

Chemistry ~ is it a noun or a Verb?

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"Chemistry is a contribution that teammates make to each other, but it's also something a coach can create." -Tony DiCicco

Putting a team together is simple, but putting together a championship team requires special contributions from every player, as well as the coaching staff. Taken together, those contributions create what we call "team chemistry." As you come closer to opening day, you've got to begin to pull your team together in an effort to create the kind of team chemistry that will translate into a winning season.

The definition *by Tony DiCicco, Head Coach, 2008 US U20 World Champions, 1999 Women's World Cup Champions, 1996* of chemistry is a tricky thing. People always said that our team had such great chemistry, as if chemistry were a noun, a thing, something you could have or hold onto. But chemistry isn't a noun, it's a verb, an action, a behavior. Each person on the team has a responsibility to actively contribute to this living entity we call chemistry. A team is like a new plant. You have to water it, provide it with light, space to grow and then nurture it on a daily basis. It's active, it's personal, it's individual and it's ongoing.

Chemistry is that intangible quality that exists in teams that allows them to perform at a higher level collectively than they could individually. It's a support and trust structure within the team. It's the relationship between players, between staff and players, between staff and staff. The ultimate goal is to create a safe environment in which neither players nor staff feels like they're under a microscope. As a result, people aren't afraid to try new things. Players can play without risk of embarrassment or failure, because it's safe.

Chemistry alone is not enough to make you a winner. But if you have the other ingredients, talent, knowledge and competitiveness, it certainly enhances the ability to win. Clearly, teams with high levels of chemistry enjoy the game more and perform at a level beyond what they're individually capable of. And, in the end, the whole team experience is more rewarding, there's more learning taking place and there's more carryover to the rest of your life. It goes beyond the white line of the field.