Notes taken from Coach K's book – Leading With the Heart
Compliments of Comet Women's Basketball

1. Getting Organized

-We have only one rule: Don't do anything that's detrimental to yourself. Because if it's detrimental to yourself, it'll be detrimental to our program and Mayville State University.

-It is important to begin using plural pronouns right away. "Our" instead of "my". "We" instead of "I". "us" rather than "me."

-We're ALL equal.

-Time management is a lesson that students learn through us –not only as it relates to them individually, but as it pertains to a group.

-While it ios always up to the individual student to graduate, I also believe its incumbent upon the school to positively influence its athletes in their studies.

-Time puts more pressure on you than anything else – that is why student's may cheat and cut corners.

-The upperclassmen will spend time letting the freshmen know what is expected. That, in turn, fosters additional leadership. And leadership on any team should be plural, not singular.

-A leader who sets too many rules, is making it appear that it is "my" team, instead of "our" team.

-I want to be a leader – and leadership is ongoing, adjustable, flexible and dynamic.

-The fact that I don't have a hard and fast rule gives me flexibility in certain cases. It provides me latitude to lead.

-That's what the best families are all about. There's real love, real caring, pride in one another's accomplishments, and no jealousy.

-When there is a chance to make a mistake, remember that you're part of our family. Remember, that you're not alone. And remember that whatever happens to you, happens to ALL of us.

-This is my "fair but not equal" policy. I'll be "fair" in everything I do, but the players won't be "equal" with regard to on-court playing time.

-Whatever I tell the players will be realistic and something that I believe in my heart.

2. Building Your Team

-I really dislike job descriptions. They tend to put people in boxes, and hold them back from realizing their full potential. I prefer to reevaluate our entire team and match the needs of the program with the strengths of the individuals running the program.

-We adjust as we go – according to needs and circumstances.

-Each team I coach is different because each individual is different.

-Almost everything in leadership comes back to relationships.

-My total focus in the preseason is finding out who we are and developing a personality of our own.

-I try to instill a mind-set that the players are going to win eventually – that our destination is winning. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that the destination is winning the national championship. It means constantly improving to reach maximum potential.

-A real winning attitude is about standards of excellence – which are variable from year to year, from team to team. Being the best you can be – and doing the best you can – are the constants

-The leader has to asses the quality of the team, set the standard of excellence, and then work with the team to achieve that standard – to be the best they can be every time out.

-I really believe that if a leader is s stickler on high performance, on excellence, then winning games will be a natural by-product.

-Because if a team is a real family, its members want to show you their hearts.

3. Establishing Discipline

-That is what I want from my players – a belief in a higher authority and respect for that authority.

-If a team cannot perform with excellence at a moment's notice, they probably fall in the long run.

-In addition to a caring attitude, leaders instill respect for authority by being direct, by communicating regularly, and by being honest.

-I want our team to know that when I tell them something, it's the truth.

-Well, no matter what happens, it's my team. I'm responsible. There's no excuse. That's how I feel, and that's how I act.
-If one of us fails, we all fail.

-When a leader takes responsibility for his own actions and mistakes, he not only sets a good example, he shows a healthy respect for the players on the team.

-Am I tough on the team? Absolutely. If they don't show respect for the program, for the University, fort one another, I'm all over them.

4. Dynamic Leadership

-Basically we are a group of people living together over a short period of time in our own culture.

-So all year long, the cycle keeps going – always active, always planning, moving, doing. That's the way I view leadership. It never stops. It's going all the time. It's dynamic.

-Well, if you are always striving to achieve a success that is defined by someone else, I think you'll always be frustrated.

-I want our team to get better every day. If we can do that, the other stuff will take care of itself.

-Whatever a leader does now sets up what he does later. And there is always a later.

-It's important to have a long-term strategy, but no one should be a slave to their plan.

-Success is not a matter of just wanting to win. It's a matter of preparing to win – which is much more important.

-If a team consistently concentrates on goals like that, major achievements happen.

-**MY GOAL HAS TO BE WORTHY OF THE TEAM'S COMMITMENT!!!!!**

-If you're a leader, you'd better understand that if you want people on your team who are fully committed, the you'd better be fully committed to a course of action that allows proper use of that commitment.

5. Teamwork

-If five talented individuals don't perform as a team, they my not be a strong as five less-talented individuals who do.

-There are five fundamental qualities that make every team great: communication, trust, collective responsibility, caring and p[ride.
-You develop a team to achieve what one person cannot accomplish alone.

-If he gets in the habit of yelling for the ball, his hands will instantly go up in a reflex motion.

-I've always believed that confidence shared is better than confidence only in yourself.

-And once the confrontation is done, its done. The bond is not jeopardized, because ours is a relationship based on trust.

-Because when you point blame at someone else, one finger sticks out – and you no longer have a fist. Besides, that one finger can easily be broken off.

-Everything we do has our own personal signature on it. So we want to do it as well we possibly can.

When everyone on our team believes that our own personal signature in on everything our team does – then we have a chance to be a great basketball team.

-But all the technical aspects of the game are better achieved if the fist is clenched tight.

-One of my goals in establishing teamwork is always to get the team believing that they are part of something beiger than themselves.

-Two are better than one if two act as one. And if you believe that that two acting as one are better than one, just imagine what an entire team acting as one can do.

6. Training and Development

-The overriding concept I employ in teaching revolves around this simple phrase: You hear, you forget, You see, you remember. You do, you understand.

-Whenever I have a practice session with my team, I go in fully prepared. I put together a one-page handwritten lesson. I decide not only what points I want to get across, I also pick different places where I will talk to them – in the locker room, in the middle of the court, on the bench, under the basket, and so on.

-But the single most intimidating element of competition, aside from raw talent, is a team working and playing hard for the entire game.

-A leader may be the most knowledgeable person in the world, but if the players on his team cannot translate that knowledge into action, it means nothing.

-Having a chance to win every time out is one of my goals.
-I want all the players on our team to see themselves through my eyes. They need to know how they really are, not just how they think they are.

-For the players to see themselves through my eyes is not always a pleasant thing. But always, it is a fact. Always, it is the truth.

-I think it more important to concentrate on the character and talent of the individual player rather than on the number, the position, or the job description.

-I want no artificial walls erected that might limit potential, stifle creativity, or shackle innovation.

-The freedom to grow personally, the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them, the freedom to work hard, and the freedom to be yourself. These freedoms should be granted by every leader in every organization.

-Leaders should be reliable without being predictable. They should be consistent without being anticipated.

-In any classroom, if the students can predict what the teacher is going to do all the time, they start memorizing and stop thinking.

7. Turn Negatives Into Positives

-As a coach, I must be able to read my players, to recognize those different things and then take appropriate action.

-Any little negative thing can hurt the team's overall performance. So it must be dealt with immediately before it becomes a big negative thing.

-Overcoming adversity is part of becoming successful.

-"Don't worry about losing, think about winning."

-Remember, sometimes adversity can work in your favor. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself and using it as an excuse, accept the situation and try to make the most of it. That's how a team develops resilience and character.

-A leader has to have the courage to make key decisions is a split second. And then he has to have the courage to live with it afterward – whether it succeeds or fails.

8. Game Day

-Game day is the best of all days and it is sacred to me.

-How does a person show respect for anything??? He gives it time.

-"If you guys can get yourselves to a high level individually," I tell them, "then I can take you to higher level as a team."

-Adjustments are not unusual, they are usual.

-Game day is not a day for long drawn out speeches. It's a time for interaction. And you have to interact by feel. That's what I do, I coach by feel.

-As a matter of fact, each game is an intermediate stop on our journey. We get off the train and see how we are doing. Games are not our final destination. They are checkpoints on our progress.

9. Refresh and Review

-The general idea during this renewal phase is to determine what the team needs right now and then provide it for them.

-We believed we could win. And that our formula consisted of preparation, communication, hard work, practice and focus – which will continue to be our guide.

-Everybody just doesn't come together right away, meet on top of a mountain and embrace.

-They believe, they work hard, and they prepare – but they don't assume.

-And I tell them to believe they can win, but don't assume they will win.

10. Handling a Crisis

-And the worse the crisis is, the more people tend to act as individuals rather than as members of a team.

-What is it that leaders do in a crisis situation??? They stay calm, stay focused, stay positive, stay confident and utilize their best people.

-A leader has to show that he's real, that he can make a mistake.

-"Untrustworthy" is the last thing a leader wants to be.
-I've learned that to admit a mistake is not a weakness, it's a strength. As a matter of fact, it shows confidence in the relationship.

-Successful crisis management is best achieved when people are truthful with one another – immediately.

-I really wanted them to enjoy themselves because having fun help[s reduce pressure. And there is always pressure in an emergency situation.

-A leaders needs to show the face that his team needs to see. Because before he ever utters a word, they see his face. They also see his eyes, even his walk.

-A good leader presents an image that gives confidence to his team.

-"Show confidence, hide weakness."

-Anger is okay, if it motivates you to do something good. Sometimes anger destroys fear. And I wanted our players to be angry, too.

-In a crisis, it appears to most people that there are no opportunities. But a leader's job is to create opportunities.

11. Focus on the Task at Hand

-A leader's responsibility to his team is paramount. It overshadows even his own personal feelings at any given time.

-A leader should strive to do his best 100 percent of the time.

-"Okay, what does this group need right now."

-"Don't even listen to what I say publicly," I also said. "Just listen to what I tell you face to face."

-No company, no matter how good they are, is going to win that next job on reputation alone. They're going to have to go out and earn it.

12. Celebrate Tradition

-Once a member of the corps, always a member of the corps.

-Tradition builds pride, fosters team unity and reinforces confidence. It lets people know that they are part of something grand.
-But all of the hard work is worth it, because once you make it happen, confidence, excellence, unity, and pride will grow.

-I want each player who plays for Duke that our relationship will always be there – that friends donot disappear once the journey has concluded.

13. Blueprint Basics

-My early commitment o him and his parents was to give 100 percent of myself in coaching, teaching, and advising whatever was in his best interests.

-In other words, if the leader is committed, there will be a greater chance for the followers to be committed.

-A leader has to let his players have the freedom to show their personal commitment to the organization.

-A leader must be committed to helping people grow. My commitment to each player is to help him realize his full potential, to be the best he can be. And his commitment to me is to try and do his best.

-My personal motivation as a coach has always been the pursuit of excellence.

-I feel good about what I am doing, just because I am doing it.

-My hunger is not for success, it is for excellence.

-My goal for each player, and for the team as a whole, is to have them playing is a positive matter, utilizing their abilities and not being afraid to fail. That's my goal in motivation.

-The leader of the team is responsible for getting to know the players well enough to understand what methods are the most effective for each individual – as well as the team as a whole.

-I believe the main job of a coach is to motivate. The main job of a leader is to inspire.

-A leader should not allow his team to cheat themselves with complacency.

-And to teach is to learn twice, as the adage goes.

-If you're a good teacher, you know that the arrow goes both ways. You give to the group. The group gives back to you.

-If I teach them well, winning games will be the natural result.
-Family is a fist – complete with communication, caring, collective responsibility, trust and pride. Families make individuals part of something bigger.

14. The Core of Character

-Actually I know they'll win – because I know I am a good coach.

-Then I held up my own glass and said: "Here's to never forgetting tonight happened. Not ever!"

-All we cold do was learn from the adversity we experienced, try to handle it with grace, and then get on with our work.

-But true bravery in leadership really revolves around the degree to which a person maintains the courage of his convictions.

-Courage gives a leader the ability to stand straight and not sway no matter which way the wind blows.

-You can talk about a pitcher throwing shutouts or striking out twelve batters in a game. But until hat pitcher does it, he never really knows he's that good.

-With accomplishment comes confidence and with confidence comes belief. It has to be in that order.

-Any blueprint to leadership has to be used as a guide. There has to be room for personal creativity. And every leader has to put his own signature on his leadership style.

-Leadership never stops.

-In order to be a winner, you have to look for ways of getting things done and not for reasons why things can't be done.

-At the heart of character is honesty and integrity.

-We must be honest with each other. There is no other way.

15. Friendship

-Because things change by the hour in my business, I've learned to live with instability and deal with it.

-Sometimes, people simply have to do what they have to do. Sometimes they have to move on.

-It's always "next season, next game, next play."

-The future should always be uncertain for you. You never know what is going to happen to you next.

-In coaching, we never give up. Never!

-Part of being a coach is to have empathy for other people.

-"A person really doesn't become whole until he becomes a part of something that's bigger than himself."

16. Life

-If your people are engaged in competition and you cannot lead them, then you step back and let someone else lead.

-"Two is better than one, if two can act as one"

-Even the head coach, like any other leader has to remember that there are always other people around who can lead – and that we should listen to them.