

\*Taken from the book, Coach Wooden One-On-One, by John Wooden and Jay Carty.

## Walking Your Talk

I began smoking during World War II. I would always quit during basketball season. I'd stop on my birthday in October and start again when the season ended. I never smoked in front of the boys. One of my reasons for finally quitting was to improve my example. I was convinced I could no longer expect my players not to do what I was doing.

A leader's most powerful ally is his or her own example. There is hypocrisy to the phrase "Do as I say, not as I do." I refused to make demands on my boys that I wasn't willing to live out in my own life. Quitting smoking is just one example.

Leadership from a base of hypocrisy undermines respect, and if people don't respect you, they won't willingly follow you. One of my players complimented me greatly when he said, "Coach you walked the talk."

At the beginning of each season I would give my players a letter. Part of it usually went something like this:

**"Remember that you represent others who are responsible for you as well as yourself, and your personal appearance and conduct should not bring discredit in any way upon yourself or upon those whom you represent. Cleanliness, neatness, politeness and good manners are qualities that should be characteristic of those who are of great influence on young people, and you certainly qualify for that category. Be a good example.**