

Book Reviews

THE CAROLINA WAY: LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM A LIFE IN COACHING¹

REVIEWED BY MAJOR MICHAEL S. DEVINE²

*Play hard; play together; play smart.*³

This simple, three-term phrase constituted Dean Smith's entire coaching philosophy during his remarkable thirty-six year career as the head basketball coach at the University of North Carolina.⁴ Smith's philosophy of "play hard; play smart; play together" is presented in this book as the "Carolina Way."⁵ Throughout the book, Smith strips down this already simple coaching philosophy and defines good leadership as simply caring about people.⁶ This deeply held belief and practice of Smith's proves to be the message of *The Carolina Way*—even more so than Smith's coaching philosophy itself. *The Carolina Way* offers leaders, aspiring leaders, college basketball fans, and mere supporters of human decency an inside look at the means and methods Smith used to become a premier coach, teacher, and leader. As such, it is a highly recommended read.

Smith's thesis is that good leadership qualities are transferable from one occupation to another.⁷ This thesis was apparently not one that Smith thought consciously of during his coaching career and seems mainly attributable to co-author Gerald Bell⁸ and book contributor John Kilgo.⁹ However, Smith generally accepts their idea and develops it throughout the book.

The authors use a compelling three-pronged approach to support their thesis. Each chapter begins with Smith detailing some aspect of his coaching philosophy, including personal anecdotes about his success or failure in implementing that particular aspect of his philosophy. Smith follows each of those entries with powerful and often emotional testimonials from former players or others associated with the program.¹⁰ As Smith astutely points out, his players "were students in the classroom known as North Carolina basketball, and their observations provide the thread that ties the entire book together in a way that would otherwise be impossible."¹¹ Following the testimonials, Bell applies a business perspective to each of Smith's coaching philosophies. Though the book is primarily credited to Smith, the book is driven by this application of Bell's business perspectives to Smith's coaching philosophies.

The authors break the book into five parts—The Foundations; Playing Hard; Playing Together; Playing Smart; and Lessons Learned. The middle three parts of the book deal with the tripartite elements of Smith's coaching philosophy and are similar to each other in their structure. However, the first and last parts differ substantially in

¹ DEAN SMITH & GERALD D. BELL, *THE CAROLINA WAY: LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM A LIFE IN COACHING* (2004).

² U.S. Army. Written while assigned as a student, 53d Judge Advocate Officer Graduate Course, The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, U.S. Army, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³ SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 20.

⁴ *See id.* at 1. Dean Smith coached the University of North Carolina men's basketball team from 1958 until 1998 and his teams won more games (879) than any other NCAA Men's Division 1 basketball coach and he also coached the U.S. Olympic team to a gold medal in the 1976 Summer Olympics. *See id.* at 338.

⁵ *See id.* at 2.

⁶ *See id.* at 3.

⁷ *See id.* at 1.

⁸ *See id.* Mr. Bell heads a leadership training company and has taught at the University of North Carolina's Keenan-Flagler Business School for over thirty years. *See id.* at 338. Mr. Bell's "leadership training sessions have been attended by approximately five hundred thousand managers in more than four-thousand seven-hundred organizations." *Id.*

⁹ *See id.* at 338. Mr. Kilgo is an award winning newspaper columnist in North Carolina who has known Smith for over twenty years. This book was Kilgo's idea and he brought the idea to Smith. *Id.* at 3. Kilgo also co-authored Smith's first book. *See* DEAN SMITH, JOHN KILGO, & SALLY JENKINS, *A COACH'S LIFE: MY FORTY YEARS IN COLLEGE BASKETBALL* (2000).

¹⁰ *See generally* SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 5-6; *see also* Cecil Johnson, *The Carolina Way: Leadership Lessons from a Life in Coaching*, FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM, Mar. 1, 2004, available at <http://www.dfw.com/mld/dfw/business/8076509.htm%20> (last visited Apr. 6, Mar. 2005) (raising the same idea).

¹¹ SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 6.

both their structure and focus and are reviewed independently from the middle three parts. Each part of the book has individual chapters and each chapter is presented in the three-part style discussed above—Smith’s presentation of his philosophy in action, personal testimonials, and business applications and anecdotes.

A. Part One: *Introduction* and *The Foundations*

In the book’s first chapter, Smith introduces the reader to his personal background. Smith grew up in the Midwest as the son of a father who was a high school sports coach and a mother who was a teacher.¹² He also briefly reviews his basketball career beginning when he was a player at the University of Kansas and then an assistant coach at the Air Force Academy and the University of North Carolina before accepting the head coaching position at the University of North Carolina in 1961.¹³

Still in the first part of the book, Smith first introduces the reader to the broad details of his philosophy in the second chapter, titled “Play Hard; Play Together; Play Smart.”¹⁴ “*Hard* meant with effort, determination, and courage; *together* meant unselfishly, trusting your teammates, and doing everything possible not to let them down; and *smart* meant with good execution and poise, treating each possession as if it were the only one in the game.”¹⁵ In this chapter Smith discusses how and why he taught his players his philosophy.¹⁶ Smith recognized that occasionally his teams would have bad luck or face a particularly good team or player on their best night, but he believed that if his teams simply concentrated on those things within their control, then they would generally be successful.¹⁷ Smith provides a more detailed description of his philosophy’s three components later in the book in Parts Two, Three, and Four, but this early exposure provides a terrific introduction to Smith’s philosophy. In fact, when coupled with the business perspectives in Part One, the authors’ point is virtually complete, leaving little but a more detailed discussion to follow in the remaining chapters. The detailed discussions of the philosophies’ three components later in the book actually produce one of the book’s weaknesses—repetitiveness of concepts and anecdotes.¹⁸

In these early chapters, Smith comes as close as he ever does throughout the entire book to fully buying into Bell’s thesis on coaching and business leadership by stating that

[the co-author] believes that readers can take things from our [basketball coaching] philosophy and benefit from them, and I agree that *could* be the case. Whether you’re leading a basketball team, a nurses’ school, a small insurance office, or a large corporation, there are certain common denominators. Honesty, integrity, discipline administered fairly, not playing favorites, recruiting the right people, effective practice and training, and caring are foundations that any organization would be wise to have in place¹⁹

Also in these initial chapters Smith identifies one of the weaknesses in trying to apply his coaching philosophy to other business-related industries admitting that, “[m]aybe it was easier for me to lead my players, who wanted to be there, than it is for a business manager to lead members of her sales department who feel they have to be there.”²⁰ The business reality that requires leaders to deal with experienced employees who generally have greater freedom to switch employers than a typical college scholarship athlete has to transfer universities is rarely recognized throughout the book and is one of its fundamental weaknesses.

¹² See *id.* at 9-10.

¹³ See *id.* at 10.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 28.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 28-29.

¹⁶ See *id.* at 15 and 28-31. A book written by a former North Carolina player presents a broader array of leadership principals which the author attributes to learning from Smith such as “The Reciprocal Law of Loyalty,” “Success Requires a Flexible Vision,” “The Power of Positive Words,” and several others. See DR. DAVID CHADWICK, *TWELVE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES OF DEAN SMITH* (1999). Coach Smith, however, does not adopt those expansive principles as his own. See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 3.

¹⁷ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 1.

¹⁸ Examples of repetitive concepts or anecdotes used in the book include the fact that his team lost to Wake Forest because they were tired after returning from an overseas trip, *id.* at 51, 294; and the team’s emphasis on senior leadership, *id.* at 17, 108, 158, 172, 174, 175, and 207.

¹⁹ See *id.* at 3.

²⁰ *Id.*; see also Alex Coffin, *Dean Smith Shares His Leadership Lessons*, CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, Feb. 15, 2004, at H6 (arguing the similar point that thirty-five year old MBA graduates may not be quite as receptive to certain parts of the Carolina Way as eighteen to twenty-two year old student athletes might).

This part of the book also contains the first of many perspectives written by a former player which sets the theme for all the other perspectives throughout the book.²¹ The initial perspective strongly supports the authors' goal for the introduction, which is to establish Smith as a caring, brilliant leader who was interested more in molding each player's individual character than he was in building individual players.²² Despite the enormous on-court successes of his teams, players, and assistant coaches, it is clear throughout the book that Smith is most proud of the fact that the vast majority of his players developed into outstanding citizens.²³ In fact, ninety-six percent of his players earned their undergraduate degrees, and more than thirty-three percent continued on to earn graduate or professional degrees.²⁴ There is little doubt that this success is largely based on the lessons he taught his players while at North Carolina.²⁵ The life lessons discussed in the personal perspectives, the passion with which they are written, and the near reverent awe the writers seem to have for Smith are common threads in the player perspectives sprinkled throughout the book.²⁶

B. Parts Two, Three and Four: *Playing Hard; Playing Together; Playing Smart*

These three separate parts of the book form its core. These parts detail and fully develop how Smith executed his coaching philosophy. Each part is divided into chapters specifically focusing on one part of the overall concept. Among the most helpful chapters in these parts from a leadership perspective for the typical business, government, or military leader are the chapters on "Recruiting the Players," "Team Building Techniques," and "One-on One Meetings."²⁷

In "Recruiting the Players," the authors emphasize the need to carefully select employees, focusing not only on each employee's abilities, but also on how each of their goals and attitudes will fit with organizational goals. "Hire smart, manage easy" and "hire slowly, . . . fire quickly" are the themes of this chapter.²⁸ These concepts strongly support the authors' thesis because they have near universal applicability across the spectrum of leadership challenges.²⁹

In "Team Building Techniques" Smith discusses rewarding players, praising performances that are beneficial to the team, and showing respect for all players who are trying their best for the team, regardless of the outcome of their efforts.³⁰ The practical benefits of these approaches are highly lauded in both the player perspectives and the business perspectives sections of the chapter.³¹ The authors provide several examples of how these techniques can be applied to business in ways such as starting each meeting by praising individual efforts, large or small, that helped the team,³² and by treating with greater respect those senior employees who are not part of the management team.³³

²¹ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 20-24. Charles McNairy was a player on the 1997 North Carolina team. *Id.* In this personal perspective he talks about Coach Smith's personal decency and expectation of excellence as well as how Coach Smith prepared his team for every possibility. *Id.* He uses a particularly exciting game against Wake Forest and their All-American center, Tim Duncan, to describe how Coach Smith taught basketball and life lessons to his players. *Id.*

²² See *id.* at 20 (providing a player perspective from Charles McNairy who believed that Carolina basketball success was attributable to Coach Smith's philosophy of life, which is one of personal decency, treating people equally, and expecting excellence).

²³ See *id.* at 323.

²⁴ See *id.* at 218.

²⁵ See generally *id.* at 161-62 (describing life experiences of former player, Dr. Joseph Jenkins, class of 1988); *id.* at 194-95 (describing life experiences of former manager, Charles Lisenbee, class of 1995); and *id.* at 234 (describing life experiences of former player, Kim Hubbard, class of 1972).

²⁶ See for example player perspectives by Steve Previs, Class of 1972, talking about how Coach Smith would accept physical errors but not mental ones—*i.e.*, play smart; and Phil Ford, Class of 1997, discussing Smith's recruiting him by discussing primarily citizenship, race relations, and academics as opposed to basketball. *Id.* at 31 and 92.

²⁷ *Id.* at 88, 132, 155, 199, and 215.

²⁸ *Id.* at 93-95.

²⁹ *Id.* at 93.

³⁰ See *id.* at 155-56.

³¹ See *id.* at 161-62, 166.

³² See *id.* at 171-72.

³³ See *id.* at 176-78.

Finally, in the chapter titled “One-on-One Meetings,” Smith outlines his methods and reasons for holding one-on-one meetings with his players throughout the year.³⁴ The premises of this idea are that leaders do too much “doing” and not enough teaching, and that most employees are too hurried in their daily activities to get a good feel and understanding of the company’s goals and missions.³⁵ The authors suggest that leaders should have monthly meeting with each employee.³⁶ The authors assert, generally, that by conducting regular one-on-one meetings, a leader can remain in-tune with employees, and the employees can remain in-tune with the leader’s expectations.³⁷ Military leaders would be wise to recognize the value of Smith’s practices and apply them to both mandatory and discretionary counseling sessions with the troops under their command or influence. In addition to the value of leaders directly communicating their expectations and performance assessment of their subordinates, such individual counseling sessions also provide an opportunity for subordinates to raise problems or concerns that they might not otherwise be comfortable raising in the more formal work setting. By discussing the concerns, the leader should better be able to further the organizations goals.

C. Part V: *Lessons Learned*

Failing to provide any significant “lessons learned,” this part of the book should more aptly have been titled, *Other Stuff Unrelated to the “Carolina Way.”* In fact, the whole part could have been discarded because it added little to the authors’ thesis. The last chapter, titled “Hopes for the Future,” is a particularly unnecessary and distracting chapter in this otherwise engaging book. In “Hopes for the Future,” Smith rambles on about such varied topics as a proposition to pay college players a stipend, fighting the war on poverty, abolishing the death penalty, and improving the social status of teachers.³⁸ While all these may be valid subjects worthy of debate, their undeveloped placement in a leadership book is completely inappropriate. Unfortunately, following Smith’s ramble, Bell decides to add several of his own unrelated, unsubstantiated, and unproven musings. Even when he actually references leadership principles in the last part of this chapter, Bell does not develop the brand new leadership topics he raises.³⁹

While this part of the book is generally disappointing, one very valuable portion is the chapter on Smith’s experience as coach of the 1976 Men’s Olympic Basketball Team. Unlike his treatment of his job at North Carolina, where he viewed the process and individual development of his players as his primary objectives, his only goal as coach of the Olympic team was to win.⁴⁰ This chapter discusses the different leadership skills necessary to lead a makeshift organization to success in a very limited amount of time. This chapter is especially applicable for military environments, particularly in an age of transformation, where different teams of people are being put together at various times to accomplish critical, but often short-term, missions. While completely independent of Coach Smith’s true “Carolina Way” philosophy, this is a critical chapter in the book because in many situations, such as combat or professional business, winning is the primary goal and Smith’s general coaching philosophies do not address such a concept.

D. Final Thoughts

While the book contains several excellent leadership techniques that leaders in various industries should follow, the book does have several weaknesses. First, the foundational source for the book, Smith’s basketball program, is not the ideal model upon which to apply the business leadership principles the authors want to develop because most leaders face a much wider variety of challenges than a college athletics coach. Further, except for the owners themselves, business leaders rarely have the autonomy or the authority that a head coach at a major university has to implement their leadership strategies. The coach

³⁴ *Id.* at 215.

³⁵ *See id.*

³⁶ *See id.* at 223.

³⁷ *See id.*

³⁸ *See id.* at 318-22.

³⁹ *See id.* at 326-28. One point the author raises for the first time in the last chapter, and yet fails to develop, is that “leaders should devote good effort to enhancing what I call the seven skills of effective communication: listening, delivering ideas, confronting people being open and non-defensive, developing a sense of humor, honing their presentations, and understanding the nonverbal patterns of ourselves and others.” *Id.* at 328.

⁴⁰ *See id.* at 307. Smith felt that winning the Olympics was particularly important in 1976 because the U.S. had lost the Olympic final in 1972 to the Soviet Union on a controversial last second call by the officials resulting in the first time the United States did not win the Olympic gold medal in men’s basketball. *Id.* at 309.

holds virtually all the “cards” with regard to scholarships and playing time which allows him to influence and motivate players in ways not available to most leaders.⁴¹

Next, the leadership strategies required for a few hours a day over a six-month basketball season are somewhat different than the longer term strategies needed for a long-term, 365 days a year business. Finally, in the business application section of each chapter’s leadership principal, Bell appropriately uses numerous anecdotes from the corporate world to support each point. However, Bell rarely identifies the specific name of a leader or company in his examples, referring to them only in the abstract such as “a vice president of sales in a pharmaceutical company with large sales force . . . ,”⁴² and “I know a CEO that”⁴³ These vague references prevent the investigative-minded reader from testing the validity of the Bell’s assertions with regard to these anecdotes.⁴⁴

Despite these weaknesses, the authors effectively translate Smith’s coaching philosophy and leadership principles to a wide variety of business challenges. The authors cover several helpful leadership concepts such as identifying ways to effectively deal with the varying personalities, backgrounds, and agendas that the people in one’s organization bring with them, as opposed to simply implementing a one-size-fits-all bureaucratic management system. Thought-provoking and entertaining, *The Carolina Way*’s readers will be better equipped to handle their own personal leadership challenges. The reader will also come away with a tremendous appreciation and respect for Dean Smith as a leader and coach, but more importantly, one will acquire an appreciation of him as a *human* being who has positively influenced generations of young men.

⁴¹ See *id.* at 264 (showing that Smith recognizes and acknowledges this difference between college basketball and running a business).

⁴² *Id.* at 176.

⁴³ *Id.* at 166.

⁴⁴ Bell never says why he does this, though it may be that he was under agreement with companies with whom he works to remain confidential so people could talk freely.

THE CAROLINA WAY: LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM A LIFE IN COACHING¹

REVIEWED BY MAJOR JAYANTH JAYARAM²

Every college basketball fan is familiar with Dean Smith's reign as coach of the University of North Carolina men's basketball team from 1961 to 1997.³ With 879 wins, Smith is the winningest coach for men's basketball in the National Collegiate Athletic Association.⁴ His longevity and consistency, combined with a very high graduation rate and unfettered admiration from his players and assistant coaches, is a testament to the success of Smith's goals: play hard, play together, play smart.⁵

In *The Carolina Way*, Coach Smith and Gerald D. Bell,⁶ try to "fully explain[] . . . [Smith's] entire coaching philosophy and show readers how to apply it to the leadership and team-building challenges in their own lives."⁷ Divided into five titled parts,⁸ the book consists of chapters written in three segments, offering Smith's views and thoughts of his former players; Bell then provides a business perspective for each topic.⁹

The authors do a good job of describing Smith's coaching techniques, intertwined with interesting stories about players and situations. Coach Smith details his building and continued improvement of his different teams, since each year its composition changed.¹⁰ Throughout the book, he describes how he recruited prospects, conducted practice, made personnel decisions, and interacted with players, coaches, and media. Understanding these processes would certainly assist those in the coaching field and inform those interested in how Smith was able to keep his program at such a high level for decades, while gaining the admiration of his players. A fair critique of the book, however, must include an examination of the internal inconsistencies in the authors' analyses as well as an assessment of the applicability of their findings. Although the book provides insight on leadership lessons and ways to make a team perform effectively and efficiently, this review contends that the book is, at times, internally inconsistent and does not provide convincing applicability of all of Smith's techniques to the military. *The Carolina Way* does not rise to the "must read" level for the military judge advocate.

Smith and Bell identify many traits of successful leaders: "Honesty, integrity, discipline administered fairly, not playing favorites, recruiting the right people, effective practice and training, and caring are foundations that any organization would be wise to have in place."¹¹ They discuss effective leaders as those who are flexible,¹² confident,¹³ loyal,¹⁴ modest,¹⁵

¹ DEAN SMITH & GERALD D. BELL, *THE CAROLINA WAY: LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM A LIFE IN COACHING* (2004).

² U.S. Army. Written while assigned as a student, 53d Judge Advocate Officer Graduate Course, The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, U.S. Army, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³ See Basketball Hall of Fame, *Hall of Famers*, at <http://www.hoophall.com/halloffamers/SmithDean.htm> (last visited Feb. 17, 2005).

⁴ See *id.* As a head coach, Smith's teams won 879 games and lost 254 games: a winning percentage of over seventy-seven percent. See *id.* On 1 December 2004, McKendree College Men's Basketball Coach Harry Statham passed Dean Smith for most wins by a basketball coach. See *Statham Makes Dean's List*, CHI. TRIB., Dec. 2, 2004, at C10. Statham accumulated all his wins in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). See *id.*

⁵ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at inside flap. Smith's players had a graduation rate of over ninety-six percent. See *id.* But see Andrew Jones, *Krzyzewski Climbs Ranks of Coaching Legends*, STAR NEWS (Wilmington, N.C.), Dec. 15, 2004, at 1C (citing a graduation rate of over ninety-eight percent for Smith's players). Many collegiate basketball teams today have graduation rates at below fifty percent for their players. See *Basketball's Academic Fouls*, USA TODAY, Apr. 6, 2004, at 12A.

⁶ Dr. Bell has developed leadership training sessions that "have been attended by approximately five hundred thousand managers" worldwide. See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 338.

⁷ *Id.* at inside flap.

⁸ See *id.* at vii-viii (titling the parts as follows: *The Foundations*, *Playing Hard*, *Playing Together*, *Playing Smart*, and *Lessons Learned*).

⁹ Bell takes Smith's leadership techniques developed in coaching and tries to apply them to various business settings.

¹⁰ See *id.* at 12.

¹¹ *Id.* at 3.

¹² See *id.* at 12-13.

¹³ See *id.* at 14.

¹⁴ See *id.* at 15.

¹⁵ See *id.* at 26.

unselfish,¹⁶ dedicated,¹⁷ and able to foster an environment in which his or her “players” can play hard, play together, and play smart.¹⁸ Readers can gain perspective from how Coach Smith embodies these traits through his coaching philosophy and how Dr. Bell translates these into fundamental traits of a good leader.¹⁹

The Carolina Way offers many valuable tips on leadership, but there are several inconsistencies within the book. The most glaring inconsistency is the order in which Smith lists the basis of his basketball philosophy. The book is structured in the order of play hard, play together and play smart.²⁰ In at least two places, however, Smith switched the order to play hard, play smart, and play together.²¹ This does not necessarily invalidate the underlying principles for his teams’ success, but it reduces the credibility of other portions of the book.

One technique Smith implemented to add some perspective for his players was the “Thought for the Day,”²² later testing his players to recite the day’s message. If a player was unsuccessful, the entire team would do extra sprints.²³ With this as background, the “Thought for the Day” seems pale in comparison to the *essence* of Smith’s basketball philosophy.²⁴ Smith’s inability to enunciate his basketball philosophy consistently demonstrates his failure to follow his own drill and negates the effectiveness of “Thought for the Day” exercise.

Although Smith identifies many foundational principles for leaders in the book’s introduction,²⁵ he only addresses some of them in Part One, *The Foundations*. In this section, the authors fail to follow up with the principles of disciplining evenly and not playing favorites.²⁷ If these are basic principles, they should be discussed in further detail in the proper section of the book.

Another inconsistency is the equation he uses when discussing hard work. In the introduction he states, “Hard work that results in success equals confidence.”²⁸ In the chapter titled *Building Confidence*, however, Smith writes, “Hard work equals success, which equals confidence.”²⁹ These two statements are not synonymous. Confidence in the first statement occurs only when the results are successful through hard work. In the latter definition, confidence only requires hard work, irrespective of the results.

Reconciling Smith’s stance on peer pressure is difficult. He believes that “peer pressure is more effective in building good habits and morale than motivation created by fear, reward, or other means.”³⁰ He continues, “Peer pressure can be a valuable weapon.”³¹ He believes, however, that teammates should not criticize each other for making mistakes.³² Instead,

¹⁶ See *id.* at 18.

¹⁷ See *id.* at 15.

¹⁸ See *id.* at 20.

¹⁹ See *id.* at 9-27.

²⁰ See *id.* at vii-viii.

²¹ See *id.* at 28, 323. “It was our mission statement, our strategic plan, our entire approach in a nutshell: Play hard; play *smart*; play *together*.” *Id.* at 28 (emphasis added). “The Carolina Way isn’t the only way, that’s for certain. But playing hard, playing *smart*, playing *together* certainly worked well for us.” *Id.* at 323 (emphasis added).

²² See *id.* at 76.

²³ See *id.*

²⁴ Smith’s basketball philosophy is a combination of: play hard; play together; play smart. See *supra* text accompanying notes 20-21.

²⁵ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 1-6; see also text accompanying notes 12-18 (listing the numerous leadership principles identified by Coach Smith).

²⁷ See text accompanying note 11.

²⁸ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 15.

²⁹ *Id.* at 237.

³⁰ *Id.* at 262.

³¹ *Id.* at 135.

³² See *id.* at 161.

they should unequivocally support each other.³³ This belief is further obfuscated by Smith giving the players the option to be criticized by him in front of the team or on an individual basis.³⁴ If peer pressure is such a powerful motivator, he should not give the players the option to be counseled individually when the criticism could benefit or influence other players on the team.³⁵ If teammates are there only to support, and not criticize, the motivating force of peer pressure would be reduced and therefore detrimental to the team's success. But, despite not allowing teammates to criticize one another, Smith also discusses how he had all the players review and grade each shot taken during a game.³⁶ How can peer pressure be a powerful, motivating force if teammates can only provide support? If criticism of a teammate is not permitted, why are players evaluating each other? This illustrates the confusion Smith creates on this issue with his inconsistent assertions on peer pressure.

Another disconnect is Smith's position on winning. Winning was not the goal, but rather, the result of the process of playing hard, together, and smart.³⁷ He believes, "[M]aking winning the goal can actually get in the way of winning."³⁸ Smith concedes, however, that winning was the only goal when he coached the 1976 United States Olympic men's basketball team.³⁹ He distinguishes the Olympic team from his collegiate team in that the team represented a nation, not a university.⁴⁰ He also attempts to differentiate his approach because he did not recruit the members of the Olympic team.⁴¹ These distinctions appear completely arbitrary and are not persuasive.

The book discusses many worthy topics but could have been better organized; several chapters seem misplaced. For instance, Smith lists many traits, such as caring, as foundational principles.⁴² The chapter titled *Caring*, however, is not even in *The Foundations* part, but in *Playing Hard*.⁴³ Similarly, the chapter *Every Man on the Team Is Important* was situated in the *Playing Smart* part, but it would fit better in *Playing Together*.⁴⁴ *Don't Dwell on the Past*, which discusses how to handle mistakes, was put in *Lessons Learned* instead of *Playing Smart*.⁴⁵

Weak in comparison to the other parts of the book, some of the chapters in *Playing Smart* did not directly relate to "smart playing." Rather than discussing how a team that plays hard and together can improve its skill level, *Playing Smart* discusses a hodgepodge of issues such as the importance of treating everyone on the team fairly,⁴⁶ taking care of the details,⁴⁷

³³ See *id.*

³⁴ See *id.* At the start of each season during individual meetings, Smith gave players the option of being criticized privately in the office or in front of his teammates, but he cannot recall any player who opted for the private office counseling. See *id.*

³⁵ See *id.*

³⁶ See *id.* at 145. Smith had the players grade each shot anonymously. See *id.* Even when done anonymously, however, it is still criticism.

³⁷ See *id.* at 29.

³⁸ *Id.* (citing Tom Osborne, former head football coach of the University of Nebraska). Osborne ranks in the top fifteen for college football head coaches in wins with 255 victories. See RECORDS: OFFICIAL 2004 NCAA FOOTBALL, Aug. 2004, at 376 (including a section on *Coaches With 200 Or More Victories*), at http://www.ncaa.org/library/records/football_records_book/2004/2004_d1_football_records.pdf (last visited Feb. 17, 2005).

³⁹ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 307. Smith believed that winning was the only goal because the United States for the first time did not win the gold medal in 1972. See *id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 308.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² See *id.* at 3 (Smith writes, "The most important thing in good leadership is truly caring").

⁴³ See *id.* at vii.

⁴⁴ See *id.* at viii.

⁴⁵ See *id.*

⁴⁶ See *id.* at 191-93.

⁴⁷ See *id.* at 199-209.

conducting one-on-one meetings,⁴⁸ and earning the support of the bigger team.⁴⁹ Although these may be important to Coach Smith's overall philosophy, these chapters had little relevance to "playing smart."⁵⁰

Smith is not the only author who displayed weakness within the book. Dr. Bell, an individual who has studied and taught leadership, collaborated with Smith to write this book to present business applications of Smith's coaching techniques.⁵¹ Some of Bell's examples, however, were oversimplified, generalized, and inconsistent. The chapter on *Winning*, exposes some such oversimplifications: "The moral of the story is: Managers who focus entirely on winning neglect the processes for performing well and run over their people, thus usually end up losing."⁵² The statement is not convincing, because the author illogically assumes that the focus on winning automatically leads to neglecting the performance process and running over people. Similarly, Bell asserts, "Smart business leaders focus on factors that produce winning rather than on winning itself."⁵³ Do "dumb" business leaders focus only on winning? Are they "dumb" if they focus only on winning and actually win?

Further, Bell makes several unquantifiable and baseless generalizations about people's behavior:

Leaders in all professions, industries, and organizations throughout the world must come to understand that about 95 percent of *all* people are good people who have good intentions, who desire to be helpful and productive. About 5 percent are negative people, and only about 1 or 2 percent of these are truly mean.⁵⁴

Can anyone come to this conclusion without some indicia of proof? Bell does not mention any statistical methods used to make this assertion. The statement detracts from the author's credibility as a renown leadership trainer.

Bell provides another generalization with the following comment: "Self- and group[-] control is 100 percent more powerful than boss control."⁵⁵ Again, Bell measures concepts that are not quantifiable, without offering a rational basis. The assertion seems completely dependent on the characteristics of the individual, the group, and the boss, as well as the group's objective.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Bell's statement appears to contradict Smith's. Smith would not permit criticism from teammates, a form of group-control.

The business perspectives at times were internally inconsistent as well as inconsistent with Smith's coaching techniques and principles. Bell writes, "the most *effective* leaders are *always* focused on how to help the individual as well as their organizations succeed personally."⁵⁷ This would indicate that effective leaders are always "on the job" trying to help the organization and its members succeed. Bell, however, contradicts this in another part of the book:

Studies show that the maximum most people can work and be consistently effective is ten hours a day, five days a week. The key to staying at your peak all day long is to work intensely for about fifty minutes and then take a ten-minute break, starting with the first hour of work.⁵⁸

Reconciling these two assertions is difficult as the latter statement places a durational cap with breaks for effective work, but the former declaration requires a constant focus to be an effective leader.⁵⁹

⁴⁸ See *id.* at 215-25.

⁴⁹ See *id.* at 248-60.

⁵⁰ Some of these would fit better in *Playing Together* or perhaps an "administration" section.

⁵¹ See *id.* at 338.

⁵² *Id.* at 46.

⁵³ *Id.* at 44.

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 326.

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 163.

⁵⁶ One can probably think of group situations when an individual's pride and peer pressure were more powerful than boss control, and vice-versa.

⁵⁷ *Id.* at 70 (emphasis added).

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 185.

⁵⁹ See *supra* text accompanying notes 57-58.

One of Dr. Bell's examples is inconsistent with Coach Smith's principle on goal-setting.⁶⁰ Bell considered a woman who transformed a bank and mortgage business from nothing to a lucrative business.⁶¹ Due to many long days at work, however, she burned out and hired a manager to maintain the company; the owner kept her role as the leader and strategy setter.⁶² She then took long vacations without delegating her strategic authority, and "[i]n three years, the company went from a hundred-million-dollar business to one that was doing forty million dollars' worth."⁶³ Bell criticizes this entrepreneur for not taking appropriate action to keep the business growing.⁶⁴ He suggests that "a business leader should have been hired to build the company, with the goal of making it excel."⁶⁵ According to Webster's Dictionary, "to excel" is "to be superior to or to surpass others."⁶⁶ All of these terms seem synonymous to winning, a goal that Coach Smith did not make, except for the 1976 Olympics.⁶⁷

Although the book provides many good examples of leadership traits, it discusses issues that are not directly applicable to the military culture. Personnel decisions play a critical role in all three components of Smith's basketball philosophy: playing hard, playing together, and playing smart.⁶⁸ Throughout the book, Smith and Bell stress the importance of recruiting the right people to fit organizational needs: "Recruitment is one of the most crucial elements in producing a successful business"⁶⁹ However, in the military context, mid- to high-level leaders do not recruit the vast majority of their workers. Military recruiters hire most military members through enlistment contracts to fill certain positions. Although attempts may be made to try to match recruits in their preferred areas, it is mainly a numbers game to meet certain quotas within specific timelines. For instance, the Army's goal for fiscal year 2005 is to recruit 80,000 for the active component and 22,175 for the reserve component.⁷⁰

Bell's model for an organization's personnel decisions does not fit well with the military system. For example,

A company should hire slowly, researching the candidate objectively and asking all the right questions. But it should fire quickly. It shouldn't compound the problems created by a bad hire by allowing the employee to stay around for months or years and poison the atmosphere or destroy the performance of others.⁷¹

A small business or organization may have the luxury to thoroughly screen candidates and select a few members to fill their ranks. The armed forces, however, would have difficulty in using such a process. The military has limited ability in terms of firing an individual quickly. Procedures are in place to remove a Soldier for unsatisfactory performance; however, it is not a quick process and can often take months to effect.⁷²

The Carolina Way is a great book for coaches to see how Dean Smith built and managed the University of North Carolina men's basketball team, a perennial powerhouse for over three decades. For fans, the book provides an insider's look

⁶⁰ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 185-86 (Bell suggests winning as a goal). *But see id.* at 29 (Smith did not make winning a goal). However, Coach Smith appears inherently inconsistent on this topic as well. See *supra* text accompanying notes 37-41.

⁶¹ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 185-86.

⁶² See *id.*

⁶³ *Id.* at 186.

⁶⁴ See *id.*

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY 432 (9th ed. 1983).

⁶⁷ Smith admits that winning was the goal in the 1976 Olympics. See *supra* text accompanying notes 37-41.

⁶⁸ See SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 20.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 93.

⁷⁰ See United States Army Recruiting Command G5, *U.S. Army Recruiting Command Goals*, at <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/goals.htm> (last visited Feb. 9, 2005). The Army exceeded its recruiting goals for fiscal year 2004 with 77,587 active and 21,278 reserve recruits (target was 77,000 active and 21,000 reserve). See *id.*

⁷¹ SMITH & BELL, *supra* note 1, at 94-95.

⁷² See U.S. DEP'T OF ARMY, REG. 635-200, ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATIONS ch. 13 (15 July 2004). The goal for processing separations involving the notification procedure is fifteen working days; for those involved in the board procedure, the goal is fifty working days. See *id.* at para. 1-7. However, failure to meet these goals, as is often the case, does not prevent the separation process. See *id.*

into how the individual players and teams reacted or interpreted many situations they faced. The basic tenets of Coach Smith's philosophy apply to military leadership and management. The authors' approach to business management, however, has limited applicability to the military. Despite the limitations and weaknesses of the book, *The Carolina Way* offers readers valuable insight on leadership lessons and ways to make a team perform effectively and efficiently.