In any sphere of activity, teams which value, apply and master six virtues perform to the highest level and beat the competition.

Tony Cockerill describes the role of the virtues in Europe’s victory in golf’s Ryder Cup.
**Virtue 1: Create conditions for success**

Victorious armies select their battleground carefully. They choose to fight at a place which maximises their chances of winning and places the enemy at the greatest disadvantage. As a general rule, leaders must shape their environment so that, as heavily as possible, the odds are stacked in favour of their team succeeding.

The European 2004 Ryder Cup team, and its captain, Bernhard Langer, did this in spades. Two examples illustrate the point.

The first concerns the battle for popular support. Assisted by US sensitivity to excessively patriotic behaviour, Langer instructed his players to be as friendly to the spectators as they could. From the practice days onwards, the team talked, joked, and laughed with the fans; they presented balls, gloves and hats. In contrast, Team USA remained distant, aloof and disengaged. As a result, the gallery provided only muted support for the home team and gave unexpected support to the visitors. Through its behaviour, Langer instructed his players to be as friendly to the spectators as they could. From the practice days onwards, the team talked, joked, and laughed with the fans; they presented balls, gloves and hats. In contrast, Team USA remained distant, aloof and disengaged. As a result, the gallery provided only muted support for the home team and gave unexpected support to the visitors.

When Europe selects sites for the Ryder Cup, it typically chooses the battlefield very carefully. The courses are usually popular with the players and feature regularly on the European Tour so the team knows them well – just like Ireland’s K Club, the venue for the 2006 Ryder Cup. American Ryder Cup venues are chosen by very different criteria. Normally they are one of the venues for the US Open Championship rather than being the annual site of a US Tour event. Hence, they do not provide the home team with any particular advantage. Oakland Hills was no exception in 2004; the 1996 US Open was the last time it featured on the US Tour calendar. Even before the action began, Team America relinquished the competitive advantage that choice of home territory provides.

The team selection process provides a second example. Both Ryder Cup teams have to work within the boundaries set by the process that exists to select team members. This process is very important because team performance is so strongly influenced by the quality of people in the team. Even when a team performs to unexpected heights, it is still limited by the strength of its members. Furthermore, every team is held back in some way by its weakest member. For these reasons, outstanding team leaders usually make special efforts to get the strongest team members they can.

In this regard, the differences between Team Europe and Team USA in 2002 were stark. Europe significantly changed its team selection process. Crucially, this enabled the ten players who automatically qualify to be selected from a much wider pool than the old process would have allowed and it ensured the recent form of these players was good. In contrast, the Americans did not change their selection process which resulted in a team full of players who had performed well in 2003 but were off the boil in 2004. By changing a process that normally remains fixed, the Europeans substantially raised their probability of success.

In addition, like all great leaders, Langer exercised much wisdom in team selection when it came to the two players he could choose to be in the team. He chose Luke Donald and Colin Montgomerie. The young, in form, Donald plays most of his golf in the US and is attuned and comfortable with American conditions. Montgomerie traditionally plays beyond himself in the Ryder Cup, has one of the best records in history and has been the talisman of the European side for many years. While no-one questioned Langer’s choices, the American captain Hal Sutton was not so fortunate. As soon as his picks were announced he was under pressure for not selecting in form, popular, two-time major tournament winner John Daly or Todd Hamilton – the winner of the British Open in 2004. The effectiveness of the two captain’s choices can be judged by the results. Langer’s choices won 5.5 points for Europe while Sutton’s amassed only three points for the US.

**Virtue 2: Build total dedication to one for all and all for one**

Successful teams think and behave as one. True, every team member is different and has unique personal characteristics and needs. In fact, the greater the diversity of its members, the greater potential the team has for outstanding performance. However, the most successful teams are bound together by a powerful, overarching, and shared goal that binds the diverse team members together so they become an unbreakable unit. This enables them to put aside their individualised self-interest and totally dedicate themselves to the higher order team goal which, if realised, will deliver benefits that transcend anything they could have achieved on their own.

By “benefit” we have to look beyond personal financial reward. We must give full weight to the unique joy, satisfaction, inspiration, learning, respect and reputation that flows from being a member of the successful team. We have to properly understand that the intrinsic rewards of the journey and success far outweigh and outlast extrinsic financial rewards. Large financial rewards may stem from team success but they are simply an added bonus. Driven by the shared desire to achieve the
team goal and the intrinsic rewards success will bring, each team member will do everything in his or her power, within ethical boundaries, to support and help the other team members. One for all. Reciprocally, each team member is given the total support and help of all the others. All for one.

The 2004 Ryder Cup saw profound differences between the two sides on this second virtue.

With regard to having a shared team goal, winning the Cup clearly meant far more to the Europeans than the Americans. They saw it as the biggest prize in golf, transcending all four major tournaments. Montgomerie described the Ryder Cup as “Our Olympics”. The Americans were quite different. Their top and most influential player, Tiger Woods, puts winning the majors at the top of his agenda. When questioned about his commitment, Woods asked reporters how many Ryder Cup points Jack Nicklaus had won (note the slant of the question towards personal rather than team achievement). When the press could not answer, Woods asked them how many majors Nicklaus had won – the press knew the answer to this: 18. Woods felt he had made his point. Individualistic achievement is more important than team achievement. It is little surprise, therefore, that the Americans’ commitment to one for all and all for one was patchy at best while the Europeans’ was awesome.

Montgomerie illustrated this. He constantly stressed that winning the cup was more important than his own personal achievement. Exhausted after the first day and having lost in the morning of day two, Montgomerie asked Langer to leave him out that afternoon for the overall good of the team. In doing so he ended his own personal record of successive appearances in Ryder Cup matches. Self-sacrifice was made to benefit the team.

Contrast this with the American golfer, Chris Riley. In Riley, it seemed as though Sutton had found a good partner for Tiger Woods. They had attended college together, liked each other, played well together and had fun together. After their victory in the morning of the second day, Sutton asked Riley to go out again with Woods in the afternoon. With defeat now looming, Riley refused. He said he felt tired, he didn’t like playing the alternate shots that foursomes requires and he wanted to spend some time with his family. Despite Sutton’s best persuasive efforts, Riley never played on Saturday afternoon. Woods was partnered by Davis Love III and they lost their match. One was left wondering if Riley has any comprehension of the meaning of one for all.

Virtue 3: Achieve strategic and tactical supremacy

Once the goal has been set, winning teams devise and evaluate the major strategic options that are available: the key routes to success. They decide which path to follow and enact it with courageous determination. They have contingency plans to deal with the unexpected or to change direction quickly if Plan A proves ineffective. Ideally, the strategy delivers an early body blow to the opposition. This builds positive momentum which is fuelled by further success until the enemy is demoralised and defeated. In the modern world, victory has to be achieved in an ethical and sympathetic way so the dignity of both the winners and the losers is maintained. In enacting the strategy, details matter. Methodical, detailed and conscientious tactical planning and execution tremendously increase the probability that any strategy will succeed. Sloppy tactical planning and execution can cause any strategy, no matter how conceptually brilliant, to fail. There is no doubt that the Europeans gained strategic and tactical supremacy over the Americans in the 2004 Ryder Cup.

Let us begin with strategic supremacy. Langer is clearly a very gifted strategist. This was evident in the practice days immediately before play began. He got his team to practice a wide variety of options together: different pairings, different formats such as four-ball and foursomes, different tee and pin placements. In contrast, Sutton made some glaring strategic errors like never practicing foursomes and allowing Phil Mickelson to practice on his own even though half the points to be won in the Ryder Cup result from four-balls and foursomes where the players are paired with each other.

A critical strategic choice for the home captain is the order in which four-balls and foursomes are played on the first two days. The Americans are traditionally stronger than the Europeans in foursomes, but Sutton decided to start both days with four-balls. This proved a serious mistake because it eliminated a potential source of American competitive advantage and made it much easier for the Europeans to deliver a body blow by establishing a 3-1 lead on the first morning and building early positive momentum.

This momentum was also fuelled by Langer’s strategy for fielding his players. For instance, the morning session on the first day requires each team to use eight players in four pairings. The afternoon session is the same. The captain has to choose which players to field in the morning and afternoon sessions. Langer only used his nine strongest players on day one meaning three did not compete at all. He believed that a strategy which concentrated the available strength would deliver an early lead and momentum. Sutton hardly had a strategy at all; he simply followed American tradition and used all 12 players on day one.

Langer’s strategic decisions helped deliver 6.5 points for the Europeans on day one compared to the 1.5 points Sutton’s team gained. A quick lead had been forged and the Europeans had momentum.

In the sphere of tactical supremacy, Langer
proved himself to be a master. Living up to the German stereotype, he planned everything methodically in great detail and left little to chance. When play began Langer's tactical rigour became abundantly clear – particularly to the European players. Having sought and gained their approval for his approach, he drove round the course systematically to give his players exact advice on how to play difficult shots particularly on the treacherous par three holes. This proved vital given the notorious difficulty of the greens at Oakland Hills.

Sutton adopted a different approach. He decided to abandon his golf cart and walk with his players. By doing this he would have been physically unable to provide Langer's level of systematic, tactical advice even if he had chosen to do so and his players had been prepared to let him. After day one, Sutton thought putting accounted for the difference players had been prepared to let him. After day one, Sutton thought putting accounted for the difference between the two teams - the Europeans had holed out and the American's had not. What he hadn't figured out were the tactical reasons for this.

Virtue 4: Dovetail and develop people
Life is a lot easier when you work with people you like, respect and get on with. Succeeding is much easier when your colleagues have skills that complement your own so your strengths compensate for their limitations and vice versa. In other words, the better team members dovetail, the more likely they are to win. Perpetuating a winning team over a long period of time inevitably requires new blood. Inducting and developing new recruits is vital for long-term success. Yet, everyone can constantly learn and develop no matter how experienced they are so the old learn much from the new. Thus, the creation of an enduring developmental approach within a team is vital for success. Careful analysis of the 2004 Ryder Cup shows the Europeans also had an edge in the fourth team virtue.

In every European pairing, the players visibly liked one another and did everything they could to help each other. In many instances, they had forged deep bonds of partnership in previous battles. Sutton took a very different course to Langer in his most prominent pairing. He put his top two players - Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson – together in both the morning and afternoon of the first day. He thought this dream pairing would be “stronger 'n rope” despite the interpersonal coolness and rivalry that existed between them. But, rather than winning the very first match of day one, Woods and Mickelson were soundly beaten by Harrington and Montgomerie. Insult was added to injury in the afternoon when Woods and Mickelson, despite being three up after four holes were eventually defeated by Clarke and Westwood. Two dovetailed European pairings inflicted demoralising defeats on America's best two golfers – two individuals who are wonderful players on their own but find it hard to spark as a team.

Virtue 5: Inspire beyond normal performance
The most brilliant leaders inspire their team members to produce individual performances that go far beyond their own experience and expectations. They reach new heights of excellence and change their perception of themselves forever. This, almost magical, event occurs by stabilising, focusing, building, and channelling the emotional energy of the individual. To be most inspirational, leaders need to command the respect of their team members, take and justify difficult decisions and, at all times, exude both total calmness and total confidence in future success so that a tangible sense of stability, certainty and optimism prevails in their camp. This enables each individual to gain inner peace through clarity and to stabilise his or her emotional energy rather than dissipating it through uncertainty, doubts and worries or, at worst, fear and panic.

Inspirational leaders then focus their team on the immediate task and the specific objective the team and each individual or pairing needs to achieve. The overall goal is broken down into realistic steps. Each step brings the team closer to the attainment of its shared goal. As each step is successfully achieved, it is locked away and total focus is made on the next, and only the next, step. This behaviour of the leader enables each team member to concentrate their emotional strength on the next step; they have it clearly in their sights and are not distracted by external, and more importantly, internal destabilising forces.

Outstanding leaders build the emotional energy of their team. They do this in a myriad of ways with both the team as a whole and with each individual. The better a leader empathetically understands the psychology of each team member, the more precisely he or she can build emotional strength. As a general rule, the leader enhances the self confidence of the individual; the deep seated inner belief that he or she can and will succeed. Lastly, having stabilised, focused and built the emotional strength of team members, the leader gets them to work out how they are specifically going to channel this power to gain psychological advantage and momentum over their particular opponent; to gain and keep the emotional upper hand that makes victory predictable if not certain.

In the Ryder Cup, the Europeans were undoubtedly inspired to perform beyond expectations. Prior to the competition, most commentators believed the two sides were evenly matched with Team USA being slightly favoured if only because the contest was being held in America. The actual result of 18.5 to 9.5 was the biggest winning margin ever achieved by Europe
and equals the largest victory between the two sides since the American triumph at Walton Heath in 1984.

A prime index of inspiration and emotional strength is recovering from being behind to draw or win. The Europeans did this in eight matches while the Americans managed it in only three. Furthermore, in every great sporting event, emotional turning points occur which prove decisive to the overall result because they massively boost the confidence of one side and emotionally deflate the other. Such turning points are another prime index of inspiration and emotional strength.

In the 2004 Ryder Cup, the most critical turning point occurred in the four-ball matches on the morning of day two when two European players came from behind to win. After the first day, Europe had a lead of five points; they needed to gain only eight more points to win the competition. It was critical for the Americans to strike back hard on the next morning.

This is exactly what they did. For a long period on Saturday morning it looked as though Team USA might win all four matches which would have taken the overall score to 6.5 Europe, 5.5 USA. If this had happened, the Americans would have been on a roll.

In reality, Sergio Garcia and Lee Westwood came from being two behind after six holes to gain a draw in the first morning game. America had big leads in the second and fourth matches. The third match was critical. This was between Jim Furyk and Chad Campbell and two European rookies who had been paired together by Langer – Paul Casey and David Howell. By the tenth hole, the Americans were in the lead by two holes. In a titanic struggle, Casey and Howell pulled level on the seventeenth hole and then won the eighteenth to defeat the Americans. Victory had been plucked from the jaws of defeat. The overall score was now 8.5 Europe and four USA.

Even though they had won more points than the Europeans, Saturday morning felt like a defeat to the Americans and the Europeans were on a high. They quickly established a commanding lead on Saturday afternoon and won three out of four matches leaving the overall score after two days at 12.5 Europe and 5 USA. Who knows what might have happened if Casey and Howell had lost. Almost certainly the final score would have been much closer.

Many people make the mistake of believing that only extroverts make inspirational leaders. Bernhard Langer showed how talented introverts using the right behaviours can inspire teams to perform beyond expectation. As Jim Collins points out in *Good to Great*, shallow razzmatazz cannot compete with quiet depth in terms of delivering results. In commenting on their victory Casey and Howell paid tribute to Langer emphasising how his reserved, total confidence and physical presence during critical parts of their match had contributed to their success. Without taking anything away from the achievement of the two players, Langer had inspired them to perform beyond the level that could reasonably be expected of two Ryder Cup rookies in the most intense and seminal game of the tournament.

**Virtue 6: Build a culture of success**

The most esteemed teams are able to perpetuate success over the long-term. They go beyond a single victory to amass a glittering record of sustained achievement. In doing so, they build an awesome reputation so the opposition is at a psychological disadvantage from the start because they are overawed and thinking of avoiding defeat rather than winning. The perpetuation of success does not just happen by accident. It occurs because all those associated with the team, both past and present, learn the team virtues, learn how to apply them to their team and ensure that this knowledge and understanding is embedded within the team for the future. New team members are inducted into the team virtues and encouraged to master them and pass them on to the next generation. Examples of the successful application of the team virtues become folklore and legend. Critically, the current captain of any team has a focal role in this activity. He or she must take the best from the past, encourage and capture new learning and ensure this is perpetuated by working with future teams – particularly their captains.

Prior to 1985, the Americans were totally dominant in the Ryder Cup; they won it 27 times, drew once and lost only three times. However, in the last ten encounters since 1985, a remarkable turnaround has occurred. Now, Europe has won the Ryder Cup six times, drawn once and lost three times. More recently, they have won four out of the last five matches. Over the last two decades, it appears that the Europeans, despite typically being regarded as the underdogs, have been better at building a culture of success than the Americans.

Observing the Europeans, it is clear that the players, captains, deputy captains and support staff have cooperated intensively over the last 20 years to learn, embed and perpetuate the team virtues that underpin success. When interviewed, veteran players explain how they were inducted into the European way of doing things, built new best practices into the European culture and acted as role models and coaches to rookies. The supreme importance given to the Ryder Cup by all these highly successful individuals, as well as the intrinsic satisfaction they have gained from the competition, has fuelled a long-term commitment and contribution to the team. Significantly, therefore, the European team does not consist simply of the 2004 participants; in reality it is an extended network of players, captains, officials and supporters who are the bearers and developers of a distinctive culture that has been steadily gaining

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momentum and delivering increasing success since 1985. The number of experienced European players expressing a keen interest in captaining future Ryder Cup sides pays testament to this.

The seventh team virtue
There is one additional element: team leadership. Langer and his predecessors in the role of European team captain have played a vital and central role in learning, applying and perpetuating the team virtues and, have, therefore, made a very significant contribution to Europe’s turnaround in results over the last twenty years. Europe has proved adept at leveraging the power of the leader.

The 2004 Ryder Cup gives vivid support to recent research at Harvard which showed that leaders in dynamic and competitive environments can boost team performance by 40 per cent. Even though it is difficult to quantify, using Harvard’s research we can suggest that Langer’s leadership gained Team Europe as many as 7.5 points (18.5 x 0.4).

Langer made a vast contribution to the enhanced performance of his players both individually and collectively - which they have all publicly acknowledged. Langer placed so much importance on leadership that he carefully appointed three deputy captains and had Colin Montgomerie as a leader in the team. While Woods should have had a similar influence to Montgomerie, he never rose to the challenge and behaved as the archetypal individual contributor rather than as a team leader. Hal Sutton exhibited little understanding, let alone application or perpetuation of the team virtues. His leadership contribution pales to insignificance when compared with Langer’s.

The aftermath
Where do the two teams go from here? For the first time, the Europeans should enter the 2006 Ryder Cup as favourites. So they must show they can run from the front as well as behind. Most importantly, they must avoid complacency. More teams, businesses and empires have been destroyed by complacency than anything else. It is all too easy for highly successful teams to rest on their laurels buoyed up by a false perception of their own invincibility. When this occurs, things quickly grind to a halt and enter a downspin. Luck seems to go against the team. Denial, anger and recrimination can easily follow which only accelerate decline. Enormous efforts then have to be made to reverse the team’s slide which rarely pays off as quickly as hoped.

Coming into the competition, Team America exhibited all the hallmarks of complacency founded on a solid belief in its own superiority. Unfortunately, there is very little evidence to support this belief in either the results or the behaviour of Team America. It is now time for the Americans to conduct an objective and thorough analysis of the situation rather than deny the problem or scapegoat Hal Sutton who did his very best but had neither the leadership capabilities nor the supporting structures to deliver an American victory. Powerful self-analysis followed by fundamental change and an outstanding leader can transform American fortunes and deliver a win in 2006.

Ultimately, the deciding factor may be how importantly the Ryder Cup is perceived in America. Many of the changes that are required run counter to American structures and cultures which deliver substantial benefits to the players as individuals and to all the other stakeholders in American golf but which appear to make team play more difficult. Perhaps Americans have to remember that consistent defeats on the scale of Oakhills could switch off the interest of the American public in golf just as easily as they switched TV channels during the competition as US hopes faded.

If this happens, then all of golf in America will suffer and the benefits delivered by the current system will be unsustainable. On the positive side, a turnaround in American Ryder Cup fortunes will undoubtedly provide a massive boost for golf in America. Perhaps by focusing on the overall standing and success of golf, Americans will be motivated to make the changes needed for future success.

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