

# COACHES COACHING COACHES

teaching, training, learning

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## Editor's Message

Every year, newly graduated college students enter the coaching profession. In most cases, these newly minted coaches have completed at least one coaching course with some earning a coaching minor. But, as every experienced coach knows, no amount of book learning or required college courses can truly prepare one to be an effective coach. There is truly no better way of learning than through experience.

An adage I learned many years ago truly explains how one learns and how one helps the next generation learn.

I do, you watch, we talk.

I do, you help, we talk.

You do, I help, we talk.

You do, I watch, we talk.

And then we each go help the next person

Coaches Coaching Coaches (CCC) is a supplement to Dakota Coach. The purpose of CCC is to provide an outlet for coaches to share coaching knowledge that helps other coaches become better coaches. CCC is interested in all topics related to coaching, for example, skill techniques, game tactics, coaching strategies, practice planning, team and individual psychology, nutrition, culture, first aid, training and conditioning, motivation, parent relationships, practice planning, mental health, leadership, mentoring, and relationships.

To submit an article to Coaches Coaching Coaches, send your article in word format to [bradford.strand@ndsu.edu](mailto:bradford.strand@ndsu.edu)

*Brad Strand*

# Behavior Management: Setting the Standard

Brad Strand, NDSU

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Every coach will have to confront behavior management issues with their athletes from time to time. Skipping practice, inappropriate language, disrespect for teammates and opponents, and bullying of underclassmen are just some of issues one is likely to face. Knowing this, it is imperative that coaches establish a culture that minimizes bad behavior, fosters good behavior, and addresses inappropriate behavior immediately when it happens.

During the 2016 What Drives Winning conference, a panel of renowned collegiate coaches (Becky Burleigh, Jack Clark, Sherri Coale, Bob Glass) discussed behavior management in a presentation titled *Coaching The Line* (What Drives Winning, 2016). The moderator, Brett Leadbetter, presented a road map for managing behavior that consisted of: 1) setting clear standards and closing the gap in the interpretation of those standards, 2) recognizing and encouraging above the line behavior, 3) managing and correcting below the line behavior, and 4) understanding that the coach is the example of the standard.

## **Setting the Standard**

With every team, there is a standard that sets the line of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. For success, it is essential that coaches make sure their athletes clearly understand “the standard”. In all cases, a coach needs to set the standard and stick to it, even if it means disciplining or correcting one’s best player(s).

The only real way to coach standards is to have clear standards. A coach must identify the exact examples of standards for the sport one coaches. He or she must demonstrate what those standards look like

to your players. Using video, one can show how easy it is to see the difference between cheating on the standard and exceeding the standard.

Sherri Coale, head women’s basketball coach at Oklahoma State University described championship behavior. When athletes come into her program they watch a video of the standard, or “this is the way you do it because this is who we are”. Her expectations, or standards, include pointing to the person who passed you the ball when you scored, sprinting to help a teammate up after they take a charge, showing emotion, and counting the number of personal touches between teammates.

## **Catch Above the Line Behavior**

If coaches want their athletes to display above the line behavior, they must catch their athletes doing something good. Mike Krzyzewski, former men’s basketball coach at Duke University said, “We can always catch a kid doing something wrong and we overlook the things they do right. They will do fewer wrong things if we catch the right things. The right thing is not necessarily making a basket, it is getting a rebound, executing a block out, making the right decision in a certain situation, being enthusiastic on the bench, and helping a teammate.”

Jack Clark, head men’s Rugby coach at Cal-Berkeley, suggested that is it difficult to audit success. What he means is that it is hard to make changes when one is winning. He says coach must have the correct touchstones so they can talk to athletes with honesty. Clark tries to use the 70-30 rule, that is, talk about 70% positive things and 30% of things that athletes need to do to get better.

Coaches can easily chart effort plays or above the line behavior in practice and games. Those athletes who display great effort and above the line behavior are rewarded with verbal praise and playing time. To reinforce above the line behavior, don't play individuals who give less than great effort or display good behavior until they start doing it in practice.

### **Manage Below the Line Behavior**

Bob Glass, Oklahoma State University head strength and conditioning coach, finds it helpful to flip the script when dealing with below the line behaviors. By flipping the script, the athlete is forced to look at the behavior from the perspective of a coach.

The coach must certainly create awareness of the below the line behavior by talking to the athlete after the practice or training session. The athletes must understand personal accountability and team expectations. If an athlete's behavior falls below the line, the athlete will "pay the fine" and move on. In the case of Glass, as athlete displaying below the line behavior gets a ticket and pays off his or her fine on a stair master.

### **Resetting the Standard**

Becky Burleigh, former University of Florida head women's soccer coach, encouraged her players to call time out and ask questions. Sometimes an athlete needs an energy break or clarity on a drill or some aspects he or she doesn't clearly understand. She likes to give the game back to her athletes by allowing them to stop the drill and fix it without the coaches having to do it. Self-correction creates awareness and peer support is helpful.

The best coaches want their athletes seeing them (the coaches) watching them (the athletes). One does not want to take practice time to address the behavior as it happens, but rather, simply let them see your eyes watching them. One needs to get as much done on the front end so athletes know the expectations.

### **Coach is the Standard**

In all cases, coaches set the standard and they are the standard. It is important to get an outside viewpoint and feedback (an audit) from others on how you are doing. Clark suggested that it is important that coaches audit themselves, "coaches have to want to know how they are doing". If you are made aware of bad things, you must pivot away from them.

Burleigh says that one must, "Listen to others, have people around you. Coaches are so wound into the practice that is great to have someone who is outside of it." Coale said "as a coach it is your job to be a mirror and mirror back to your athletes the very best image of themselves.

### **Reference**

What Drives Winning. (2016). Coaching the line. *WDW 2016 Conference*. <https://whatdriveswinning.com/conference-videos/coaching-the-line/>

### **About the Author**

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# How to Help Your Athletes Improve Their Mental Game

Molly Griep, Northwood High School

Intrinsic motivation is well-defined as “The doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence” (Pierre-Yves, 2008). When an athlete is intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external products, pressures, or reward. “Intrinsic motivation is generally distinguishing from extrinsic motivation on the basis of the reward that is associated with the activity” (Deci et al., 1981, p. 80).

The reward for intrinsically motivated behavior is the feeling of competence and self-determination that is associated with behavior. The reward for extrinsically motivated behavior is something that is separate from and follows the behavior. With competitive activities like sports, the reward is typically “winning” (that is, beating the other person or the other team), so the reward is extrinsic to the activity itself. Coaches and teachers are seeing more and more athletes who give up at the drop of a hat, cannot think for themselves, and do not have the confidence within their peers to rise above them all.

## **Sport Psychology and Why it Works**

“Sport psychology is the connection between the mind and the body and how the mind and body impact performance” (Fischer & Gillham, 2019). Think of a race car. No matter how fast or powerful the car is, if the driver does not have the knowledge or control to operate the vehicle, the specifically built race car is no better than any plain old vehicle. Through the use of sport psychology concepts, coaches can aim to train athletes’ minds to effectively run their “race car,” through pressure and regular performances.

Sport psychology concepts include topics like goal setting and self-talk to more

complex concepts of imagery and relaxation. Using these different methods, coaches can help athletes gain awareness of how their mind and body react during practice and competition, to help better optimize performance. Having this base of knowledge allows athletes and coaches to practice overcoming the inherent internal hurdles that arise while they aim to achieve peak performance.

## **How Coaches Can Incorporate Sport Psychology Concepts**

Coaches can integrate these concepts of sport psychology into practice and games. These concepts are most effective when they are frequently reinforced. Coaches are the most practical person to help introduce these concepts into practices. Here are five practical ways to incorporate sport psychology concepts into a daily coaching routine.

- Before practice, discuss your goals for your time together by emphasizing what is unique about that practice’s activities. Have your athletes talk to another player or other coach, what one thing they wish to improve on or have a better understanding by the end of practice. Talking about what happened during practice will make your athletes more aware of their actions during practice and help translate into the game or competition.
- Implement relaxation at the end of each practice. Take one or two minutes during the final huddle of practice to have your athletes complete a full body scan or a set of rhythmic breathing to end practice. “Remember the 6-2-7 breathing count and lead three or four team breaths” (Fischer & Gillham, 2019).

Taking this time to reflect with your athletes will allow them to become aware of how their body feels.

- Coaches should implement check-ins to create open lines of communication with each athlete and the team. Be aware of the athletes as they learn new skills. Coaches need to understand that when their athletes learn new skills, they may become aggravated or discouraged. A simple check-in may be just asking your athletes how they think practice went and one aspect of practice that went well and one aspect that they could improve on for the next practice.
- Coaches should use the “positive sandwich” when giving feedback to their players. When an athlete makes a mistake, instead of telling them what not to do; point out what they did correct, give a future-oriented critique, and a word of encouragement. A positive sandwich in volleyball could go like this, “Great job getting your feet in place. Next time try not to swing your arms. Keep up the hustle!” This positive feedback method provides reinforcement and a positive direction in a way that your athletes can respond to and improve on.

Coaches having this knowledge about sports psychology are better at understanding who their athletes are and what they can become with positive psychology concepts. Basic sport psychology allows coaches to leverage their current knowledge and support their athletes and teams and help them bring a mental advantage and edge during practice and competition.

### **The Importance of the Mental Game**

It is now widely accepted that the mental aspect of sports is what ultimately wins any race, competitive game, or practice. Being “mentally tough” is what distinguishes the 1% of top athletes from the ordinary. People often put too much weight on the physical capabilities of an athlete but may never think about their mental skills they have or

lack, are just as critical to their athletic success. Many people do not acknowledge the fact that mental skills, self-awareness, and the ability to understand and work with other people, is just as important as working on free throws, serving or shot-put drills.

“Coaches need to think about mental skills being an athlete’s hub. Every single decision they make is processed by their brain” (Hanson, 2017). Coaches need to know that it is critical to acknowledge it is the hub for everything we do. It is not just a little piece of the puzzle, but a central and major piece of the puzzle. Coaches have seen athletes that didn’t have all the physical attributes that plenty of other did, but what those athletes have going for them is their mental toughness and how they excel at the mental side of the game.

### **Conclusion**

As coaches who are teaching and directing the next generation of athletes, we need to look at the whole athlete, that is including the mind, the body, and the whole athlete. Coaches need to broaden their horizons and research how positive reinforcement, sports psychology, and mental toughness are going to help improve team cohesive, athlete turnout, and athlete participation. Coaches need to find ways to incorporate these concepts into practice so athletes are comfortable with daily body scans, reflection, and mindfulness within their sport.

Athletes will have more successful practices, games, and overall enjoyment with these concepts implemented into everyday life. Athletes who have mental toughness will have increased resilience to stress, improved life satisfaction, and enhanced performance. With these concepts implemented daily, athletes will handle situations outside of practice better and reduce stress. As athlete’s mental toughness increases, so does confidence and peace of mind. Athletes must want to also use these concepts as well, at least, if you want to be a better athlete, partner, or worker increasing your mental strength will help you reach your full potential in whatever you choose to put it to.

### Resources

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### About the Author

Molly Griep is physical education teacher and coach at Hatton-Northwood Public Schools, Northwood, ND.

# Top Ten Thoughts from a North Dakota Class B High School Girls Basketball Coach

Andy Braaten, Carrington High School

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With apologies to all top ten lists, here is my attempt to inform and inspire fellow coaches.

**Number 10: Every moment matters.** As this writing begins, summer “vacation” starts. Open gym, skills camp, weight training, and team camps are scheduled. A book “What Matters Most” by John Sullivan has just arrived in the mail. If it is as good as touted, it may be shared with assistant coaches. Coach’s convention schedule is out and the speakers this attendee wants to hear are circled. The down time at convention and team camps are great times to share thoughts with other coaches (see number 6). When next fall arrives, and if the calendar allows it, attending a college practice is a favorite excursion to see a new drill, set, conditioner or an overall different practice plan.

**Number 9: First things first.** Cleaning out files the last day of school 5-27-22, a practice plan schedule dated 8-12-99 was found. (Fall girls BB) Plenty of conditioning and some defensive and ballhandling drills. Really basic. We did let them play a little basketball at the end with 3 on 2 continuous.

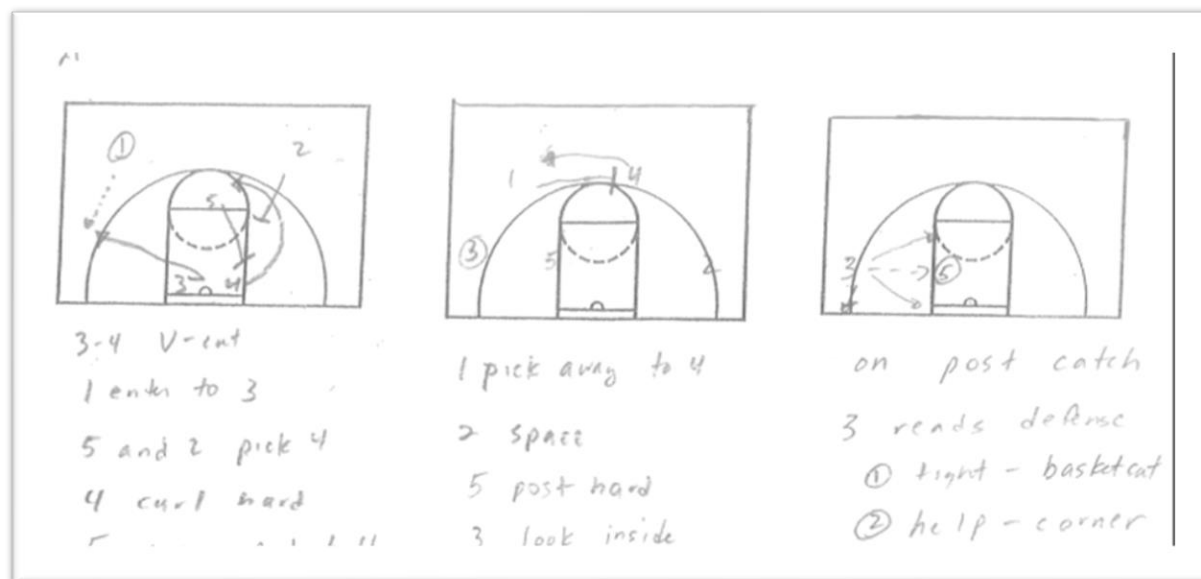
**Number 8: Stay basic (see #9) with a few tweaks.** Last year a player said she liked how we had a different focus in our daily shell drill (4-4 closeout). Examples include: double the post, double a certain player or two, defend the high screen, overplay the

wing entry, no switch, giving the offense an advantage to make the defense scramble, etc. Players need both the basics for consistency but also the changes to help keep them engaged and excited. Another tweak we do on 3 on 2 continuous is jamming the rebounders and pressure the outlets make or miss.

**Number 7: Finish practice with a competitive shooting drill.** Here is a shooting game we call “37”. Teams of 2-4 at 6 hoops. One ball per team or per person, which makes it go faster. Teams start in the right short corner. First team to 3 makes wins round and every team is back to zeros. For winning team to win next round they need to make one more shot than their previous winning round. After 2 teams get to 4 all teams go to right elbow, after two teams get to 5 all teams go to left elbow, after two teams get to 6, we go to left short corner. 7 makes wins the game. Teams need to shout out winning number of makes each round.

**Number 6: Network.** Connecting with fellow coaches is one of the great joys of the job. Getting the scouting report, requesting film, or asking for advice on certain issues are just a few things our peers can help us out with in and out of season. If you are new to coaching, find an experienced person on staff or maybe an opposing coach. If you are experienced, share your ideas with the new generation of coaches.





**Number 5: Adjust your team's playing style to your lineup.** Some years, two six foot girls help the high-low game. Other years, a 5'6" post changes your attack. Most years we put this motion 21 in to keep the girls moving and even though we many not use it as much due to personnel, we may face it, so defending it will be an appropriate use of practice time.

**Number 4: Use your practice time wisely.** A wise assistant told me our job is to improve our athletes every day. With multiple winter sports and NoDak weather, the available gym time can get tight. The hour you get in the gym for the day has to be laser focused. Post season tourney time can have this feel, so make the minutes intense. If the gym is not available, check out the weight room, watch some film together, or schedule a day off. The practices after an off day can be some of the best practices.

**Number 3: Communicate strongly with all parties.** Our players are of the digital age so pick an appropriate platform. This coach keeps it simple with remind app for messages and old school hard copy, along with email if needed. Make your parent meeting informative and bring some humor. In years past we have played some Kahoot

games with needed discussion starters and fun stories at the parent meeting. Keep school employees informed: assistants, AD, admin, custodians, office staff, and teachers. Let classroom teachers know of student athletes missing class time days ahead of the game.

**Number 2: Maintain your health.** Get away from the gym and your players. Work on your physical and mental wellness with exercise, family/friend time and a real vacation. Concentrate on your day job whether teaching or other occupation to escape the ups and downs of a season. Balance your life with non-sport community activities like a civics group, church leadership or other volunteer experiences.

**Number 1: Respect all, Fear none.** This saying has been on our practice jerseys for over 15 years. Another wise assistant has helped me to stress to our student athletes to control the controllables. We tell our players that they are in control of effort and attitude and if they give us those two things every day, they never disappoint us.

I hope this list can help you to coach 'em up for another season.

**About the Author**

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# The Importance of a Coach

Laura Friedman, Ohio State University

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The following essay was written about my last year as a club hockey player at a Division 1 university. This essay is my way of sharing my thoughts on the importance of having a well prepared, knowledgeable, and passionate coach. It was written following the semester after completing a method of coaching course and while currently enrolled in an independent study on advanced coaching.

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This season we didn't have one coach, we had three. Three separate head coaches!

This all began when I was looking for a coach in the spring of 2021. Finding someone with the schedule and desire to coach at 9 pm on Tuesday and Thursday nights is not easy. To add to that, the pay isn't great. From a teammate's recommendation, we landed the best option we could find. His name was Lester (all names in this essay have been changed) and he was 21 years old with no coaching experience; however, he had played hockey in high school and had the time available to coach.

It was evident Lester had not coached before as he did not make eye contact with the team when he mumbled his way through the first drill. It was a good drill, just an uninspiring presentation of it. Going into the locker room after practice there was still the excitement of the beginning of the season and some hope left for Lester. As the president of the club, I managed everything. So, I felt very responsible for Lester's lack of coaching ability and that I provided the team with a less than ideal coach. I gave Lester the benefit of the doubt and let him plan the first three weeks of practice. By the end of the third week, we had not progressed past skill drills and the team was beginning to become

frustrated. Why should they show up to practice? It was ill-put together and did not hit the sweet spot of challenge and comfort. With club hockey, no one is forcing you to show up, you have no scholarship, no contract, and no commitment besides the one you feel to the team. So that's what started happening, girls would slowly prioritize other parts of their life above the team and would come to fewer and fewer practices. But I totally understand. Why would you show up to something that isn't making you better and is no longer fun because of how frustrating practice is? And not to forget the terrible ice hours.

As I saw the team slipping through the cracks, I reminded myself of forming, storming, norming and performing. The excitement of a new season had worn off and the reality of what looks to be our season is setting in. The big question was, what side will the team choose? The continued downward slope, or will there be something new to believe in? Success does not just happen by sitting around, which is why I started pre-practice meetings with Lester. These would include talking about what is going well, what is not working, and what steps we can take to get there.

Lester was very receptive to these meetings as it was evident his passion for wanting success for the team. He just did not know how to get there. One big thing we worked on was elevating the practice plan. We did this by making an objective for each week and practice. We created a list of topics the team needed to work on and what order those should be accomplished in. I inspired his drill presentation to speak louder and more direct which developed confidence in the drills he was conveying. I also encouraged him to smile more, and chat with the girls during drills to get to know them a bit. All these things had a clear

positive impact on the reception of him as a coach by the team. The season looked to be trending upward again, but I could not control nor coach every aspect of Lester. So, while the practices got better, coaching on the bench and in the locker room did not.

Working with Lester was not the only angle I took to oppose the trend of storming and the norming of it. I reached out to individuals on the team to have casual conversations with them about the season and what they thought. Through these I would implement hope for Lester by saying things such as “I am meeting with him before practices and he comes with a full notebook worth of drills. He might not present it well, but he really cares”. Communicating with the team and showing them behind the door of coaching and how the team is run made it clear that they were cared about. This helped and people were re-inspired to participate and show up to practice.

Coming to the end of the fall semester, we were ready for a break. The girls on the team were fun and liked each other (social cohesion), however, the on the ice part was just not as rewarding (task cohesion). Meeting with and coaching Lester changed the angle of where the team was headed but it wasn't enough. He wasn't a natural leader, so the team couldn't look to him for something to believe in. So that gaze came to me. I am the president of the club and have been for three years, I am the most consistent thing this team has. I am a player, the captain, the president and one would say now the coach. Those are a lot of hats to wear, and really, I just wanted to wear my helmet.

Going into the spring semester I was excited for the potential of a new beginning and Lester being able to use the knowledge he gained the previous semester to better the team. Considering the second sentence of this essay includes the words “three coaches”, I received a text message from Lester four days before the first practice of our spring semester. Lester was sick and would be unable to fulfill his duties of coaching for the rest of the year. I called him up and had a conversation. We concluded that he could stand on the bench for games

but could not be at practice. This was enough to keep the season going as I knew I would be able to run practice.

But this is not what I wanted. Like Herb Brooks said “I am your coach, I won't be your friend”. I knew that having myself run practice, even as capable as I was, would not be the best for me or the team. I could not act as a friend while making decisions that affect the whole team. It was isolating in the position I already was in as the president where being the coach would just put me into another realm.

So, what's the next best thing to a 21-year-old with no coaching experience? Another 21-year-old with no coaching experience. With four days until the first practice and two weeks before the first game I did not have much time to work with. I came up with three solutions. One was to have me run practice and Lester stand on the bench during games, the second was to call in Mack, our former coach, but he could only be there until mid-February, or we could get Bob, a former Men's Club Hockey player who had just graduated. So, I laid out the situation to the team, presented them with my solutions and said we need to find a coach. I gave the team three days to bring their suggestions and ask questions so we could pick the best solution. As it is, no one had any other solutions. Knowing that option 1 was not cohesive and option 2 was not long term, that only left option 3, Bob. Bob was fresh out of college, a former fraternity brother and hockey player who had the ego of someone who just won the Stanley cup. Clearly, I knew this wasn't going to perfect, but nothing was even about this season, I was desperate. After a team vote, we landed on option 3 with a caveat that Bob would not be able to take PTO if we made it to the national tournament.

I called Bob and told him he had the job and that practice was at 9 pm the next day. I constructed and ran the first practice with Bob watching and moving pucks. He was enthusiastic and you could tell the girls were happy about the change. Bob and I collaborated on the next practice and split instructing drills. That weekend we headed to a nearby college for games and got beat

badly to the point where we forfeited the second game because of the number of injured players. Bob was beginning to build major confidence with coaching as the team seemed to be getting along even after the two losses.

We played our next opponent the following weekend and five minutes into the game we were winning 4-0. We came to an agreement that we would count the game as 6-0 and give them some of our players to keep playing for fun. Rolling through the first opponent where we got clobbered, then playing opponent #2, where we dominated, there was no real coaching needed because the games were such on either side of the spectrum. For the following practices, we were just far enough into the season where Bob hadn't bored us with drills yet and was still trending upwards in the eyes of the players. But next we played opponent #3, a competitive team for us, which is where the frustration began. Bob was excited and saw an opportunity to win and so he began to correct mistakes on the bench. One missed pass and he's talking to you, one missed shot and he's telling you to hit the net. The way you coach girls is a lot different than the way you do for boys and the approach is everything. Yes, I missed the net and of course I don't want to keep doing that, but what is saying "you need to hit the net!" going to do? Frustrate me. Instead, hearing "Fantastic job catching that pass and being in the right position, you're going to put it in next time!" going to do? Inspire me and give me confidence to hit the net. As the approach of bench management continued to lean towards a negative spotlight on your mistakes, heads start to go down, mouths shut, and feet slow.

We won both of the games but not in the fashion we should have. The following weekend we drive seven hours to play opponent #4 and split the series when we were very capable of winning both games. That week in practice, fewer girls showed up, more looks were given across the room when Bob explained something and the respect for Bob as a coach was diminishing. The big turn is when we play a community college from Canada that recruits girls and is the defending National Champion. Earlier in the

fall semester, we lost 5-1 both times we played them. In the first game of the spring series, we lost 8-1. But not because of lack of effort, we just weren't in the physical shape to play three full periods of hockey. What also didn't help was that we were probably better off with a shooter tutor in the net than our actual goalie. It's difficult to play knowing that one shot on our net and the puck is probably going in.

The morning of the second game of the series, Bob walked into the locker room and started his pregame speech with "Whatever you did yesterday, do the complete opposite". As players, what we heard is that no one worked hard, you didn't make any passes, you didn't get any shots on net, and you sucked. As a player, that is probably the last thing one wants to hear at 9 am on Sunday morning after one's body got beat up playing the night before. Why would the team want to play for someone who treats them like that? Winning or losing against the Canadian team didn't matter as we were already ranked high enough to make it to the national tournament. We lost 7-1 that day and it was clear the team was now against Bob.

Understanding how seasons go, I knew I had to talk with Bob just how I used to meet with Lester. After a back-and-forth conversation with Bob before the next practice, it was clear to me that Bob wanted success for the team and didn't think he was approaching it wrong. I did my best to convey to him that this is club hockey, we are already going to make it to the national tournament, and there is only one series of games left in the season. I am not saying to quit trying, but it was clear it was either no coaching or mad coaching. Bob was receptive to my critiques, managed the bench better with less talking, some more positive reinforcement and we managed to win the next series. Even with Bob performing better, it was clear he checked out from the team. He no longer had a practice plan, the drills would drag on for 20 minutes, and yet he still had plenty to say. With no PTO as a 21-year-old and the team heading into the National Tournament, my dad became our hockey coach, our final and third coach of the season.

With a fresh slate, and my dad who has coached for many years, the team was looking forward to the new adventure. At Nationals, we had one practice and three guaranteed games. As a coach, my dad knew the only things he could control were managing the bench and pointing out a few things. He directed a high tempo practice and made it clear that we were here to win. He gave the team someone and something to believe in. The number of compliments he received after his first and only practice were quite amazing. The girls were tired and happy, the practice hit the sweet spot of challenge and comfort. Sadly, we lost all three of our games and did not move on to the semifinals, but it was still the best coaching we received all year. He couldn't change the team in three games, but he gave us a reason to be there. We ended the season with a smile on our faces and a new understanding of just how important a coach is.

#### **What I Learned About Quality Coaches and Coaching from this Experience**

Throughout the last season I was able to feel the impact of coaching decisions as a player as well as analyze them from the knowledge I gained from my coaching class.

In the paper you read about how I attempted to redirect the season by working with the coaches on how they inadvertently emotionally impact players through their coaching decisions. After further analysis of the season, I have concluded that to be a quality coach you must make players feel that they have a purpose, are improving and are valued.

At the beginning of the season, there was not a defined goal of where the team was

headed, therefore we did not have a uniform purpose to rally behind. When Lester ran the same skill drills for the first three weeks of practices, the team did not feel like they were improving. Finally, when Bob was our coach and said "do the opposite you did yesterday" after we lost 8-1, the players did not feel valued. These three notions correspond with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, a five step pyramid of emotional wellbeing for humans. When all five steps of the pyramid are satisfied, humans can achieve their highest success.

From my experience and analysis, I have concluded that to be a quality coach you must satisfy the emotional needs of the players for them to be their best self's and buy into your game plan. Through the lack of purpose, improvement, and value in the last season, it was painfully evident that these are three absolutely necessary things for a coach to create a successful and significant season for their players.

#### **About the Author**

Laura Friedman is from Mendota Heights, MN and has been an avid hockey player her whole life. Her passion for hockey continued when she attended North Dakota State (NDSU) where she played and managed the club hockey team for four years. Laura recently graduated in May with a bachelor's in mechanical engineering. Through her experience with the club team at NDSU she enrolled in an intro to coaching class her senior year where she was able to fully realize her true passion for coaching. Laura is currently enrolled at Ohio State University pursuing her master's in mechanical engineering and plans to continue playing for their club hockey team. Although she is pursuing a degree in engineering, her long-term goal is to become a major hockey coach.

# Keys to a Successful Competition

Amanda Anderson, St. Francis High School

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There is a decade's old saying of "practice makes perfect". It is well known that practice has a much better chance of producing perfection when players practice under the conditions they are going to face during competition. This means practices should provide greater stress at times to help athletes feel what it is like to compete and perform under stress. The reasoning behind this is similar to exposure therapy. Exposure therapy helps people deal with their fears and anxieties by habituating individuals to what they fear most. Over time, the subjects will learn to reduce negative feelings with that trigger and function better when the fear is presented. In the case of athletic performance, the fear is stress.

Let's apply this to real practice in a track and field event such as throwing. A coach would begin by implementing a "mock" competition to practice. In this mock competition, the same rules will apply as used in a real competition. Throwers must "save" the throw by not stepping out of the ring and must walk out the back of the ring. Athletes will get up to six throws. The first three throws are prelims. A coach can make up a "safety mark" that an athlete must throw in order to get into the finals (to receive the next three throws). This mark should be difficult yet achievable, and relative to the age and skill level of the athletes. Athletes will be encouraged to make check marks for each individual throw they take and encouraged to take 3-4 minutes between throws, similar to a real competition. This set up will fully immerse athletes into the competition stress. It also provides specific situations of stress that might occur in a competition, such as

fouling the first two throws and then having only one throw to try to make finals.

Continual exposure to the stress of competition will help athletes get less of a negative response to the stress and will help them elicit more positive responses and better performances during actual competition. This will hopefully help them avoid fouling, as in the shot put, when under stress, or changing form for the worse when at a stressful meet. Even though this example is for throwing in track and field, this scenario of creating stress during practice sessions should be implemented in every sport.

Next, let's consider competition and strategies that might be used to avoid choking. One point is that athletes in competition should think about what to do rather than how to do it. Keeping one's mind on what to do is known as strategy focus. Having a strategy focus can help athletes avoid putting too much attention on the skill or performance details. Too much attention to detail can lead to paralysis by analysis. Paralysis by analysis is overthinking the details which causes brain power to be focused on too many things, often resulting in an individual being unable to focus on the goal and perform successfully.

What does strategy focus look like? For a thrower, a strategy focus could be "separation" in the throw. A high level thrower has thrown the shotput over 10,000 times. This athlete's brain knows what to tell her body when she wants to focus on "separation". She does not need tell her body how to do it (technique focus).

Having a strategy focus ties closing to having a mantra. A mantra should be a one-word cue an athlete can say to his or herself as they perform. In the example used above, “separation” is the mantra. As the thrower steps into the ring, she keeps repeating that word in her mind and sometimes even says it quietly under her breath. Mantras can be an important key to finding performance success for every event. Obviously, each event has its own set of mantras that could be used and each athlete might be different and may even change the mantra from meet to meet. The important thing is that athletes find a mantra that works for them, and they use it.

Another major focus athletes should have is focusing on the positive. This is much easier said than done. For an athlete, sometimes it can be easy to be negative and get stuck in the negative mindset. Things such as feeling like you did not get enough sleep, you had a bad practice the day before, or an official making an upsetting call. These things can easily get one stuck in a negative mindset. Athletes need to think about their sport and performance in a positive mindset. Instead of thinking negatively like you had a bad practice, you can think about it in a positive light by thinking, “I got all my bad throws out yesterday”. Also, thinking positive thoughts about yourself as a whole is crucial. Athletes can build their own confidence through positive self-talk. Thoughts or self-talk like, “I am strong enough to win this meet”, or “I always show up and compete when my team needs me most”, or any other positive phrases one says to oneself can notably improve performance.

Athletes must refrain from thinking about what might have been. This is similar

to what was mentioned about getting rid of negativity. Learning to not dwell on past performances or changing how one thinks about a previous performance can positively affect any future performances. Athletes must work on seeing their failures as a chance to learn how to perform better in the future. An example from the shot put scenario is fouling out of a throwing event. This is the worst thing that can happen in a competition for a thrower because he or she technically threw zero feet. Fouling happens when one’s form is a little off, hence throwing one’s balance off, causing that person to either step on the toe board or step outside of the ring. Instead of dwelling on a meet in which one fouled out, think about it as a spot to learn from. During the next week of practices, an athlete could spend a lot of time learning how to save throws and making sure that during all practice throws, he or she is consciously trying to save (not foul). By the next meet, hopefully fouling will not be an issue. Learn from mistakes, do not dwell on them.

#### **About the Author**

Amanda Anderson received her undergraduate degree in Health Education and Physical Education and Master’s of Science in Leadership in Physical Education and Sport, from NDSU. During her time at North Dakota, she competed on the Women’s Track and Field team where she was a several time conference champion in the throwing events. She also has qualified for the USA national championship meet. Amanda is a health and physical education teacher and coach at St. Francis High School and will continue to train and throw discus professionally.



# Thinking About Basketball

Jim Trett, Sioux Falls Washington High School

**PHILOSOPHY:** My basic strategy about playing defense is pressure man to man with full court run and jump. Offensively we favor motion offense and transition team basketball. Your team can always run the ball up the court whether you have speed or not. Post players must be rim runners. Our team slogan is: "run for your teammates". Teams have to know they will be supported by their communities if the people know they are going to see them play hard all the time. You are not always going to be state contenders but work ethic belongs to every single player and coach. So where does this all start?

**IN PRACTICE.** I love to practice. Players have to know how important it is to prep their minds and energy for practice. My practices are scripted out and followed in 5, 10, and 15 minute increments. How do you get them to look forward to practice? We make the practices highly competitive. For example, we go full speed in all drills, no breaks. When players are not in the drill, they run and get a drink, but practice stops for no one. This keeps practice flowing, lends to more solid communication, and keeps practices shorter and crisp. We have a manager who has a device with 10 numbers on it. In every drill when there is a turnover, she/he flips up a number, once it gets to ten, we run from the baseline to half and baseline to free throw line and then quickly back into what we were doing. Turnover awareness. Turn the ball over you lose, ask the Celtics.

**ROLE ACCEPTANCE.** Players must know what their role is on the team. They must play to their strengths and work on their weaknesses. Coaches and players spell this

out. Roles can change but it is imperative that players understand their particular role.

**DRILLS.** Drills are key to success. I present four of my favorite drills.

**35 second drill:** 5 on 5 half court, put 35 seconds on the clock. If the defense gets a stop the clock stops right there and the offense goes again from that point on the clock. If the D can get the clock to run out then they get to go on O and the team that was on offense goes to D. If the offense scores the clock goes back to 35 seconds. Every time they score the clock is reset.

**Pride and defense:** Organize the entire team into groups of 3. Three players go on defense while the rest of the teams line up in 3's lines at half court. Put 10 or 15 minutes on the clock. If the defense gets a stop, they pass the ball out to half and take on the next three players. Keep track of how many stops you get in a row. If you are scored on, the scoring team now gets to go on defense. Now it's their turn to see how many stops they can get.

**5-man rebound:** Five offensive players are spread around the 3 point arc, corner, wing, top of key, wing, corner. Five players are lined up in a straight line from the baseline to the free throw line. The players in the paint are each numbered from 1 to 5. Coach throws the ball to a player on the arc and yells out a number from 1 to 5. Whoever's number is called out they guard the ball, all other players scramble to take a man making sure they are in the correct defensive position (example weakside, one pass away etc.) As soon as the player catches the ball from the coach, play is live. On the shot

made or missed, it is into transition down and back. The drill starts over once they get back to the original starting place. Five more players run into the paint yelling out their number.

**Rush drill:** This drill can be done with 3 on 3, 4 on 4, or 5 on 5. For this example, we will use 4 on 4. Four players are lined up across the court free throw line extended. Four players line up on the baseline from sideline to sideline. Each player on the free throw line has a number 1-4. A coach throws the ball to one of the players on the baseline and yells out a number. The player whose number was called has to touch the baseline giving the offense team a player advantage to begin. That player hurries up and hustles to get back into the play while the three defenders try to stop four offense players. Players must be pointing and talking. On the shot, steal, or turnover, the team transitions back. There is no out of bounds on any of our play. If the ball goes out of bounds the defensive team hurries it in and goes. There is no stoppage of play, the drill starts over. When the coach enters the ball, he can also call more than one number giving the offense the advantage and the D has to slow them down until help arrives.

We strive to go all out all practice. We don't run at the end of practice because we run all day in practice with the basketball. I truly believe that if you ask our players about practice, they would tell you it was fun. If it's fun they want to be there and they are

learning. Do we stop practice sometime to make a point? Of course we do. But most of the time we can pull a player out, talk to them, and put them back in; just like in a game.

Being a COACH is a title you will carry with you forever. It's a great profession but a tough one. "the truest measure of success is the test of TIME".

### **About the Author**

Coach Jim Trett started his career at small Northwestern High School, 20 miles south of Aberdeen, South Dakota. The Wildcats teams went to 8 state tournaments, winning state titles in 1989 and 1991. In 1992, Coach Trett and his family moved to Luverne, MN, where he coached and taught for 2 years. In Trett's first year at Luverne, the Cardinals went 7-17. In year 2, they advanced to the sub section finals and ended the year 17-7. The Southwest conference was loaded. In 1995, Trett started teaching and coaching at Sioux Falls Washington, where he would be the head coach for the next 18 years. 33 years of coaching in all. In the first year at WHS, the Warriors went 3-21. In year 2, they were in the state championship game, falling to perennial power Mitchell. The program improved and the Warriors appeared in 10 state tournaments winning titles in 2001 and 2003. Coach Trett retired this year after 43 years in education. Jim and his wife Jennifer have 3 wonderful children and 3 awesome grandchildren. "Education is not an expense - it's an investment"

# “Why I Coach .... The Thrills & Spills That Still Add Up to a Great Profession!”

Paul Twenge, Minnetonka High School

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The best way to explain my feelings on being a coach is to write about what has kept me in this profession. So, let me put down the things that I believe keep me coming back for more. I will list these items in no specific order of importance other than they are all part of why I stayed in coaching.

To give you a small window of what I have coached and the length of time I have been in it, here is a “snapshot” resume. I have been involved in coaching for 47 years. I have been a high school and college football coach. I have coached high school and collegiate baseball. My background has even had me as a girls track coach at the high school level. The coaching experience I got for basketball came at the junior high level. However, the one sport that has been with me from the get-go is baseball.

Coming from a small high school (Hatton) in North Dakota, I was able to play football, basketball, and baseball. One of the reasons I liked baseball so much was that if it was too cold today for game or practice, tomorrow had a chance to be warmer. Plus, our community excelled in baseball.

Back to the things that kept me coaching, a lifelong career. As I said before, I will list them and then talk about them separately.

## Why I Coach:

1. The Players
2. The Player’s Family
3. The Techniques/Specialties of Your Sport
4. The Passion for the Game
5. The Delight of Seeing the Performance
6. The Winning

7. The Losing
8. The Competition
9. The Relationships with Your Peer Coaches
10. My Family

My hope is to explain these items so well that it will make all of you who do coach, glad that you are a coach. For those of you who read this that do not coach for a career, wishing you would have chosen this profession. The coaching profession fills the heart while providing its share of headaches.

## 1. The Players

Without players, there are no coaches. They are the lifeline to everything a coach does, will do, and is the coach’s mark on the sport. You will definitely have athletes who are at the top and can lead while proving to all that they are best on the squad. This type of player makes you want to coach more because you are having more successes than failures. This player may also give you the feeling that you know all there is to know about the sport you are involved with. In fact, you may think that you need not have to learn more about the game. You know it all. You can’t be a good coach without being a good teacher. A good teacher always has good materials with a great presentation.

You will believe you have done a great job because you have won the main title for your sport. But, when the player(s) comes back after finishing their time with you to say “Hello!” and watch your new group perform, this is the true success of being a coach. Yes – I love winning much more than losing! I do love the new players seeing the veterans (graduated player) come home to watch their school play and touch base with the

coach. This allows the current players see the hugs and/or hand shake you can give the alum. This will not happen with every player you coached. Even those players who do not feel close to you or your program will realize that decisions had to be made and you were the decision maker. There is no coach without the game. For sure, there is no coach without the players. As Forest Gump said, "Jenny and I are like peas & carrots. We belong together!" Coaches and players need each other to make the sport enjoyable to all.

## **2. The Player's Family**

One thing that all coaches need to understand is this: "Parents view a team from one out to 25(team size). Coaches go from 25 to one". If you as a coach understand that it is the job of parents to look out for the sons and daughters, it becomes more apparent why they are asking for meetings with you when their child is not playing. Regardless of how happy the player is when they make the squad, time makes them want the next step, that is, playing in front of family and friends.

Most parents are there to support their athlete, the team, the school, and finally, the coach. This order is fine. It is actually how it should go. The thing that you need to keep present in your mind and the team is that it is about "US". (US - The Team & The Coaches.) This is where it all starts and it all ends. Only you and the players know what was said/done in a given situation. Only you, as a coach, can share this information on a situation correctly if you so choose.

Provide those tasks that you feel you need assistance with during the course of a season to parents. For the parent group that you have given a responsibility, make it a small task. Remember, you are the leader of this program and you need to know what is happening within it. I coach for Minnetonka High School and I have my office that I call my own. However, the building and my office belong to the school district. You want players and families to take ownership with the sport you coach, but you run the show.

## **3. The Techniques/Specialties of Your Sport**

This is where I go crazy in my sport of baseball. I believe that Major League Baseball (MLB) is the top and all the levels down to high school baseball stem from MLB. We are all apples. The MLB is a "honey crisp", and high school is a low hanging red delicious. What I am saying is that you need to educate yourself to the mechanics that can make your athlete better for themselves, the team, and for the next coach who is going to instruct that athlete. What is very disheartening to me is the belief that what is being taught at a higher level of play cannot be instructed/presented to an athlete at a lower level of competition.

Players are sponges for the sport they want to be their best at. Learn the drills/skills that make the professionals the best at what they do. Athletes model themselves after the professionals. In the sport of baseball, we play with 90-foot bases like they do in the Major Leagues. They are playing the same game. It is just a slower game at our level. "They do not know what they do not know." It is your job as the coach to be the professional and know the sport the way the athlete needs you to know it. You will love the result of your instruction. They will love you for the instruction. As a coach, know your trade/sport. Be a lifelong learner for what you coach.

## **4. The Passion for the Game**

You are coaching the sport that brought out the passion in you and now it is your duty to pass this passion onto your athletes. Let the players see your desire to have them play the game the way it should be played. Tell them stories about yourself and fellow teammates you had that are related to your time in the game. Do not boast/brag about your play to them. Instead, let them see how important the game was to you. In fact, they should see how important the game was and is because you are still part of the game.

I believe that the freedom that comes with passion can be expressed at any time. During a practice for sure. The athletes love that you get excited about their play. They love seeing your excitement during the game. Remember, the game belongs to the players, but you are part of the full experience of the moment.

The last thing about passion. It can be construed as aggressive coaching and seen as over the top by the spectator. The passion you show/share is between you and your athletes. The spectator is on the outside looking in. Remember, it is about "US"! Passion can help drive athletes to their true desired ending ... victory & standout play.

### **5. The Delight of Seeing the Performance**

Watching things come together for an athlete while they are playing is like a piece of art at its highest level. To see that they are doing something that they learned and practiced from something that you taught them is extremely rewarding. The ultimate, to me, is to see a group work together to make the outcome a success for the whole. Getting everyone on the same page, same paragraph, same line, and same word is the true goal of any coach.

My job as a coach during the game is truly to get out of the way of performance. To tweak the athlete's actions but, do not interfere with play of the day. Stay away from "paralysis by analysis". It is nice to hear yourself instruct but --- game day --- the "Hay is in the Barn" as they say in Hatton, North Dakota. Your work, for the most part, is done. Watch and enjoy what you have helped build. Watch the joy on the players faces when they succeed in a given situation.

### **6. The Winning**

We coach to help players succeed. To be the last person standing. To allow the athlete to raise their arm/hand as a champion. I see nothing wrong with any of this. Nor should an athlete hold down his/her joy. We all get too few times to feel

like we are at the top of the mountain. Let them, the player(s), enjoy the moment.

I talk about winning with my players and expect to win when entering a game. The winningest franchise in all of sport is the New York Yankees of the MLB. 27 World Series Trophies and hunting for number 28! Their coaches, as they walk through their players, and are calling them "Young Champions" in the Minor Leagues. They set a precedence on letting those players know that winning is a priority and expected. No one works hard to fail. You work hard to succeed. To win the trophy. To be the best at what you want to be the best at. This is winning.

### **7. The Losing**

This comes with anything that you want to be a champion or at the top of. Usually there is only one person/team left standing when all is complete with an event/game. Lessons are learned from defeat by all. You learn the correct way to handle situations as well as yourself. It teaches a person/team how to prepare for the next contest. Losing a game is not the end of the world or your life, but if the game meant something to you, it may feel this way.

In the movie called "Balboa", Sylvester Stallone, has a line that fits for all who try and fail. "It is not how hard you get hit, it is how often you get back up!" Losing teaches you that there will be failures in life. How you rebound from being told "NO" or not scoring more than your opponent shows your dependable and continuing drive to be successful. Losing teaches you the principle of "one foot in front of the other," to keep yourself moving.

Losing has its place but, hopefully it is the last place and you are not in it. It is part of the whole process of playing. Something that must not and cannot be accepted.

### **8. The Competition**

This is what has brought all of us together. The player, the coach, and the game. The challenge to be the best is part of all of us to some degree. Coaches love

competition so much that they are willing to compete in front of others not involved with the playing of the game. We want people to know if we are winning, but do not like others knowing when we are losing. As a coach, you are addicted to the battles between individuals/teams.

Here is my example of coaches and the willingness to compete: Imagine proctoring a chemistry test. You will ever know who passes or fails the test unless the student wants you to know. You do not know if the students are learning from the teacher for that course because you do not see the final grades for the class or for each student.

As a coach, your classroom is the field, court, etc. that your athletes compete on. Since I coach baseball, let's continue with this description of how confident we are in our ability to teach.

When the fan/parent comes to the field, they know immediately if the team is passing the test by seeing the scoreboard for the contest. It tells them if we are failing or passing. As a coach, I am so confident in my ability to instruct that people can witness actual application of my teaching skills through the players.

For Example:

There is a runner on second base with just one out in the inning. A ground ball is hit to the third baseman. He throws to second base for the "double play". The problem with this scenario for the third basemen is there was "no" runner on first base. Therefore, the ball goes into right field because the second basemen is not at the base. No one is out. A run scores for the opposition. As a team, we are right back in the same situation before the fielding of the ground ball.

What does this tell the fan/parent? This was a huge mistake by the third basemen. That as a coach, it looks like I have no idea what I am teaching these players about the subject - the game of baseball. Nor am I communicating the situation to the team that would have brought about a positive ending.

As coaches, we are not afraid of showing our final product of education to the public. Coaches cannot be worried about their competition nor can the athletes you are instructing. This is what we all signed up for. Showing our best and sometimes our worst to all who are present.

## **9. The Relationship with Your Peer Coaches**

This takes time to develop as a coach. My only example is myself. As a younger coach, when our team went into the game, the competition was not just on the field. It was outside the lines. I was competing against the coach in the other dugout. Yes, you want to be victorious. To have the ability to shake hands with the opposing coach at the end of the game knowing you had won on that day.

It was not until later in my coaching career that I realized that I did not throw one pitch, field one ball, or get a hit to help us win. It was done all by the athletes I coached. Once this type of thinking happened, I began to realize the coach across the way was a good person who was trying to do what he could with his team to get the victory on that day. Yes, there were coaches with whom I did not mesh. But, I never let that take the battle for the win outside the lines. The game stayed on the field for the athletes.

Today, the coaching fraternity that I run in for baseball is outstanding. We even socialize off the field. As coaches, we talk about how to handle different situations with our teams that pertain to "X's & O's," as well as, attitude toward the game.

Without a doubt, the coaches I know are in the game for the right reason. They want to pass on the love of the game to the athletes they touch.

## **10. My Family**

Every coach who has been able to make coaching a career/profession for their life has had help at home from all members of their family. Be it your children, your spouse, or your parents. They all have made

your career possible. No coach goes into a practice or game without a plan/script to follow. Your support group, your family, allows you to develop these plans for your extended family (your athletes).

When coaching, your immediate family sometimes becomes secondary to your extended family. Games and issues that may occur will take time to correct or help. Your nuclear family allows you to do this because they understand the true size of the family you have as a coach. They understand that you know the athletes, their parents, siblings, and in some cases - grandparents. Your family also knows that they are the center of your universe. It is your job to make them understand this, as well as prove this.

Season end banquets become the farewell to some of your athletes and the beginning for remaining athletes. What it also becomes, for you as a coach, is a platform to provide testimony to all about your family just how important they are to you. Never miss the opportunity to show the happiness and love you have for your family. This must not be taken for granted by any coach. Any recognition you receive for quality work in your career, your family owns part of that award. Remember this --- always!

I have been blessed in my career in numerous ways. I have a family that stood by me when bullets were flying all around me. My administration, wherever I have coached, has been superior. They always cared even when they could not meet the 'asks' I had for my program. The parents have been fantastic regardless of liking me as a coach or not. They cared for their sons. The players are everything. Without them there is no me, no coach.

Coaching the sport of baseball for me has been a true blessing. Without coaching to direct me and keep me organized, I have no idea what I would have become.

As a baseball coach, my greatest fear is, "I will die before I know more about the game of baseball"! The fact is that I will die before this happens.

But the great thing is ... I got to be a coach.

#### **About the Author**

Paul Twenge, is the Head Baseball Coach at Minnetonka High School in Minnetonka, MN.