



# Team Building for Sport Diplomacy

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# Experiences that Shape My Perspective



Physical Education and Youth Sports



Studies on teaching life skills through sports



Development of “Restorative Youth Sports”



Community-based scholarship and outreach



International partnerships



Graduate Education



Still learning...



## Positive Relationships: A Foundation for Sport Diplomacy

- Mutual Respect
- Mutual Benefit
- Reciprocity
- Individual and Collective Identity
- Challenge and competition
- Listening
- Developing Shared Values

# Example: Coaching Basketball through Relationships



Coach Kelvin Lee, University City HS, St. Louis, Missouri (USA),  
Head Men's Basketball Coach



Restorative Justice Listening  
Circles



Team Building Opportunities



Creating a Context to Respond to  
Traumatic Events

# Kelvin Lee, University City HS, St. Louis, Head Men's Basketball Coach & Restorative Justice Administrator

- "What's great about the circle, is you begin to also see who the leaders are"
- "I've been at the college level and at the high school level, and everywhere I've been, we've used circles"
- "the reason I like it is you can see each other's eyes, there's equality. Everyone has equal opportunity to have a voice, and people have the opportunity to listen to a person."



After losing [a game], Coach Lee held an impromptu circle on the bench as the fans trickled out of the gym. His players reflected for about 30 minutes on the loss and the personal impact of selfish play. They stayed and practiced on the court until the trust was rebuilt. The next week, they went on to pounce major contender.

But the most profound circle was held at a Saturday practice in the High School gym in February. Things were unsettled. A player had been asked to leave the team. The team was lacking student leadership. Plays weren't coming together. Lee had the team bring chairs into the gym and they held an hour circle – on what Black History month meant to them.

As conversations about race, inclusion and equity do, it turned to the topic of hardship and resilience. An assistant coach reflected on painful events in childhood, including losing two parents to incarceration. “I didn't know these things about my own assistant coach,” Lee said. “There was not a dry-eye in the circle. Everyone was crying.” Players as young as 15 began to speak out about challenges and grit. The presence of each other in the circle was real.

“We felt more open to each other's stuff,” said sophomore Brandon Ming of the circle. “It helped us come together as a team.”



# Shared Team Values

Individual input

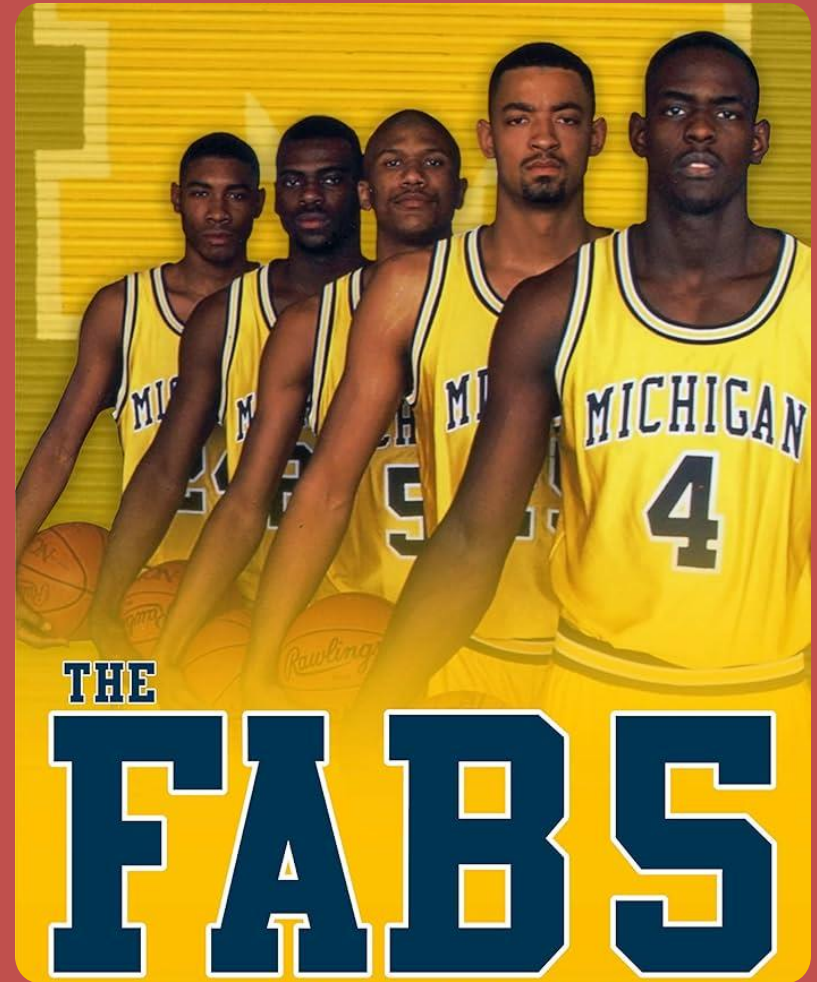
Collective responsibility

Conflict resolution



# Case Study: 'The Fab Five' and the Fateful Timeout

Addressing Problems and Resolving Conflicts



# The Event

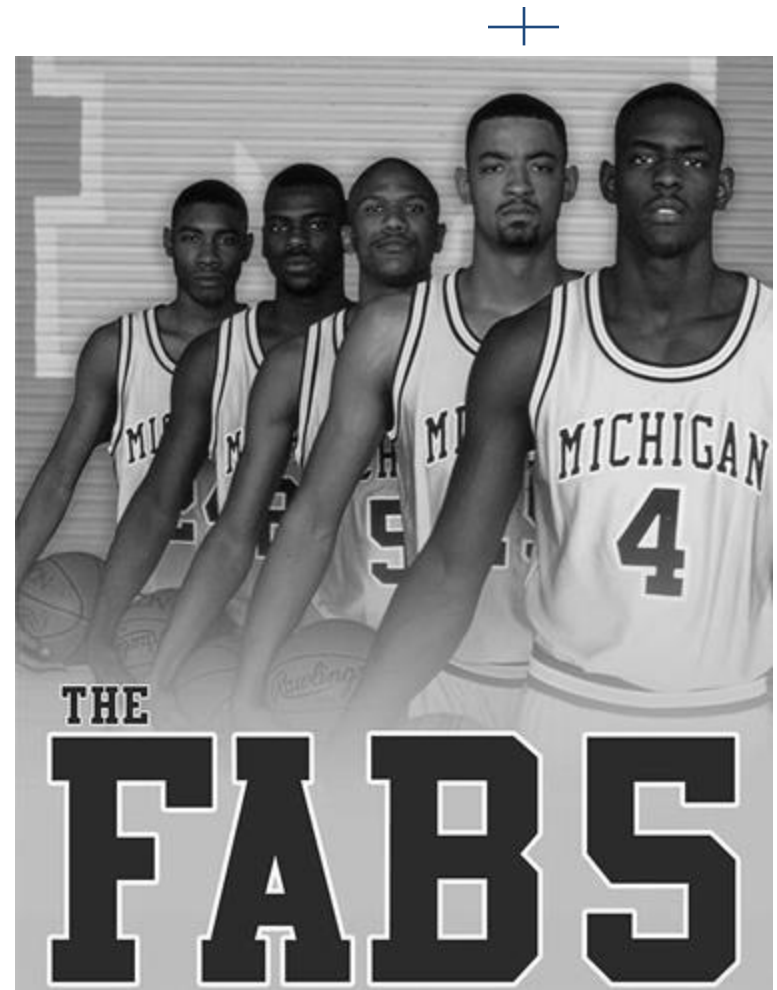


# The Aftermath



# Case Study: 'The Fab Five' and the Fateful Timeout

- Relational harm was evident 25+ years after the event
- Perceived failure of the runner-up
- Critical incidents often are not examined and placed into perspective
- Broader social and cultural issues



# Conflict in Sports

- Nature of Conflict: natural and normal in relationships
- Conflict avoidance vs. conflict resolution
- Understanding the nature of conflict



# 3 Interrelated Sources of Conflict

Individual Responsibility and Personal Relationships

Team / Institutional Policies and Practices

Systemic factors

NBA PLAYERS &  
SOCIAL  
JUSTICE  
ADVOCACY





## **Athlete Activism Emergence**

NBA players used their platforms to highlight racial inequality and police violence in the United States.



## **2020 Milwaukee Bucks Boycott**

The Bucks' playoff boycott after Jacob Blake shooting led to suspension of NBA games and wider sports protests.



## **Global Influence and Sport Diplomacy**

NBA players inspired worldwide athlete activism and acted as grassroots sport diplomats for social change.

# KEY STAKEHOLDERS

## **NBA Players as Advocates**

NBA players use their platforms to raise awareness and advocate for social justice and change.

## **League Officials' Role**

NBA league officials balance players' activism with business interests and the league's public image.

## **Fans and Communities**

Fans and communities influence advocacy effectiveness through their support or criticism.

## **Media and Policymakers**

Media outlets and policymakers shape public narratives and influence policy responses to advocacy.



## DIPLOMATIC OBJECTIVES



### **Raising Awareness of Injustice**

NBA players use their platforms to highlight racial injustice and systemic inequality worldwide.



### **Empowering Athletes as Change Agents**

Athletes demonstrate their role in shaping societal values and promoting human rights.



### **Fostering Global Solidarity**

Sport unites diverse communities around shared principles of justice and equality.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## **Athlete Activism vs State Diplomacy**

How does grassroots athlete activism differ from formal state-led sport diplomacy in approach and impact.

## **Outcomes of NBA Boycott**

Analyze both immediate and long-term results of the NBA boycott and related advocacy on policies and public opinion.

## **Global Influence on Sport Communities**

Consider the international ripple effects and athletes' responses in different countries to the movement.

## **Risks for Athlete Diplomats**

Understand the potential personal and professional costs athletes face engaging in diplomatic activism.



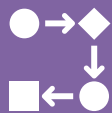
# Restorative Approach to Team Building: Discussion Guide



Establish the Facts and Perspectives: What happened and why? Who was impacted?



Reflect on opportunities: What needs to happen to solve the problem? How can the team make it right?



Take action and move forward: Whose obligation is it? What can be learned?

After the season is over, what benefits of team sports will remain?

## Conclusion



Are relationships enduring?



What happens when it ends well?



What happens when it does not end well?



Can the values of the team sustain relationships beyond the sports?