

Unlikely Friends Offer Lessons on Leadership

Two men discover a like-minded approach to teamwork and success.

By Jim Ver Steeg

At first glance, **Charles Norris '68** and Byron Scott don't seem to have much in common. Norris is the consummate businessman who turned McKesson Water into a billion-dollar enterprise and brought Freshpet from a start-up to a publicly traded company worth more than \$350 million. Scott is one of the original "Showtime" Lakers who won three NBA championships playing alongside team leaders Ervin (Magic) Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. But the two men, who started out as workout buddies, soon found they had a lot in common.

Norris and Scott came to realize that they share remarkably similar views on success and leadership. With the help of writer Jon Warech, the two are suiting up and sharing stories in their new book, *Slam-Dunk Success: Leading from Every Position on the Court* (Center Street). Written in a style that reads very much like a conversation between good friends, the book reflects two important elements of leadership: listening and the importance of developing human connections.

According to Norris, his connection with Scott began about nine years ago. "We met at a popular Los Angeles gym," he says. "There were always a lot of celebrities strutting around—but with Byron I noticed something different. He didn't wear any of the bling I saw on other famous people there, and I was amazed that he seemed to know everyone's name. He took time to talk to everyone, from the people picking up towels to the folks behind the counter making smoothies. It was really incredible."

Norris also recognized in his new friend an attention to others that the longtime businessman considers a cornerstone of his own career success. Over time, the two developed a purposeful connection, learning from each other and building a friendship that is based as much on mutual respect as it is good-natured ribbing. "He's my buddy," Scott says. "He's ridiculously competitive, but he's helped me tremendously and shown me how to grow as a leader. Whatever Charlie brings to the table, I always keep an open mind."

Perhaps at no time were Norris's insistence and Scott's open mind put more to the test than when Norris, a Boston native and a lifelong Celtics fan, convinced former



GYM BUDDIES: Byron Scott (left) and Charles Norris '68 first met at the gym, and now the former basketball star and the businessman are teaming up for a new book on leadership.

Takeaways

- Being the boss is a tricky business, but the secret to success lies in how you treat people.
- Success can lead to complacency. Challenging yourself to be greater will take you to a new level.
- Core values exist within a true leader, but the battle between confidence and overconfidence often lies in the respect you have for others.
- True success comes when you make the most of what you've got rather than trying to be something you're not.
- Everyone on the team plays a role in the organization's success. Putting the team first is the only way to be a champion.

Laker and notorious Celtics rival Scott to travel with him to his hometown. "Charlie changed my perspective on Boston," Scott says. "I wasn't a big fan while I was playing, but now that I've spent time there, I think it's a wonderful city with a lot of important history."

Norris says his friend's new appreciation for Boston is an example of another key

message. "If you take time to get to know someone and bother to ask questions that go beyond the superficial, it's amazing the things you can learn. Everyone has a story, and everyone should consider themselves leaders," he notes. "You don't need to be a professional athlete in order to experience real teamwork and the adrenaline rush that comes with beating the competition." 