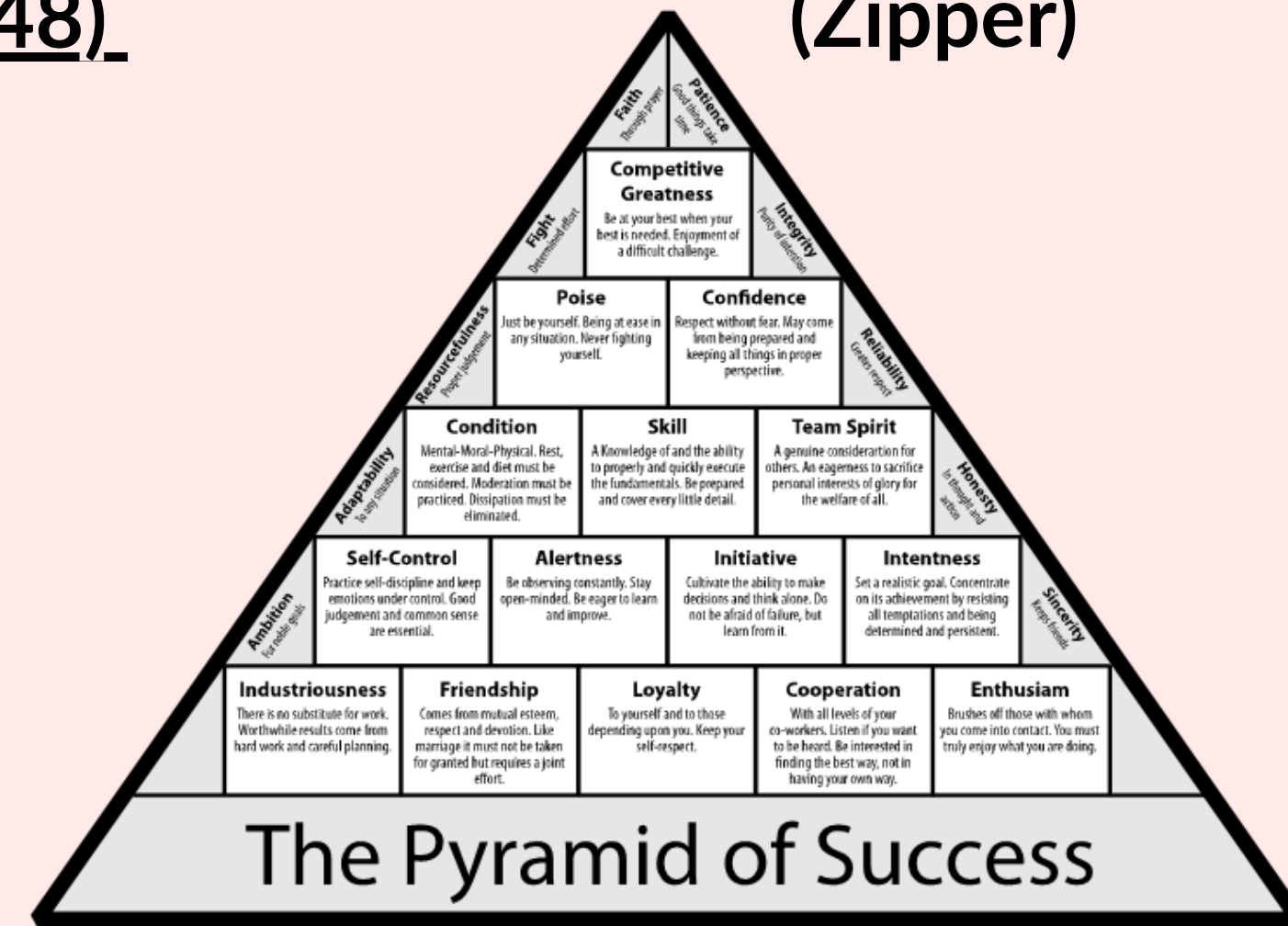
Wooden shows humanistic leadership (Pirson) strategies by emphasising on personal development and wellbeing with his athletes instead of just competitive success.

He shows key notes of this in his philosophy within his Pyramid of Success, where he emphasised character, effort and personal growth. Wooden explains and summarises his reasons behind this approach by saying:

“Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable.” (Wooden, 2005).

This approach encourages holistic athlete development, contributing to sustainable performance and success within teams.

However, critics argue that humanistic leadership may prioritise personal growth over performance within athletes, which may result in not aligning with demands.

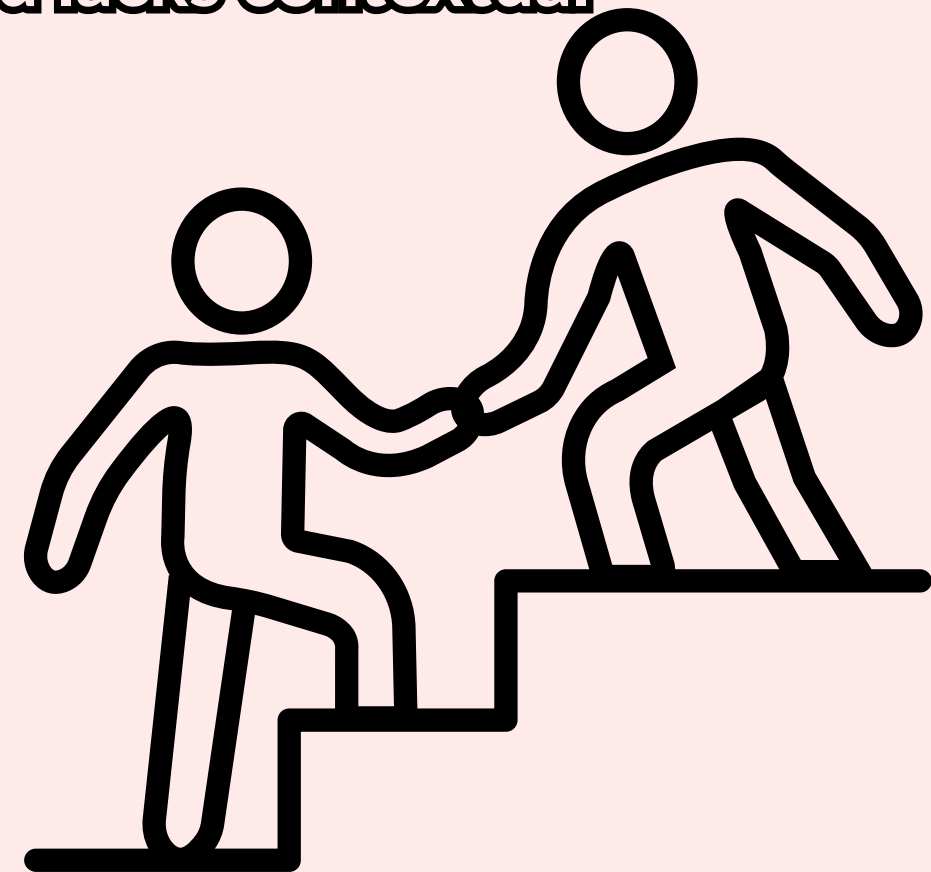


Transformational leadership was conceptualised by Burns (1978) and later developed by Bass (1985).

It involves inspiring followers through vision, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and idealised influence (Bass, 1985).

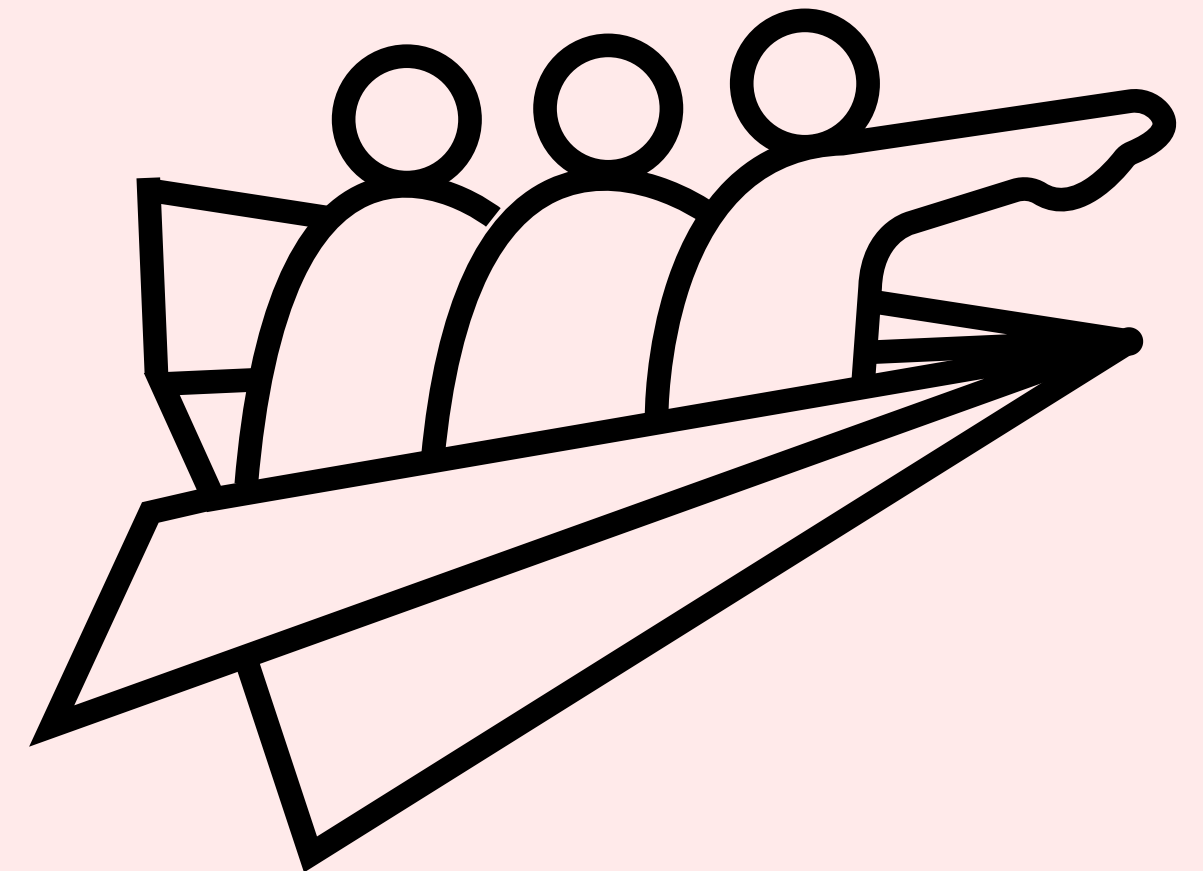
In sport contexts, transformational leadership has been positively associated with athlete motivation, cohesion, and performance (Callow et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2017).

However, critiques suggest the model may overemphasise leader charisma and lacks contextual sensitivity (Tourish, 2013).



Is Transformational Leadership Sufficient?

- Transformational leadership builds cohesion (Callow et al., 2009)
- Narcissistic athletes may resist collective vision (Arthur et al., 2011)
- Wooden combined inspiration with strict behavioural control
 - Modern sport rewards individual branding
 - Hybrid leadership approach may be required



**Transformational leadership can be context dependent
Narcissistic athletes may prioritise self-interest (Arthur et al.,
2011)**

**Commercialisation amplifies individual identity in modern sport
Wooden operated within a major Ely different social cultural
time**

Leadership effectiveness requires contextual flexibility



(Putz)

- Rise of athlete narcissism in elite sport (Arthur et al., 2011)

Individual branding vs collective identity

- Ego can undermine cohesion & authority
- Transformational leadership linked to team cohesion (Callow et al., 2009)

Wooden prioritised team-first culture & behavioural standards



("Princeton Ly – Coach")

Transformational leadership enhances team cohesion and performance through inspiring motivation and shared aspirations (Callow et al.,2009)

Athlete narcissism can challenge leadership, as high ego athletes may resist authority or team focussed values (Arthur et al.,2011)

Shared social identity creates a strong leadership influence, prioritising collective success over individual (Steffens et al.,2014)

Servant leadership promotes athlete development and trust, as leaders prioritise wellbeing and development of their athletes (Greenleaf et al.,1977)

Humanistic Leadership highlights dignity, growth and motivation. Supporting holistic athlete development instead of performance outcomes (Pirson et al.,2017)

Systematic leadership enhances structure and consistenc. Which it's important for sustained elite performance (Northouse,2022)

John Wooden's leadership involved a blend of insirational developmental and structures approaches, involving multiple leadership styles working well together. Overall hybrid leadership approachs appear most successful in modern sports environments, due to balanced wellbeing, motivation and performance being important



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