

WHAT MAKES A GOOD COACH?

Taken from 'Sport Parent', American Sport Education Program, Human Kinetics

Many people think that if you've played a sport, you're qualified to coach it. Wrong! (If this were true, all actors would make good directors, and all students would make good teachers.)

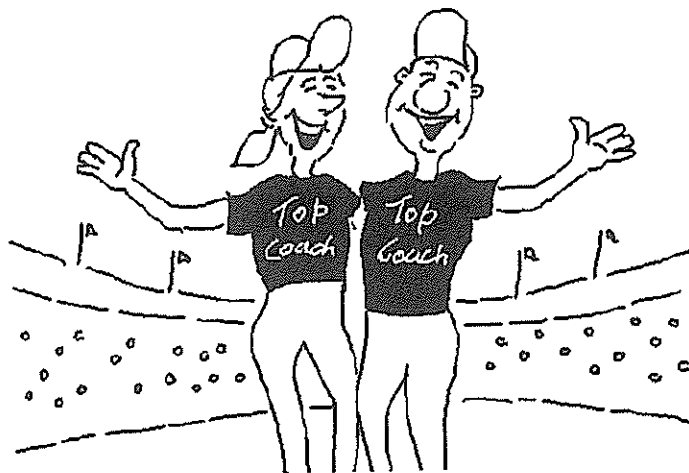
A good coach...

- must know the sport — and kids. The coach must know about the physical development of boys and girls, what children are and are not capable of doing.
- must know about differences in personality — that what is right for one child isn't necessarily right for another.
- must understand each child's motivation for being on the team. Some kids are very serious about the team; others are there because a best friend is playing.
- must be able to understand, and deal with, differences in children's physical and emotional maturity, and appreciate children for their individuality.
- needs to be sensitive to children with physical disabilities and children coming from various social, economic, and racial backgrounds. The coach must give attention and instruction to all players and attempt to make them all feel part of the team.
- must be skilled at teaching the fundamentals of the sport. Skill development is a major reason kids play — most children want to improve their abilities, and getting better at their sport is a prime source of enjoyment.
- teaches young athletes to enjoy success and to respond to failure with renewed determination.
- has more than just winning in sight. Long-term goals of helping young people develop physically, psychologically, and socially should take precedence over the goal of winning.
- emphasises improvement, competence, and striving for excellence.
- helps children develop positive self-images and learn standards of conduct that are acceptable to society.
- teaches and models conduct that reflects basic desirable values.

The successful coach is one who conveys

- the joy of competition
- the meaning of effort
- the worth of character
- the power of kindness
- the wisdom of honesty
- the influence of example
- the rewards of cooperation, and
- the virtue of patience.

The coach's challenge is to convey these values while striving for victory and not diminishing the fun in sport. Not an easy task!



Warning Signs of Poor Coaching

The coach uses profanity. There's no excuse for this — especially in junior sport.

The coach argues with referees or officials. This models poor sportsmanship for players.

The coach criticises players — not their behaviour. There's a big difference between saying 'Lisa, you've got to keep your eye focused on the volleyball and hit it with the heel of your hand' and 'Lisa! We could have scored an important point if you hadn't hit that serve out! You gotta put the ball in play!'

The coach won't listen to parents. We're not talking about parents who 'coach from the sidelines' but those who raise legitimate questions or concerns.

The coach allows cheating. ('Hey, Coach, I thought Kate was too old to swim on our team this year.' 'Well, she's the right age for most of the season — and it doesn't matter. The team that won the championship last year did the same thing with one of their best swimmers and they never got caught!')

The coach makes winning the only goal. Winning is a great goal to have; it just shouldn't overshadow the larger goal of putting players' development first.

The coach ignores the lesser skilled players. ('Well, I've only got so much time to give — I'd better concentrate on my starters.')

The coach makes the kids feel worthy only when they win. Winning is great, but the outcome of a contest has nothing to do with children's worth.