**Coaching Philosophy**

**(Competition)**

Grit: Means sticking with something for a long time. It’s approaching life like it’s a marathon-not a sprint.

* We as adults have removed/stolen much of the grit from youth’s lives.
* Sadly the single greatest predictor of success is GRIT!
* When it comes to academics,
* IQ is not the only predictor of success. Grit is a predictor of success and a combination of IQ and GRIT is necessary.
* When kids get to be 11 or 12 years old, they begin forming their own likes and dislikes.
* Most of them still want to do what makes mom and dad happy. So the danger is that there will be kids who really do enjoy their sport on a somewhat recreational level and will keep going out there to play on a travel team everyday because it’s what their parents want.
* Usually about 11-12 these kids will get sick of the sport and look for other ways to spend their recreational time.
* Children don’t mature at the same rate physically.
* If a player/athlete has a positive experience, he or she is likely to stick with the sport. If he or she is neglected or has an otherwise negative experience early on, the sport loses out on a potential superstar or, at the very least, a potential lifelong fan. Neither of these outcomes is good for the sport.
* Similarly, if a player is only moderately interested in the sport, it’s important that his or her interest be cultivated and maintained.
* There are a lot of activities competing for the attention of young people in this country.
* Initial experiences and impressions significantly influence how a child feels about something. If football practice is more exciting than baseball practice, I’m probably going to make sure I make it to football practice every time, I’ll go to baseball practice when I feel like it or if it fits into my schedule.
* If we treat all youth (beginning athletes) the same some will grow and stay, others may wilt and leave. Participation will decrease.
* Also, motor skill development is age specific. (Some differences but generally speaking age and maturation is developmental for some skills at specific ages.

**Effective Coach/Parent Relationships**

* Some parents want to be highly included, others wish to be minimally involved, and a number can be overly involved.
* Coaches can understand how difficult it can be to bridge the gap between the needs of the parents and the coaches need for a certain degree of autonomy.
* Rather than casting them as peripheral to the sport experience, club leaders and coaches should consider parent’s valuable resources who deserve to feel valued, respected, and central. Research has shown that parents along with coaches peers, and siblings, play an important role in athletes prolonged sport participation.
* A study of junior tennis players revealed that 59% of coaches believed that parents contributed to the success of their children.
* Too often there are negative perceptions about parent involvement. These negative assumptions must be suspended and replaced with one that assumes parents have the best intentions, not the worst.

EMBRACE COLLABORATION:

* The first step in embracing parent collaboration is to accept that parents have a right to understand and be informed about all aspects of their children’s experiences.
* For parents to fully understand the complex learning environment and specific cultural context that is unique to each team they need to be considered part of a communication triad that includes the child, the parent and the coach.
* In the process, both the coach and parent also learn about themselves, about each other, beliefs and expectations (sometimes similar and sometimes different) about the child’s sporting experience.
* No player arrives devoid of knowledge and skills, but each arrives with differing levels grounded in their own.
* Parents come with intimate knowledge of their children and parenting skills necessary to deal with them.
* Coaches arrive with varying degrees of sport-specific knowledge, skills, and pedagogies.
* Importantly, parents and coaches also come with parenting and coaching philosophies that underline their disposition and guide their decisions and behaviors. These philosophies are grounded in their beliefs about a myriad of aspects that affect the child’s experience as an athlete. These include beliefs about discipline, work ethic, winning, determinants of playing time, and even the role of the coach.

Developing a Shared Understanding:

* By recognizing and acknowledging the reciprocal and sometimes competing influences of coaches and parents, coaches can work toward developing a shared understanding with parents. This is different from working to change the beliefs of parents.
* Focus should not be on changing beliefs but rather on being explicit and straightforward about what parents might expect of the coach.A change in fundamental beliefs may happen, but ensuring appropriate interactions and behaviors is the ultimate goal.
* i.e. parental coaching from the sidelines is not only disruptive and inappropriate, but has also been shown to influence the dropout rates of adolescent swimmers sport participation.
* Developing a shared understanding in the coaching context is also different from negotiating and consensus building. Not everything is negotiable, and coach-parent consensus is not always required.
* Developing a shared understanding does not happen by accident or default. Rather it is a multidimensional process that begins with self-reflection and ends with a commitment to building relationships with parents that extend beyond the coaching context.
* To ensure positive and shared understandings with parents to create successful and enjoyable experiences for athletes:
  + Be transparent about one’s coaching philosophy
  + Engage in appropriate and ongoing communication
  + Collect data to guide decisions and assess athletes progress (and select athletes for the team)
  + Provide social opportunities outside of the coaching context.

Being Transparent about One’s Coaching Philosophy

* A coach who shares an articulate and reflective coaching philosophy with parents (both verbally and in writing) has taken an important first step in helping parents understand her/his behavior.
* The philosophy statement should articulate what the coach (and club) values and believes. It should provide a window into the experiences the coach is committed to providing the athletes during the season. The philosophy statement is also informed by the club philosophy.
* Where possible a coach’s personal philosophy should be congruent with that of the club in order to avoid surprises and conflicts later in the relationship.
* A discussion of coaching philosophy should be part of the hiring process, and both parties should fully understand any points of difference.
* The creation of a coaching philosophy is an important precursor to communicating openly and consistently with parents. A coaching philosophy is an honest reflection about what the coach and club value.
* It helps parents fully understand what they can expect from the coach so they are able to clearly see similarities and question important differences.
* The difference in philosophies may not be responsible and the child may be moved to a different level of competition or team, but ultimately that decision may be in the best interest of all concerned.
* Next, coaches should consider whether their coaching behavior actually align with their values. A coach who says he values hard work should actually reward it. He needs to ask himself how he currently encourages and rewards hard work in practices and events.
* By reflecting on their behaviors and how those behaviors align with their philosophies, coaches are also forced to answer the fundamental questions that link the two: How will I know hard work when I see it, and how will my athletes know I am valuing their hard work?
* Answering these questions is an important part of the reflection process and will assist with effective communication with the athletes and parents.
  + Rick Pitino story: (NCAA violations)
  + Sin of commission vs. sin of omission (Denial always feels irresponsible in leaders).
  + If you didn’t know you should have known. The coach should then lead their athletes toward mature and legal behavior.
* Coaches must pay attention to more than winning. Winning with student athletes means knowing them and guiding them outside the game.
* Good Leaders are able to say:
  + I am doing what is right
  + I am proactive about knowing my students activities
  + I am building relationships with my student athletes and staff
  + I am earning the right to be trusted with their intimate information
  + I am an educator and leader, equipping them to become healthy adults
* Trust only comes from consistency and relationship investment and involvement in their lives. It’s a product of both results and relationships. If one is missing, life can become a house of cards.

**Rules to Lead By….**

* All leadership operates on the basis of trust. People will follow you only as closely as they trust you.
* Your position gives you authority but your relationships give you influence.
* Team members do not have the innate need to be heard. This means leaders must listen.
* Trust and intimacy – when you go beyond expectations and cultivate a bond with your team members, you win.
* Often, a person’s greatest need is to be understood. When leaders take no time to understand student’s needs, we can sabotage everything we work for.

\*\* Coaches don’t delegate relationships. Don’t be satisfied with the excuse that you didn’t know about some wrongdoing. Let’s get this right and lead our young athletes into adulthood.

\*\* The value that athletes place on competitive success makes sport a domain for teaching integrity and character development, which can have long-lasting effects on personal growth. But these positive outcomes occur only when coaches make character development a high priority.

**Teaching Athletes How to Cooperate as Well as Compete**

* In our modern society, learning how to cooperate is just as important for our young athletes as learning how to compete.
* Competition and cooperation are often depicted as opposing processes, even though they are actually complimentary.
* Most of us can readily identify one type of association in that athletes in team sports must cooperate with each other in order for the team to perform cohesively. Such with-in team cooperation is essential to a team’s success.

\*\* Positive or negative sport experiences for athletes come from key coaching decisions and philosophies (their actions).

**Competition**

Competition is a situation where an individual’s or teams performance is being compared with a standard.

* Three types of standards:
  + 1) An athletes’ previous performance (self-evaluation).
  + 2) Performances of other competitors (social evaluation)
  + 3) Idealized standards i.e. sub 4 min. mile.
* Helping athletes to reduce anxiety and improve performance by focusing on self-evaluative goals rather than on winning.

**Critics** of competition point to problems such as violence between performers, coaches, officials, and spectators; development of serious participation-related physical disabilities; promotion of poor character development and distorted reasoning skills; lack of accountability in the classroom; and negative attitudes toward physical activity because of unpleasant sport experiences.

**Proponents** of competition view it as a constructive use of time and energy; a way to develop a sense of fair play, positive character traits, and skills that promote success in career and life; an important tool for enhancing quality of performance; and a powerful learning strategy that helps us to view problems as opportunities for achievement and fulfillment.

* Arguments on both sides of this debate are insightful and compelling, and it can be difficult to determine how beneficial competition really is.
* The impact of competition, both helpful and detrimental, results not from competition itself but from how it is organized and conducted.
* As a coach you play a major role in making sport a positive competitive experience **or not.**
* Competition can be fun, and making sport enjoyable will help your athletes stay in it longer and feel high intrinsic motivation to improve.
* Coaches who focus on their athletes physical, psychological, and social development, and make sport fun, normally promote high participation rates and minimize attrition.
* The very nature of competition can affect your coaching philosophy.
* Let’s look at what coaches must do to make competition a powerful motivational force, a valuable strategy for improving the quality of performance, a way to help athletes develop positive character traits, and a means of developing cooperative as well as competitive skills.

**Making Competition a Powerful Motivational Force**

* Your coaching philosophy needs to ensure that competition is used appropriately to enhance your athletes motivation.
* Competition provides the greatest motivation when the level of challenge is moderately different. That is, your athletes motivation will probably be highest when they tackle a challenge approximately equal to their current capabilities.
* As discrepancy between skill level and the competition challenge increases, motivation steadily declines. Athletes, normally have less motivation to compete against substantially superior or inferior opponents than against ones of similar ability.
* Therefore, coaches need a philosophy that encourages athletes to set process or performance goals – not focused solely on winning – with an optimal level of challenge so that they develop and maintain high motivation.

**Improving Quality of Performance Through Competition**

* Coaches must understand that competition doesn’t automatically enhance quality, and they must learn how to counter the potential of pressure-packed situations to reduce quality prompt performer, to adopt negative solutions for reaching a particular competitive standard.
* For example, some wrestlers become so concerned with out-performing their sparring partners that they continually rely on favorite moves instead of developing and refining new ones. Thus they perform well in practice but ultimately limit their skill development.
* Competition needs to be used judiciously, so that it stimulates improvement in the quality of performance without limiting skill development. Your competitive philosophy must emphasize development, so that athletes strive to enhance quality in appropriate ways.

**Competition as a Means to Develop Positive Character Traits**

* Your coaching philosophy must specify the importance you place on character development.
* Competition does not automatically generate positive character traits, and regrettably, competing in sport sometimes detracts from character development.
* We believe it is essential that your coaching philosophy specify the role you will play in your athlete’s character development.
* Research has confirmed that athletes are less likely to participate in delinquent behavior than are non-athletes.
* However, moral reasoning and good sporting behavior seem to decline as athletes progress to higher competitive levels, in part because of the increased emphasis on winning.
* The winning can be a double -edged sword in teaching character development. Some athletes may want to win so much that they lie, cheat, break team rules, and develop undesirable character traits that can enhance their ability to win in the short term.
* Character is a learned behavior, and a sense of fair play develops only if coaches plan to teach those lessons systematically, along with strategies for transferring the lessons and values to future life experiences.