

A Championship Team

by Wayne Goff

The Kansas City Royals won their first World Series Championship in thirty years on November 2, 2015. The team is truly a championship caliber team, and they exude the qualities of champions.

I have watched the Royals on TV, and quite a few games in person, over the last twenty years that I have lived here. Moreover, I have watched many sports from my childhood, baseball and football being the two chief sports. And I have played just about every sport there is to play, both on school teams, summer leagues, etc. And I was fortunate enough to help coach my two boys in baseball and basketball when they were young. I say that to *emphasize* that I **know** a championship team when I see one. They are always special, though not to be confused with that occasional team that “lucks” into a championship on rare occasions.

The apostle Paul wrote, “*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it*” (1 Cor. 9:24). Those who have never played sports may miss out on the point Paul is making. It’s not easy to win, and it takes certain intrinsic qualities to be a champion. Here is my list:

1: Talent

No championship team was ever without talent. The Royals team is full of *first round selections* — Alex Gordon, Luke Hochevar, Mike Moustakas, Eric Hosmer, and Christian Colon. Add to that some *first round talent* that signed early because they were international players — Alcides Escobar and Salvador Perez both signed at age 16! Ironically, some other talented players on the team signed in late rounds — Lorenzo Cain, Jarrod Dyson, and Ben Zobrist — but all have blossomed tremendously. The Royals have a *talented* ball club, to say the least!

2: Leadership

It is a known fact that when Dayton Moore and Ned Yost came on board that they were from a **proven** program — *the long-time successful* Atlanta Braves organization. The Royals’ organization was in such disarray that it took nine years to get to the championship level! But it was done by building an *organization*, not just a team. Ned Yost was hand-picked by Dayton Moore and he knew exactly what he wanted in this manager. Ned is a coach who *directs* the players, but he does not *over* manage and get in the way. He lets his *talented* players learn the game, make mistakes and grow into first-rate players. Fortunately, he had a GM who had the patience to let this develop!

3: Teamwork

The Royals are a “**team.**” They work together, they have each other’s back, they laugh and tease, and have fun together. But most importantly they play as a team together. There are many, many *talented* ball clubs that never won a championship because they were never a team. This year’s Los Angeles Dodgers would be a perfect example of a team with a wealth of talent, but who did not play together.

When certain players were selected for interviews after a *spectacular* game they might have had, it was **singularly obvious** that each player went out of his way to thank his teammates and to credit the whole team for their success. I personally saw this done over and over this year, not just during the playoffs. Coaches would give their “eye teeth” for a group of players who think, act and play like a team!

4: Goal-Oriented

Last year’s team missed winning the World Series by losing the seventh game by one run, with that tying run standing on third base when the game ended. Ned Yost, Dayton Moore and every player affirmed that this left a *bitter taste* in their mouths which never went away. While the world around them thought they were *fortunate* to make it to the World Series last year, the Royals knew what kind of team they were and were *bitterly disappointed* at the loss! The Royals were projected to finish third or fourth in the Central Division, and miss the playoffs *completely*, but the Royals came to Spring Training this year with **one goal** in mind — get back to the World Series and win it this time! Last year was no fluke!

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