



SO YOU WANT TO BE A COACH

IS COACHING FOR YOU?

The first thing to answer is: Why are you coaching or even considering coaching? Love the sport? Driven to be successful? Enjoy working with kids? Like teaching? Forced into it? In it for the money? For the fame? The basic reasons you are coaching are very important. They will be the base or support from which most of your important decisions in coaching are made.

Coaching takes many hours, not just during the practices or games, but also in preparation. Depending on your level, coaching can also entail helping players with scholarships or recruitment. Good coaches invest their whole lives, it seems, in coaching. It's very clear what it takes to be successful. A passion for the game and a passion for people are the two most important traits for a coach - not necessarily in that order. Those two things are all encompassing. The passion is the basis of good teaching, because if you have a passion you want to share it. A passion indicates you want to share with somebody whether it is love or talent. So, a coach with passion has a head start.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

As a coach, are you most interested in the momentary pleasure of a win, or the lifelong contribution to a person's quality of life? Longmeadow's George Mulry asserts that "when I teach volleyball, I am trying to teach our players about life."

Winning is a tangible thing you can feel, see, and taste. Your peers will laud you and your ego will soar. Winning the right way, without sacrificing your players on the altar of your ego, can be of enduring value. Can you both win *and* be a positive influence in your players' lives? Yes, if what is most important to you is players first and winning second. Your foremost focus needs to be on helping the players.

HOW IMPORTANT SHOULD YOUR PLAYERS BE?

Work for the well-being of your players and you will be the winner also. That is, if you coach with the right focus in mind, you win even if you don't win the game. Much more important than these other side benefits of coaching are the relationships you're able to generate and maintain. The longer you coach the more of these relationships you're able to have. Coaching puts you in a position where you can touch many lives and where you can be touched by many lives.

If you put your players first, you will produce. Players coached with their best interests at heart are happier, work harder, and are more loyal to their coaches and the program.

So, you need to look long and deep inside yourself and decide what is most important to you - wins and medals? Or a legacy of personal building blocks that you have ingrained in every player you will coach?



And it doesn't stop with just the players you coach because they will pass on the skills they have learned from you to everyone they come in contact with. It's your call. What will it be?

COACHING PHILOSOPHIES

There are many philosophies that will lead to success. In our search to excel we have found that if you want to be the best, learn from the best. Why try to reinvent the wheel? If you want to be successful, emulate the coaches who already have been successful.

Adhering to the following strategies will not only help you ---- but will also provide you with personal satisfaction.

- **BE A TEACHER FIRST** - Before you can coach, you must be a teacher. You must motivate, educate, discipline, and care for your athletes. The very best teachers teach best by example. Your players will learn far more from your actions than from your words. What do you do in a tight situation? How much composure do you exhibit? Can you keep your mind focused on the game? How important are your players compared to the win? Coaches don't start out their first year being great. Yes, they might win, but wins by themselves do not define a great coach. Great coaches are developed by their experiences and the knowledge they gain from them.
- **BE WILLING TO CHANGE** - Every year, learn something new and add it to your program. Go to clinics, read books, study videos, watch the best teams warm up and practice, and so on. If you're not rowing upstream you'll be drifting down. You want to challenge your players and yourself every year.
- **BE POSITIVE** - Catch your players doing it right and praise them. Players who are coached by a person who uses praise to motivate instead of fear are more willing to try new things and to go beyond their comfort zone with confidence. By being positive, you empower them to rely on themselves, to trust their own instincts and intelligence, and in reality, to grow.
- **ESTABLISH PRIORITIES** - Remember, it is just a game, and there *are* more important things in life. Keep things in perspective. We should encourage our players to work hard and give all they've got, in the right time and place, but after all is said and done, there is more to life than volleyball.
- **EMPHASIZE WORK ETHIC** - Work hard. Winning isn't everything, but making the effort is. When the players have invested lots of their time and effort in a sport, they hate to lose, which creates commitment. The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender. Frontier Regional and Longmeadow High School win, in the end, because our players feel they have worked too hard not to.



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- **TEACH DISCIPLINE** - You must be disciplined yourself before you can teach it. If you want your players to follow the rules, you must follow them. If you want them to be prepared, focused, on time, and so on, you must be first. Teaching discipline creates players who have self-discipline. Self-discipline is a matter of how hard you are willing to work when no one is watching and that is essential to success.
- **ENCOURAGING TEAMWORK** - When you come to practice, other interests and problems stay outside. You cease to exist as an individual; you become part of a team. It is amazing how much you can accomplish when no one cares who gets the credit. It is not necessary for everyone to particularly like each other to play well together, but they must respect each other and subordinate selfishness to the welfare of the team. The team must come first.
- **KNOW YOUR PLAYERS** - No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. It is essential that you get acquainted with your players and their likes and dislikes. Get to know some personal things about them and their families. There is so much more to your players than their athletic ability and it all contributes to who they are and how they tick. Leaders must know what motivates their people. Some will not do their best until you kick them in the butt; others need continual pats on the back.
- **COMMUNICATE** - Players need to know their roles on the team and what is expected of them. Too many times we coaches just assume players know what we are thinking. We need to be very clear with our players and verbally tell them what we are thinking, instead of assuming they know.
- **USE GAMELIKE SITUATIONS IN PRACTICE WHENEVER POSSIBLE** - Players learn less when they are physically and mentally fatigued. All drills and conditioning programs should be gamelike situations using the ball. Your players not only enjoy it more (and consequently put more effort into it with you hounding or driving them) but also improve their physical and mental skills and reflexes. Using consequences at the end of each game also teaches your players to hate to lose (a nice motivational technique).
- **HOW TO CRITICIZE PLAYERS AND TECHNIQUES** - Tell players what you want to see them doing, not what they are doing wrong. If you tell players what they are doing wrong (e.g., bent arms on pass), that is the last picture they have in their heads and it acts as a negative reinforcer. If you tell them what you want to see (e.g., keeping arms straight), that is the last thought and it becomes a positive reinforcer. In addition, experience shows there are inherent differences between coaching males and females. Females tend to be holistic. This means if you criticize a skill, female players might take it more personally than would male players. In other words, female players may feel like *they* are being criticized, not just the skill. Using a positive approach eliminates a lot of hurt feelings and thoughts of inadequacy.



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- **USE PLAYER-CENTERED DRILLS** - If YOU are doing a lot of serving and spiking at your players, you need to question how many ball touches you are depriving them of and how much better they could be with as much practice as you are getting. Also, if you are not directly involved with the drill, you can observe and give feedback to your players. Taking one player out of a drill (as it continues) and giving that player one or two pertinent cues is a great coaching strategy. A good place to observe and coach any six-on-six drill is from behind the middle of the endline. You can tell a lot about your defense and transition from there, and your players aren't always looking at you after a mistake or great play. They tend to focus more on each other.
- **ENCOURAGE AND ALLOW YOUR PLAYERS TO TAKE RISKS** - To risk nothing is to gain nothing. Your players are unable to reach a higher level of skill if you don't allow and encourage them to risk failure. You need to allow them to fail without censure and encourage them to try again if you want the maximum amount of growth to occur. You must give them the courage and your permission to leave their comfort zones and try something new. Everyone will fail - it is what one does after the failure that counts. As a coach, your belief, support, and encouragement in your athletes can give them confidence to expand their abilities. You don't need to punish failure; the gamelike situation does that. Coaches and players both need to understand that without failure there would be no success.