

The Coach Who Never Yelled

When most people think of a leader, they think of someone who is loud. Someone in charge, someone who is energetic, who pushes everyone to move forward. This was the kind of coach I expected when I signed up for my high school's volleyball team. Instead, we got Coach Lena.

She was quiet, not in a cold or distant way, just calm. She did not shout during drills or clap dramatically from the sidelines. She gave short instructions and stood back. At first, this confused everyone. Some people even took it as a sign that she did not care. But she did care deeply.

But she showed it in a different way altogether. She noticed when we had a bad day and approached us without everyone watching. She chose questions like, 'What do you need right now?' rather than 'Why are you messing up?' She figured out how each of us responded best, some in space, some with encouragement, or silence. And slowly, our team changed.

We stopped waiting for someone to yell at us to focus. We started holding each other accountable because we wanted to, not because we were afraid. We paid attention to each other. We gave room for people to speak up who usually stayed quiet.

Watching Coach Lena lead made me rethink what leadership looks like. I used to think it was about being the loudest voice. Now I understand it can also be about listening first and making others feel steady, especially when things are hard.

That shift has affected more than just how I play. In group projects, I am no longer trying to take charge immediately. I ask more questions. I try to notice what people need. I care less about being the one in front and more about how everyone is doing around me.

Coach Lena never gave a big speech about leadership. But by the way she carried herself, calm, thoughtful, steady, she taught me something I will carry with me long after high school ends.

Not every influence comes in bold letters. Some come in a quiet voice, a steady presence, or the way someone leads without needing to be seen. I may never be the loudest person in the room. But because of her, I get that leadership doesn't need to be loud to be strong.