



Organizational Behavior

The Brooklyn Bluebirds is a professional baseball team. Years ago, it was the best team in professional baseball. Then it hit a period of almost 10 years without a pennant. Recently, though, things have been looking up. A new owner, Trudy Mills, acquired the Bluebirds and proclaimed that she intended to make them world champions again.

Trudy quickly began to use her wealth to rebuild the team by acquiring big-name players in the free-agent draft. She also signed a manager well known for his winning ways, Marty Bellman. Marty was also known for his "fighting ways," on and off the field. However, Trudy was more concerned with his winning record.

The first year of Trudy's and Marty's tenure, the Bluebirds came in second in the division, showing it was a team to be reckoned with. Trudy acquired even more big-name players in the free-agent draft. Everyone was predicting a pennant for the Bluebirds in the coming year.

The year began with great expectations. During the first month, the Bluebirds looked unstoppable. At the end of the month, the team was in first place with a record of 20 wins and 7 losses. But then problems began. Rumors of conflict between players were reported in the sports columns. Russ Thompson, a five-year veteran and starting first baseman, publicly stated that he wanted to renegotiate his contract. (He was unhappy that Trudy had brought in so many players at much higher salaries than his.) He and his lawyer met with Trudy and the Bluebirds' general manager, but the meeting ended in disagreement. Both Russ and Trudy were angry.

The team's record began to deteriorate, and by the All-Star Game at midseason, the Bluebirds had lost as many games as they had won and were back in fourth place. Right after the All-Star break, Marty decided he had to make a move. He benched both Russ Thompson and Mickey Ponds, a well-known player with a multimillion-dollar contract. Marty called them to his office and

said, "You guys are not playing baseball up to your abilities. I think you've been loafing. When you decide to start playing baseball and quit counting your money or worrying how pretty you look on television, I'll put you back in the starting lineup. Until then, you can sit on the bench and cheer for your teammates."

Russ responded hotly, "The owner won't pay me what I'm worth, and now you won't play me. I don't want to play for the Bluebirds anymore. I'm going to ask to be traded." Mickey was no happier than Russ. "I'm going to Trudy. You can't bench me. You're the biggest jerk I've ever played for!"

At that, both players left his office, got dressed, and left the ballpark. Later, a few minutes before game time, Marty received a phone call in his office. It was Trudy, and she was upset. "Why did you bench Russ and Mickey? I hired you to manage the team, not create more problems. They're two of our best players, and the customers pay to see them play. I want you to apologize to them and put them back in the starting lineup."

Marty was not known for his diplomacy. "You hired me to manage, and that's just what I'm doing. Keep your nose out of my business. You may own the team, but I manage it. Russ and Mickey will stay benched until I say otherwise!" With that, Marty slammed the receiver down and headed for the field to get the game under way.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the types of conflict that seem to exist within the Bluebirds organization. What are the causes?
2. Is the situation characterized by functional or dysfunctional conflict, or both? Explain.
3. Assume that Trudy has hired you as a consultant to help her address the situation. Describe the steps that you would take.