

**“As fierce as the stare was, the hug was just as tight”: A Qualitative Examination of Coach**

**Pat Summitt**

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## ABSTRACT

Pat Summitt is known as one of the most successful and influential coaches of all time. This success has been attributed to her leadership. This study explores the leadership styles that contributed to Summitt's success as a Division I Head Basketball Coach at the University of Tennessee.

Despite her profound impact on women's basketball, research on Coach Summitt is limited. This study aims to fill that gap by examining her leadership through the lenses of transformational and servant leadership. The review of the literature on transformational and servant leadership, highlighting their core principles and application to coaching. Transformational leadership, as defined by James MacGregor Burns and later refined by Bernard Bass, focuses on inspiring followers to achieve organizational goals through idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation. Servant leadership, coined by Robert Greenleaf, emphasizes putting others' needs first to foster personal growth and societal contribution.

This study uses a qualitative method. Semi-structured interviews with 14 participants, including former players, coaching staff, and athletic support staff, the research identifies key themes that illustrate Summitt's leadership qualities. Through the process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) three main themes were recovered: Visionary, Authentic, and Mentor, with sub-themes of Accountability and Ambition. These themes demonstrate how Summitt embodied both transformational and servant leadership.

The study concludes that Summitt's success was not solely due to her coaching strategies but also her ability to combine transformational and servant leadership effectively. Her

leadership style, characterized by her effectiveness as a visionary, her authenticity, and mentorship, offers valuable insights for current and future coaches. The research suggests that understanding and implementing these leadership qualities can lead to success in various fields outside of sport.

In summary, Coach Summitt's leadership was a blend of transformational and servant qualities that made her an exceptional coach and leader. Her ability to inspire, mentor, and genuinely care for her players and staff created a lasting legacy in women's basketball and beyond. This study provides a comprehensive look at the leadership traits that contributed to her success, offering a valuable resource for those looking to emulate her approach.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In collegiate and professional athletics, there is an immense pressure on coaches to be successful. This pressure is also felt by the athletic administrators whose jobs depend on hiring winning coaches. Because of this, both coaches and athletic directors look for ways to address the question: “*What makes a successful coach?*”

This answer could be found through consistent winning seasons; however, Valerie Kondos Field, former head coach of UCLA gymnastics, cautions against using winning as the only metric to judge success. She argues that real success does not always equate to merely winning. In her 2019 Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) Talk, Field shares she had to learn the hard way that defining success as winning can lead to being a “dogmatic dictator” (4:49). Being this type of authority figure can “produce compliant, good little soldiers,” but “it doesn't develop champions in life” (4:49). Field realized that developing relationships with her athletes and being devoted to their lives outside of sport helps her to motivate them in ways she never could have otherwise. This process, while slow, requires patience, respectful honesty, and accountability; she also feels building trust and caring for the athlete as a person is more than worth it. Field encourages coaches to first define success for themselves and for their athletes and to make sure this definition aligns with their goals. Communication and self-examination are key to keeping everyone on the same page. Field is clear that a ‘win’ for her is developing “champions in life” and not just in sport (2019, 15:12).

Although winning is certainly a part of success, an athletic administrator’s task when choosing a coach is to also look at the prospect’s coaching profile holistically to ensure the selection process has a chance of identifying the right person for the job. This includes looking at

coaching records, styles, beliefs/morals, reviews, hearsay, mentors, traits, etc. The goal is to choose someone who has proven they possess the leadership traits that will aid in their effectiveness and ability to be successful. Looking at the candidate's previous success, and their role in that success, ultimately helps athletic directors determine if a prospect is the best choice. Having an in-depth look at traits that are proven to be successful has the potential to be a powerful tool for athletic administrators to possess when recruiting potential coaches. "At a time when integrity, value bases, and loyalty are being questioned, the selection of coaches who have the qualities and skills to develop programs in all areas, as well as win games, has become an essential part of an athletic administrator's job" (Armstrong, 2001, p. 46).

A review of the literature pertaining to coaches' success in athletics yielded an abundance of sources. The search was then narrowed to female coaches' success which significantly reduced the number of journal articles. Finally, the search for articles about Coach Pat Summitt's success in coaching yielded only one study which was performed in 2008. Despite her profound impact and forward advancement in not only women's basketball but coaching in general, there is a paucity of peer-reviewed research on Coach Summitt. Due to the lack of research in this area, the basis of this study will be on Coach Summitt's success, but more specifically, on what characteristics of transformational and servant leadership she embodied.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Coach Summitt began her coaching career at the University of Tennessee at age 22. She had no previous coaching experience at any institution. Complicating her first start, Tennessee allotted virtually no money to women's basketball. Coach Summitt had to fight for women's basketball on many levels: to play the entire length of the floor, to acquire a dedicated practice space, and most of all, to gain respect for her athletes and herself. Throughout her 38 years of coaching, she had a 100 percent-graduation rate amongst her athletes and an unprecedented 84 percent-win rate. She became the winningest coach in Division I basketball history with 880 wins (ultimately reaching 1098 wins), a title which she held for 15 years (*Pat Summitt*, n.d.; Tikkanen, 2023; Voepel, 2020). Furthermore, her teams won 32 Southeastern Conference titles and eight National Collegiate Athletic Association championships. Because of her success, she was chosen as the Naismith College Coach of the Year five times and was also named the Naismith College Coach of the Century (*The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame*, n.d.; *Pat Summitt*, n.d.).

Despite her professional accomplishments and the numerous human-interest articles about Coach Summitt, only one peer-reviewed study has been done which focused on her instructional methods as a coach. This behavioral analysis study by Becker & Wrisberg in 2008 on Coach Summitt mimicked the studies of Tharp & Gallimore in 1976 and 2004 on Coach John Wooden. Both studies examined instructive behaviors during practice and analyzed them to determine if there were a correlation between perceived player talent and level of instruction. They did not, however, use player or coach interviews as supplemental data, as was suggested by Gallimore and Tharp in their 2004 study. All four researchers stated they would have done one

thing differently: “make every effort to gain the perspective of players, of coaches, of Coach Wooden himself” (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008, p. 208). Becker & Wrisberg (2008) further encouraged future researchers to implement qualitative approaches such as coach and athlete interviews to gain insight into their perspective rather than just looking at the quantitative behavioral data. This research on Coach Summitt will take a combination approach examining two leadership styles together: transformational and servant leadership. This method, though infrequently utilized, will be used to evaluate Coach Summitt as to not limit her to only one leadership style. While an interview with Coach Summitt herself would be impossible in the current timeframe, interviews with experts focusing on Coach Summitt’s leadership and coaching résumé will be utilized to offer insight into her illustrious career.

The review of literature related to this study focused on three areas: scholarly articles written on Coach Summitt, literature on transformational and servant leadership, and studies done on the leadership styles of Coach Summitt. As discussed above, a scholarly search on Coach Summitt yielded only one peer-reviewed article, Becker and Wrisberg’s 2008 research study on behavioral patterns. Individual searches on transformational and servant leadership, respectively, generated hundreds of articles done on numerous institutions and organizations; none of these articles, however, discussed a combination approach of reviewing a leader through the lens of both transformational and servant leadership. Through this chapter, the literature surrounding both transformational and servant leadership theories will be discussed as well as the core values and examples Coach Summitt provides in her books: *Reach for the Summitt* and *Raise the Roof*.

The concept of ‘we have to learn to walk before we can start to run’ is especially true when establishing the foundation for a leadership framework. Scholars must clearly define a framework before developing theories or styles under said framework and especially before comparing them. “[A leadership framework] provides a structured approach to leadership, guiding leaders in making decisions, fostering relationships, and achieving goals...it is a strategic plan that defines the key principles, practices, and tools leaders use to lead” (Taylor, 2023, Section 1, para. 1).

A leadership framework also consists of several key components: core leadership values, leadership styles, decision-making processes, communication strategies, and team dynamics and relationships (Taylor, 2023). Although these five components can be equally important to a successful framework, this research will focus on the chosen leadership styles of Coach Summitt, transformational and servant, the core values she instilled in her teams, and her use of these which resulted in a successful career. Leaders customize their leadership framework to best fit their organization. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ in leadership or coaching; therefore, leaders must develop what works best for their organizations and personnel. For this study, transformational and servant leadership will be the two leadership styles used to evaluate Coach Summitt’s successful tenure as a head coach. Transformational and servant leadership have been compared and analyzed in terms of organizational outcomes numerous times (Anderson, 2018; Bass, 2000; Parolini et al., 2009; Schneider & George, 2011; Stone et al., 2004). Both have also been used to analyze and categorize the behavior of coaches; however, they have not been used in congruence to evaluate coaches holistically.

There are those who do not believe transformational and servant leadership can be utilized interchangeably predominantly for reasonings of servant leadership performing better as a “stand-alone leadership approach” (Hoch et al., 2016, p. 502). Servant leaders are known to recognize personal limitations and put their focus on the growth of their followers while transformational leaders are those that can help their followers reach collective or organizational goals (Xie, 2020). Despite the disagreements amongst scholars on this topic, the premise remains the same in that the foundations have to be laid before comparing or contrasting with any certainty. The following two sections will first discuss the background of both leadership styles in order to understand what is being compared. Following this, the lessons and observations from Coach Summitt’s books, *Reach for the Summit* and *Raise the Roof*, will be discussed in terms of her core leadership values.

### **Leadership Styles**

The first component of a leadership framework is choosing the leadership styles that a leader will use. This decision may not be a conscious one, but it is important, nonetheless. The leadership styles that people follow will impact how they interact with the organization and personnel. The two leadership styles that will be used to evaluate Coach Summitt in this study are transformational and servant leadership. They will first be described individually with a combination approach to follow (Taylor, 2023).

#### **Transformational Leadership**

Research surrounding leadership models has been heavily dominated for nearly five decades by transformational leadership, a term coined in the late 1970s by James MacGregor Burns (Hoch et al., 2016). The model itself was not refined further into a theory until the mid-

1980s when Bernard Bass developed its main principles and facets in the form of four I's: idealized influence/charisma, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Figgins et al., 2019; McCall, 1986). Bass found transformational leadership to be a way “to motivate followers and enable them to accomplish challenging organizational tasks” (Xie, 2020, p. 221). In this theory, followers are inspired to “achieve organizational goals and thus enhance overall job performance” (Xie, 2020, p. 221). This definition of transformational leadership was criticized amongst the research community due to its ‘fatal flaw’ of not putting followers’ or organizational needs above the leaders’ (Tepper et al., 2018).

In an effort to correct this shortcoming, Podsakoff and others (1996) introduced the concept of transformational leaders needing to “transcend self-interests for the sake of the organization [or followers]” (Xie, 2020, p. 221). Though Tepper et al. (2018) held the belief that transformational leadership was “a static behavioral pattern that stabilizes at a certain level and after that remains constant” (Xie, 2020, p. 221), it is more likely that people who employ transformational leadership only behave in a transformational way occasionally. Meaning, transformational leaders would likely not rigidly follow the limited characteristics set by Bass but would rather employ specific attributes of the theory in various situations (McCall, 1986).

Another important distinction Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) make is between the ideas of authentic transformational leadership and pseudo-transformational leadership. Authentic transformational leaders truly want the organization to succeed and will do anything they can to aid in that success. Pseudo-transformational leaders, on the other hand, put their own interests above those of their organization which forces a certain ideology on their followers. Bass &

Steidlmeier (1999) held that the person must have the “moral foundations of legitimate values” to truly be considered an authentic transformational leader (p. 184). Scholars expressed that authentic transformational leaders should also exhibit long-term vision rather than only concerning themselves with day-to-day tasks. The vision they develop and communicate should not only be positive and create empowering working conditions that increase their follower’s commitment and performance but should also encourage them to continue learning/developing. Lam (2002) stresses how transformational leaders “can positively influence the process and results of organizational learning” (Xie, 2020, p. 221). Transformational leaders have to prioritize showing support for their followers to guard against the stress of organizational needs overtaking them and potentially causing burnout (Xie, 2020).

### **Servant Leadership**

As aforementioned, transformational leadership has long been the dominant theory in research, but servant leadership has been the topic of studies in more recent years (Dvir et al., 2002; Hoch et al., 2016; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). The term of servant leadership was coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1977, eight years before transformational leadership. Despite this, Greenleaf did not develop criteria for servant leadership until 2008. Some of the questions he proposed to identify the signs of a true servant leader are as follows: “Do those served to grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely to become servants?” (Greenleaf, 2007, p. 83). Even though Greenleaf is credited with creating and developing an interpretation for servant leadership, he also created confusion on the exact definition. Some believe his questions did more harm than

good at times as many could not understand the questions enough to categorize themselves as servant or otherwise (Anderson, 2018; van Dierendonck, 2011).

The fundamental part of the definition that is agreed upon is that servant leaders put other's needs before their own in order to "make a broader contribution to society in the long run" (Xie, 2020, p. 222). Beyond that, scholars tend to have their own opinions on what servant leadership is. Some say servant leadership is more of an individual leadership approach rather than organizational because it "relies on humility, care, concern, benevolence, altruism, service, fairness, and a friendship-related definition of love" (Winston, 2003, p. 220). Others hold that it cannot be performance-oriented because it does not "sacrifice people on the altar of profit and growth" (Sendjaya, 2015, p. 4). Larry Spears (2010), however, used the foundation that Greenleaf created to set 10 key characteristics for servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Spears did not dismiss Greenleaf's original description despite the confusion it caused, but rather he reframed the characteristics into skills more easily identified (Xie, 2020).

### **Core Leadership Values**

While leaders might structure their leadership framework using five distinct sections, Coach Summitt was able to combine the three individual components of decision-making, communication, and team dynamics and implement them as part of her core leadership values. Core values of leaders are a reflection of their character and morals. Establishing these values within their organization and personnel can only happen by first building trust and respect (Taylor, 2023). "Teamwork is not created by like-mindedness. It is an emotional cohesion that

develops from mutual respect and reciprocity and from coping with good times and adversity” (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998b, p. 175).

It is clear through reading her books that Coach Summitt had a plan when it came to what characteristics her team would and would not embody. This set of core values that she describes in *Reach for the Summitt* is named the Definite Dozen:

- respect yourself and others
- take full responsibility
- develop and demonstrate loyalty
- learn to be a great communicator
- discipline yourself so no one else has to
- make hard work your passion
- don't just work hard, work smart
- put the team before yourself
- make winning an attitude
- be a competitor
- change is a must
- handle success like you handle failure

These are not unlike Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success in that they are not exclusive to sport. Coach Summitt explained how she was more concerned with preparing her players for life rather than just playing the game of basketball. She believed in the value of pursuing an education and learning how to be successful in life: ideas which are threaded throughout her books *Reach for the Summitt* and *Raise the Roof* (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998b).

“Any realistic formula [for success]” Coach Summitt says, “must have five things: people, system, communication, work ethic, and discipline” (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998b, pp. xiv-xv). Knowing this, it is easy to draw connections between these five basics, her Definite Dozen, as well as the three other components of a leadership framework: decision-making, communication, and team dynamics. Relationships were at the center of everything for Coach Summitt. She could not be out on the court playing the game herself, but she also could not coach the game entirely on her own. Coach Summitt understood the dynamics of a team and thus the importance of communication and decision-making. She was skilled at putting together a staff who individually had strong skills, but together, they were able to use them to make a united team. She understood the value of delegation and the placement of her players and coaching staff in positions where they would thrive just as servant leaders “serve to build the competencies of followers, remove hindrances, encourage innovation, and empower creative problem-solving and organizational dynamics” (Nauman et al., 2021, p. 17).

A main characteristic of both servant and transformational leadership that Coach Summitt embodied was the empowerment and involvement of her team, players and coaches alike. Coach Summitt discussed at length in her books about the responsibility her athletes, especially upperclassmen, had in teaching and mentoring the younger players. She emphasized how crucial it was to have the athletes be part of the decision-making process which is a hallmark of transformational leadership. If the players felt they had a part in the development, they were more likely to take ownership of the team which led to accountability and responsibility. Allowing them to be a part of setting the standards of the team demonstrated mutual respect which “is the first step towards team building” (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998b, p. 12).

Another vital skill for a team is communication. Imagine during a game Coach Summitt called the next play only to the players and coaches on the bench instead of the five players on the court. Chaos would ensue because the players on the court would not have received the communication from the coach. Learning to be an effective communicator means articulating the organization's vision and goals to the team so that the individuals can carry out their roles. Armstrong (2001) says a transformational leader's vision is "compelling and contagious" because a "united effort tends to enhance performance" (p. 45). Putting others first is a part of the Definite Dozen because of its importance in working cohesively. Servant leaders teach their followers to work together by communicating which in turn should spark group collaboration with the mission of reaching collective goals (Nauman et al., 2021).

A mantra that Coach Summitt engrained in her players and staff was, "Winners are not born, they are self-made" (Summitt & Jenkins, 1998b, p. 4). She taught them that to be a winner they had to work hard and earn it. In *Reach for the Summitt* (1998b), Coach Summitt taught her players not to rely on the successes they had in high school or even in previous collegiate seasons. She stressed they must continuously work hard to earn and maintain their reputation year after year. In this same manner, Armstrong (2001) said that transformational leaders "are created, not born" (p. 44). Coach Summitt continually demonstrated this fundamental belief as evidenced in the way she taught her athletes using the Definite Dozen.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

To have a deeper understanding of the coaching and leadership style of Coach Summitt, a qualitative research design was used to collect information from players, coaching staff, and athletic support staff who had direct contact with her during her tenure as head coach at the University of Tennessee from 1974-2012. This chapter is organized in the following way: (a) purpose, (b) population definitions, (c) participants, (d) procedures, and (e) data analysis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership styles that shaped Pat Summitt's success as a Division I Head Basketball Coach. Despite her profound impact on women's basketball, research surrounding Coach Summitt is limited. To the impact of her leadership, Becker and Wrisberg (2008) suggest using qualitative methodologies to examine transformational and servant leadership. Semi-structured interviews were used to evaluate Coach Summitt's leadership in coaching. Participants were asked a series of questions used to examine Coach Summitt through the lens of a combination of two leadership styles: transformational and servant. The goal of this research was to demonstrate how the leadership styles that Pat Summitt used shaped her into a successful coach.

### **Population Definitions**

*Players* refer to athletes who were on the women's basketball roster at the University of Tennessee at any point during the time period of 1974 to 2012.

*Coaching Staff* refers to individuals who held the titles of associate or assistant coach for women's basketball at the University of Tennessee at any point during the time period of 1974 to 2012.

*Athletic Support Staff* refers to individuals who worked as managers, athletic administrators, or athletic training staff with women's basketball at the University of Tennessee at any point during the time period of 1974 to 2012.

### **Participants**

The sample included 14 participants: nine players, one coaching staff, and four athletic support staff. The participant's associations to Coach Summitt are listed below as well as their positionality during her tenure (**see also Appendix A**).

- Joan Cronan worked with Coach Summitt for 29 years as the Women's Athletic Director at the University of Tennessee from 1983-2012 (*Joan Cronan, n.d.*).
- Debby Jennings worked with Coach Summitt as the first Director of Media Relations for women's sports at the University of Tennessee for 35 years from 1977-2012 (University of Tennessee Athletics, 2022).
- Mickie DeMoss was brought on as an Assistant Coach and head of recruiting in 1985 and worked under Coach Summitt until 2003 and again from 2010-2012 (University of Tennessee Athletics, n.d.-a).
- Dara Worrell worked in athletics at the University of Tennessee for nearly 29 years from 1993-2022 in ticket operations and development, working directly with Coach Summitt in her role as Associate Athletics Director for Development (*Dara Worrell, n.d.*).
- Suzanne Singleton, formerly Barbre, was a part of Coach Summitt's first team, playing from 1974-78 (*Suzanne Barbre, n.d.*).

- Pam Marr played under Coach Summitt from 1982-86 and appeared in two Final Four's (1984 and 1986) (Harralson, 2023; *Pam Marr*, n.d.).
- Kathy Knoll, formerly Spinks, was a player under Coach Summitt from 1984-88 and had three Final 4 appearances in 1986, 1987, and 1988 (University of Tennessee Athletics, n.d.-b).
- Abby Conklin was a player under Coach Summitt from 1993-97 and was a two-time National Champion in 1996 and 1997 (*Abby Conklin*, n.d.).
- Semeka Randall Lay played for Coach Summitt from 1997-2001 and was a member of the undefeated 1998 National Championship team (*Semeka Randall Lay*, n.d.).
- Tamika Catchings was a player under Coach Summitt from 1997-2001 and was a member of the undefeated 1998 National Championship team (University of Tennessee, n.d.-e).
- Drew Johnson worked under Coach Summitt as a student manager from 1996- 2001 and was a support staff member of the 1996, 1997, and 1998 National Championship teams.
- Sidney Marlborough, formerly Spencer, played for Coach Summitt from 2003-07 and was a member of the 2007 National Championship team (University of Tennessee Athletics, n.d.-c).
- Alexis Hornbuckle played for Coach Summitt from 2004-2008 and was a two-time National Champion in 2007 and 2008 (*Alexis Hornbuckle*, n.d.).

- Ariel Massengale played at the University of Tennessee from 2011-2015, made four Elite 8 appearances, and was a member of Coach Summitt's last recruiting class (University of Tennessee Athletics, n.d.-d).

### **Procedures**

International Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to recruiting participants or data collection (see Appendix B). Individuals who held the title of player, coaching staff, or athletic support staff and worked directly with Coach Summitt from 1974-2012 were eligible to take part in this study. To begin the recruitment process, a list of email addresses and/or phone numbers was compiled from working relationships as well as departmental connections. From there, the initial list of seven individuals were contacted using a standard recruitment email (see Appendix C). After two weeks, a follow-up email was sent (see Appendix D). Finally, after 30 days a final follow-up email was sent (see Appendix E). If the individuals replied to any of the above emails, a scheduling and consent response was sent with the consent document attached (see Appendices F and G). The written informed consent document template was provided by the UT IRB website and then guidelines were adapted to reflect the needs of the study. Of the seven individuals that were contacted, two agreed to participate. From those two interviews, snowball sampling occurred which led to the other 12 interviews. Participants were also given the option to provide contact information for other individuals that met the study criteria or reach out to individual contacts directly which began the snowball sampling.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide with questions developed from Coach Summitt's Definite Dozen, traits from transformational and servant leadership theories, and a similar qualitative study (N. Sheridan, personal communication, March

25, 2024) (see Appendix H). This data collection method was chosen “to better understand the participant’s unique perspective” because “it permits interviews to be focused while still giving the investigator the autonomy to explore pertinent ideas that may come up in the course of the interview” (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p. 1360). The interviews were scheduled for a maximum of one hour and conducted from June 25, 2024, through August 29, 2024. Interviews ranged from 17.55 minutes to one hour, averaging 34.27 minutes (SD = 12.79 minutes).

Interviews were recorded and transcribed digitally on Zoom. Each participant was reminded of the statements from the consent document at the beginning of each interview, “As discussed in the consent document, this study is not anonymous so your name, identifiable characteristics, and interview responses will be used in the study and publication. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, please let me know and we can skip it. If at any point during or after the interview you do not wish to continue, you have the right to do so, and your responses will not be used.” Following these statements, each participant was asked to give verbal consent before proceeding with interview questions. Participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions prior to the interview questions. Finally, the participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts and make suggestions to correct any statements they feel were misinterpreted during the recording and transcription process.

### **Pilot Interviews**

In order to practice interviewing for the study, two pilot interviews were conducted with individuals from teaching and coaching backgrounds. Neither worked directly with Coach Summitt but both had knowledge of the subject. Because the questions for this study were pieced together from various sources rather than a single, previous study, testing the verbiage and

follow-ups beforehand was imperative. Majid et al. (2017) studied the effectiveness of using the technique of piloting in qualitative studies as it is more frequently used in quantitative studies. The authors discuss how piloting interviews can be used to “address potential practical issues” by “trying out the questions” (p. 1074). They go on to say that piloting interview could strengthen the interview protocols by helping to “identify if there are flaws or limitations within the interview design” (p. 1074). After conducting the pilot interviews, the interview guide was rearranged, and several questions were reworked to improve the progression and continuity of the interview.

### **Bracketing**

Another technique used in this study was bracketing. There is not a distinct definition of bracketing within the research community; one researcher describes it as “the task of sorting out the qualities that belong to the researcher’s experience” (Drew, 2004, p. 215). Other researchers, Starks and Trinidad (2007), emphasize that the researcher “must be honest and vigilant about her own perspective, pre-existing thoughts and beliefs, and developing hypotheses” (p. 1376). The process of bracketing is used to become aware of any assumptions or biases “with the analytic goal of attending to the participants’ accounts with an open mind” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1376).

There are several methods in which to perform bracketing:

- writing notes during data collection and analysis to “examine and reflect upon the researcher’s engagement with the data” (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 86)
- being interviewed by an outside source to recognize and state preconceptions and biases

- self-reflecting through journaling before, during, and after data collection

Researchers place importance on choosing the appropriate bracketing method for the study, but they also mention that the methods are not mutually exclusive. For this study, a bracketing interview was used as well as a reflexive journal entry following the interview. These methods were used in congruence to recognize and become aware of any assumptions or biases about Coach Summitt.

### **Data Analysis**

The data set was analyzed using an inductive thematic analysis approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe a thematic analysis approach as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes [the] data set in (rich) detail” (p. 6). By using an inductive thematic approach, coding and analysis will be driven by the dataset itself, meaning codes and themes will be derived from the content of the data (Braun & Clark, 2012). The authors provide a six-step guide that the researcher followed in the analysis phase of the study.

#### **Step 1: Familiarize Yourself with Your Data**

In the data collection stage of this study, the researcher utilized Zoom recordings to digitally transcribe the audio from each interview. Upon completion of all 14 interviews, the researcher spent time reading through each interview in its entirety, checking with audio recordings when necessary. This initial step was used for the researcher to become familiar with the transcriptions, as well as to become “immersed” in the “depth and breadth of the content” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The researcher did not take any notes during this initial phase.

## **Step 2: Generate Initial Codes**

In the second phase of analysis, the researcher proceeded to read through all 14 interviews a second time, highlighting key words, phrases, and quotes. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe this step as “working systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identifying interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data” (p. 89). After highlighting initial codes in each interview, the researcher transferred each data extract to a notebook for consolidation purposes. Braun and Clarke (2006) encourage “coding for as many potential themes/patterns as possible” because “you never know what might be interesting later” (p. 89). Though time was a factor, the researcher was able to generate hundreds of data extracts in this stage to later use as emerging themes.

## **Step 3: Search for Themes**

The researcher found step three to be the most overwhelming part of the analysis as it began with a long list of various codes pulled from the dataset. During this step, the researcher used different colored highlighters in sorting the various codes into emerging themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) caution researchers to “not abandon anything at this stage” even though some candidate themes or sub-themes may “need to be combined, refined and separated, or discarded” (p. 91). Following the sorting and categorization process, the researcher ended step three with 25 emerging themes (see **table 3.1**).

## **Step 4: Review Themes**

During step four, the researcher took the 25 candidate themes from the previous step and refined them. During this refinement phase, the researcher combined some themes as well as

**Table 3.1.**  
*Themes from Step 3 of Thematic Analysis*

<b>Emerging Themes</b>
Passion
Driven
Vision/Knew What She Wanted
Hard Work
Teacher/Learning Moments
Preparing for Life
Selflessness/Loved the Game
Genuine/Approachable
Revolutionary/Transformative
Led By Example
Lifelong Learner
Accountability/Definite Dozen
Strove to Be Better
High Standards/Expectations
Consistent
Work Ethic
Adapt/Adjust
Direct/Honest
Put People First
Intentional
Determined
Sisterhood/Family
Commitment
Relatability/Proven Success
Confident

discarded others in which the “data within the themes [did not] cohere together meaningfully” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). After initially consolidating the emerging themes from 25 to nine (see table 3.2), the researcher narrowed them down even further. While consolidating, the potential names of the themes changed several times as the researcher evaluated the thematic map in regard to the data set as a whole. Braun and Clarke (2006) give “a word of warning [that] coding data and generating themes could go on ad infinitum” (p. 92) as can editing of any written work, so it is important to know when to stop. After several rounds of fine-tuning, the researcher ended this stage with five refined themes: vision, discipline, mentorship, dynamic, and authentic.

#### **Step 5: Define and Name Themes**

Step five of the analysis began with the researcher taking the five themes from the previous step and organizing them within the chosen leadership frameworks of transformational and servant. During this stage, the researcher evaluated the main themes to determine if there were any overlap. Through this, the researcher found that two of the themes identified in the previous stage were better suited to be sub-themes as they were more complex. Though the researcher had already given the themes working titles in the previous stage, this is the point where the “names needed to be concise [and] punchy” to “give the reader a sense of what the theme is about” according to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 93). The researcher finished this phase with three main themes (visionary, authentic, and mentor) and two sub-themes under mentor (accountability and ambition).

#### **Step 6: Produce the Report**

Step six of the analysis process involved the write-up of the results. The researcher’s task in writing the report on the thematic analysis was “to tell the complicated story of the data in a

**Table 3.2.**

*Themes from Step 4 of Thematic Analysis*

<b>Consolidated/Grouped Themes</b>
Strove to Be Better, Driven, Determined
Accountability, High Standards
Work Ethic, Passion, Commitment
Revolutionary, Selflessness, Vision
Put People First, Sisterhood/Family
Preparing for Life, Teacher
Relatability, Consistent, Genuine
Lifelong Learner, Intentional, Led By Example
Direct, Confident

way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The report needed to be concise while also providing sufficient evidence of the themes, meaning the researcher needed to show “enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme” (p. 93). It was also important to demonstrate the theme without being too complicated or unnecessarily complex. The data extracts or codes should be examples that illustrate the themes which helped to “go beyond description...and make an argument” (p. 93) in relation to the researcher’s purpose statement. The researcher also needed to select compelling examples from the interviews that illustrated the themes as the report needed to show more than just data. The fully developed findings can be found in Chapter 4 with the discussion and conclusion following in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Through the data analysis process, three main themes emerged with two sub themes. The main themes include Visionary, Authentic, and Mentor with sub-themes under Mentor of Accountability and Ambition. While unique on their own, these themes also share some commonalities and are not mutually exclusive. The above themes help to demonstrate how Coach Summitt exhibited both transformational and servant leadership during her tenure as Division I Head Basketball Coach at the University of Tennessee.

### **Theme 1: Visionary**

Coach Summitt started her career at an early age with little to no coaching experience, but she always knew her end goal and had a long-term vision: grow the game and prepare her athletes for life. This vision was especially appreciated by players on Coach Summitt's early teams. Suzanne Singleton, a player on Coach Summitt's first team, recognized that even though they lacked equipment, support from administration, and players at times, Coach Summitt was all they needed. "We are the ones that really appreciated what we had, even though we didn't have anything really. We had Pat Summitt." Even though these players did not realize the impact that she would make on their lives at the time, they grew to appreciate how she prepared them for life after basketball.

Despite the success she had later on in her career, it took Coach Summitt several years to learn how to develop her coaching style, and more specifically, how to coach players who were only a few months older than she was. Coach Summitt discusses these early challenges of earning and keeping the players respect in her book *Reach for the Summit*. Coach Summitt thought that to gain the players respect, she had to be a tough, 'my way or the highway' type of

coach. Only after years of coaching plus having a child did her outlook change on how to interact with her athletes. Several participants reported in their interviews that they could see a change in Coach Summitt after having Tyler, her son, saying they felt she was more maternal and nurturing in nature. This did not take away from her high expectations and tough love, when necessary, but she was able to see her athletes from a different perspective.

One of Coach Summitt's greatest talents according to Tamika Catchings was her ability to adjust and adapt her coaching style to the new group of players each year: "She was able to tailor her plays [as well as] her coaching [style] and tailor the way our game would be on a yearly basis." Kathy Knoll echoed this sentiment by saying Coach Summitt had "an uncanny ability to meet a player where they were." Coach Summitt discovered ways to have variety in her coaching style and to make her point while always staying true to her values.

It is common to find coaches today who will give commands to their athletes and staff without a second thought. Coach Summitt made a point to never ask more of others than she asked of herself, something she constantly proved to her players which earned her much respect. One of the characteristics that appeared most in the interview process was that Coach Summitt always led by example. She represented and embodied who her athletes needed to be. This was not always done perfectly, but she would never tell them to do something she would not do or did not believe was in their best interests.

Another aspect of Coach Summitt's coaching style that set her apart and showed her forward-thinking mindset was her willingness to admit when she was wrong or needed help. Joan Cronan provided an example of this when she talked about her interview for the position of women's athletic director.

During the interview, the President, the Chancellor, and Pat said [women's basketball] wasn't going to play in the new arena. We were going to move to Stokely, which was the older arena, and it was going to be just ours [Lady Vols]. Pat wanted it because she wouldn't have to worry with the men's team and their practices. She would have it just for her. The Chancellor and the President both cared about us [women's basketball], but they were worried about the arena being too big for women's sports at the time. And I drew the line in the sand during the interview and I said, 'If y'all want me to be the athletic director, we have to play in the arena.' And they said, 'Okay', thank heavens, and after the first game, we had sold it out. In fact, we sold it out, and I had to go outside and give people tickets to the next game because they couldn't get in. I immediately received a phone call and a note from Pat saying, 'You were right'.

Those three simple words, "you were right", are some of the hardest words for leaders to say as they acknowledge a mistake. Coach Summitt, however, knew the importance of learning from her mistakes. She looked for solutions and harped on the importance of developing good problem-solving skills, welcoming new ideas by reaching out to others who knew more than she did. These skills also helped her to hire some of the best assistant coaches because she did not let her ego get in the way of bettering her team. In particular, she did not allow success to give her an exaggerated sense of her own importance or ability, but rather she looked at her failures as opportunities for learning and growth.

In addition to being a lifelong learner, she was also "revolutionary" and "transformative" for the game of basketball. In the late 1970s, Coach Summitt hit her breaking point when the state of Tennessee as the TSSAA would not allow girls to play the full length of the court during

high school games. Coach Summitt decided that the only way to get the TSSAA's attention, as Debby Jennings stated, was to refuse to recruit in state.

She [Coach Summitt] took on the TSSAA when she said, 'I can't recruit here, because they're not playing five-on-five and I'm not going to sign a player from the State of Tennessee until you change'. Well, I mean, she didn't make any friends from the high school coaches, but she felt like it was the most important thing for the State of Tennessee, for them to give young girls the opportunity to play the five-on-five game and be on equal footing to get an opportunity for scholarships. And this is four- or five-years post Title IX, so she knew the importance of that happening quickly.

The State of Tennessee could have responded to Coach Summitt negatively as they had to others many times before, but because of her influence and rapport, they decided to listen and the rest, as they say, is history. Instead of Coach Summitt staying quiet and protecting her reputation, she took action because this change would be the best thing for women's basketball in Tennessee. She made sacrifices to grow the game, and more importantly, to provide more opportunities for women in sports. Joan Cronan recalled something Jerry Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys, said on good leadership, "A leader is a person with a vision and a person that has a sphere of influence."

Coach Summitt was a visionary and ahead of her time by recognizing the importance of good mental health and proper physical training for her athletes. Before the use of sport's psychologists was mandated by the NCAA, Coach Summitt recognized their importance on her athletes' mental health and well-being. By providing this resource, Coach Summitt opened the door for her athletes to seek help, when necessary, which translated to greater focus and

performance on the court. Also to help her team to improve physically, she utilized male practice players, oftentimes playing six practice players on five Lady Vols, long before it was widely used. She understood that the only way to get better was to play against athletes who were bigger, stronger, and faster.

Another example of Coach Summitt being a visionary was she constantly looked for ways grow the game of women's basketball and gain more coverage for not only her athletes but all female athletes. Joan Cronan recalled a time when Coach Summitt had one of these ideas.

Another strength, I think, was how much she loved the game of basketball, and I can't tell you how many times she would come in and say, "You think we could do this?"

Example: "Can we play a game on an aircraft carrier out in Arizona?" And I would say, "Why?" and she said, "Cause it's good for the game. It's gonna bring attention. People are gonna pay attention to what we're doing."

Above all, Coach Summitt understood she would not be anywhere without her players and staff. She wanted everyone to share in her success and "selflessly brought so much attention to women's basketball" which Debby Jennings noted. Coach Summitt was impactful in so many ways, but she always remained thankful and grateful.

## **Theme 2: Authentic**

One constant thread throughout the interviews was how genuine and approachable Coach Summitt was no matter how successful she became or where she was in her career. Sidney Marlborough detailed how Coach Summitt always took the time to meet people, to hear their story, and to thank them for their support.

She [Coach Summitt] would talk to everybody. She would do anything. She didn't avoid stores or send out assistants to do things like a lot of celebrities would. Pat was going to go do it for herself. And if she signs 100 autographs just going into the grocery store, she doesn't care, she's going to do it.

Coach Summitt understood that people (fans, players, administration, etc.) were the keys to the success of her program. In the interview responses, the participants stressed how Coach Summitt always valued those involved in every aspect of the game. From the athletes on the court, to the administration, to the ticket sales staff, to the fanbase, Coach Summitt made sure everyone felt included and important, a value she held onto for her entire life.

Another slightly controversial yet endearing quality Coach Summitt operated under was she was always "just Pat". She never wanted anyone, even her players, to call her anything other than Pat. Many of her colleagues in the coaching world, and even some players, did not agree with this tactic early on as they saw it as disrespectful. In her mind, though, she had always been just Pat so why change it now? She also felt this made her more approachable for the players which was essential in building relationships. As Joan Cronan mentioned in her interview, "They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Coach Summitt was always available for anyone, especially her players. She had an open-door policy where everyone knew they could drop by and chat whenever they wanted or needed to. She made herself available and was never too busy for anyone. Her availability went beyond even her team at times as she was always willing to help fellow coaches or players from other sports. As Debby Jennings stated, "Great leaders leave the ladder down and help the next person up." Coach Summitt recognized that she could teach others just as she was taught many years before, so she

never hesitated to give back and pay it forward. Drew Johnson remembered the attitude the fans demonstrated towards Coach Summitt even in the tough times.

As a result of the way she treated everyone, Coach Summitt was incredibly admired and revered, especially in the Knoxville community. They [fans] just adored her. I mean the year that we lost ten games and won a national championship, you could never tell that the community was ever down or felt like she wasn't going to turn it around. She just earned that rapport with the community.

Because she was a proven winner and a veteran coach, she was rarely doubted. She had “paid her dues” so to speak and earned her reputation in the basketball community and beyond. Having started out as a successful player who became an Olympic coach, people knew the significance of her accomplishments, but she was quick to remind everyone that she was just a person. Coach Summitt's upbringing in Henrietta, Tennessee, allowed people in the community to relate to her on a personal level. She also never treated anyone differently, no matter where they came from, what they did for a living, or who they were. Suzanne Singleton recalled meeting “a guy several years ago” who delivered pizzas to Coach Summitt's basketball camps.

She [Coach Summitt] talked to him and said, ‘What's your goals in life? Are you going to college?’ And he said, ‘Yes, ma'am, yeah.’ He ran into her several years later. She remembered him, and said, ‘Well, what are you doing now? Did you complete your goals like I asked you when you were delivering pizzas?’

Coach Summitt could have just greeted him and said enough to make him feel heard in the moment. Instead, she took the time to ask about his life, to truly listen to him, and then to remember their conversation years later. She was compassionate, thoughtful, humble, and

sincere, even in the midst of an incurable disease. As Alexis Hornbuckle said, “Treat everyone as you want to be treated.”

Just because Coach Summitt had good manners, however, does not mean that she was not also direct and honest, even if it stung a bit. Coach Summitt was straightforward, honest, and transparent. Her approach was to address the issue head-on and immediately. Coach Summitt was not a gossip and did not talk about others negatively behind their backs. By not shying away from the problem and addressing it one on one, she gained much respect and credibility amongst players and colleagues.

Coach Summitt's basic philosophy did not change because her values never changed even as she became more successful. Her focus was to remain consistent in every aspect of her life and she did not allow her success or her team's success to change her or her players. Even if the Lady Vols had just won a national championship, practices did not change and neither did the demands on the team.

Remaining consistent in winning and consistent in character were reasons Coach Summitt grew more confident in herself and her methods. Everyone talked about her icy blue eyes and “the stare,” but her presence was powerful even before she walked in a room. “Her presence,” as Kathy Knoll put it, “walked in before she did.” People straightened up and stopped to listen with a “here comes excellence” posture as Sidney Marlborough noted. She commanded a room without even saying a word, but when she would speak, everyone would hang onto every word to try and glean something from her. Coach Summitt was able to command respect and attention, no matter where she went because of how she carried herself and the confidence she exuded. Semeka Randall Lay summarized this feeling perfectly.

It was great to see a woman who could come in a room, who won, who was successful, especially when you were in a male-driven world to see her be amongst all those people, and for them to be in awe of her was just so powerful.

### **Theme 3: Mentorship**

A player choosing to attend the University of Tennessee to earn an education and to play basketball seems pretty simple; however, in reality, what that player actually signed up for was a grueling four years of backbreaking practices, strict academic schedules, and playing some of the hardest opponents in the country on a regular basis. Yet at the end of four years, this player would be a part of a sisterhood that is truly lifelong. The Lady Vol 161 or LV161 sisterhood consists of every Lady Vol basketball player past and present. The '161' represents the 161 women that played for Coach Summitt. This is not a standard group chat or newsletter for alumni of a program. LV161 is one of, if not, the strongest active sisterhood in the country. The incredible women in this group truly embody what it is like to be in a family and who will be there for each other in any way they can. This sisterhood would not have been created much less sustained if not for Coach Summitt. She knew the program would not succeed without creating a true family atmosphere. Did players always get along or agree with decisions that were made? No, because what family does? They did have to work through it because "no one person was bigger than the team," a sentiment which Mickie DeMoss expressed carried into every aspect of the program.

Coach Summitt was able to create this team dynamic because she developed relationships with the players before they even stepped foot on campus. She wanted players and their families to understand that not only was she their coach, but she also deeply cared about them as

individuals and wanted to help them succeed in every way possible. Her goal for her players, was for them to feel safe, supported, and loved while under her care because they really were like her daughters. Semeka Randall Lay said, “I just remember Pat cooking, and the love that we felt from her making those meals.” Almost 30 years removed, her players are remembering the meals she cooked for them, the relationships they had, and the love shown for each and every one of them, no matter the outcome on the court. Because of this, Coach Summitt was able to balance having a personal relationship with her players while also taking care of business when necessary.

One tool Coach Summitt utilized to help with building relationships and to learn her personnel was personality testing. Each year she would have the players and staff take personality tests in order to learn how everyone was motivated, what kind of leader they were, and how each person would interact with others. She used the results to learn her personnel in order to best put each piece of the puzzle together. Coach Summitt also had the players read everyone’s results so they could learn how to play with each other. The team needed to learn their individual roles for the team to succeed. This knowledge was especially useful when figuring out how to motivate individual players. Ariel Massengale remembered a time when Coach Summitt used this knowledge to motivate her during an away game.

I just think one story that always stands out to me about my freshman year was we were playing Auburn, and at the time Auburn had this little bitty guard that was like 5'2". She was really little, and in the first half, the little girl was giving me the business, like she was going to work. And so, we get in the locker room at half time, and Pat is like, ‘Ariel, look at your stat line like it's zeros across the board and look at her stat line. Are you

telling me I should recruit her over you?’ I was like. ‘Okay, got it.’ And so, we leave the locker room. And like, I understood the message. Of course, all my team is like, Ariel, it's okay. It's okay, like she gets on all of us. It happens. And I was like, guys, I'm fine. This is the reason I came to Tennessee, because in those moments where I was not living up to my potential, I wanted somebody that was gonna call me out and was gonna challenge me.

That may sound harsh to some people, but Ariel recognized that she was best motivated through challenges, which is exactly what Coach Summitt did. She challenged Ariel to be better because she knew what Ariel was capable of. As Debby Jennings said, “As fierce as the stare was, the hug was just as tight.” Oftentimes Coach Summitt saw the potential in someone before even they could, which is why she pushed them so hard.

Beyond building successful teams, Coach Summitt was immensely talented at putting together a staff that complemented each other. Part of the reason they were so successful was due to the respect and trust she had for them. Many former players cited how the coaching staff always used the same language around the team and how they were given responsibilities and allowed to carry them out without being undermined. Too often today, head coaches feel a need to micromanage their assistants in order to have their hand in everything, but not Coach Summitt. She hired her assistants because they were extremely gifted at what they did, so she let them do it.

Coach Summitt also believed that everyone who was a part of the Lady Vol program in any capacity should be treated equally because each played a vital role in the team's success.

Being treated equally, however, also meant being held to the same standards as the players themselves. Drew Johnson learned this lesson the hard way during the NCAA tournament.

One night we were in Memphis for an NCAA tournament game, and I missed curfew because I was escorting her [Pat's] sister and brother-in-law and my parents around Memphis to make sure they got to the hotel room and everything from a casino or whatever. And the next day she called me up to her room, and I think my dad had given me \$50, and I turned it into like \$200, and I was on Cloud 9. When she called me up to her room the next morning, she said, 'I heard you had a good night, you know, at the blackjack table', and I said, 'yes, ma'am, I did, and I said, I won \$200, which at the time I thought I was rich'. She said, 'Well, I hope it was worth it. You missed curfew, and you're not going to be able to sit on the bench during the NCAA tournament.' At the time I just thought that was the worst thing in the world, but then I realized that all along she had been telling me she was gonna treat managers just like players. I said, 'Well Coach, I was making sure that my parents (who were really good friends of hers) and your sister Linda was, you know, gonna get back to the hotel room okay, and everything.' And she said, 'Well, do you work for Linda?' And I said, 'No, ma'am,' and she said, 'There you go.'

In the moment, Drew recalls being frustrated and almost mad at Coach Summitt for treating him, a manager, the same as a player, but he now considers it a compliment that she had so much respect for him that she followed through. The idea of "delayed gratification" as Abby Conklin put it, is somewhat threaded throughout all the interviews. Those four years under Coach

Summitt were some of the hardest that any of the players had ever experienced, but the rewards outweighed the challenges.

Outside of developing lifelong relationships, Coach Summitt placed a high-level of importance on being prepared for life outside of basketball. She always told her players that they were students first, athletes second. This was a point she made to players' families long before they ever committed to Tennessee. Pam Marr recalled a story from when Candace Parker was being recruited. "She [Coach Summitt] told Candace Parker when she was recruiting her that she could not promise her playing time, but she could promise her a 4-year degree if she went to school." Coach Summitt was far more concerned with her athletes being good people and successful in life than she was about their performance on the court. Do not mistake that statement for Coach Summitt not caring about competition or winning because that was certainly important to her, but true failure to her would not be a loss. True failure would be if players left Tennessee without graduating or being prepared for life.

"You're an athlete on the court, but you're a female off the court and that that's how you will act" (Suzanne Singleton). "She transformed the lives of young athletes into super stars, into professionals" (Alexis Hornbuckle). "She saw her job as more of raising us up from girls to women" (Sidney Marlborough). "We are here to play basketball, but basketball is not who we are" (Tamika Catchings). Each of these quotes and many more demonstrate the priority Coach Summitt put on life preparation. She modeled being involved in the community and giving back to show her players how to be good people who make lasting impacts. As Joan Cronan said, "[She was] going to help you be successful in life."

Another aspect of mentorship Coach Summitt did so well was being a great teacher on and off the court. Even though she considered the court to be her classroom, Coach Summitt also believed education outside in the world was also very important. Pam Marr expressed this sentiment when she recalled stories of team travel.

She [Coach Summitt] believed every moment is a teaching moment. So, you know, we go on road trip. She wanted to make sure that they [players] brought back something more than just being in the gym so she would make sure that if there was something that they needed to see or experience, that they had the opportunity to do that. You know, she always thought about the players. When we went to Chicago, we would stay on Michigan Avenue in the middle of everything, you know at the big Marriott there cause Nike is right down the street. You know the players loved to shop, so she made those experiences really memorable for them. And that was really important to her because it wasn't just the education inside the walls, the University of Tennessee. It was the education outside in the world. And you know that was every bit as important to her for their development as young women, not just student athletes.

Players and staff alike were constantly learning from her and she from them. Every moment was a teaching moment, especially when things did not go to plan. Coach Summitt taught hard lessons but also gave clear direction so that everyone knew how to improve. Drew Johnson noted, "If you were allowing yourself to be a sponge, you were always going to be learning something." It did not matter where athletics people worked, anyone could learn a lesson or two from Coach Summitt, whether that be about basketball or leadership in general. Besides all the reasons listed above, what made her a great teacher went beyond her ability to simply teach

others but was more about her willingness to “leave the ladder down” and help the next person up.

### *Accountability*

Most everything Coach Summitt taught pointed back to her core values called the Definite Dozen. While these characteristics were not combined into a formed list when Coach Summitt began, the values themselves remained the same throughout her entire career. All twelve were mentioned individually at least once in the interview process, but the value mentioned the most by far was discipline. Coach Summitt wanted her athletes to have discipline in every aspect of their lives as most other skills would follow. Being able to discipline themselves meant they were accountable for their actions, they respected their time and others’, they demonstrated loyalty to their teammates, university, and coaches, and the list could go on and on.

For Coach Summitt, good communication eliminated confusion. She would much rather a person ask questions than to stay silent and do the task incorrectly which was more time-consuming. Coach Summitt instilled vital conversational skills in her athletes such as active listening, effective communication, and arguably most important to Coach Summitt, making eye contact. She viewed maintaining eye contact during a conversation as a form of respect for the person speaking to acknowledge they are engaged and listening to what is being said. Coach Summitt taught her athletes the importance of being present and focused on the conversation at hand, a practice which Tamika Catchings strives to accomplish in her own professional life. Catchings stated, “The only thing that matters is you and this moment, and then, when I get to

the next person, it's their time, and the next person. She [Coach Summitt] was very intentional with that.”

One main reason Coach Summitt made responsibility a core value was because she believed responsibility led to ownership which led to investment. This was not only for the athletes, but also for everyone else involved with the program. Giving someone any kind of responsibility and the autonomy to carry out that responsibility would help them to buy-in and take ownership of what it was they were doing. Once they felt they had a stake in what happened, they were invested. Another facet of responsibility for players especially was getting them to understand the legacy of the program and how they fit into it. Suzanne Singleton talked about Coach Summitt having a book of past players that she would have the current athletes read to understand who came before. “This is the history of this program, and you’ve got to understand where it started, who started it, and where it is now.”

The most talked about topic of all interviews, though, was the expectations or “Tennessee Standard” that Coach Summitt expected of herself and her athletes. One of the expectations was that everyone would uphold the Definite Dozen, but there were other standards everyone was expected to live by as well. Stay engaged during practice, demonstrate high character, and play for the name on the front of the jersey and not the back, were just a few that were mentioned in interviews. One expectation that translated to every portion of their lives was being on time. Alexis Hornbuckle recalled the standard as, “If you’re early you’re on time, you’re on time you’re late, and if you’re late, don’t even bother showing up.” Coach Summitt again was showing her athletes how to be respectful of a person’s time which could carry over to every part of their lives.

Another aspect of the “Tennessee Standard” was the standard of winning and performing well on the court. Coach Summitt demanded quality from her athletes and did not expect less than their best because she knew their capabilities. At the beginning of her career, Coach Summitt’s teams were consistently going to the Elite 8 and Final 4 each year, but after winning their first national championship in 1987, the expectation grew even more. Semeka Randall Lay stated, “When we didn’t win a championship, we felt like we had a bad year.” Coach Summitt never wanted her players or herself to be content with their success from previous years because there was always room to grow. She also taught her players that they had to handle failure the same as success: never get too high or too low because there were always opportunities to improve.

Alexis Hornbuckle learned this particular lesson the hard way when she let herself get complacent during practice. She talked about having stayed out too late the night before and not being in great headspace during practice. She was still winning drills and performing well, but Coach Summitt could immediately tell she was not her normal self.

I liked to party a lot in college, and I remember a particular workout where I didn't get a lot of sleep the night before. It was at 6 AM, but I was early, so I was on time, but my performance was not up to par. It was not my standard performance and Coach set me down and said, ‘If this is what our leadership is gonna look like we will not win a championship. It's not going to happen.’ And I'm argumentative so, ‘What do you mean, Coach? I'm winning almost every sprint,’ despite me not having sleep, right? ‘It's not about that. They see. They know you went out. They know you're barely making it. They know that right now, your conditioning, your basketball, your Lady Vol family, and

winning a national championship is not top priority today. That is not the leadership I'm looking for.'

Mickie DeMoss said Coach Summitt had an “unwavering ability to never lower her standards” which was shown in this example. Even though Hornbuckle was performing well on the court, she was not demonstrating the leadership Coach Summitt expected, so Coach Summitt called her out. One responsibility the upperclassman on the team was given was to show the underclassmen what was expected. Hornbuckle was not upholding that responsibility, so Coach Summitt made a small course correction that shifted Hornbuckle’s perspective on her actions. She realized that she was hurting her team by lowering her standards, so she made sure it never happened again. It could seem harsh to someone outside of the program, but “the expectation was just excellence” according to Tamika Catchings. As Hornbuckle put it, “Stay out of the kitchen if you can’t stand the heat.” Coach Summitt’s style was certainly not for the faint at heart, but everyone who made it through came out better than when they started. As expressed by Semeka Randall Lay, “My experience was great. It was tough, but I wouldn’t trade it for anything in the world.”

### ***Ambition***

When talking about Coach Summitt, the participants were quick to describe her as passionate, hungry, driven, and determined. Each participant detailed the incredible work ethic Coach Summitt displayed each and every day. Because of her ambition and drive to be better, she would constantly push herself to play better, recover faster, and coach more effectively. Coach Summitt truly believed success was a result of hard work, which is why she never wanted to be complacent or take opportunities for granted. Expectations and boundaries were constantly

raised by Coach Summitt as she strove to be the best version of herself. There was always work to be done because “you’ve never arrived” as noted by Sidney Marlborough.

Coach Summitt was more committed and dedicated to growing the game of women’s basketball than anyone in the sport. When others were content with being televised, Coach Summitt was fighting to be as mainstream as the men. She never wanted to settle for anything less than what she knew the athletes deserved. Even though she was passionate about the game as a whole, Coach Summitt was equally as dedicated to her job at the University of Tennessee and growing their program. In her line of work, preparation was key especially as the game developed more parity, largely because of her.

Many of the participants remember Coach Summitt watching film for days with little sleep because she wanted to prepare her team for their opponents. Debby Jennings described Coach Summitt’s routine when something would inevitably not go as planned.

She [Coach Summitt] would beat herself up... she would go in a room, not come out for a while, but then she would put the film in and get on a treadmill or bike and watch the game, and watch the game, and watch the game.

Often, though, Coach Summitt would be just as upset after a win as a loss because the team’s execution was lacking. She had such high expectations for the athletes and the program that something as small as giving up rebounds was unacceptable. The fundamentals were of upmost importance. Joan Cronan recalled a mantra Coach Summitt said often, “Offense sells tickets, defense wins games, rebounds win championships.”

Coach Summitt loved the game of basketball so much so that she believed that fundamentals were truly the basis of all success as a player. She was very detail-oriented and

intentional about the way she went about coaching. She always had a reason and purpose behind drills, rules, strategies, etc. Example 1: If the team was not meeting the expectations during practice, there were often physical consequences such as running. That may seem like a typical consequence used by coaches, and it is, but Coach Summitt used it for a reason. Physical consequences improved the team's conditioning for games. If an athlete is well-conditioned, they are not as focused on feeling tired during games, which means they are more focused on the game itself. Example 2: To have the players be more accountable for their actions, Coach Summitt had them say "two points" if something was done well and "rebound" if they needed to do better. This improved personal accountability and minimized passing blame, but it also reinforced the importance of fundamentals as "two points" referred to layups, and "rebound" referred to defense.

Another strategy Coach Summitt used as a motivation was balancing encouragement with constructive criticism. She believed both were necessary for athletes to succeed, but both also needed to be used sparingly and mindfully as to not diminish the power of either. As quick as she was to empower and lift up her athletes, Coach Summitt also knew she needed to humble them, something Suzanne Singleton remembered quite vividly.

We did like to enjoy college life, you know, as most college students do. Never failed, you know, if we went over to somebody's apartment and drank, because legal drinking age then was 18, by the way, she always found out. Always. And we would go, how could she find that out? So, this is a quick little story to show you. One weekend, a couple of players went out of town, and I went home. We had practice on that Sunday. Well, she knew a couple of them had gone with a sorority and so we walk in that gym,

Alumni Gym, by the way, she put four trash cans at each corner of the basketball court, and she ran us, and ran us, and ran us until some of them threw up in the garbage cans. And so, we knew there was going to be consequences for our actions, regardless. Now, that may sound really brutal, but that was a good punishment.

Coach Summitt was very intentional about her decisions and always had a reason for doing them. For example, she intentionally surrounded herself with people who were different in personality. She understood her personality of being strong-willed and intense, so she hired staff like Mickie DeMoss, Holly Warlick, Al Brown, and others to provide balance.

Coach Summitt was renowned for her mental toughness and composure. The participants could not remember a time where she let pressure affect her; in fact, many recall her thriving under pressure. She always seemed to have everything under control, which allowed her players and staff to trust her completely. This does not mean they did not ever feel anxious, especially during close games, but as Tamika Catchings put it, “nerves just mean you care.” Coach Summitt was by no means perfect as a coach or a person. She handled situations rashly at times and did not always attain goals she set for herself or the team, but each participant expressed how thankful, grateful, and appreciative they were for who Coach Summitt was and what she stood for. This could not have been more well said than in the sentiment from Ariel Massengale who was on Coach Summitt’s final team. “I just hope that we never forget her legacy, and what it is that she has done for women’s basketball.”

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study's purpose was to show how Coach Summitt's leadership styles contributed to her success as a head coach. The objective was to provide resources to coaches looking to improve their instructional methods and as a tool for athletic administrators for hiring purposes. While not every leader finds success using the same methods, the aim was to present the traits that helped Coach Summitt be successful as a potential resource for any leader, in sports or otherwise.

As discussed in Chapter 3, semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide with questions that targeted different areas of leadership. From there, thematic analysis was used to code for themes that arose from the interview responses. Following coding, three main themes emerged: Visionary, Authentic, and Mentorship which housed two sub-themes of Accountability and Ambition. The themes of visionary and authentic naturally fell under the category of transformational leadership while the theme of mentorship best fit into servant leadership. The themes are not mutually exclusive to each other or the respective leadership styles. Therefore, there will be some commonalties shared by the themes and sub-themes. Additionally, each of the themes derived from the interviews were consistent across the decades represented. The participants from each decade of Coach Summitt's career contributed to the overall results and themes.

Visionary best fit under transformational leadership overall, but it also fell into servant leadership at times as well. Coach Summitt knew that in order to accomplish her goals and carry out her vision of growing women's basketball, she would have to make sacrifices and rely on her

personnel to succeed. She understood that this vision was bigger than herself and would therefore require her to focus on other's needs rather than her own.

The theme of Authentic most suitably fell under transformational leadership as well while also possessing qualities that move toward servant leadership such as humility. Coach Summitt valued each and every person who were apart of the Lady Vol program. She understood that she would not have had the success she did without her personnel. She was genuine and consistent in everything she did which also earned her the respect and rapport with those around her.

Mentorship and its sub-themes are most suited for servant leadership, but they also play into the motivation portion of transformational leadership. A leader needs to find way to motivate their personnel to achieve the goals of the organization. Coach Summitt was able to mentor her athletes and staff because she earned their trust and found ways to motivate them individually and as a team. Despite the similarities shared by the main themes, they are unique as well which is why they are categorized separately.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature on transformational leadership suggests that a transformational leader (TL) exhibits long-term vision rather than simply concerning themselves with only day-to-day tasks. Coach Summitt showed this long-term vision in terms of growing the game of women's basketball, the Lady Vol program, and her emphasis on preparation for life. While she most certainly cared about competition and winning, Coach Summitt was far more concerned with her athletes being good people and being prepared for life after basketball. Another way Coach Summitt demonstrated transformational leadership was through her encouragement and desire to continuously learn and develop. One of the most mentioned traits of Coach Summitt was how she led by example. She encouraged her athletes and staff to never be

content because there was always room to grow. She did this by modeling the behavior she expected of her athletes.

Xie (2020) holds that TLs should also find ways “to motivate followers and enable them to accomplish challenging organizational tasks” (p. 221). Because of the authentic and genuine behavior of the TL, followers are inspired to achieve those organizational goals which enhances overall performance. Coach Summitt understood the importance of learning her personnel and how they were motivated. She used personality testing to determine how each athlete or staff member was motivated to best support them. She wanted the athletes to be successful during their time on Rocky Top and beyond, which is why she developed long-lasting relationships before the athletes even stepped foot on campus. As Xie (2020) states, authentic TLs truly want the organization to succeed and will do anything to aid in that success including “transcending self-interests for the sake of the organization [or followers]” (p. 221). TLs “positively influence the process and [subsequent] results of organizational learning” by prioritizing showing support for their followers (Xie, 2020, p. 221). Coach Summitt earned and developed respect and rapport with her athletes, staff, and amongst the fanbase because of her unwavering commitment and dedication to the Lady Vol program and the sport. She sacrificed time and resources to grow the sport of women’s basketball to get her athletes the recognition and support they deserved.

Servant leaders (SL) on the other hand, as suggested by the literature in Chapter 2, are those that recognize their own limitations and choose to focus on the personal growth of their followers. SLs prioritize other’s needs before their own to “make a broader contribution to society in the long run” (Xie, 2020, p. 222). As mentioned previously, Coach Summitt displayed the attitude of “you’ve never arrived” because she believed there was always room for

improvement. Because of this, she was not shy about owning up to her mistakes and shortcomings so that she could learn from them and move on. She also displayed this attitude in terms of providing for her athletes. Coach Summitt talks at length in her books, *Reach for the Summit* and *Raise the Roof*, about the necessity of seeking out others who are gifted in different areas than yourself in order to better each other. She practiced this often when putting together a staff and seeking out individuals she could learn from too.

Another quality described prolifically by participants was Coach Summitt's humility. She recognized and acknowledged that she would not be anywhere without her players and staff. Servant leaders rely on humility, care, and concern for others even outside of their followers. SLs also practice kindness, fairness, and service to anyone they come in contact with (Winston, 2003). As suggested by Spears (2010), SLs also demonstrate 10 key characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, and building community. Coach Summitt demonstrated each of these qualities as discussed in Chapter 4. Examples of this include demonstrating kindness and concern to everyone she encountered. She would ask delivery drivers about their life plans and sign hundreds of autographs in the grocery store on a random Tuesday because she valued everyone she met. She believed that everyone played a vital role in the program's success including the fanbase who were their support system. She was not afraid to try new and slightly unconventional methods and techniques to grow the game. She saw a need, made a goal, and worked toward accomplishing that goal her entire career.

All participants confirmed that Coach Pat Summitt was an incredible leader both on and off the court. The results of the interviews showed that Coach Summitt demonstrated each of the

above characteristics of transformational and servant leadership during her tenure as head coach. She developed her leadership style over her career, which spanned nearly four decades.

While there will never be another Coach Summitt, others can take note of how she led and implement aspects of her style into their own careers. Coach Summitt achieved success in many aspects of her life including coaching winning teams, graduating all the athletes under her care, and developing a lifelong sense of family. She did not do this by simply taking strategies that other coaches had used and copying them because she understood not every tactic works for every leader. She instead sought to learn from the successes and failures of herself and others in order to be the best version of herself as possible. This growth was not an easy process, and it certainly did not happen overnight. As Coach Summitt wisely said, “Success is a project that’s always under construction” (Brobeck, 2016).

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

Recommendations from previous studies (Becker & Wrisberg, 2008; Tharp & Gallimore, 2004) suggest an interview with the primary source would have been ideal. Unfortunately, this is impossible due to Coach Summitt’s death in June 2016. Therefore, the secondary recommendation was taken to interview those closest to Coach Summitt during her career. The population sample was limited to players, coaching staff, and athletic support staff who had direct contact with Coach Summitt from 1974-2012. An additional limitation of using expert interviews is the subjectivity of reported experiences (*Expert interviews*, 2024). Despite this potential limitation, the findings and themes presented above were consistent across participants.

Coach Summitt’s career at the University of Tennessee spanned nearly four decades. Due the length of her tenure, hundreds of participants met the study’s inclusion criteria. The original

recruitment email was sent to seven potential participants, of which two agreed to participate. From the two participants that were interviewed from the initial recruitment email, 12 more were interviewed using snowball sampling. From the experience of the 14 participants, every year of Coach Summitt's career is represented. Some of the participants from the earlier years of Coach Summitt's tenure, now 50 years removed, may not have recalled the smaller details of their everyday experiences (Grotper, 2008). The participant with the most recent interactions with Coach Summitt played in 2012, over a decade ago. Extended time removed from their individual experiences could be considered a limitation. However, participant responses and themes were consistent from 1974 to 2012.

Another limitation of qualitative research is the potential for data collection and analysis to be influenced by the researcher's positionality and personal biases (Anderson, 2010; Bourke, 2014). To combat this, the researcher also used bracketing and check-ins with the research team. The researcher recognizes they have outsider status as they did not play for, coach with, or work under Coach Summitt and thus are not a member of LV161 (Porter et al., 2024). Due to the personal relationships shared by participants, the researcher did not have control over information shared amongst participants before, during, or after interviews. Despite these limitations, the aim was to construct a balanced portrayal of Coach Summitt's leadership which connected back to the chosen styles: transformational and servant.

### **Delimitations**

Coach Summitt was a very prominent figure amongst all of women's athletics but especially in the basketball community. She played and worked in athletics for over four decades allowing her to develop many relationships. For this study, the focus was on players, coaching

staff, and athletic support staff who had direct contact with Coach Summitt regularly during her tenure as a head coach. Therefore, this study did not include members of the University of Tennessee Athletics Department who were not directly supervised by Coach Summitt or were her direct supervisors. The study also did not include members of the University of Tennessee fan community, Knoxville community, or relatives of Coach Summitt.

### **Future Research**

This study sought to explore the leadership styles that shaped Pat Summitt's success as a Division I Head Basketball Coach by using semi-structured interviews. Due to this study's purpose, only one coach was examined through the lens of two leadership styles. Future researchers could replicate this study on a different coach/leader utilizing the same frameworks. Additionally, coaches and leaders could be examined through a different combination of leadership styles. Researchers could also perform the study using this method but interviewing only players or only staff rather than a mixture of both. This study could also be replicated on a coach who is still living to perform a comparative study showing the experiences of the coach as well as the players and staff.

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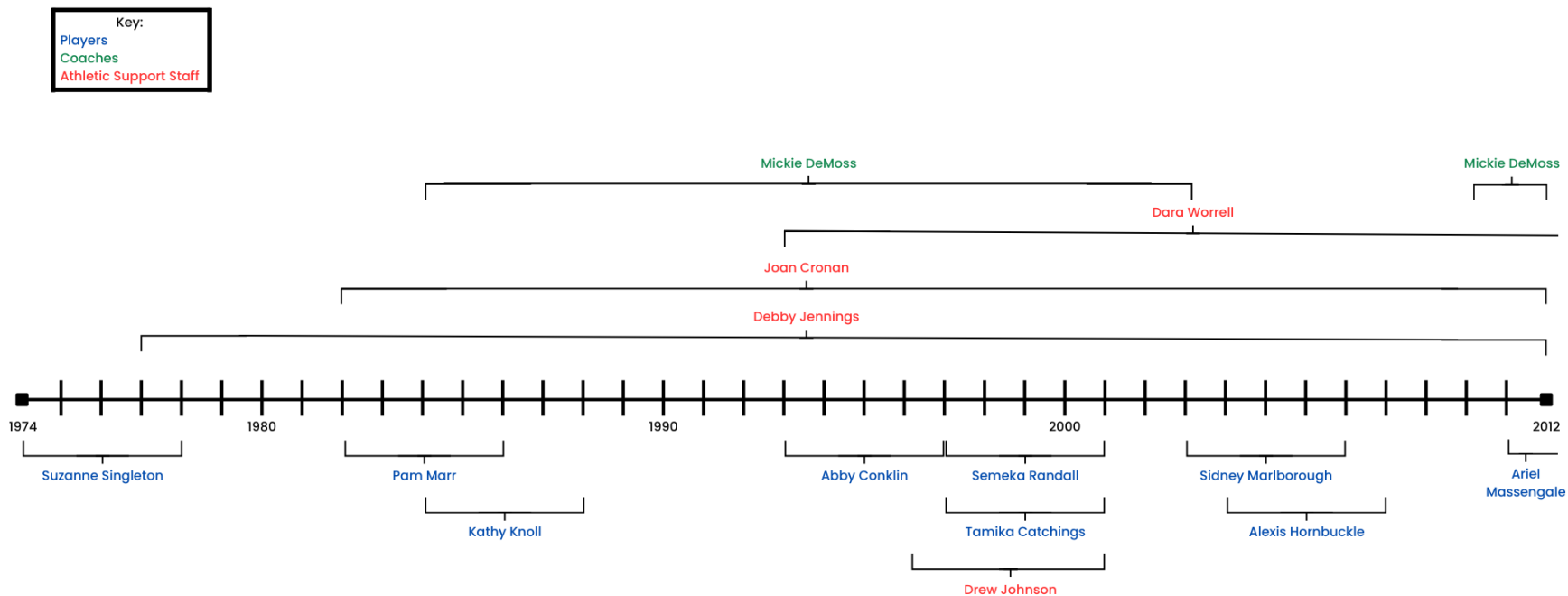
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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Participant Positionality Figure



## Appendix B: IRB Approvals



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

April 25, 2024

James H Bemiller  
UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Kinesiology, Recreation & Sports Studies

**Re: UTK IRB-24-08186-XM**

**Study Title:** Combination Leadership Styles: An Examination of Pat Summitt

Dear James H Bemiller:

The Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) reviewed your application for the above referenced project and determined that your application is eligible for **exempt** review under 45 CFR 46.101. Category 2: Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if the information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your application has been determined to comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval of your application (Version 1.2) as submitted, including:

**Documents Stamped:**

- Consent Form - Appendix B (English) - (Version 1.1)
- Recruitment Email - Appendix D - (Version 1.1)
- Interview Guide (Appendix A) - (Version 1.0)

that have been dated and stamped IRB approved. You are approved to enroll a maximum of 20 participants. Approval of this study will be valid from 04/25/2024.

Any revisions in the approved application, consent forms, instruments, recruitment materials, etc., must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement  
1534 White Avenue      Knoxville, TN 37996-1529  
865-974-7697    865-974-7400 fax    irb.utk.edu

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Approval of this study is valid for three years. If a Study Update Form is not submitted in iMedRIS and approved by the IRB prior to 04/24/2027, the study will be automatically closed by the IRB and no further study activity will be permitted until a Study Update Form is received. Please be sure to also submit a Study Closure Request (Form 7) when all research activity, including data analysis, has been completed.

Sincerely,



Lora Beebe, Ph.D., PMHNP-BC, FAAN  
Chair

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement  
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529  
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

June 05, 2024

James H Bemiller, J.D., MS Ed.  
UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Kinesiology, Recreation & Sports Studies

**Re: UTK IRB-24-08186-XM**

**Study Title:** Combination Leadership Styles: An Examination of Pat Summitt

Dear James H Bemiller:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for **revision** of your previously approved project, referenced above. The IRB determined that your revision application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b), and that your study remains eligible for **exempt** status. The following revisions to your project were approved as complying with proper consideration of the rights and welfare of human subjects:

- Application Version 1.3
  - Amendment expands the inclusion criteria to include basketball players from 1974 – 2012.
- No documents to stamp/void.

Any alterations (revisions) in the research project must be submitted to and approved by the UTK Institutional Review Board prior to implementation of these revisions. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Sincerely,

**Lora Beebe, Ph.D., PMHNP-BC, FAAN**  
Chair

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement  
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529  
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb@utk.edu

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**BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.**

Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System 

## Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Hello **(Participant Name)**,

My name is Madeline Reagan, and I am a Sport Management master's student at the University of Tennessee. I am conducting a study examining how Pat Summitt used transformational and servant leadership qualities to be successful as a coach. To do so, I hope to conduct interviews with people who had direct contact with Coach Summitt in varying capacities during her time as head coach.

I'm reaching out to you because I feel you could offer valuable insight into the leadership qualities Pat Summitt exemplified as a coach. If you are available, I would like to interview you regarding your experiences with Coach Summitt and, in your opinion, the leadership qualities she embodied to make her successful. The interview should not take longer than 1 hour.

This study requires your consent, and should you be willing to participate, I will send you the necessary informed consent forms further detailing the study via email. Thank you for your time, and I hope you will be able to assist me in this research as it will give insight into various perspectives of Coach Summitt's leadership styles which could directly benefit both current and future coaches. Should you have any further questions now or at any point during the study, the researcher, Madeline Reagan, can be reached by email at [mreagan7@vols.utk.edu](mailto:mreagan7@vols.utk.edu), or by phone at (865) 719-3277.

Sincerely,

Madeline

## **Appendix D: Initial Follow-Up Email**

Hello **(Participant Name)**,

I wanted to follow up on my previous email regarding participation in my research study. I am happy to answer any questions you might have regarding the interview process or the study itself.

Sincerely,

Madeline Reagan

## **Appendix E: Final Follow-Up Email**

Hello **(Participant Name)**,

I hope this email finds you well. I wanted to send a final follow up to see if you have received my previous emails regarding participation in my research study. I also wanted to mention that Debby Jennings (former Director of Media Relations) is helping me reach out to former LV players and staff. She will be able to confirm my study if you would like to reach out to her. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Madeline Reagan

## **Appendix F: Consent and Scheduling Email**

Hello **(Participant Name)**,

Thank you for your response and your willingness to participate in this research study. I will attach the informed consent document to this email for your review of which I will ask for verbal consent at the beginning of your interview. We are hoping to conduct interviews this summer and early fall, so please provide me with your availability beginning in June for a one-hour interview either in-person at the University of Tennessee, or online via Zoom (whichever you would prefer). If you have and are willing to provide the contact information (preferably email addresses) for any other former Lady Vol players, coaches, or support staff, please do so in your response to this email. Thank you again and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Madeline

## Appendix G: Consent Document

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### Consent for Research Participation

**Research Study Title:** Combining Leadership Styles: An Examination of Pat Summitt  
**Researchers:** Jim Bemiller, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Madeline Reagan, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

#### **Why am I being asked to be in this research study?**

We are asking you to be in this research study because you served in a capacity which worked directly with Pat Summitt as a player, staff member, or support staff. We believe you can offer valuable perspectives of Pat Summitt's success, your opinions of the specific leadership qualities Pat Summitt embodied, and how Pat Summitt demonstrated transformational and servant leadership.

#### **What is this research study about?**

The purpose of the research study is to examine the leadership styles Pat Summitt used in her tenure as head coach at the University of Tennessee through a combination approach.

#### **Who is conducting this research study?**

This study is being conducted by researchers at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

#### **How long will I be in the research study?**

If you agree to be in the study, your interview will last approximately 1 hour.

#### **What will happen if I say "Yes, I want to be in this research study"?**

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to take part in a one-on-one interview with the researcher that should take no longer than 1 hour to complete. You will be asked questions pertaining to your perceptions of Pat Summitt's success, your opinions of the specific leadership qualities Pat Summitt embodied, and how Pat Summitt demonstrated transformational and servant leadership.

#### **What will happen if I say "No, I want to be in this research study"?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. Your decision to participate/not participate in this research study will not affect your relationship with the University of Tennessee.

#### **What happens if I say "Yes" but change my mind later?**

If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

### **Are there any possible risks to me?**

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. For example, you may be asked questions involving personal opinions about or experiences had with Pat Summitt. If at any point you are uncomfortable with participating in this study, you can exit the study without penalty or consequence. You will have the option to review your interview transcript before the information is used in the study.

### **Are there any benefits to being in this research study?**

We do not expect you to benefit directly from being in this study. Your participation may help us to learn more about Pat Summitt's leadership styles that helped her become successful as a coach. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

### **Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?**

The data collected from your interview (audio recordings/transcripts and consent forms) will be securely stored on a password protected laptop with two-factor authentication. Only research personnel will have access to this information. The information collected from this study including your name, identifiable characteristics, and interview responses will be used in this study as well as publication.

### **What will happen to my information after this study is over?**

We will keep your information to use for future research or publication. You will have the option to review your interview transcript prior to use in the study. Your interview responses and any other identifiable data will be securely stored on the researcher's computer and only accessible to qualified research personnel.

### **Who can answer my questions about this research study?**

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem, contact the researchers, Jim Bemiller ([jimb@utk.edu](mailto:jimb@utk.edu), (865) 974-0359) or Madeline Reagan ([mreagan7@vols.utk.edu](mailto:mreagan7@vols.utk.edu), (865) 719-3277).

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Phone: 865-974-7697

Email: [utkirb@utk.edu](mailto:utkirb@utk.edu)

### **STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read this form, and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have

been told who to contact. I am agreeing to provide consent for use of my name and identifiable information on interview transcripts, in the research study, and in publication. I have received a copy of this document.

Received Verbal Consent

Yes	No
-----	----

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Interview Guide

### (Start Recording)

#### **Welcome:**

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is Madeline Reagan, and I am conducting a research study to understand the leadership qualities that Pat Summitt used as a coach. We are conducting interviews with people who had direct contact with Coach Summitt in varying capacities in order to gain a better picture of the leadership styles exemplified by Coach Summitt.

#### **Consent:**

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions regarding the consent document sent via email or the research study in general?

As discussed in the consent document, this study is not anonymous so your name, identifiable characteristics, and interview responses will be used in the study and publication. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, please let me know and we can skip it. If at any point during or after the interview you do not wish to continue, you have the right to do so, and your responses will not be used.

Do you agree with statements provided in the consent document?

Thank you for your response. Could you please say and spell your name to ensure the accuracy for the project?

Before proceeding with the interview questions, could you briefly describe what your relationship was with Coach Summitt?

We will now proceed with the interview questions.

#### **Questions:**

1. Can you describe Coach Summitt's leadership style?
2. What are some leadership qualities that Coach Summitt possessed that helped her teams be successful?
3. What factors impacted Coach Summitt's coaching credibility amongst her teams?
4. What factors impacted her coaching credibility in the community?
5. What kind of presence did Coach Summitt have when she walked into a room?
6. How did Coach Summitt impact the character of the team and players?
7. How did Coach Summitt deal with conflict? [i.e. in the media, with her players/other coaches]

8. What are your experiences with Coach Summitt as a disciplined coach?
9. How did Coach Summitt deal with success?
10. How did she deal with failure?
11. How did Coach Summitt handle the pressure of high expectations within the program and in the community?
12. What core values did Coach Summitt want her players to take away from their experiences with Lady Vol basketball?
13. Is there anything you would care to add about Coach Summitt's leadership style/coaching philosophy?
14. Is there anything that I did not ask you regarding your experiences with Coach Summitt that you would like to share?

That's all the questions I have. As I mentioned at the beginning, we are hoping to interview people from various points in Pat's career to gain a richer understanding of Coach Summitt's leadership styles as a whole. Are there any former players/staff from 1974-2012 that you think would be beneficial for me to speak with on this topic?

**Closing:**

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research study. This interview will be transcribed using the audio recording collected today. Once all transcriptions have been analyzed, we will use the results to present our findings. I will be happy to provide you with a link to the publication once completed.

This concludes the interview.

**(Stop Recording)**

## VITA

Born and raised in Tennessee, Madeline Grace Reagan is a native of Seymour, TN. Upon graduating from The King's Academy, which she attended for 13 years, Madeline attended the University of Tennessee where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology. During her time in the Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies (KRSS) department as an undergraduate, Madeline was exposed to the Sport Management program which sparked her desire to return as a graduate student. Following her undergraduate degree, Madeline returned to the University of Tennessee to pursue a Master of Science degree in Recreation and Sport Management. Her research interests include leadership studies with an emphasis on Coach Pat Summitt. Upon completion of her master's degree, Madeline hopes to begin her career working in collegiate athletic administration.