

Coaching Philosophy

As a new and inexperienced coach, you have much to prepare for in your first season. Of course, you are excited and eager about your first head coaching position. You most likely have planned what you are going to do and believe that you are ready. But are you truly ready? Have you thought about the why's and how's of everything you will do as a coach? It is important as you get started in coaching to develop a philosophy. For that matter, even experienced coaches may want to re-evaluate their philosophy.

Many coaches do not believe in the value of developing a coaching philosophy. They do not realize how a philosophy can have an impact on their daily coaching procedures and strategies. However, a coach's philosophy is actually a very practical matter. In fact, every coach, whether he's aware of it or not, follows certain principles based on his/or her own playing experience. Most of our basic philosophy comes from former high school and college coaches. This is a natural start because it is the approach with which we are the most familiar and comfortable.

It is also reasonable to assume that the philosophy of a person's everyday life, thinking, and actions would be applied when it comes to coaching. For example, a salesman discovers that one of his clients is dishonest. He decides to sell to a competitor despite the fact that he will make less profit selling the same product. This may not sound like good business practice, yet many people are willing to adhere to their principle even if it means making less money. How many coaches would stick to principles of sportsmanship or fair play rather than win the game? There may be a gap between what a coach thinks is the right thing to do in every day life and the action he takes on the field or court.

In your effort to form or analyze your own philosophy of coaching, first know what a coach is. A coach can be many different things to many different people. A coach is a mentor, a teacher, a role model, and sometimes a friend. Most of all, a coach must be positive. A positive coach has the following traits:

Puts Players First

A positive coach wants to win but understands that he is an educator first. The development of his players is his top priority. He avoids thinking that the game is about himself rather than his players. He must have an unwavering commitment to what is best for the athletes.

Develops Character and Skills

A coach seizes upon victories and defeats as teaching moments to build on self-confidence and positive character traits such as discipline, self-motivation, self-worth, and an excitement for life. The desire to see the athlete learn and effectively improve his skill is key to an effective coaching program.

Sets Realistic Goals

He focuses on effort rather than outcome. He sets standards of continuous learning and improvement for the athletes. He encourages and inspires the athletes, regardless of their skill levels, to strive to get better without threatening them through fear, intimidation, or shame.

Creates a Partnership with the Players

A positive coach involves the team members in determining team rules and recognizes that communication is crucial to building effective relationships with players. He develops appropriate relationships with the players based on respect, caring, and character.

Treasures the Game

A positive coach feels an obligation to the sport he coaches. He loves the sport and shares that love and enjoyment with the athletes. He respects opponents, recognizing that a worthy opponent will push his team to do its best. There is not a level, where as a coach, you cease teaching the game. As long as you teach, teach in a positive manner. You will produce the best players an, ultimately, the best results.

It is extremely important to develop a philosophy with the following in mind:

Your Approach Should be Educationally Sound

Your drills should serve a purpose and not be used merely for "killing" time. They should be structures to provide the necessary repetitions for each athlete and should be relative to the athlete's ability level.

Your Approach Should be Appropriate for Your Players

You may learn a lot of new offenses and defenses and they may be excellent systems, but are they suited to your players? Use an approach that is developmentally appropriate for your players.

Your Philosophy Must be Ethical

In basketball, for example, many coaches instruct players to fake an injury in order to stop the clock. This is unethical. Consider what you do in all aspects of coaching. Coaching from an ethical standpoint is extremely important. Remember, you are a role model for your players.

Stick With Your Philosophy

Most coaches, especially on the high school level, have to develop the talent on hand. There may be some years in which athletes may not possess the ability or skill to fit into your philosophy. You cannot change the players, but you can alter your approach.

Is There a Better Way of Doing What You Are Doing?

Apply this question to all aspects of your coaching philosophy as it affects the offense, defense, motivation, etc. Keep an open mind. Learning should be a life-long pursuit, and this should definitely apply to your coaching philosophy.

Explain Why You Do the Things You Do

To instruct and to motivate your athletes, you have to justify what you do. Can you? You need to be able to do so. The days of just simply saying, "Well, this is the way we are going to do it," are long gone. There is no way that you can justify anything associated with your program or team to athletes and parents without explanation.

Your Coaching Philosophy Should be Compatible With Your Personality

Are you a risk taker? Are you patient or impatient? Are you deliberate or aggressive? You will be more successful if your philosophy and personality are in sync.

Sportsmanlike Conduct Should be a Top Priority in Your Philosophy

There are situations in some games that could be considered unsportsmanlike by opponents, officials, or fans. Running up the score, playing starters long after the outcome has been determined, and taunting are just a few examples. If any of these are tolerated within your approach to coaching, you may need to make some changes.

After considering the factors I have mentioned, develop your own philosophy by putting it into written form. It is extremely important to be able to express and to explain your approach to athletes, parents, and supervisors. A written document can also give you something concrete to re-examine and to evaluate annually. I have included my "[Personal Coaching Philosophy](#)" for you to examine.