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# Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr's NBA life of lessons

**Kyle Mucerino** Special for The Republic

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Before his Golden State Warriors took the floor at Mortgage Matchup Center on Feb. 5 to take on the Suns, coach Steve Kerr talked about what it truly takes to win and what being a head coach is all about. It's about the "million little conversations" that define a life in basketball.

"When you're a coach, you have those conversations every day," Kerr said, reflecting on his pivot from Suns GM in 2010 to Warriors coach in 2014. "If you're GM, they're very infrequent. The relationships are really strong when you're the coach, and that's what kind of makes it fun."

For Kerr, returning to Phoenix is always a trip down memory lane. And it was during his tenure here when he said he realized his true calling wasn't in the front office but every day with his players.

"I was not a great GM," Kerr said. "I made some mistakes. I thought one of the best ways I was prepared for my Warriors coaching job was because of the three years that I had as GM thinking about organizational dynamics, thinking about all kinds of things. Once you go through these types of experiences you learn, you grow, and so absolutely."

The emphasis on relationship-building is exactly what Kerr said he sees in Suns first-year head coach Jordan Ott. While the league has taken notice of the Suns' tactical organization and defensive intensity, Kerr points to something deeper, the tangible work of a coach that rarely makes the highlight reel.

When asked about what a first-year coach actually does beyond preaching the usual clichés of “effort” and “intensity,” Kerr didn't hesitate.

“A million little conversations,” Kerr explained. “With everybody, each player, the training staff, you're just constantly communicating. Those conversations are sometimes more important than big talks in front of the whole team. You've got to connect with every individual, find out what's going on in their world.”

Kerr credits his own mentors, Phil Jackson and Gregg Popovich, for this blueprint. To Kerr, the identity Ott has established in Phoenix isn't just a style of play, it's the result of a coach who has found a way to make his players feel seen.

Kerr's belief in the power of communication isn't limited to the locker room. As one of the league's most outspoken voices on social issues, he knows how powerful his words can be with the platform he has. But it's not just Kerr. Other NBA athletes have also spoken out recently regarding the tragic events in Minneapolis, most notably San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama.

In an era where athletes are often told to “stick to sports,” Kerr's advice to his players, and any young player finding their footing in a loud world is grounded in authenticity and preparation.

“Just speak from the heart and know your material,” Kerr said. “If you are going to speak about a topic, make sure you know enough about it

to actually converse with it and not just spout out platitudes. You're going to get tough questions in response and you're going to have people who disagree with you.

“As long as it's done in a respectful way and you know what you're talking about you can do it confidently.”