

## The Role of the Coach

### INTRODUCTION

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the coach as a trainer or instructor of sport, however, as anyone who has been involved in coaching knows, the coach's role extends far beyond that. Teaching players the skills, tactics and rules of the game, while important, is only one of the coach's many roles.

As a coach, you must always remember that while the physical skills you teach your players may only be used for a short time, the attitudes and values they develop towards themselves and others will stay with them forever.

Think back to coaches you may have had when as a player. What sort of impact did they have on your life? There may be one coach in particular who stands out more than the others in your memory.

What was it about that coach that sets them apart from the others?

After reading, this module you will have gained knowledge to be able to:

- ***UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE AS A COACH***
- ***RECOGNISE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF VARIOUS COACHING STYLES***
- ***DEVELOP YOUR OWN COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND UNDERSTAND HOW IT IMPACTS ON YOUR PLAYERS***
- ***UNDERSTAND THE FAIR PLAY PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING***
- ***DEVELOP POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PLAYERS' PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS***
- ***DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO MANAGE PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR***

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## **UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE AS A COACH**

Coaching is not just about improving the physical performance of a player. In taking on the role of the coach, you must accept that the development of the player as a 'whole' person is as important as the player's success in sport. As a coach, you can have a considerable impact on the development and lives of your players.

The role of the coach is wide ranging and varied. At times, you may be asked to be a person of many parts!

- Teacher...** passing on knowledge, teaching new skills.
- Trainer...** improving players' fitness.
- Motivator...** providing positive reinforcement.
- Manager...** organising practice, planning competitions.
- Scientist...** applying sport science to the training programme.
- Counselor...** providing advice, settling disputes.
- Fund Raiser...** finding sponsorship, running raffles.
- Friend...** providing empathy and support.
- Leader...** providing a philosophy and vision for your players.
- Disciplinarian...** being firm but fair.

## **QUESTIONS & EXERCISES**

*What do you see as your most important roles as a coach?*

*Are there any roles you are not prepared to fill?*



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## **RECOGNISE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF VARIOUS COACHING STYLES**

Following are some different coaching styles that you may identify with in New Zealand. These coaches have a range of qualities, some of which you will recognise in your own coaching. While there are disadvantages and advantages to any coaching style, all these coaches can be successful.

Most coaches, do not fit neatly within any of the described styles, they have a mixture of qualities from all of the styles.

### **“ENTHUSIASTIC BUT LACKS EXPERIENCE” COACH**

- Loves the sport and sees coaching as a way to be involved.
- Enthusiasm is contagious.
- Can get over-excited at competitions.
- Transmits anxiety by being too tense.
- Has difficulty understanding the casual player who does not share their enthusiasm.
- Lacks knowledge on analysing and coaching skills.
- Tends to speak quickly and loudly when giving instructions.
- Practices have a tendency to revolve around a ‘game’.

### **“NICE GUY” COACH**

- Is always positive and rarely gets upset.
- Is interested in being a ‘buddy’ to the players.
- Develops a good rapport with the players on an individual basis.
- May concentrate too much on social aspects during practice.
- Tends to be ‘soft’ when at times more discipline is required.
- Can sometimes be dominated by players.

### **“SINGLEMINDED OR FANATICAL” COACH**

- Lives and breathes the sport.
- Has good sport-specific knowledge but is not necessarily an effective coach.
- May demand long and arduous practices.
- Good team spirit when winning, frustration when losing.
- May take an authoritarian approach in disciplining players.
- May spend many hours during the week on planning and administration.
- Can handle being ‘hated’ in order to have respect or to win.

### **“EASY GOING” COACH**

- Has a relaxed approach, giving the impression of not being serious.
- Is often disorganised at practice and competition.
- Does not appear concerned if the team wins or loses.
- Has little variation of activities at practice.
- Coaching instructions are not specific, e.g. ‘play harder.’

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## “BUSINESS” COACH

- Pays great attention to detail – is always well organised at practice.
- Often carries a clipboard and takes notes at competitions.
- Has high expectations of player effort.
- Tends to put more time and effort into managing rather than coaching.
- May not be very people oriented.

## “THE EFFECTIVE AND RESPECTED COACH”

The effective and respected coach will share some characteristics with all of the above coaching styles. However, their knowledge and approach to coaching allow them to adapt the skills to meet the needs of the players. The effective and respected coach:

- continually seeks coaching knowledge from a variety of sources
- is very organised and has planned ahead.
- has learnt from previous experiences of coaching (and perhaps playing) the sport
- understands and appreciates the strengths and weaknesses of individual players
- is a good communicator
- is concerned about winning but focuses more on the performance of the players.

Think of the coaches you had as a player and what qualities you liked or disliked about them.

Coaches should coach at a level, which suits their knowledge and communication style. Be yourself – a coach who tries to adopt or imitate a coaching style or characteristic that does not suit them will come across as false to their players. Above all, a coach should communicate in a natural manner and remain positive and encouraging at all times.

## QUESTIONS & EXERCISES

*What is your coaching style?*

*Is it an appropriate style to get the best out of the players you coach?*

*Make a list of what you consider to be your positive coaching characteristics and a list of the characteristics you would like to change or improve upon.*

**Chose a coach from amongst the group whom you admire and respect and ask them to be your mentor to help you develop your own coaching style and knowledge.**

Remember the person does not have to have better playing skills than you – perhaps it is a person who you believe has a nice communication style and nature with players, or someone who seems to be better prepared than you; how do they manage to always have their finger on the pulse?

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## APPROACHES TO COACHING

Your style of coaching will, to some extent, determine your approach to coaching. There are many different approaches to coaching that cover a wide range – from pure task to a totally social orientation:

### The Task-Oriented Approach

*The task-oriented coach is one who strives to achieve goals.*

*They learn as much about the sport as possible and focus on teaching skills effectively.*

*The task coach aims to play the sport well, overcoming barriers to success.*

### The Social-Oriented Approach

*The social-oriented coach is one who emphasises the player's need for affiliation. They focus on group belonging, forming friendships, having fun, and working cooperatively.*

There are few coaches who are entirely task, or totally socially oriented. The approach you take as a coach will change with time and experience and will largely depend on the players being coached. It should be consistent with the players' ages and abilities, with the goals of the team and with your own coaching philosophy.

As a coach, you should strive to satisfy both the task and the social needs of your players, as both of these needs exist (to varying degrees) at all levels of sport. Therefore, by taking a player-centered approach the coach can deal with these needs as they arise.

#### **TDC TIP**

#### **A GOOD 'SOCIAL' AND TEAM WARM UP EXERCISE:**

FORM TWO LANES OF PLAYERS FACING OPPOSITE EACH OTHER. PLACE A ROW OF BOULES (SAME NUMBER AS PLAYERS IN THE LANE) IN A LINE DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE TWO LANES OF PLAYERS.

|        |   |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| PLAYER | A | B | C | D | E | F | AND SO ON |
| BOULE  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| PLAYER | A | B | C | D | E | F | AND SO ON |

AFTER THE WHISTLE (OR SHOUT), THE FIRST PLAYER IN EACH LANE SHOOTS THE FIRST BOULE. THE PLAYER WHO SUCCESSFULLY HITS THE BOULE MOVES ON TO THE NEXT BOULE UNTIL ALL THE BOULES ARE SHOT.

IF A PLAYER MISSES, HE/SHE MOVES TO THE BACK OF THEIR LANE AND THE NEXT PLAYER HAS A SHOT.

THE AIM IS FOR ALL THE BOULE TO BE SHOT AND THE TEAM WHO MANAGES TO HIT THE LAST BOULE WINS.

**THIS IS A FAST TEMPO GAME WITH HIGH EXCITEMENT AND TEAM FUN AND SUPPORT.**

### Develop your own coaching philosophy and understand how it impacts on your players

Every coach should have a coaching philosophy.

A philosophy is a set of values or beliefs that govern your actions help you make decisions and set your priorities. A philosophy is based on ideas formed from your personal experiences, opinions gained from the knowledge you acquire, and your hopes and aspirations for the future.

Your coaching philosophy will reflect what you believe is your role as a coach. In developing an effective coaching philosophy, you should consider the following:

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## WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR COACHING?

Following are some reasons often given by coaches for why they coach:

- To put something back into sport
- To help others achieve
- Love the sport and want to stay involved
- For the recognition
- Enjoy coaching
- For the sense of control
- To do something worthwhile with their spare time
- To win
- To learn more about the coaching process



## WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

What are your future plans? How much time can you commit to coaching?

Do you want to work with children or adults, social or serious players?

Is your goal to coach a national team one day?

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## WHY DO PLAYERS PARTICIPATE IN SPORT?

Players participate in sport for many different reasons. It is important as a coach to consider why your players are participating, and what they want to achieve over the season and beyond.

Addressing this issue at the start of the season reduces the chance of future misunderstandings, and the players are more likely to stay involved in the sport.

Following are some reasons why players may participate in sport:

- Achievement of goals
- Health and fitness
- Having fun
- Friendship and social activities
- Sense of belonging
- Sense of direction and control
- The thrill
- Fame and money

You may also want to consider the expectations of other stakeholders that also have an important role in sport. For example:

### Parents and Caregivers

- Fun
- Safety
- Low cost
- Family involvement
- Success
- The all-round development of their child

### Sports Administrators

- Increased membership
- Success
- Good club spirit
- Revenue
- Satisfaction from seeing players achieve

### Umpires and Officials

- Adherence to fair play
- Competitive spirit

## QUESTIONS & EXERCISES

*Develop your own coaching philosophy incorporating the considerations above.*

## **UNDERSTAND THE FAIR PLAY PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING**

SPARC defines fair play as abiding by the principles of 'integrity, fairness and respect.' It is by these principles that the spirit of competition thrives. This spirit requires:

- 1. HONESTY IN THE CONTEST**
- 2. POLITENESS BETWEEN ALL PARTICIPANTS**
- 3. AN ACCEPTANCE IN GOOD SPIRIT OF THE RESULTS**

A fair play coach believes and teaches that sport is an activity, which develops character and shapes attitudes. As a coach, your fair play aims should be to:

- help your players develop a positive self-image
- promote respect for the rules, officials and their decisions
- promote respect for opponents, for without them there can be no competition
- encourage a constructive attitude toward competition
- develop a sense of dignity under all circumstances
- provide an equal opportunity for all to learn skills
- encourage these individuals to continue their participation in sport.

Coaches have an important influence on the lives of their players, especially young players. Your role is to teach not only the skills of the game, but also how to win with dignity and lose with grace. Remember, sport is meant to be fun.

## **QUESTIONS & EXERCISES**

*Are you teaching your players the valued life skills of integrity, honesty and respect?*

*These qualities will help them become better people regardless of whether they become winning players.*

## **ENHANCING THE PLAYER'S POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE**

As part of the fair play philosophy, it is the coach's role to promote and enhance a positive self-image amongst players. Self-image refers to how people see themselves. This is influenced by the individual's environment, their life experiences and by the reactions of others, for example peers, parents and, in this instance, the coach.

Therefore, an important role of the coach is to be aware of their players' self-images, to encourage them, and to ensure they feel good about themselves. To achieve this coaches need to be positive with their players and communicate this effectively (using verbal and non-verbal language). When making positive comments or gestures, ensure you are sincere and realistic – the players will recognise and appreciate it more. Be consistent in your expectations, i.e. all the rules apply equally to all the players.

Remember also, that children's self-esteem must stand aside from their sporting performances. Whether they play well or badly, win or lose, they are still unique, worthy people and the coach must always make this clear.

Above all, accept that your players are individuals, be aware of their feelings and take an interest in their lives off the sports field. Feeling accepted should never depend only on their sports performances.

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## **QUESTIONS & EXERCISES**

*Make a list of things you could do or say to make your players feel accepted, important, happy and successful – try them out at your next training session or competition and see what a difference it makes!*

## **DEVELOP POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PLAYERS' PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

It is important to establish an open communication line with the parents and caregivers of your players' right from the beginning of the season to avoid any conflicts or confusion that may arise later on. Parents and caregivers are very influential and can provide a source of either support or stress, particularly for younger players. Therefore, the coach should strive to develop and maintain positive and meaningful relationships with them.

It is a good idea to write a letter to the parents/caregivers to let them know who you are and your plans and expectations for the season. Further to this, you could hold a meeting. Encourage all the parents/caregivers to come along, not only to meet you the coach, but also as an opportunity to meet and socialise with each other. You might want to invite them to attend and participate in a training session first, or make it a real social occasion with a barbecue!

## **AGENDA FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS' MEETING**

Introduce yourself, talk about your background and your coaching philosophy. Talk a little bit about the sport – the children could provide a demonstration.

Stress the importance of children having fun, learning new skills and making new friends, Winning is not high on the list of priorities.

Discuss the role of parents and caregivers on your team. Stress the importance of supporting and encouraging their children. Also discuss your expectations of their behaviour at competitions, e.g. that you do not want them to yell instructions to the players from the sidelines.

Explain the logistics of the sport – what equipment children will need; training times and venues; competition dates; what transport is required; the costs involved; and what assistance is required and available from the parents and caregivers. End with a question and answer session; this encourages an open line of communication.

## **QUESTIONS & EXERCISES**

*Draft an open letter to parents and caregivers of the players you coach. The letter should:*

- *outline the philosophy and objective of the programme*
- *inform them of what is expected of their child and of them*
- *invite them to share any concerns they have with you*
- *establish clear lines of communication*
- *obtain support for the season's activities.*

## **DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO MANAGE PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOUR**

One of the more challenging roles of the coach is that of managing people. Good discipline is essential to running an effective coaching session and just as players have certain expectations of how a coach should behave; coaches also expect certain attitudes and behaviour from their players.

The expectations you have of your players in terms of attitudes and behaviour may differ from those of other coaches, as they are a reflection of your own coaching philosophy and style of coaching.

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To be fair to the players it is important that these expectations are clearly communicated at the beginning of the season and it is important that each player understands and accepts the team's rules and goals. Players tend to drop out when the sport does not match their reasons for participating. For example, the coach of a social grade netball team would have different expectations from a coach of the premier grade, and using the same example, the netballer with high performance aspirations would very quickly become frustrated with the activities and performance of the social team.

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PLAYERS

Establish a code of conduct for players at the start of the season outlining what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour. It is important that each player understands and accepts the code of conduct, so include your players in the decision-making. Explain the reasons for the code of conduct and agree on the penalties for breaking the code.

#### A Code of Conduct May Include the Following:

- The rules of the training session or competition
- Attendance and attitude at training and competitions
- Attitude and behaviour towards others, e.g. officials, umpires, spectators, parents, other players
- Disciplinary action
- The fair play philosophy
- Recreational and/or performance enhancing drugs

### QUESTIONS & EXERCISES

*Develop your own 'Code of Conduct for Players' that outlines the attitudes and behaviours you would expect from the players you coach. Design a handout to give to your players at the beginning of the season and/or a poster to post on the wall at training.*

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## MANAGING PLAYER BEHAVIOUR

By developing their management skills coaches should learn how to ensure the appropriate behaviour of players so that an optimal learning environment exists at practice. If coaches do not establish and reinforce appropriate behaviour parameters at the start, they may be reduced to disciplining techniques that are unpleasant and create a negative environment.

Following are some strategies/techniques for developing good team discipline and dealing with inappropriate behaviour:

### Positive Preventative Management

Often the way the coach has organised the session can provide opportunities for disruptive behaviour, for example having too much time between activities or using the same boring drills every session that don't challenge the players. A coach can reduce or eliminate disruptive behaviour by being well organised in advance, keeping the talk to a minimum, and using a variety of activities.

Taking a positive management approach means adopting proactive rather than reactive strategies. The coach should try to ignore inappropriate or attention-seeking behaviour (unless safety is at risk) and reinforce with praise any positive appropriate behaviour. Try to catch players being 'good' rather than always catching them being 'bad'.

### Reasoning

Players know that there are certain behaviours and attitudes that are considered acceptable (should be outlined at the start of the season). Letting players know that their unacceptable behaviour has not gone unnoticed is usually enough to get them to modify their behaviour. For example – “Jane, what do you think you're doing?”... “Do you think that's a good idea?”... “Would you rather sit on the bench than play this game?” If they continue to misbehave they should, ultimately, be removed from the activity.

### Verbal Warning

When necessary, verbal warnings should be issued in a clear, no-nonsense manner, well timed and well targeted but not demeaning or harsh. If the players are well informed of the consequences should they choose to ignore the warning, they will be more inclined to alter their behaviour. If not, they risk the removal of privileges.

### Removal of Privileges

One effective method of dealing with a player who refuses to modify inappropriate behaviour (after receiving a verbal warning) is to remove certain privileges. This may include simply removing the player from the parts of training that they like for a short period, removing the player from training and the next competition, or, in the worst case scenario, banning the player from the club altogether for a season or more. Coaches need to set these consequences in place and be consistent in enforcing them.

### Remember...

- The behaviour parameters should be clearly outlined to all the players at the start of the season (Players' Code of Conduct).
- Coaches must be consistent both in their expectations and in enforcing the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.
- Any attempt to modify behaviour is more effective if combined with a positive management system.
- Once the player has modified their behaviour, accordingly the coach should look for an early opportunity to praise any positive behaviour from that player.

## QUESTIONS & EXERCISES

*Read the following scenarios and consider how you as a coach could deal with them in a positive manner:*

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*You have a great group of children (boys and girls) on your petanque team. However, one player in the team tends to be a show-off. The player acts up just enough to get some sniggers and glances from the rest of the group. The coach tries to stop this behaviour by reprimanding the player, with no effect. What management strategies could the coach use to change this player's inappropriate behaviour?*

*You have a team of 20 boys and girls all under 10 years. Two of the girls in the team are limited in their skills, but are keen to participate. The boys, however, are consistently making digs at their lack of skill. Consequently, these girls are starting to feel left out and are beginning to acquire low self-esteem. What would you as a coach do to a) prevent this from happening and b) stop it happening once it has occurred?*

*You have 25 boys (under 14 years) in your petanque squad. Five of these boys are unruly and are constantly testing you as a coach. They purposely do the opposite of what they have been told to do. You have become totally frustrated as they will not listen and consistently disrupt training. What could you do to alleviate this problem?*

### **FURTHER READING**

Kidman, L. and Hanrahan, S., *The Coaching Process: a Practical Guide to Improving Your Effectiveness*. The Dunmore Press Ltd. Palmerston North, 1997.