



Introducing the Captain of your Special Teams...



Originally Created for:

EuroSTAR 2006 – Assembling the Dream Team
December 4, Manchester, UK

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The Analogy



Our sport is developing software.

Victory is delivering high quality, useful software before the competing team does.

Our coaches are managers and executives.

Our development team is the offense.

Our quality team is the defense.

And (hopefully) our fans are our users.





Why American Football?



The offense and the defense have separate and independent coaches.

Very few players participate on both offense and defense (offense and defense are mostly separate and independent).

It has a third group of players known as the “Special Teams”

Note Familiarity with the game itself is not necessary to understand this presentation ;)





The Coaching Staff



Program, Product and Project Managers.

“Hands-off” Development and Test Managers.

Key roles in the analogy:

- Team Building
- Motivation
- Training
- Planning
- Personnel issues





The Offense



Team Captain: Lead Developer or Architect.

Team Members: Developers and Administrators.

Key roles in the analogy:

- Designing and Writing Code
- Configuring and Maintaining Hardware
- Innovating
- Collaborating
- Problem Solving





The Defense



Team Captain: Test Lead or Architect.

Team Members: Testers and often Analysts.

Key roles in the analogy:

- Investigating Software
- Evaluating Business Needs
- Managing Risk
- Collaborating
- Problem Identification





The Flaw



Not everyone who participates in the process of developing software fits in this analogy, for example:

- Configuration Managers
- Network/IT Support
- Vendors and Partners
- Usability Experts
- Administrative Staff
- Security Specialists
- Performance Testers





An Improvement



American Football has a structure for making experts a collaborative and integral part of the team called “the Special Teams”.

Like the Offense and Defense, the Special Teams have a unique and critical role.

In football, after historically being ignored, many teams now see the Special Teams as the key to victory in close games.





A Challenge



Many software development teams view specialists as either 'B' players, or not as a part of the “real” team.

Some software development teams won't make use of specialists because they feel the rest of the team can accomplish special tasks.

Frequently, individual developers, testers and managers feel or act threatened by specialists and undermine their effectiveness.





What Makes Specialists Special?



Specialists have deep expertise in a relatively narrow area.

A specialist brings expertise to the team that it wouldn't otherwise have.

Specialists frequently also possess a broad base of skills spanning many of the those already represented on the team (i.e. specialists are also generalists).

Specialists have the benefit of unique points of view.





Changing the Perception



Specialists frequently have to overcome resistance and prove their worth to the team.

Some of the most effective ways to change the perception include:

- Be visible, helpful, friendly and non-confrontational.
- Attend and appropriately participate in meetings.
- Learn what the rest of the team members do... from them.
- Pitch in to assist (not lead) when you can.
- Report issues and challenges personally.
- Be generous and collaborative with information.





The Special Teams Captain



In Football, the Captain of the Special Teams tends to possess the following qualities:

- **Leadership**
- Able to motivate entire team
- **Independence**
- Can fill in whenever and wherever needed
- **An uncanny knack to make big plays when they are needed most**





Performance Tester Competencies



Senior Performance Testers are, by definition, generalists who possess the following skills:

- Functional and Para-Functional Testing
- Programming and Architecture
- Networking and Protocols
- Business Analysis
- Databases and Data Testing
- Planning and Management
- Systems and Hardware Administration
- Results Analysis and Reporting
- Usability and Security
- General Systems Thinking





A Natural Fit



The Performance Test Lead is the natural fit to fill the role of the Special Teams Captain in our analogy as an:

- Accomplished generalist who can contribute to virtually any aspect of the team.
- Experienced leader, focused on both user and business aspects of quality software.
- Enthusiast of “whole team collaboration”.
- Effective motivator of teams and individuals.
- Expert at consolidating information and using the skills and abilities of the entire team to accomplish tasks.





Analogy to Reality



This analogy holds several uncommon, yet effective implications for software development teams. Performance Testers (and other specialists):

- Are most effective when they are managed by neither the Development or Test Manager.
- Are most efficient when they are fully integrated with both the Development and Test Teams.
- Deliver the best results when encouraged to focus on the highest risk issue of the moment, rather than forced to follow a pre-determined, sequential plan.
- Can make the “big plays” when given the information, support and the trust to make decisions and collaborate on the spot.





Summary



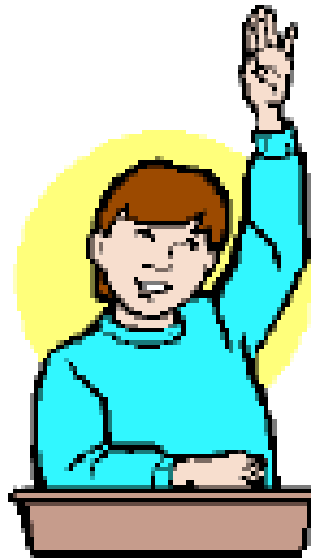
Adding the “Special Teams” concept to your software development team:

- Encourages collaboration.
- Enables senior generalists with a specialization to have a significant impact on the quality of the software.
- Keeps development and test managers from trying to micro-manage specialists.
- Helps to minimize “turf wars”.
- Demonstrates a trust in the specialists which, in turn, improves their effectiveness.





Questions





Want More Information?



<http://www.PerfTestPlus.com> (My site)

<http://www.PerformanceTester.com> (Various resources)

<http://www.TestingReflections.com> (QA blog collection)

<http://www.QAForums.com> (Huge QA forum)

<http://www.LoadTester.com> (Good articles and links)





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