

A Guide To A Healthy Player Coach Relationship

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to provide information to beginning coaches and others new to leadership positions. This document contains information on the qualities a good coach should display. The idea that sports are not only important for the development of individuals but sports properly coached are important for individual's later lives is the message of this paper. An article was written to express these ideas.

It is hoped that this project and the article it contains will guide people new to leadership positions. The project and article is based on successful coach-player relationships that the author has experienced as well as literature dealing with successful relationships.

This project concludes by suggesting quantitative work that can be done to validate and strengthen the content of this project.

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this paper to my family for allowing me to reach for the stars and for standing by me as well as encouraging me to be the best person I can be. I want to give a special thanks to my former coach Dave Roehl for his support, mentorship and for always being a strong presence in my life. I truly enjoy the relationship that we have had over the years and it doesn't get taken for granted. Special thanks to Steve Domin and John Beerbower for their continuous support and guidance.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Men's Basketball program as well as other faculty and staff members for giving me this opportunity to complete this Master's Program. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Zavada for his guidance, support and patience as we worked to complete this project.

Table of Content

Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	7
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	15
Chapter 4: Result.....	22
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	32
References.....	35

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

Sports are an extracurricular activity that allow people to grow and learn a great deal about themselves and others. Sports offer an opportunity for people to compete and learn how to build healthy relationships and trust with others. For a long time, sports have been viewed as a way to stay healthy and in shape but their importance goes much further. Playing sports teaches life lessons such as discipline, responsibility, self-confidence, accountability, and teamwork. The roles that coaches of sports play in the lives of each student-athlete has a tremendous effect on the athlete's college experience. Coaches who recognize all sports have positives and empathize the importance of being successful academically can help increase a student's overall experience and enhance their chances of graduating. Graduating from college helps student athletes pursue a professional career of their choosing.

In order for an athlete to benefit the most from playing a sport, there needs to be an understanding of the importance of the relationship between player and coach. A coach who demonstrates good leadership skills will help change an athlete's behavior. That behavior change can benefit the athlete and their team. The main focus of an effective coach should be to maintain a good relationship with each team member as well as winning a specific contest. Challenging and putting athletes in positions to grow within themselves is another important aspect of a coach and demonstrates the great leadership skills of a coach. This mentoring relationship is extremely important. According to Bloom and Salmela (1998) "The Importance of Mentoring in the Development of Coaches and Athletes", mentoring occurs when there is a trusting relationship between the teacher/coach and the student-athlete, when there is an interest on the part of the

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

coach in the personal development of the athlete. Athletes who have strong mentors will be motivated to do things that will benefit their lives.

Every athlete has a different background. For some athletes, sports can be used and are used as a method to get away from the inconsistencies of their daily lives. Coaches can sometimes be the most consistent part in an athlete's life. That is one of many reasons, it is important to understand the value of a healthy player and coach relationship. Quality relationships can lead to success, wealth and fulfillment. The coach is a very significant person in the lives of athletes and the role coaches' play is key in the athletes' sport experience and academic success.

Athletes need to understand the importance of commitment to themselves, teammates and coaches. Athletes need to approach everyday with an open mind and willingness to learn and be challenged. For that reason, athletes must understand that nothing regarding their coaches' suggestions should be taken personally. It is also important that student athletes understand the importance of performing well academically as well as in the competition. In order to help students understand this concept, coaches need to emphasize both aspects of an athletes' performance on a daily basis. According to Knoles, Burnette and Peak (2010) in the article "The Sports Journal", faculty, coaches and athletic administrators must be knowledgeable and responsive regarding the student- athletes academic performance. In other words, coaches or other faculty members need to continue to hold their athletes accountable for their academic performance as well as performance in the competition. The student can gain a great deal from sports. Coaches can enhance the athletes' experience. Coaches have a responsibility that go beyond helping athletes compete in sports. They must also help the student athlete understand the value of academic performance.

The above statement places a large burden on a new coach which may seem overpowering for the person who is new to coaching. For this purpose this article is to present an outline for the new coach to follow.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of this project was to create an article for a new coach to review as he/she begins their career in coaching. The article encompasses research and best practices as they pertain to coach-player relationships. Positive coaching behavior and practices are stressed. Topics include: acting as a role model, being concerned about the athletes' well-being, helping athletes excel in life beyond the sport, being concerned about the athletes' academic success.

Using related literature as well as best practices from the author's experience, and positive experiences of other coaches, the article (below) was written. To make certain that the article addresses the topic and will be useful to new coaches, two people who have extensive coaching experiences reviewed and commented on the article. After their review the author revised the article which is represented in chapter four.

For a long time, winning and losing sporting events has been used to evaluate coaches. In today's society, sports are bigger than the outcome of a game. Looking at how a coach can affect the lives of their players causes coaches to develop a leadership method they believe in and can be used to help develop well rounded student athletes. This is extremely important since the lack of a healthy player-coach relationship can lead to a very dysfunctional and unhappy career for an athlete. Coaches are key people in developing the social environment that may influence student academic and athletic performance. Unwanted, rejecting or neglecting behaviors that represent negative social interaction with coaches can hinder progress and result in a lack of motivation for student athletes to perform at a high level in the classroom. Coaches are so critical in the athletes' total development. It is important for coaches to know the effectiveness of their teaching and coaching methods. These methods can be assessed through the perspective of their athletes. Committing to having an open dialogue between players and coaches can help build mutual trust, respects and appreciation.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Guiding Question

There have been various studies on how to predict the performance of an athlete. The main question that comes to mind is --What does a person who is new to coaching need to know to be an effective leader?

Definition of Terms

The following terms used throughout this study are defined as follows:

Coach-Athlete relationship: Interdependence and influence between coaches' and athletes' thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

Effective Leadership in Coach: When athletes perform in accordance with the coach's suggestion while finding their own needs satisfied. Maintaining good relations with team members and winning a specific contest.

Academic Success: The coaches' encouragement to do well in the classroom. Helping the athletes develop a plan for their future professional careers.

Commitment to the Coach: Players are comfortable and willing to be open and to learning new things from their coach.

Student-Athlete: Participant in an organized competitive sport sponsored by the educational institution.

Performance Enhancement: factors that can have an effect on how an athlete competes.

Communication Skills: The steps needed for the athletes and coaches to be on the "same page" with each other. Building chemistry between the players, coaches and teammates.

Active Listening: Involves attending to main and supporting ideas, acknowledging and responding, giving appropriate feedback, and paying attention to the speaker's total communication

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Supportive Listening: Communicates that you are “with” the speaker and value the person’s message. You remain open to new ideas, perspectives and the possibility of change.

Aware Listening: People react differently to the way you communicate. Be alert for barriers and breakdowns in communication.

Chapter Summary

Any collegiate sport requires a strong player-coach relationship in order for the sports team to be successful. If there is no trust or respect between the coach and player, the performance of the athletes may be compromised. Any team sport requires everyone to be “on the same page” for the team to be effective. Coaches play a valuable role in the lives of their athletes. For this reason, it is important that coaches acquire the necessary skills to become good leaders. At the same time, it is important that every athlete stays committed to their coach and believes in the coaches’ philosophy and knowledge. The article presented in this paper is designed to deal with this complex issue and offer a person new to coaching a researched based guide to effective performance.

Sports requires a strong player-coach relationship in order for a team to be successful. If there is no trust or respect between the coach and player, the coach cannot enhance the performance of the athletes. A poor relationship may cause a lack of motivation for the athlete to continue to play or perform at a high level. Coaches play a valuable role in the lives of their athletes. For this reason, it is important that coaches acquire the necessary skills to become good leaders. At the same time, it is important that every athlete stays committed to their coach and believes in the coaches’ philosophy and knowledge.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Student athletes need to understand that life is bigger than just sports. In order for students to be successful later in life, their needs be goals that are set for them to achieve dealing with sport, academics and personal achievement. Coaches need to help students by setting these goals. Coaches spend a lot of time with their athletes and for that reason it is important that they become good guides, role models and teachers. Encouraging and challenging all athletes to do well in many aspects of their lives as well as academically, will help prepare the student athlete for a professional career outside of sports.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Overview

The purpose of this chapter was to review previous literature on player-coach relationships and how those relationships can impact the athlete's performance in the sport and in life. The main topics discussed include: Impact of Coach on Performance, Academic Success, Effective Leadership, Mentorship and Importance of Communication.

Background

In sports, there are a variety of factors that can play a role in the performance of an athlete. How a player prepares themselves mentally, physically and emotionally on a consistent basis is very important. Understanding the importance of ways to enhance the performance of athletes can help with the overall success of the sport. This analysis can help determine ways to better the player-coach relationship which can lead to a positive outcome within the sport and in the personal lives of athletes. Being challenged on a daily basis will allow student athletes to learn a lot about themselves and develop self-confidence. Developing student athletes into positive people within the society should always be a goal of a good coach.

Impact of the Coach

Understanding factors that contribute to the success of students-athletes is essential for the management of any sport. Coaches are put in positions to influence their athletes and put them in positions to be successful. Much of the responsibility is placed on the coach to set the desired tone through policies and practices. In order for athletes to

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

believe in their coach, there needs to be trust within the relationship. If there's a lack of trust it will be difficult to have the athlete commit to the coach and the team. The coach-athlete relationship is intentionally developed through appreciation and respect for each other (Rezania and Gurney 2014). In the, "Athletes and Coaches in Sports" literature, the coach and athlete interaction is portrayed as unique with the goal of the relationship to bring about successful performance outcomes and satisfaction (Misasi and Morin 2016). In order to have a unique dialogue between player and coach, there needs to be some sort of a relationship that's build. Once that relationship is created, it will help the athlete "step up" to perform at a higher level. If an athlete knows that their coach believes in them, it can give them extra motivation and confidence to compete at a high level. Coaches must consistently praise athletes for their good efforts. Finding ways to boost the athletes' confidence is essential in the development of an athlete. It is important for coaches to ensure all athletes that they are capable of being successful. Coaches must challenge and motivate.

The impact of a coach on the lives of athletes is crucial. The amount of hours spent with each athlete allows coaches to have different points of views from other faculty members. According to the "What Intercollegiate Athletics Coaches Wish Faculty Knew: Implications for Curriculum and Instruction"(2018) study, coaches of collegiate teams typically engage in greater contact with student-athletes than course instructors. Because of this, intercollegiate athletic coaches can inform university faculty regarding the needs of student-athletes from the unique perspective of the coaches (Raunig, Coggins 2018). Coaches can use their platform to help other educators develop plans for their athletes. Having all faculty members' work together, can help motivate and guide

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

each individual on the right path. Athletes can be academically successful as well as successful in competition.

Academic Success and Sports

Athletes must learn to successfully balance the academic life of a student and athlete while dealing with the pressure of doing well in both. According to Parsons, (Journal of Sport Behavior Vol 36 No 4), often student athletes are depicted as less challenged than regular students. In reality, they have greater challenges. They are faced with the struggle of performing at a high level in sports while maintaining a GPA to remain eligible. Playing a sport at the collegiate level is time consuming. Having late and long practices can have an effect on how an athlete performs academically. Constantly traveling for games and the effect that it can have emotionally and physically can present some challenges for the student athlete. According to Parsons “Student Athlete Perception of Academic Success and Athlete Stereotype on Campus” study, college athletes are negatively depicted and are sometimes stereotyped as “dumb jock”. The “dumb jock” stereotype is the assumption of a lack of academic ability and motivation for academic tasks. In other words, student athletes are viewed as individuals who take “athlete-friendly” majors and courses which can help ensure that they will remain eligible for their season but lack academic rigor. It is the job of coaches to guide each athlete in the right direction to be successful not only during a sporting event but in the classroom as well, this means that coaches should encourage athletes to pursue majors that will help them secure good jobs when sports are finished.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Coaches and other faculty members as well as other athletic directors, should ensure that every student- athlete understands the importance of having a good education. Having a healthy player and coach relationship should apply to the sport, as well as academics and other parts of the athlete's life as well. This is summarized well by Godfrey (2013) when he states, "within higher education, the dual roles student athletes accept, to be successful athletes and academic scholars, can be difficult to maintain. Thus, academic personal and administrators as well as coaches must strive for a deeper understanding of athletics while trying to provide an environment that promotes learning, performance, institutional integrity, and academic rigor" (P. 2). In order for coaches to be all they can be, they must understand the fundamentals of leadership and be concerned with all aspects of the athlete's lives.

Effective Leadership

During a sporting event, coaches typically depend on the athlete to perform and to showcase what they have been working on, or have learned during practices. In order for athletes to prepare for competition, coaches need to show leadership skills for athletes to commit to them. According to the "Leadership: Athletes and Coaches in Sport" literature, effective leadership in coaching occurs when an athlete performs in accordance with the coach's intentions while finding their own needs satisfied (Misasi and Morin 2016). Unfortunately, some leaders are able to change their athletes' behaviors in order to win while ignoring the athlete's needs. These coaches do little for the athlete.

Players will be more willing to compete at their best if they have a coach who they admire and who will challenge them to be successful in all aspects of their lives.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Misasi and Morin (2016) stated that effective coaching behaviors result in the athletes reaching: personal achievement and performance goals which results in positive psychological outcomes. Coaches need to take the time to get to know their athletes. According to the “Canadian Olympic Study”, there are four different coaching styles within the CoachDisc Model: Athlete Centered Coaching, Dominant Coaching Style, Steady Style of Coaching and Influencing style of coach (Hanson 2008). It is up to the coaches to study different styles of coaching and determine what leadership style will be the most beneficial for the players and result in success of the team. The leadership of coaches and how the coach should interact with players is a topic of importance to those associated with sports. Rezania and Gurney (2014) state that leadership behavior that leads to sharing power or giving more responsibility and autonomy to the followers has been the subject of many studies and is found to be successful. Another aspect of the leadership/player relationship is the coaches’ ability to act as a mentor.

Mentorship

Bloom, Bush and Schinke (1998), studied another aspect of coaching relationship-mentoring. They define mentoring: “Mentoring is a process that requires further research and is believed to lead to high levels of success in both personal and professional endeavors” (267). The authors discussed other studies involved with mentorship and stated: “Several studies have indicated that mentoring occurs when there is a trusting relationship between the teacher/coach and the student/athlete, when there is an interest on the part of the coach in the personal development of the athletes, when the coach purposefully allocates his/ her time to fulfill the needs of the athlete, when an imitation of

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

behavior takes place” (268). One of the key studies was by Borman and Colson (1984). They reported that, “mentoring student athletes, facilitated the development of interpersonal skills and enhanced their knowledge in the workplace. Mentored collegians experienced more positive changes in their self-confidence and overall development status” (269). In other words, mentoring can be used to motivate and to help enhance performance in all areas of life. Mentoring can be used effectively due to the emotional, physical and psychological demand that an athlete endures. Guidance from a mentor is key and everyone can benefit from it. Mentors assume a helping role opposed to an evaluative one, and that respect and trust between two individuals is crucial for the program to work effectively. Another key aspect of overall development and well-being is commitment.

Commitment

Commitment has been widely studied because it is predictive of work related attitudes and behaviors such as motivation, engagement, retention, citizenship or its relationship with the organizational effectiveness (Rezania and Gurney 2014). The success of the athlete and coach is heavily determined by how much they value and are committed to each other. Stein (2018) wrote a piece referring to the commitment needed to be successful as an athlete and in life. His view of commitment is one of building and maintaining relationships. He writes specifically about basketball but generalizes to all sports and states “To be successful in any walk of life, from basketball to business you have to know how to build and maintain relationships” Commitment on the athlete’s part refers to a sense of duty that a student-athlete feels is important to achieve the coach’s

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

goals and their willingness to do what is needed to perform well to accomplish goals. Coaches who are committed to empowering their athletes can have an effect on their performance. In other words, the student athlete is given the opportunity to participate in the decision making process. This commitment will help the student be successful as a team member as well as later in life. When coaches and athletes commit themselves to teamwork, this behavior allows everyone to be on the same page and can help with the success of the program and help the athletes in later life.

Chapter Summary

There are a variety of things that impact how well an athlete performs in competition as well as in later life. Relationship building is essential at any level of competition and is important for development of the student athlete and in later life. Once a relationship is built, that relationship helps the players and coaches to believe in each other and function at an optimal level. Coaches who understand the impact they have on athletes can use their platform to influence those they work with and guide them in the right direction to be successful. How a coach leads can have an impact on the player and the rest of the team. Coaches as leaders are able to challenge the players in ways that will benefit the players and will help them have positive growth and a successful future. Both the players and the coaches need to be committed to each other for the success of the team. Athletes need to know what commitment is and learn to be committed to the coach and team. Coaches need to be committed to building relationships with their players which can help the players and teams perform well. Successful coaches can help the

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

athletes and the team reach their goal. The athletes need to understand that in order to be successful they need to “buy into” their coaches’ system.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of Project

The purpose of this project was to create an article for a new coach to review as he/she begins their career in coaching. The article encompasses research and best practices as they pertain to coach-player relationships. Positive coaching behavior and practices are stressed.

Using related literature as well as best practices from the author's experience, and positive experiences of other coaches, the article (below) was written. To make certain that the article addresses the topic and will be useful to new coaches, two people who have extensive coaching experiences reviewed and commented on the article. After their review the author revised the article which is represented in chapter four.

Methodology

This project involved writing an article based on literature in the field and geared to new coaches as well as others who might be in a teacher student or leadership position. In order for the project to be carried out, once the article was written it was given to two experts in the field for comment. The preliminary document is below and the document with changes based on comments is found in chapter four.

Expert Panel

The preliminary document was given to two experts for comment.

1. John Beerbower began teaching at Carthage College Master's Program in 2014. Classes that he currently teaches are, Advance Techniques in Sport Psychology and Leadership in Sports. He received his Bachelors in Education and a Master's Degree in Educational

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Leadership, both at Eastern Illinois. He also has a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Concordia University. Mr. Beerbower also served as Assistant Divisional Chair for Physical Education, Health and Drivers Education for Mchenry High School

2. Steve Domin has served Carthage College as Director of Soccer Operations, the Head Men's and Women's Soccer Coach and Instructor in the Exercise Sport Science Department. He is one of the Directors of Coaching for the local area select club programs, holds an Advanced United Soccer Coaches National License and is a full-time teacher in Carthage's Exercise and Sport Science Department.

The letter sent to the experts regarding the scope of the project as well as their role in commenting and evaluating is below:

Letter to expert panel.

Please help me with complete my Master's Degree. The purpose of my degree is to look at all the aspects of a successful coach. I have reviewed the literature in the field as well as discussed coaching with colleagues. In the end I have written an article that hopefully will be read by people as they are entering the world of coaching. Please review the article and answer the following questions.

I will use your responses to revise the article and get it ready for submission. Please answer the following questions:

1. Will it help new coaches learn how to build relationships?
2. Is this document useful in helping the new coach gain knowledge of his/ her responsibility for preparing the athletes for life outside of sports?
3. Does the document present enough qualities to be a successful coach?
4. Please feel free to comment or offer suggestions that will make the document better

Preliminary Document

In order to be a successful coach, you need to understand the whole student not just the athlete. The following article is based on literature review as well as the authors coaching experiences. As you venture into what can be a very rewarding and challenging experience, here are some pieces of advice, tips and key points that can help in your development.

Get to know your athletes and building relationships:

It is crucial for the coach to look beyond the sporting event. The coach needs to know the athlete as a person. The coach needs to spend time with each athlete and take a genuine interest in the athlete. The coach is responsible for getting to know the athlete. The coach needs to know the strengths and weakness as well as the athlete's goals. The goals need to be explored with the athlete. The coach needs to help the athlete understand what is important for the sport as well as understand what is important for the athletes later life.

Your impact-teaching the athlete

Teaching athletes how to overcome adversity can allow the athlete to grow as an athlete and person and help them function as a high level. This skill will also help the larger team as well as promote a winning chemistry amongst the team. The coach is more than the person who directs athletes in a contest. The coach is a teacher who helps

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

the athlete on and off the playing field. If players believe in you and your philosophy, the impact will be felt by the entire team.

Athletes and coaches need to develop trust. Trust motivates players to follow the coach's lead. It is necessary for the coach to be a positive model in order to gain the athletes' confidence and trust. Finding ways to boost the athletes' confidence is essential to helping the athlete in the contest and in later life.

The importance of academic success

Coaches are too often judged on just wins and losses. This metric alone is too narrow. It is necessary for the coach to place as much emphasis on academics as they do the preparation for the game. Coaches must hold their athletes accountable for their performance in the classroom. Their classroom performance will have an impact on their eligibility and have an impact on them later life. If a player is not able to perform, not only is the player impacted, the entire team is affected. It is important for the coach to stress that the athlete has the responsibility to "not let the team down".

It is the job of the coach to guide the athlete to be successful. Coaches need to help their players seek challenges and academic majors that will help them, in later life, be considered a success. Coaches need to understand that an athlete has to "wear many hats" and juggle many schedules. Athletes have to attend classes, study, go to practice, go to games and maintain an adequate grade point average.

A coach who is well organized is able to instruct in a meaningful way. The athletes will be able to follow the lead of a coach who is knowledgeable and well organized. Creating an environment where the athletes can learn and use their abilities to

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

the fullest is important not only for the current state of the team, but for the future.

Coaches must devise a schedule that will benefit the athlete. The coach needs to be organized. By doing so, there will be less stress on the athlete and the athletes will be able to perform better both academically and in their sport.

Be an effective leader, role model and mentor

Many athletes use sports as an outlet. They put aside their daily routines to participate in extracurricular activities. The activities become not only an outlet, they become stress relievers and a way for athletes to have an identity. This takes on new meaning especially for the players who come from broken homes. For some student athletes, coaches can fill the void left by lack of parenting. Keeping these things in mind the coach must develop a teacher and mentor leadership style unique to them but geared toward helping the players and team. These players need to have someone with which to identify and have a person to step into their lives and become an important figure.

The coach must remember to “practice what they preach” and lead by example. For example, the coach must be to practice on time. The coach must interact appropriately with other staff members and players. These signs of respect are necessary for the athletes to model. The coach needs to be an open person. Being an open person creates a welcoming environment where people want to work for success. The coach needs to be available to the athletes and act as a “sounding board”. He or she needs to listen to the athletes concerns and offer them guidance

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Importance of Commitment:

Commitment is a two way street. Coaches must be committed to their players and need to conduct themselves in a way that the athletes will be committed to them. As a coach, you must believe in your players. Giving up should never be an option in order to be a successful coach. Although you may be faced with difficult challenges or obstacles, showing commitment to your players will have a positive effect.

It is important that coaches spend some one-on-one time with each player. Recognizing athletes' weaknesses and helping the athletes with exercises will strengthen the individual player and help the team. That means individual coaches have to be committed to the athletes so athletes will work on self-improvement and develop trust in the coach.

Coaches need to empower their athletes by opening the floor for athletes to express their ideas. Athletes need to feel needed and heard. By engaging in this activity players will feel more motivated and recognize the coaches' commitment and follow their lead.

Some final thoughts

As coaches you need to remember to stay true to yourself and treat players as people who need you. You need to have confidence, be organized and be a sounding board as well as a teacher and mentor. By working on these skills you will have a positive experience for yourself as well as your athletes.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Chapter summary

The purpose of this project was to produce an article that can be shared with beginning coaches. The article is based on current literature as well as experiences of the author and others in the coaching ranks. Once the article was written it was given to two experts in the field for comments.

Chapter 4

Results

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project was to create an article for a new coach to review as he/she begins their career in coaching. The article encompasses research and best practices as they pertain to coach-player relationships. Positive coaching behavior and practices are stressed.

Using related literature as well as best practices from the author's experience, and positive experiences of other coaches, the article (below) was written. To make certain that the article addresses the topic and will be useful to new coaches, two persons who have extensive coaching experiences reviewed and commented on the article. After their review the author revised the initial article. The final article is presented in this chapter.

Expert panels comments and corrections to the document

1. The panel felt that the topic was appropriate and could be of use to new coaches.
2. The panel wanted the author to cite sources in the document as a panel member felt that additional clarity was necessary
3. The panel felt that the article needed to continue to stress the coaches role as a person who goes beyond X's and O's. Thus, the final article stresses this point.
4. The scope and sequence of the article needs to be addressed thus, clear subject headings and the overall flow of the article was stressed.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

5. The audience of the article should be expanded to go beyond the athletic coach and should encompass all leadership positions thus, a preliminary purpose statement was added to the article. Based on the comments above the final document is presented:

Final Document

Importance of a Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

By Marlon Senior

Scope of this article

This article was conceived as one that suggested behaviors and actions that athletic coaches need to take. The piece was conceived to have beginning coaches as an audience. When the article was initially reviewed the reviewers, as well as the author, the feeling was that the advice offered is applicable for many people in leadership positions not just athletic coaches.

Getting to know your athletes and building relationships:

It is crucial for the coach to look beyond the sporting event. Just like educators in their respective classrooms, coaches need to be able to prepare their athletes for life outside of sports. Coaches need to understand that it takes time for an individual to open up and feel comfortable. For that reason, having patience is important. Once that coach-player relationship is built, being consistent and showing genuine interest to the athletes and their overall development will have a tremendous impact on athlete's lives. A self-confident player adds a great deal to the success of the team. This feeling of confidence can then translate to the athlete's own personal lives.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

The coach is responsible for getting to know the athlete. In other words, it is the coaches' job to create a welcoming environment to allow their players to feel comfortable. Knowing the athlete's strength and weaknesses can put them in positions to be successful. According to Rezanian and Gurney (2014), "Coach-athlete relationships have been defined as an interconnection of emotions, thoughts and behaviors. The coach-athlete relationship is developed through appreciation and respect for each other". In order to fulfill the needs of both the coach and the athlete, both need to feel comfortable with one another.

Coaches need to have an open mind and willingness to trust their athletes. This all starts from strengthening the player-coach relationship. Coming up with goals with the athlete will show them that you care about them as individuals and their overall success. The coach needs to help the athlete understand what is important for the sport as well as understand what is important for later life.

A huge part of building relationships with your athletes is developing good communication skills. Having good communication skills can allow the athletes to feel heard and is a vital part in building good chemistry. The book *Foundation of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (Weinberg and Gould 2015), stated that "Good communication skills are among the most important ingredients contributing to performance enhancement and personal growth" (page 221). In other words, when the athletes and coaches have successful communications a strong relationship and a healthy environment is created. Coaches need to empower their athletes by opening the floor for athletes to express their ideas. Athletes need to feel needed and heard. By engaging in this activity, players will feel more motivated and recognize the coaches' commitment as well as follow their lead.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Another reason coaches also need to develop good communication skills is because these skills are necessary for athletes to feel respected as individuals. Having good listening skills is vital. Coaches need to listen as well as talk. As a coach you need to listen in order to create a platform for students to speak their minds. By doing so, athlete's confidence is enhanced and relationships are built between the athlete, coach and teammates. According to Weinberg and Gould (2015), Active listening, Supportive listening and Aware listening are all effective strategies when implemented correctly. Although coaches want to be heard just like any other instructor, taking a step back once in a while to listen to the athletes concerns or ideas can have a tremendous impact on the coach-player relationships. Creating a culture where athletes and coaches are capable of communicating effectively will help create a successful environment.

Positive Influences of a Good Coach

Teaching athletes how to overcome adversity can allow them to grow as an athlete and person. This skill will also help the larger team as well as promote a winning chemistry amongst the team. The coach is more than the person who directs athletes in a contest. The coach is a teacher who helps the athlete on and off the playing field. If the athletes believe in the coach and his/her philosophy, the impact will be felt by the entire team.

Some athletes may not have positive role models in their own daily lives. In some cases, due to the athletes lack of positive role models in their daily lives, coaches can sometimes be viewed as mother or father figures to their athletes. As coaches, it is

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

important to accept each individual for who they are and provide an environment for them to excel. Understanding and finding ways to relate to those athletes is part of the way that coaches can create a healthy environment.

There needs to be a sense of motivation, dedication and an unwillingness to give up. As coaches, you need to educate the athletes on the reality of life. Challenging and holding athletes accountable for their actions will prepare them to learn how to overcome obstacles they may face in life. According to Missasi and Morin (2016), “effective coaching behaviors result in the athletes reaching: personal achievement and performance goals and this results in positive psychological outcome” (page 2). In other words, setting high standards for the athletes to achieve can enhance their confidence causing them to realize the importance of setting goals.

As a coach, you will be presented with different types of athletes from various backgrounds. It is your responsibility to find ways to connect with all the athletes. In other words, in order to have a positive impact on the lives of the athlete, coaches need to take the time to understand who they are. Knowing the “whole athlete” is essential.

Athletes and coaches need to develop trust. Trust motivates players to follow the coach’s lead. It is necessary for coaches to be a positive role model in order to gain the athletes’ confidence and trust. Finding ways to boost the athlete’s confidence is essential to helping the athlete in the contest and in later life.

The importance of academic success

Coaches are often judged on just wins and losses and sometimes judge themselves by the win-loss metric. This metric alone is too narrow. It is necessary for

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

the coach to place as much emphasis on academics as they do the on preparing for the game. Coaches must hold their athletes accountable for their performance in the classroom. The Athlete's classroom performance will have an impact on their eligibility and have an impact on their later life. If a player is not eligible to perform, not only is the player impacted, the entire team is affected. It is important for the coach to stress that the athlete has the responsibility to "not let the team down".

It is the job of the coach to guide and challenge the athlete to be successful. Coaches need to help their players seek academic majors that will help them in later life. Coaches need to understand that an athlete has to "wear many hats" and juggle to maintain an adequate grade point average. In order to help the athlete be successful juggling all these demands, the coach needs to be well organized. A coach who is well organized is able to instruct in a meaningful way. The organized coach can devise a schedule that will benefit the athlete and create a winning environment. By being organized and preparing a manageable schedule, there will be less stress on the athlete and the athlete will be able to perform better both academically and in their sport.

Setting Goals

Creating an environment where the athletes can learn and use their abilities to the fullest is important not only for the current state of the team, but for the future. Part of that successful environment is goal setting. By creating effective goals and helping athletes find ways to achieve those goals there will be less stress on the athlete and the athlete will be able to perform better both academically and in their sport. In the book *Applied Sport Psychology* Williams (1986) stated "All too often goals are properly set but

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

never accomplished because athletes fail to identify goal achievement strategies (page 140). In other words, coaches should develop a goal setting program that will help educate the athletes to find ways to achieve those goals as well as their personal goals. Helping athletes identify goals in and outside of sports will help guide them on the right path to be successful. Coaches need to open a platform where the athletes can have the opportunity to discuss their personal interest, academic goals and future plans. Being a “winning” coach doesn’t always mean to have a good overall record in a sports contest. A winning coach can be viewed as preparing the athletes to be successful members of society.

Play the role of an effective coach

To be an effective coach, you must remember to “practice what you preach” and lead by example. The coach must be to practice on time. The coach must interact appropriately with other staff members and players. These signs of respect are necessary for the athletes to model. According to the book of *Guide to Effective Coaching Principles and Practice* (Jones) “Players will not hear what coaches say if it is different from what coaches do” (page 9). In order to earn the respect of the athletes, coaches must model how they want their players to perform. Doing so, will help develop the athlete in a positive way which will have an impact on the athletes’ performance and help them in later life.

Coaches need to empower there athletes and allow them to take initiative, by doing so, players leadership skills will be developed. Leadership skills will prepare athletes to be effective in their professional careers. Keeping these things in mind the

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

coach must develop a teacher and mentor leadership style unique to them but geared toward helping the players and team.

Importance of Commitment

Commitment is a two-way street. Coaches must be committed to their players and need to conduct themselves in a way that the athletes will be committed to them. As a coach, you must believe in your players. Giving up should never be an option for a successful coach. Although you may be faced with difficult challenges or obstacles, showing commitment to your players will have a positive effect. When the athletes know that you “have their backs”, it helps boost their confidence level which can impact their performance. Being committed to the overall success of the student will show the students that you care for them.

During skill development for a contest, it is important that coaches spend some one-on-one time with each player. Recognizing the athletes’ weaknesses and helping the athletes with exercises will strengthen the individual player and help the team. This means coaches have to provide time and to be committed to the athletes so athletes will work on self-improvement and develop trust in the coach. Commitment plays a huge part in building relationships and without it negative issues between player, teammates and the coach may surface.

As coaches, teaching the athletes not to settle in their current comfort zone but to take risks is important. Learning how to challenge themselves and to overcome adversity is something that will benefit the athlete during a sporting contest and later in life.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Sports serves many purposes

Beyond the obvious virtues of sports participation: getting exercise, meeting new people, competing as well as developing social skills, etc. sports serve as an important outlet for the athlete. As a coach, you will be presented with different types of student athletes from various backgrounds. It is your responsibility to find ways to connect with all the student athletes. In other words, in order to have a positive impact on the lives of the student athlete, coaches need to take the time to understand who they are. Knowing the “whole student athlete” is essential.

Many athletes use sports as an outlet. They put aside their daily routines to participate in extracurricular activities. The activities become not only an outlet, they become stress relievers and a way for athletes to have an identity. This takes on new meaning especially for the players who come from dysfunctional or broken homes. These players need to understand and have a person who steps into their lives and becomes an important figure. The coach needs to be an open person. Being an open person creates a welcoming environment where people, regardless of their backgrounds want to work for success. The coach needs to be available to the athletes and act as a “sounding board”. He or she needs to listen to the athletes concerns and offer them guidance.

Some final thoughts

Coaches need to remember to stay true to themselves and be aware of their own behavior. They must show respect for players and treat players as people who need them.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Every athlete comes from a different background. By the coach taking time and listening to the athlete there will be big positive impact on players' lives.

Coaching can be fun and rewarding if you are dedicated and passionate about the overall success of the team and the individual. As a coach, you need to have confidence, be organized and be a sounding board as well as a teacher and mentor. By working on these skills you will have a positive experience for yourself as well as your athletes.

Coaching is a fun experience when the energy and focus is put towards the success of the student athletes. Although some athletes may not always voice their opinion, creating an environment where they are comfortable will allow them to grow and gain that confidence.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project was to create an article for a new coach to review as he/she begins their career in coaching. The article encompasses research and best practices as they pertain to coach-player relationships. Positive coaching behavior and practices are stressed.

Using related literature as well as best practices from the author's experience, and positive experiences of other coaches, the article, above, was written. To make certain that the article addresses the topic and will be useful to new coaches, two persons who have extensive coaching experiences reviewed and commented on the article. After their review the author revised the article which is represented in chapter 4.

Discussion

Sports are known to be bigger than just extracurricular activities. Sports has a huge impact on a large number of people. Playing sports is an opportunity for people to build relationships, develop good social skills, and learn how to overcome adversity as well as many other benefits. Sports offers the individual an opportunity to grow and to learn about themselves and be challenged. Having a good coach who is there to lead and care for the athletes will always have a positive impact on student athletes' lives. This coach player relationship goes beyond athletes on the field performance and can be considered in many aspects of life.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

In order to present ideas associated with being a successful coach to others the author chose to write an article that can be presented to people new to coaching. A rough draft of the article was presented to two individuals for comment and the final article was written. Although the article captured all the important points the author wished to make, recent research into the field of coaching-coach player relationships and quantifying those relationships as well as looking at various aspects of the coach-player relationship could be added to enhance the piece.

Implication for future Research

Recently a rating scale that might be used to enhance and validate the thinking in the above article was introduced to the sporting world. The Athletes' Perception of Coaches' Behavior and Skills About Their Sport (Hanifi Üzümlü, 2018) was written and initially tested. The study examined the perception of athletes' about their coaches' behavior and skills in terms of knowledge and skills, fairness and coaches' characteristic features. Conducting research using this instrument and soliciting a large sample can help determine what players' value in coaches at a more precise level. Those results could help validate and enhance the current article.

Comparing test results or perceptions of male and female athletes or comparing individual sports to team sports can allow coaches to see if there are differences in how players perceive coaches or how coaches perceive their roles. Comparing NCAA division 1, 2 and 3 athletes may yield interesting and instructive results.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

Summary

This author looked at various pieces of literature and provided knowledge from his coaching experiences to write what he felt was a necessary article which can be used to help people new to coaching sports. Upon review of the article it was realized that the ideas of coaching presented in the article could be generalized to coaching in other situations. Additionally, the reviewers challenged the author to find instruments which might validate the article. A very recent study was written to do just that. It is hoped that in the future an article which expresses the thinking of coaches in relationship to working with and helping players and the related literature associated with formulating those ideas can be enhanced with the new quantitative piece which is new to the field.

A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

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A Guide To A Healthy Player-Coach Relationship

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