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By MICHAEL SOKOLOVE

That irritating American Express commercial is blaring again during the college basketball telecasts. The scrappy Polish guy from Chicago is standing in front of his bench, his feet firmly planted on the holy hardwood of Duke's Cameron Indoor Stadium, his jaw locked with intensity. For years, Mike Krzyzewski, the legendary Coach K, has been pounding your team, my team and every other damn team in America, but here he is saying that he's not, really, all about basketball. His purpose is a higher one. "I don't look at myself as a basketball coach," he says in the ad. "I look at myself as a leader who just happens to coach basketball."

So, three national championships and 10 Final Four appearances, all achieved with his usual roster of clean-cut all-Americans, and now this: the high priest of Blue Devils basketball as corporate icon. Leadership guru.

Ethics exemplar. And soon to become, in marketing terms, "the [Michael Jordan](#) of college coaches," according to his agent, David Falk (who is, yes, Jordan's agent).

Krzyzewski (pronounced sha-SHEF-ski) has been doing about 30 corporate speaking gigs a year for about \$50,000 a pop. (He plans to cut back on the number of speeches while raising his fee to \$100,000.) He is host of an annual conference at Duke's Fuqua School of Business. The university, in an unusual move, put its basketball coach's name on an academic center, the Fuqua/Coach K Center of Leadership & Ethics, and made Krzyzewski an "executive in residence" with the expectation that he will be able to become a professor whenever he stops coaching. In addition, Duke Corporate Education, which consults to businesses, has developed a program that uses Krzyzewski's methods as a teaching tool. PricewaterhouseCoopers has so far sent about 500 senior associates and managers — most of them "partners in the making," as they were described to me — to study Duke basketball in a "metaphoric context" to help them reach personal and professional goals.

All of this is easy to ridicule because Krzyzewski is, after all, a mere coach — and in some quarters, especially among rival fans in the bitterly competitive Atlantic Coast Conference, a reviled one. "The Anti-Duke Manifesto," which is widely circulated on the Internet and typical of some of the vitriol aimed at Krzyzewski, reads something like a federal indictment and, at more than 6,000 words, runs about as long. Its anonymous author makes the impossible-to-prove charge that even within the foulmouthed fraternity of college basketball coaches, Krzyzewski's language on the sideline is more profane than most. The manifesto attributes much of Duke's success to favorable calls from referees, which seems far-fetched. More broadly, Krzyzewski is accused of being a sanctimonious, self-satisfied hypocrite.

What the manifesto demonstrates, mainly, is how satisfying it can be to hate success and, even more so, to hate success linked to virtue. It is far more difficult, but ultimately more rewarding, to try to understand it.

Is Krzyzewski smug? Well, anyone who wants to beat you — and then sell you the book on how it was done — can be accused of that. But there is a larger truth to keep in mind. Krzyzewski is not lucky. Nobody stays lucky for a quarter-century. He's good. And not simply good in an Al Davis "Just win, baby" kind of way. In an era of rapacious C.E.O.'s, crooked congressmen and predatory lobbyists who rip off Indian tribes, a man who runs a squeaky-clean program within the dubious world of big-time college sports just might be worth listening to.

Alan D. Schwartz is the president of Bear Stearns, a Wall Street firm that generated more than \$7 billion in revenue last year. Sitting in his office one recent morning, looking out over much of Manhattan, he told me that Krzyzewski was his role model: "I think executives like me aspire to be his peer, and I don't say that tongue in cheek. Leadership is such an intangible quality, but it's really clear when you see it. I said to him once, 'You may be better at what you do than anybody I know is at what they do.'"

So what is the secret to Krzyzewski's success? For starters, he coaches the way a woman would. Really.

Almost everything in leadership comes back to relationships.

Chapter 2: Building Your Team, From "Leading With The Heart: Coach K's Successful Strategies For Basketball, Business, And Life" (2000), By Mike Krzyzewski, With Donald T. Phillips

About a month into the current basketball season, Krzyzewski's 26th at Duke, I walked into his cubbyhole of an office at Cameron Indoor Stadium, just steps away from the basketball court. (He has another, much bigger office in a building next door.) "Don't get too close," he said. "I might stink a little bit." He had just finished lifting weights and was still perspiring. He also seemed agitated, all revved up in a way I had not seen before. That afternoon's practice was soon to begin, and he told me, with evident glee, that he planned to rip into his players.

The Duke Blue Devils at that point had won their first seven games and were ranked No. 1 in the nation, but in several of those contests they had sputtered and prevailed only because of superior talent or, in one case, last-second heroics: a Duke player's heave from near midcourt swished through the net as time expired, giving Duke a 2-point victory over Virginia Tech.

A coach has just a few moments each season to galvanize a team and lift it to a higher plateau, and Krzyzewski knew that this afternoon was one of them. He had a couple of targets in mind: two talented freshmen on whose development he believed the season rested. They weren't playing "fast enough," he said. Their tentativeness was making a mess of Duke's usually fast and fluid motion offense. He wanted the freshmen to be more engaged in each moment (rather than the one just past or the one coming up) and to play more instinctively and without fear of making mistakes. It was the opposite of the guidance you might expect — which would be to counsel

young players to slow down and think about what they were doing. He actually wanted them to think less.

Krzyzewski explained his method for getting such points across. "You gotta go just like this," he said as he formed his right hand into a claw, then extended it toward me and rotated his wrist as if he were about to rip my chest open. "You gotta get through all their layers and right into their hearts and say, 'I want this from you and I want it right now.' They're not used to that. Nobody has ever come at them like that before. So I've got to go after them really hard."

Later, after we spoke, Krzyzewski confronted his team behind closed doors. "He told us freshmen to stop playing passive and to play with an attacking style," Greg Paulus, a first-year point guard, told me. "We heard him. Loud and clear."

Krzyzewski is a tough man, obviously, as well as sort of a guy's guy, someone who knows how to use his iconic status as the coach of one of America's fabled sports programs to great effect. Men want to be around him. They want his attention, his approbation. Long after they have given up their dreams of being sports stars, they can still hope to be what he is: the executive at the top of his game. I heard him begin a speech to a corporate group by recognizing several friends in the audience, including a renowned knee surgeon who many years ago had operated on his ankle. "Let me introduce a great surgeon to you," he said, before adding, in jest, "He screwed up my ankle, so then he started doing knees." That jocular one-two punch of ridicule and praise is a distinctly male thing and something that most women would not attempt; Krzyzewski, a master of the form, pulled it off with aplomb.

Krzyzewski's toughness and his wisecracking, just-one-of-the-boys manner are certainly part of his leadership style. These qualities buttress his status and authority, but they form just one layer, an outer layer.

In Krzyzewski's office that day, a few minutes after he thrust his clawed hand toward my chest, I said to him that I had noticed something about his approach to leadership: despite the unquestioned authority he commands, his style, on balance, is more feminine than masculine. At Duke games, after he gives his instructions during a timeout — the classic command-and-control moment — his players break away from him and form their own huddle. To talk to one another. Duke players constantly consult with one another on the court without looking to the bench for direction or approval. Krzyzewski believes that even a practice should have a certain sound, by which he means he should hear his players communicating back and forth constantly.

When he recruits a player, Krzyzewski tells him, "We're developing a relationship here, and if you're not interested, tell me sooner rather than later." That word — relationship — is one he uses frequently. To players who may leave after a year or two for the National Basketball Association, he says: "If you come here, for however long, you're going to unpack your suitcase. We're going to form a bond, and you're going to be part of this family."

What I said to Krzyzewski, precisely, was: "You know what, you manage like a girl, basically." He laughed and, somewhat to my relief, agreed. "Mostly, I've been in a male world," he said. "Catholic high school, all boys. West Point, all boys. The Army, all boys. Basketball, all boys."

But I don't do things in the way that background probably would predict I should. I'm a hybrid, which I think you should be."

Game day is not a day for long, drawn-out speeches. It is a time for interaction.

Chapter 8: Game Day

Krzyzewski grew up on the North Side of Chicago, and even after his quarter-century in Durham, N.C., you can still hear, in his nasal voice, inflections of the old neighborhood. (The word "this," for example, comes out sounding more like "dis.") He thinks about everything he does — how he presents himself is central to how he leads — so the accent is probably something he did not want to lose and may even at times accentuate. It is a remnant of roots that are working-class to the core. His father operated an elevator in a downtown office building, and his mother scrubbed floors at the Chicago Athletic Club. His older brother, Bill (his only sibling), went into the city's fire department and retired after attaining the rank of captain.

Krzyzewski was a savvy high school point guard but not talented enough to attract scholarship offers from the big basketball powers. The coach who came calling was Bobby Knight, then the head man at the United States Military Academy at West Point. "I don't want to be a soldier," Krzyzewski protested to his parents. His mother and father had a quick (and, as Krzyzewski recalls, angry-sounding) conversation in Polish. They later told him to accept the free education being offered because they didn't have the money to buy him one.

In the American Express commercial, Krzyzewski says, "My life isn't about playing games," but in a literal sense, that's all his career has been about. Krzyzewski played three years for Knight. After that, the boy who never wanted to be a soldier was granted his wish, more or less. While many of his classmates were serving in Vietnam, he spent three years coaching military basketball teams, then two years as the coach at a military prep school in Virginia. Capt. Michael William Krzyzewski then resigned his military commission, worked for one year as a graduate assistant to Knight (who had taken over at Indiana) and then — without ever having served as a full-fledged assistant coach in college — accepted a job as head coach back at West Point.

Krzyzewski likes to call West Point "the greatest leadership school in the world." In his mind, the other academies largely teach technical skills — how to fly a fighter jet or sail an aircraft carrier — but West Point, more than the others, teaches officers how to bond units together and lead them into battle.

Knight is the most obvious influence on Krzyzewski's career and coaching methods, but by no means the most important; his wife has long been that. He met the former Carol Marsh, known as Mickie, when he was home on break from West Point and she was working out of Chicago as a stewardess for United Airlines. On an early date, to a Chicago Bears football game, he somehow revealed that she had been his third choice, after two others turned him down. "I had never known someone who could be so honest and so blatantly stupid," Mickie Krzyzewski told me. "I was thinking, How can this guy be so dumb?"

The Krzyzewskis were married on his graduation day at West Point at the academy's Catholic chapel. (He was dressed in his Army "blues," a formal uniform he'd become eligible to wear only a few hours earlier, when he graduated as an officer.) They have three adult children, all daughters, meaning that the Duke coach has long dwelled in a world of women.

If you read a sampling of books and other advice on leadership, a recurring theme emerges: managers should be more "interactive" and less "command and control," meaning they should share rather than hoard information, spread decision making and initiative across all levels of the company, and make clear that individual goals can be met only through team success. The rationale is twofold: in a complex world, no one person can know everything and direct from on high. Collaboration among large numbers of people, all of them sifting and synthesizing information, is ever more important. And more basically: people no longer just do what they're told. Not in a workplace, in a family or on a basketball team. Father might still know best, but now he has to explain himself. He has to clearly state goals and invest everyone in reaching them.

The interactive, or relational, qualities of leadership are stereotypically feminine; the command-and-control ones, masculine. The books don't straight out tell male executives to be more like women, but that message is clear.

Mike Krzyzewski's interactive/feminine qualities of leadership may be partly innate, but to a large extent, he learned them from his family.

"There's an empathetic part of leadership, and this is where my wife and my daughters have had a huge impact on me," Krzyzewski says. "Guys don't share insights. If a guy does, we call him a blowhard or a know-it-all, so we don't do it. Every night at the dinner table, my wife and girls discussed their day. They remembered details. They remembered the feeling that the detail brought, and the feeling before that, where as men we remember only the final feeling. We're all about the end of the story, the punch line."

You must be able to read your players.

Chapter 7: Turn Negatives Into Positives

The plowing and replowing of emotional terrain inside the Krzyzewski household is the sort of thing that might make some men thankful for the occasional out-of-town business trip. And coaches do, of course, take lots of trips. Typically, they stay up late with their assistant coaches watching game film while eating pizza and drinking beer. But starting with his first year at Duke, Krzyzewski's wife has accompanied him to the vast majority of away games. (His daughters, when they were younger, often went, too, but had to attest that their schoolwork was under control to be allowed to make the trip.)

"Many nights we would be in our pj's, sitting on the floor and watching film with the staff," says Krzyzewski's middle daughter, Lindy Frasher. "And Mom would put in her two cents." Did she comment on matters involving basketball, like how a certain play should be run? "Absolutely,"

Frasher says. "It was usually more about what a player might be thinking or feeling, but if she has something to say about basketball, believe me, they listen to her."

Mickie Krzyzewski was raised in Alexandria, Va., and attended a small Southern Baptist college, but left before graduating. "Mike's ability to take risks has helped him, and it was risky, at the time, to include us like he did," she says. "Remember that this was before the time that TV cameras showed the families in the stands as a point of interest. But the girls and I had to live up to it. We couldn't be hysterical or whatever those stereotypes of women are. We had to add something that was valid."

Mickie says she and her husband made an agreement when he began coaching at Army: that he would never say she couldn't go somewhere with him because no other women would be there. (At West Point, when military rules prohibited her from riding on the bus, Mickie followed behind in her car.) It was not a hard thing for him to agree to because he did not believe, even then, that there was something sanctified about the all-male atmosphere of a men's college team. His game was basketball, not male bonding.

"His wife and daughters are around constantly," says J. J. Redick, a star of this year's team. "When you have all these males around and all that intensity, it's nice to get a hug sometimes."

That may sound trite or unimportant, and Redick's comments are of the type that could easily fire the imaginations of anti-Duke partisans who already like to taunt Duke players as soft preppie types. But in an era of rampant lawlessness in big-time college sports, Duke players have generally stayed out of trouble and away from the antisocial behavior that has occurred within the all-male caldrons of other programs. Yes, it is impolitic in some circles to suggest that the role of women is to civilize men. And there are surely higher callings than keeping watch over pampered college athletes. But it's also a fact that there are some things boys don't do when women are around — and at Duke, they always are.

Judy Rosener, an expert on gender differences in leadership who has written for the Harvard Business Review and other publications, told me that men and women respond to different signals. "Women tend to have more of a sensitivity to subliminal things," she says. "They pick up on body language. Tone of voice. They don't just look at the action or the result."

Mike Krzyzewski says that his wife has served as a kind of early-warning system, that she can see things he can't: "Mickie will say to me, 'There's something wrong with Shane.' I'll say, 'There's nothing wrong with him.' And she says, 'O.K., but there is.' I try to dismiss her, but I'm thinking, 'There's probably something bothering him. And sure enough, I'll take him aside, and there is. This kind of thing has happened hundreds of times over the years.'"

Krzyzewski's credo is teamwork — no one person can do it alone — and his family has been his team. His wife has poured her considerable energy and intellect into his career. His oldest daughter, Debbie Savarino, now oversees his charitable and community projects. Lindy Frasher has taken on part of the role that Mickie Krzyzewski always filled informally. As Duke basketball's "performance development coordinator," she attends practices and staff meetings

and, according to the team's media guide, provides a "non-basketball perspective" for the coaches.

Frasher, who is also a high school teacher, explains to me that the Krzyzewski women provide more than a soft cushion of support. "It's sort of a protective thing, too," she says. "They're like my little brothers, and I'd kill someone on their behalf if I had to."

Believe that the loose ball you're chasing has your name on it.

Chapter 5: Teamwork

A strong high school principal might be a big man whose booming voice resounds down corridors, or a small-boned woman who once taught English and barely speaks above a whisper. A successful corporation might be led by a straight-from-the-gut guy like Jack Welch, or a recede-into-the-background geek like [Bill Gates](#), or a visionary like [Steve Jobs](#). A winning sports team might be inspired by a fire breather like Vince Lombardi, or a fatherly presence like [Joe Torre](#), or a diffident intellectual type like [Bill Belichick](#). They're all good. They all win. They are all celebrated as leaders.

This is why nearly anyone who has been successful can go out on the road as a leadership expert or write one of the dozens of books that are published on the subject each year. ("Joe Torre's Ground Rules for Winners," [Rick Pitino's](#) "Lead to Succeed," Pat Croce's "Lead or Get Off the Pot!," Donald T. Phillips's "Lincoln on Leadership.") No one can replicate Jack Welch's General Electric, but maybe if you listen to him closely enough, and read and reread his best-selling books, you can learn a little something to take back to your own shop.

I traveled to Colorado Springs last summer to listen in as Krzyzewski gave one of his corporate speeches. The setting was the Broadmoor, a fancy resort that was hosting a conference of several hundred hospital executives put together by McKesson, a company that specializes in health care services. There is a distinct internal psychology to these sorts of gatherings. The attendees may, in their day-to-day lives, feel burdened by various pressures and perhaps even be cynical, but here they dress down in business casual, breathe in the mountain air and open themselves up to inspiration.

The speaker must be a person of high achievement but, ideally, not so lofty in manner that no one can connect with him. Krzyzewski, who turns 59 this month, came onstage just after his American Express commercial finished playing on a giant video screen. He still has an athlete's build, but he walks stiffly after a series of orthopedic surgeries: two hip replacements and an operation on his back. Rather than standing behind a lectern, he paced at the front of a stage. He used no notes.

The house lights were up because he likes to find a few faces to focus on, "to make eye contact," he says. He always looks for a few women because "they're more emotional, and when I talk about those things, they get it. They're right there with me."

In the first few minutes of his speech, he joked about his appearance — his big nose and overly large ears — and noted that he is "not the best-looking guy in the world." He told stories about his Chicago roots and his mother, who despite never going beyond the eighth grade was the wisest person he has known. He said he likes to "belch after eating Polish sausage, because for a Polack that's like reliving a great experience."

It was cheesy after-dinner material, vaguely inappropriate — and utterly effective. When he talked about his mother, who died in 1996, it didn't come off as shtick; it was clear he missed her. The Chicago stories came with maybe a little bit more of the Chicago accent, but not too much.

His speech was titled "Victory Through Teamwork and Leadership,"² and he segued into the substance of it by telling a story about his experience as an assistant coach of the 1992 United States Olympic basketball team, the so-called Dream Team. Michael Jordan was part of that team, and one day after practice he asked Krzyzewski to help him work on some offensive moves. Krzyzewski said he felt intimidated by Jordan, who was not only a huge National Basketball Association star but had played for the University of North Carolina, Duke's archrival. But when Jordan approached Krzyzewski and addressed him as "Coach," the small nod of respect resonated. "How much better did that make us as a team?" he asked.

Krzyzewski knows from his time in hospitals that they are big, complex workplaces with hierarchies that stretch from high-paid specialists to residents to nurses to orderlies and janitors. "Know their names," he told these hospital C.E.O.'s. "You know what? 'Please' and 'Thank you' go a long way. You can be damn sure that every guy on my team says that. The best way to get better as a team is if everyone has ownership, and if you do these things, they will."

This is hardly profound. On the other hand, perhaps this particular audience, which listened without a fork or a spoon clinking and without any low hum of conversation, needed to be reminded of this. And maybe leadership itself is not complicated but, rather, primal: one person's ability to reach another and persuade him to be part of a team, all pulling in some common direction.

Look each other straight in the eye, tell the truth, full disclosure.

Chapter 1: Getting Organized

When Krzyzewski started at West Point in the summer of 1965, one of his first tasks was to swim as far as he could in water seven feet deep while carrying a 10-pound brick. "Sir, may I make a statement?" he asked his instructor. He was given permission. "Sir, I can't swim!" He had been in the water before — Lake Michigan — but only up to his waist. He was told to swim anyway, and promptly sank and had to be pulled from the water. He spent the next year taking a three-times-a-week remedial swim class with about 30 other city kids.

"Before I got to West Point, I was the golden boy of my neighborhood," he says. "It just knocked me back because there was stuff I had never been exposed to. The first time we went out in the field to put up a tent, guys were digging ditches around them, in case it rained. I guess they'd

been Boy Scouts. It rained, and my tent just floated away. West Point had a huge impact on me because it put me in positions to fail, so I got comfortable with failure being a part of success."

At Duke, Krzyzewski is able to attract golden boys like himself — only they are much better athletes, drawn from the top sliver of available high school basketball talent. And that's not the only advantage he starts with over his competitors. Duke players also tend to be better students than most National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball players at major programs and — though it is difficult to generalize about such things — more likely to come from stable, middle-class backgrounds. (As at most N.C.A.A. schools, an athlete at Duke can gain admission with lower — sometimes much lower — academic credentials than other applicants have, but his grades and test scores have to be high enough to indicate that he can cut it at one of the nation's most academically select institutions.)

Grant Hill, perhaps Krzyzewski's greatest player, was an extreme example of the Duke basketball demographic; his Yale-educated father played in the National Football League, and his mother was a classmate of [Hillary Clinton's](#) at Wellesley. Still, in a sport that draws heavily from a poor, inner-city population, Krzyzewski gets more than his share of kids who are the sons of white-collar professionals, teachers, nurses, coaches and pastors.

When asked if he thinks it's easier for him to coach the kind of students he is able to attract, Krzyzewski says their backgrounds do not make them smarter players, necessarily, but do give them other attributes he finds useful. "What it means is that they have probably already learned about discipline, about being on a team, about being part of something bigger than themselves," he says. "So when I teach those things, I'm able to start at a different level."

Krzyzewski thinks of prospective recruits as falling into one of four categories: high maintenance, medium maintenance, low maintenance and no maintenance. "We get a lot of low- and no-maintenance guys," he says.

Abe Lemons, who led college basketball teams in Texas and Oklahoma for a combined 34 seasons, once observed that there were only two plays: "Romeo and Juliet" and Put the Darn Ball in the Basket, by which he meant that basketball (and possibly life itself) was not much about strategy. It's straightforward. The game does not reward trickery or surprise — it has no equivalent of the flea-flicker in football or the squeeze play in baseball — and true innovations (as opposed to rule changes) are so rare that the last great step into the future was the jump shot, popularized by the N.B.A. pioneer Joe Fulks in the late 1940's. A skilled basketball coach assembles the right mix of players and motivates them to play hard, mesh together and attend to all the little things that lead to victory.

Because Krzyzewski attracts kids who tend to feel secure, and not just about basketball, he can put pressure on them similar to what he experienced at West Point, knowing that even when they fail, they are unlikely to feel like failures. He can ask for a little more than some other coaches and demand it more quickly. This year's team is a case in point. Its senior leaders, J. J. Redick and Shelden Williams, are candidates for national player of the year, and they (along with other seniors) are responsible for mentoring the team's talented core of freshmen. But Krzyzewski has cleverly framed the setup so that the responsibility flows both ways, telling the freshmen that the

season will rise and fall on their performance: "I've said, 'Look, we don't have time to wait for you. I've got four seniors and this is their last year, and they want to win now.'"

That's not something a lot of coaches would heap on young players. Krzyzewski uses a bit of circular logic to convince them that they can give what he is demanding of them: "I tell them, 'It's in you. I know it is. I wouldn't have recruited you if it wasn't.'" (In other words, if you weren't great, you wouldn't be here.)

Before coming to play for Krzyzewski, Greg Paulus, one of the freshmen, was rated one of the top high school point guards in the nation, as well as the top quarterback prospect. He is the golden boy taken to a ridiculous extreme. If he hadn't enrolled at Duke to play basketball, he could have played football at Notre Dame. You could certainly break a kid like that by giving him more than he could handle, but it would not be easy.

"He believes in us so much, and we believe in him so much that whatever he tells us to do," Paulus says, "we're going to do it to the best of our ability."

Duke players understand the culture. They know it before they even arrive. They want, desperately, to fit in, measure up and please the man at the top. One former Duke player, Mark Alarie, recalls that Krzyzewski ripped a picture of him off the locker-room wall after a game, a theatrical move that would seem unworthy of a bad Hollywood sports drama. "In the picture I was diving for a loose ball," Alarie says. "He crumpled it up and said, 'When are we going to see the Mark Alarie who would do that again?' It was calculated, but when you're in the moment, it doesn't come across as that."

One definition of leadership is, simply, the ability to give constructive criticism — to demand better performance in a way that inspires rather than deflates. The ability to do so is based on the underlying relationship as much as on the actual spoken words. Alarie, now a venture capitalist, played five years in the N.B.A. "I had coaches in the pros say things to me that were not that different from what I heard from Coach Krzyzewski," he says. "But it didn't feel motivational. It hurt, to be honest."

To a man, the Duke players I talked to, both current and former, say they consider Krzyzewski's most important attribute to be his honesty, even if it is a sometimes brutal honesty. J. J. Redick says he felt disappointed when his sophomore season ended with a loss (to Connecticut) in the semifinal game of the N.C.A.A. tournament. "After the Final Four ended," Redick explains, "Coach told me I was personally unworthy of being a national champion. A lot of people would feel that was harsh, and it was harsh, but it was the truth."

Redick says that he was "living a college lifestyle. I wasn't eating right. I wasn't going to sleep. I partied, and it caught up to me. I apologized to my teammates, and I made some changes in my life."

In early December I watched Duke's showdown with Texas on TV, a pairing of what were then the two top-ranked teams in the nation. It wasn't even a contest. Duke, led by Redick's 41 points, ran Texas right off the court, 97-66. The announcers praised Redick's deadeye shooting but

seemed most impressed by his energy. They speculated that he might be the best-conditioned player in all of college basketball.

Regularly ask yourself: What's your job, knucklehead?

Chapter 16: Life

Krzyzewski's early teams at Duke struggled. The first three won a combined 38 games, against 47 losses. It was not until the 1984-85 season, his fifth, that he posted a winning record in the Atlantic Coast Conference. In the midst of a dreary 1982-83 season (11-17, with a 3-11 record in the A.C.C.), his job was even rumored to be in danger. Attracting top talent to Durham was not the slam dunk it is now. Grant Hill, who came to Duke a decade into Krzyzewski's reign, told me: "He's extremely persuasive. Being a salesman is part of the job, and he should get credit for that."

But Krzyzewski has since had unparalleled success. Over all, he has coached 19 high school all-Americans and seven national college players of the year. Of all Krzyzewski's Duke players, only two have stayed the full four years and failed to graduate, a remarkable record in an era when some other elite programs routinely graduate fewer than half their players.

Rival fans quite understandably view the parade of elite talent that flocks to Duke as a tremendous advantage, which, of course, it is. But Krzyzewski's admirers in the corporate world consider his handling of such an array of stars to also be his primary challenge — and one that they specifically relate to their own businesses.

"In our business and his business, people like being stars," says John Mack, the C.E.O. of Morgan Stanley. "Leadership is trying to get them to buy into a team concept, and that's what Mike does so well."

Sim Sitkin, the faculty director of Duke's Fuqua/Coach K Center of Leadership & Ethics, is Krzyzewski's mentor at the business school and, to some extent, his student. The packaging of Krzyzewski's methods as a business school product is mostly Sitkin's doing. "Having the talent that Mike has — the best, the brightest — makes some things easier and some things harder," he says. "It is completely analogous to a lot of business situations. How do you take a group of people like that and say, 'Some of you are actually better than others? And let's deal with that honestly, in a way that does not demean some or inflate the egos of others, and design a system that allows everyone to use their talents well.'"

Leadership has been part of the curriculum for several decades now in most M.B.A. programs, but as an academic discipline, it remains notoriously squishy — difficult to quantify and therefore difficult to teach. "I was a mathematician,² Douglas Breeden, dean of the Fuqua School of Business, says. "I mathematically modeled problems in finance. You would have two or three variables, or maybe five. In leadership, it's like you have 20 or 30 or 40. So it's hard, and there are skeptics, people who say it's just too soft — that, O.K., maybe Jack Welch was a great leader with his style, and somebody else was great with a different style, so what does it prove? But it is

too important not to teach, and we're making progress in finding things that we can actually measure."

Breeden acknowledges there is a marketing and fund-raising aspect to Fuqua's alliance with Krzyzewski, but says he had no qualms about having the coach's name on the leadership center, which is something like an on-campus think tank, generating courses, ideas, seminars and energy around the concept of leadership. It opened in 2003 and raised about \$8 million in its first year, including \$2 million to endow a Coach K Professorship in Leadership. "I used to play basketball," Breeden says. "I didn't think of basketball coaches as mental giants." But he says of Krzyzewski: "I'll be honest with you, I was kind of surprised at how smart I felt like he is. He is totally compatible with what we do here."

The book "Built to Last," by Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras, suggests that companies that endure and prosper over time do not usually offer innovative products, but that "the company itself is the ultimate creation." Such companies "thoroughly indoctrinate employees into a core ideology ... creating cultures so strong that they are almost cultlike." That is not a bad description of Duke basketball.

The Krzyzewski brand is so strong that he need not be physically present when Duke Corporate Education (which is separate from the leadership center) teaches Duke basketball as metaphor. It's a half-day of a weeklong program and is taught primarily by Krzyzewski's student managers. The PricewaterhouseCoopers employees suit up in basketball gear and learn a Duke play. One of the lessons is that the best shooter does not always get to take the shot; sometimes he has to pass the ball or set a screen.

Krzyzewski's teams turn a yearly profit for Duke. In addition, he has helped raise more than \$30 million so far for the Duke basketball "legacy fund," which among other things provides basketball scholarships, and he helped create a 30,000-square-foot community center in downtown Durham (the Emily Krzyzewski Family Life Center, named for his mother). He has also raised funds for the "K Lab" (officially, the Michael W. Krzyzewski Human Performance Research Laboratory at Duke Medical Center), a research center for the prevention of athletic injuries.

Krzyzewski is a wealthy man: he reportedly makes about \$1.5 million a year coaching basketball at Duke and several million dollars more a year from endorsements and corporate speaking. He lives on 12 secluded acres in Durham, where he spends much of his free time tending his extensive flower gardens. He enjoys living well, but it's clear that his peripatetic off-court life is something other than a money grab. His forays into the corporate world are a way to stay engaged and, to some extent, to keep from getting bored by basketball. He is not planning to leave coaching any time soon — "Why would you quit something you absolutely love?" — and last year accepted a second basketball job (he's staying at Duke) as the head coach of USA Basketball. It's something like a corporate turnaround job. The United States was embarrassed with a bronze-medal finish at the 2004 Summer Olympics, and Krzyzewski was chosen to reclaim the gold.

The Duke coach counts several corporate titans among his close friends. Mack, of Morgan Stanley, is one, along with Steve Wynn, the Las Vegas casino magnate, and Schwartz at Bear Stearns. The friendships can, on the one hand, be viewed as rich, successful guys wanting to hang out with each other — and C.E.O.'s wanting to rub up against a sports figure. But I got the strong sense that for Krzyzewski, these relationships are part of his questing nature: he has things he wants to learn, and he figures they know some of them.

"I need different motivations beyond: I'm going to score more points than you," he says to me at one point. "O.K., I beat you in the last game, or you beat me. What the hell does that mean?"

I coach by feel. I follow my heart.

Chapter 8: Game Day

Krzyzewski nearly left Duke in 2004. Late in the summer of that year, after coming to his decision, he gave one of the occasional lectures he delivers at the university's Fuqua School of Business. He looked tired and a little drawn, but his audience was, if anything, more rapt than usual because they knew that just weeks earlier he had done something extraordinary: turned down a \$40 million offer to coach the N.B.A.'s Los Angeles Lakers.

The M.B.A. students were (as at all top business schools) mostly in their mid-20's or older, and most had already been in the working world. They were future C.E.O.'s and entrepreneurs, go-getters on their way to big jobs and big salaries.

"You've heard of doing anything to make a deal work," he said to them. "My question is, Is that the last deal you're going to do?" He added: "All decisions are not bottom-line financial decisions. ... If money is your only passion, good luck and God love you."

Rejecting that kind of money, as Krzyzewski did, was its own kind of life-changing event — "a point of demarcation," his agent, David Falk, calls it. Paradoxically, turning down those millions was also an enhancement to the selling of Mike Krzyzewski, a way for him to become a bigger off-court presence.

Talking to the M.B.A. students at Fuqua that day, Krzyzewski was typically self-deprecating: "What the hell did you do during the summer?" I turned down \$40 million. You're probably thinking, We really want to hear what you have to say, you idiot."

But he knew he hadn't been an idiot. He turned down a job he didn't want. And at the same time, he had strengthened the Krzyzewski brand — the Winning With Virtue brand. All those national championships. The deep relationships forged with well-behaved, diploma-earning hoopsters. And then turning down millions to stay on campus. Mike Krzyzewski was, now, to his admirers, his corporate acolytes and — well, O.K., probably not to the author of the anti-Duke manifesto — ever more worthy of admiration.

Michael Sokolove is a contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine.

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