

Role of the coach

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1 Coaching roles and expectations

1.1 Roles

The coach's role is a difficult and complicated one. He/she is expected to be:

- a leader
- an instructor
- a counsellor
- an influential model for team members
- a decision maker
- a communicator
- a group coordinator, and so on

1.2 Interactions

In addition to the above expectations, the coach may also be required to deal with:

- athletes
- parents
- officials
- other coaches sports fans
- media
- business personnel
- community agencies

Certainly, the most important aspect of a coach's role involves his/her interaction with the players or athletes. In order to understand how to motivate others, we must understand what motivates us. Searching out and understanding our reasons for coaching will help to make us better coaches.

1.3 Why do I coach?

- need to dominate
- need to achieve
- need for rewards
- need to help others
- desire to see others succeed
- joy of seeing accomplishment in others

1.4 Why do athletes participate?

- friendship
- enjoyment

- pressure from parents and/or peers
- recognition
- joy of effort

It was found that coaches were second only to parents in terms of having a major influence upon an athlete's educational goals, occupational plans, and general value orientations. It is important for coaches to recognize their responsibility to contribute in some positive way to the growth of their players as individual persons.

2 Leadership

2.1 Definitions

One positive contribution may be made in terms of good leadership. Does your leadership style resemble any of the following descriptions?

- a) A leader is a person with power over others who uses this power for the purpose of influencing their behavior.
- b) The successful leader is one who is keenly aware of the social forces around him. He accurately understands himself, the individuals and group(s) he is dealing with, and the company and broader social environment in which he operates ... If direction is in order, he is able to direct; if considerable participative freedom is called for, he is able to provide such freedom.
- c) Leadership is a social interaction process. It is a set of relationships which allow a leader to affect the behavior of the individuals under him; his followers.
- d) Leadership is the behavior of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group.

2.2 Leadership behavior theories

There are several theories which attempt to explain leadership behavior:

- a) Trait Leadership: This theory suggests that certain characteristics of a leader can be identified as being important for success. Examples of these characteristics might be intelligence, dominance, insight, sociability, flexibility, etc.
- b) Behavior Leadership: This theory states that leaders can be identified by their behavior patterns rather than by any individual characteristics. There are three types of leaders commonly described in reference to behavior leadership theories:
 - i. Autocratic - an autocratic leader is usually very authoritative in his relations with others and uses absolute power in decision making.
 - ii. Supportive - a supportive leader feels that others' views are important and encourages their participation and involvement in decisions.
 - iii. Instrumental - an instrumental leader does things in an effort to achieve group goals. He/she is constantly searching for the most effective way to use available resources. He/she is a planner, a coordinator, an agent for action.
- c) Situational Leadership: This is the most practical and most commonly used

leadership theory in coaching situations. As the title suggests, this theory allows for changes in leadership depending on the timing and needs of the particular situation.

2.3 Evaluation

The key to leadership theories rests in the evaluation process. Regardless of which leadership theory you choose for your situation, you must be able to examine the success or failure of your choice. How do you rate in terms of the following levels of achievement?

- a) Attempted leadership: a coach attempts to change or influence a player's skill level
- b) Successful leadership: the player actually changes or is influenced as a result of the coach's efforts
- c) Effective leadership: the player's change in skill brings him satisfaction, rewards or goal attainment.

2.4 Informal leadership

Although leadership in most groups is focused on one individual, nonetheless, informal leaders often arise in groups, depending on particular situations. Informal leadership might arise in cooperation with the formal leader or in complete opposition to her/him. It might rotate to the person who has certain personality characteristics needed to perform in a given situation.

As a coach, your awareness of the potential of all group members is essential.

You should be aware of how much influence the captain of the team has over others or whether others are initiating the action, and influencing the team.

Who are they?

What are their motives?

If you can identify these individuals, it may be possible to work through them either directly or indirectly to achieve the goals and objectives of the program.

3 Expectations

People generally behave the way they are expected to. Low expectations produce low outcomes. Realistic expectations stand a better chance of producing realistic outcomes. Expectations well beyond reach have potential for frustration and a sense of failure. Realistic expectations can enhance self-confidence and increase the development of capabilities.

4 Overemphasis on winning

The effects of a program that is too win-oriented can create problems such as:

1. Restricted and inappropriate participation
2. Unrealistic and unreasonable expectations
3. Undesirable, violent, immoral and anti-social behavior.

5 Conclusions

You must understand your players to lead them, to motivate them, to work with them, to enhance the goals and objectives you have set. You must understand and analyze the Situation and task at hand to lead, motivate and enhance the goals and expectations. You must also, of course, know yourself and your own individual needs and goals.

A coach as a leader indeed has tremendous responsibility and potential for influencing the lives of others. You are the key to the participants' success for themselves as people.

“I shall not pass this way again. Any good thing that I can do, or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now! Let me not defer it or neglect it. For I shall not pass this way again.”