

Clarkson Women's Volleyball Team Overcomes Communication Issues Utilizing Talent-Max, Inc. Tool

Shortly after Johan Dulfer took over as head coach of the Clarkson University Women's Volleyball program, he quickly discovered that the team faced some communication – and cultural – issues.

His players were young and exhibited a wide range of personality styles. Two of the coaches were men, and cultural differences arose from Dulfer being a native of the Netherlands.

Knowing that communication is one of the keys to success in team athletics, Head Coach Dulfer brought in Sue Medley, a member of the Talent-Max, Inc. staff and an experienced college volleyball coach, to assist with communications skills. Sue Medley spent a full day with the team and coaches before the 2007-2008 season began.

"I wanted to see if an outside perspective could help us because we had experienced some miscommunication issues," Dulfer said.

Employing Talent-Max, Inc.'s DISC assessment tool, Clarkson's women's volleyball athletes completed insights assessment questionnaires that provide useful information about individual communication styles. DISC assessments provide clarity around each individual core style:

- "D" for Dominance: those tending to be independent and results driven.
- "I" for Influence: people who are more optimistic and outgoing.
- "S" for Steadiness: those who tend to be more supportive and helpful to others.
- "C" for Compliance/Conscientiousness: people focused on details and quality.

"The players who completed the DISC tool refer to it often," Dulfer said. "When they talk about a situation with another player, they'll say, 'oh yeah, she's doing that because she's a core style D or a C.'"

According to Dulfer, the DISC tool has been effective, giving the coaches a tool to sit down with a player or with the team and better explain things. "The Talent-Max, Inc. tool was incredibly helpful," he said. "Sue Medley helped the players and coaches discover that you have to dig deeper to see why someone is saying something before judging them."

During Head Coach Dulfer's first season in 2006-2007, the Clarkson Golden Knights finished with 7 wins and 25 losses. After making adjustments and a lot of hard work by both the players and coaching staff, including the application of the Talent-Max, Inc. program, the team improved to 23-17 in 2007-2008, reached the post-season, and Clarkson's coaching staff was named the Liberty League Conference's 2007 Coaching Staff of the Year. In addition, the team broke several records, including team records for assists, kills, and digs, as well as individual single-season records for kills and digs.

Dulfer says that the program's improvement had much to do with improved communication between the coaching staff and the players.

"I wanted Sue Medley's eye on my program to look at our communication," Dulfer concluded. "I attribute a lot of the success we've achieved in better communicating to the work we did with Sue and Talent-Max, Inc."