

## Developing a Coaching Philosophy

### Introduction

So you have just completed your coaching course? Have you thought about the why's and how's of everything you will do as a coach? It is important as you get started in coaching to develop a philosophy. For that matter, even experienced coaches (the ones who have been coaching for a while - if you have read this far) may want to re-evaluate their philosophy.

Coaching is much more than just following a set of principles or having a well-established program . . . coaching is interaction in people's lives. It is the responsibility of the coach to help players lead to the right decisions in all areas of their lives. A coach can help players develop character, discipline, self-motivation and self-worth by developing appropriate relationships based on respect, caring and character. When character development is the foundation for your program, players will get the most out of their athletic experience. When that happens, you will also get the most out of your players.

A coach's personal philosophy can be a very practical and personal matter. It is reasonable to assume that the philosophy of a person's everyday life, your work, your family, thinking and actions would be applied when it comes to coaching. A basic question here would be, "Would you stick to principles of sportsmanship and / or fair play rather than win the game through dishonesty or unfairness? There may be a gap between what a coach thinks is the right thing to do in every day life and the action the coach takes or supports out on the field. In your effort to form or analyze your own philosophy of coaching, you initially must accept what the role of a coach involves. You should by now be aware that a coach can be many things to many different people, at various times. At times during your performances, you may need to be a mentor, a teacher, a role model, and sometimes even a friend.

### Positive approach

Any coaching philosophy should have "*positivity*" at the core. Throughout all of the roles a coach must be positive in attitude. A positive coach has the following traits:

- Puts players first: A positive coach wants to win but understands that he/she is an educator first. The development of his players is his/her top priority. He/She avoids thinking that the game is about himself/herself rather than his/her players. He/She must have an unwavering commitment to what is best for the players.
- Develops character and skills: A coach seizes upon victories and defeats as teaching moments to build on self-confidence and positive character traits such as discipline, self-motivation, self-worth, and an excitement for life. The desire to see the players learn and effectively improve their skill is the key to an effective coaching program.
- Sets realistic goals: He/She focuses on effort rather than outcome. He/She sets standards of continuous learning and improvement for the players. He/She encourages and inspires the players, regardless of their skill levels, to strive to get better without threatening them through fear, intimidation, or shame.
- Creates a partnership with the players: A positive coach involves the team members in determining team rules and recognizes that communication is crucial to building effective relationships with players. He/She develops appropriate relationships with the players based on respect, caring, and character.
- Treasures the game: A positive coach feels an obligation to the sport. He/She loves the sport and shares that love and enjoyment with the players. He/She respects opponents, recognizing that a worthy opponent will push his/her team to do its best. There is not a level, where as a coach, you cease teaching the game. As

long as you teach, teach in a positive manner, you will produce the best players and ultimately achieve the best results.

### **Characteristics of a philosophy**

Once you have considered and accepted the need for “positivity” then you should develop your personal coaching philosophy based on the following characteristics:

- **Educationally sound:** Your drills should serve a purpose and not be used merely for "killing" time. They should be structured to provide the necessary repetitions for each player and should be relative to the player's ability level. You are about developing players through graduated educational processes.
- **Appropriate to your players:** You may be aware of unlimited attack and defensive plays or moves however are they suited to your players? You should attempt to use systems that are developmentally appropriate for your players.
- **Your philosophy must be ethical:** In some sports coaches instruct players to fake an injury in order to take up time under certain circumstances. Following a changeover for example, do you allow your players to delay handing over possession? Of course this is unethical. To properly formulate your philosophy you must consider what you do in all aspects of coaching. Coaching from an ethical standpoint is extremely important in your philosophy. Remember, you are a role model for your players.
- **Can I improve what we are doing?** Apply this question to all aspects of your coaching philosophy and keep an open mind during training sessions in particular. Learning should be a life-long pursuit, and this should definitely apply to your coaching philosophy through self-development.
- **Help players understand why you do the things you do:** To instruct and to motivate your players properly, you need to justify what you do. Can you? The days of just simply saying, "Well, this is the way we are going to do it," go back to the technique approach. We have the responsibility to develop thinking players and most of what we do should be directed towards the game sense approach.
- **Your coaching philosophy should be compatible with your personality:** You have been working on your personality for many years and this aspect should (and will) be reflected in your coaching. Are you a risk taker? Are you patient or impatient? Are you deliberate or aggressive? You will be more successful if your philosophy and personality are in sync.
- **Sportsmanlike conduct should be a top priority in your philosophy:** There are situations in some games that could be considered un-sportsmanlike by your players, opponents, officials, or spectators. If you are seen to tolerate any of these actions you may need to consider your philosophy and make some changes.

### **Finally**

The most successful coaches are not necessarily the ones who win the most games. Coaches who have successful experiences focus on team cohesion. The desire to see the player learn and improve his skill is the key to an effective coaching program. Every coach should be committed to using all their knowledge, abilities and resources to make each player successful. The coach's focus should be to promote an atmosphere of teamwork, mutual respect and commitment to each other.