

I've written extensively on Kerr before, from [his use of emotional intelligence](#) to his ability to [draw lessons from everyone on his team](#). Having followed Kerr since his playing days, I've seen him transition from a calm, collected shooter who made shots in the clutch to a master coach and manager who knows how to build a successful culture.

Kerr encountered a new challenge this year, when former MVP Kevin Durant signed with the Warriors as a free agent. Would Durant mess up the team's chemistry? Would Kerr be able to manage all that talent effectively?

Of course, it's still early in the season. But currently, the Warriors sit at the top of the NBA with 18 wins and only 3 losses. (The team has won 14 of the past 15 games.)

## What Kerr Did Last Night

While appreciating Thompson's achievement, Kerr taught a brilliant lesson in the way he managed last night's game, and it was evident in a single action:

He benched Klay Thompson for the entire fourth quarter.

Kerr preaches a team-first mentality for the Warriors, a philosophy that reduces emphasis on individual achievements in favor of the team. This ideology serves him well for a number of reasons, but none more than this: Kerr realizes that the team can achieve much more as a whole versus the sum of its parts.

That's a bold position, considering the team has two recent MVPs (who *didn't* score 60 points last night).

As a former player who knows the culture of the game through and through, Kerr's decision may not have been an easy one—but it was the right one. Because in pulling Thompson, Kerr demonstrated he truly does put the team above the individual.

No doubt, it's challenging to achieve buy-in from your team for this way of thinking. But effective leaders realize that sometimes you have to hold the top performers back. That to get the most out of everyone, you might need to take the stars out of the limelight.

Building a [culture of excellence](#) doesn't mean choosing some nice-sounding words to serve as your "company values."

It means saying what you mean. Practicing what you preach. And most of all, *living* those values.

Because if you set the example, others will follow.

Unfortunately, most leaders today don't get this. The Golden State Warriors should be thankful that Steve Kerr does.

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