

A written Philosophy of Coaching - a transformational plan for excellence in coaching
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The values of the coaching profession must have at its core the goal of developing people of character who know how to win and lose in the context of relationships and become able to have a better life because they have participated in sport. Sport should be a transformative life experience for all participants powered by the coach's philosophy.

Coaching is about relationships and working cooperatively with athletes for success and personal growth in the safe crucible of sport competition.

Excellence is working to achieve to the best of one's ability and often surpassing initial expectations. "Excellence is not an act, it is a habit." - Aristotle

Coaching excellence is helping people achieve to their athletic capability through good training and personal interaction. Encouraging and demanding that the athlete do what they said they wanted to do when they don't want to do it.

Coaching success is making good with what you've got and producing growth in the lives of athletes that surpass the limited value of winning contests.

Adversity produces personal growth and development when it is followed by thoughtful introspection, mature input of mentors and an altered plan of action.

Athletics is a chosen form of adversity which can produce significant personal growth and development in individuals.

Transformative coaching establishes values and priorities which bring out the best in an athlete, both in sport performance and their qualities of individual character.

THE PURPOSE OF SPORT

WHAT IS THE NECESSITY FOR HAVING A COACHING PHILOSOPHY?

The pillars of coaching: TRUST – CONFIDENCE - CHARACTER - RESPECT

"What is as important as knowledge", said the mind? "Caring and seeing with the heart," said the soul. The parallel rendition for sport might be: "What is as important as winning?" said the coach. "Whether or not I mattered to you", said the athlete.

This is the basis for a good coaching philosophy.

WHAT IS THE NECESSITY OF A WRITTEN COACHING PHILOSOPHY?

Russell C. Smelley Westmont College Santa Barbara, CA December 10, 2015

The coaching philosophy needs to be a written document because it becomes a standard by which a coach is able to evaluate his/her performance. It states what a coach believes is important in how he/she will approach his/her craft. A coach commits to a written coaching philosophy to provide guidelines for consistency in the coach's approach to athletes and sport in general. It provides a framework by which an athlete can understand what to expect from the coach. It becomes a contract between the coach and athlete where trust can be developed and the coach is accountable to the standards that have been set out in writing.

A written coaching philosophy is essential for maintaining the focus on what is foundational to coaching, especially when the pressures of the season's competition tends to narrow the coach's viewpoint and his/her emotional energy is aimed toward success in the sport. The authority that comes with being a coach confers a power that can be used well for the benefit of athletes or it can be wielded like a bludgeon for a coaching tyrant bent on his or her own desires and needs. The legitimacy and power of coaching is established by institutional authority and coaching expertise. Expertise provides a deeper level of coaching authority which enhances the athlete's performance. Coaching also has the component of moral authority and this is essential for the other two forms of authority to be the most effective.

Coaches who are willing to commit to a written philosophy thereby establish a standard by which they can evaluate their work and create a path for professional improvement. They then also establish their own professional bearing for how they interact with other coaches, officials, administrators, parents and the athletes involved in their sport. A written philosophy becomes a reflection of who a coach is becoming and therein provides a sense of perspective that is not rooted in the trappings of winning and losing or the approval of others. To borrow an anonymous quote, "Honor is a gift you give to yourself." A sense of personal honor, integrity and dignity is what a burnished and tested philosophy can provide for a coach.

A basic philosophical premise which I believe and promote is that sport is a safe and valuable crucible for distilling life lessons of adversity. This means that sport is a chosen form of adversity and not an end unto itself. Striving to win and learning from losing are the basics of adversity in sport but are not the bottom line. Sport is most of all about relationships. Sport participation should be a transformational experience in the life of any athlete who participates because of the coach and athlete relationship. The athlete's transformation should be exhibited in personal confidence and a greater sense self-worth that is gained from the athlete's participation in sport and the relationship with a coach.

Transformational coaching is based upon trust. Trust between coach and athlete is developed by the coach's consistent behavior by being a well-adjusted adult. As the coach and athlete develop a mutual trust, the athlete can begin to believe that the coach has his/her best interests at heart. This is not simply a mutual bargain for athletic success between two athletic conspirators wanting to win a championship. This is a genuine bond of relationship in which the athlete knows that the coach cares about his/her well-being more than athletic success.

READING LIST for developing a Coaching Philosophy
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I would suggest the following books as foundational reading toward developing a written personal coaching philosophy. There are many such books to choose from, so look for those that expand your perspective on life and which balance your athletic perspective. Choose to develop your character.

Start with Why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action by Simon Sinek;
Penguin Group, 2009

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D, Ballantine Books, 2008

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain,
Broadway Paperbacks, 2012

Turn the Ship Around by L. David Marquet, Captain, U.S, Navy (Retired), Penguin Books Ltd, 2012

Principled-Centered Leadership by Stephen R. Covey. Simon & Schuster, 1992

(integrity) by Stephen L. Carter, BasicBooks, 1996

InSideOut Coaching: How Sports Can Transform Lives by Joe Ehrmann, Simon & Schuster,
2011

A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix by Edwin H. Friedman, Seabury
Books, 1999, 2007

Starting at the Finish Line: Coach Al Buehler's Timeless Wisdom by Amy E. Unell,
Penguin Books Ltd., 2012

The Road Less Travelled by M. Scott Peck, Simon and Schuster, 1988, 2003

integrity: the courage to meet the demands of reality by Dr. Henry Cloud, Harper Collins
Books, 2006

The Shaping of an Effective Leader: Eight Formative Principles of Leadership
by Dr. Gayle D. Beebe, Intervarsity Press, 2011

Winning Attitudes: Sport's messages for achievement in life edited by Hardie Grant Books
12 Claremont Street South Yarra, Australia 3141 in association with the Australian Olympic
Committee, 2000 (introduction by Herb Elliott)

Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ by Dallas Willard, NavPress, 2002

Coach Wooden: The 7 Principles that Shaped His Life and Will Change Yours by Pat Williams with
Jim Denney, Revell Publishing 2012