

COACHES COACHING COACHES

teaching, training, learning



Table of Contents

Editor's Message	3
Braves Swimming: A Reflection of a First-Time Head Coach on Lessons Learned Through the COVID Pandemic Claudia Schoellkopf, Mandan High School	4-6
To Be the Best Coach, Be the Best You Trevor Conrad,	7-10
The "Why" in Coaching Shawn Kuhnhenh, Des Lacs Burlington High School	11-12
How to Retain and Keep Athletes in a Program Deana Lefor, South Heart High School	13-14
Building Team Culture Brock Nagel,	15-17
Zone Coverage "Shuffle Bail" Technique Tyler Green, Rugby High School	18-19

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, and we talk.

I do, you help, and we talk.

You do, I help, and we talk.

You do, I watch, and 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

Brad Strand

Braves Swimming: A Reflection of a First-Time Head Coach on Lessons Learned Through the Pandemic

Claudia Schoellkopf, Mandan High School

There will no doubt be many articles written on how the COVID pandemic influenced many different aspects of life. This paper is simply the reflections of a new head coach in the sport of swimming & diving.

After 23 years as an assistant coaching swimming & diving in North Dakota, I became the head coach in Mandan, ND. This was in the spring of 2020 before everything in the US was shut down. I thought my coaching experience had given me as much preparation for the position as possible: five years coaching in Fargo (Fargo Shanley Girls Swim & Dive, Fargo South Boys Swim & Dive, West Fargo Girls & Boys Swim & Dive), and 18 years in Mandan. However, the pandemic changed everything.

Less than a month after being hired as the new head coach & aquatics instructor for Mandan High School, North Dakota was shut down: virtual school, no activities, and businesses closed with limited services. We all know the story!

Late summer rolled around, and in comparison with much of the country, we started to attempt to return to school and activities. However, it was on a modified schedule: alternating A & B class groups with half in school and half home virtual and the next day they flipped. Athletics also made adjustments: masks, smaller training groups, limited to no locker rooms, and modified competitions. Trying to explain this to high school student-athletes was a challenge, but with a united front on the coaching staff, we approached this as “let us be grateful, with

the opportunity given to us, to have a season, in whatever form it may be!”. However long the season was going to be, whatever limitations are given to us, it was so much more than what many were experiencing.

The girls’ team did experience a quarantine period, but it was early in our season and the state did make it through the entire fall season. Our state meet was not our normal format: one-day, two sessions of swimming, an alternative site for diving, and no awards. We adapted, overcame, improved, and, counted the season as an overall win. That win was not athletic – it was emotional, overcoming adversity, and perseverance.

A week after the fall season ended, the winter season was put on hold, at least until January 1st. Learning from the fall season, we knew we needed to persevere and be flexible. We learned that everything changes from day to day. So, we waited, and we hoped, and we shared what insight we had with our male student-athletes who felt they were in a holding pattern. A week later we were told that the seasons would start December 1st, but that all competitions were on hold until after January 1st. We lost some meets, but overall, we thought this was a good compromise.

The boy’s swim & dive season started, and protocols were adjusted week to week. We again had masks, smaller training groups, with limited to no locker rooms, modified practices and competitions, and no social events which so often are the backbone of activities and team bonding. By the second semester, classes started to return to a more “normal” schedule,

and athletics slowly followed but were more restricted. Each district set its protocols, and we learned to be flexible and follow whatever the local protocols stated. The season concluded with the state meet, which matched the girls in format and location.

Adults and student-athletes learned about their strengths, the ability to adapt & overcome, and to persevere. We could adapt to many things, but the physical, mental, and emotional toll would not be evident for some time.

My second year as a Head Coach came with some great news at the Summer Coaches Convention: the COVID protocols set by the NDHSAA were stored as a historical document. In essence, this meant that our athletic season would return to “normal”.

However, it soon became evident that the health crisis was not over. Our student-athletes struggled with so many “mental” components: the ability to persevere, “grit”, depression, and the ability to handle challenging situations, to name a few. The adaptations to our training regime continued to adapt, as we realized that the old training models would no longer work. We had to adjust when, how often, how long, and at what intensity we trained. Day’s off from training due to emotional stress (on an individual basis) became a more frequent occurrence. With swimming & diving being an “individual team” sport, we learned to focus on the individual, more so than in past training protocols.

This continued through the winter season, as we worked WITH our male student-athletes on similar situations. We continued to adapt, make changes, and adapt to a much younger team than we had worked with in the past seasons.

As I reflected on the 2021-22 year, I was confused. I strongly felt that the winter season

had been more successful, but I had no evidence to back that feeling. The traditional statistics of “success” were confusing. The win-loss record, WDA & State placing from the fall season were better. The time statistics from the winter season were better than that of the fall season. In addition, the winter season brought some highlights: individual success in both the athletic and academic arena, as well as recognition for “academic all-team”, which for this group is a rarity. (For our fall sport, this standard is one of our expectations and not a goal.)

I presented my findings at the NDHSCA Summer 2022 convention. I also presented how I had grown as a coach during those two years in my ability to delegate, become flexible, and overcome change. I shared how we had changed from our previous training model through the quarantines and beyond. But I was still confused as to why my reflection on “success” did not match up with the general statistical analysis. As a swimming and diving community in North Dakota, while we all LOVE to see athletic success, most of us value the cohesiveness of “the team”; the personal growth of a person; the growth of an individual as a person, a student, and an athlete in that order; the contribution each person brings to the group; the ability of the individual and the group to overcome; and, the personal connections made OVER the athletic prowess and success.

The lessons learned were many. As a coach, and with my coaching staff, we need to do a better job of:

1. teaching “the season”, expectations, team culture, the sports, and our “standard of excellence”.
2. setting goals that develop the entire person, not just the athlete.
3. explaining our training methods.
4. having “fun”, while training hard.

I also learned that we had great skills:

1. forming relationships with athletes
2. teaching athletes to trust themselves
3. teaching athletes to trust the process
4. reflection, self-evaluation, and growth

In summary, I was reminded that after a season (or seasons) that may not be considered “successful” by traditional standards (win-loss records, WDA/State placing), my standard of success in High School athletics has so many more standards than the traditional or popular measure:

My goal for our student-athletes is about personal growth, academic success, post-high school success, and finally athletic success.

When two athletes receive Academic All-America recognition, that is a success!

When the team receives Academic All-Team, this is success!

When the team forms a cohesive unit, gets along, has little conflict, has group goals, and moves toward them, that is a success.

This may not be the standard for most or all coaches, but they are major factors in what gives us the feeling of SUCCESS!

About the Author

Coach Schoellkopf is a graduate of Mandan High School, North Dakota State University, and Minot State University. She is currently pursuing an M.Ed. in Health and Wellness Education at the American College of Education.

A resident of Mandan, ND with 25 years of coaching experience, she was honored with the Winter ACOTY (2014) and Fall ACOTY (2020) from the NDHSCA. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her extended family and the various activities her nephews participate in, reading, and gardening.

To Be the Best Coach, Be the Best You

Trevor Conrad, Dickinson High School

From a young age, every kid who participates in athletics has the goal of winning championships. Most will want to be a part of the winning score and be mobbed by teammates. Others might want to break and hold numerous records. For some, though, the dream extends to coaching teams to many titles. As those student-athletes grow up, they get into the coaching profession looking to win championships, but also positively influencing their athletes. The question is, how do you become the best coach possible? To become the best coach for your players, you need to become the best version of yourself.

When looking at how to become the best version of yourself to become the greatest coach you can become, I believe that you should fine-tune certain areas of your life and your coaching. Without these being focused on, you may fall prey to burnout, issues in the home, family issues affecting your coaching, poor health, or other negative side effects. Improving yourself in the areas of work-life balance, being a lifelong learner by reading, and embedding metacognition in your coaching and everyday life gives you a high chance of providing your best self to your student-athletes.

Work-Life Balance

Is there such a thing as work-life balance? This seems to be an age-old pursuit for anyone who somewhat cares about their job and having a family. I am not one looking to be the most successful wrestling coach with three divorces and

children I don't even know. Also, I want to avoid being the most family-centered man who cannot coach a student-athlete in any of the fundamentals. This is where having adequate work-life balance comes into play. As #1 national bestselling author Christy Wright (2022) explains, a healthy work-life balance is choosing what is the right thing to do *right now*. While this concept is different from the usual strategy of planning out your minutes, it is simple yet effective. As coaches, there are instances where we cannot control where we are. Due to practice, team meetings, or competition, we have set times when we need to be present coaching.

So how can we balance coaching and our personal lives more effectively? Simple, when we are at our job coaching, I need to focus on coaching my student-athletes and developing them. Do I have a two-hour bus ride home after an away game? Rather than scrolling on your phone, complete some film reviews on the bus ride. Or begin scripting next week's practice schedule. You could also look into developing an itinerary for your next event, regardless of if it is home or away.

When you arrive home to be with your spouse and/or children, be present with them. You may have duties surrounding coaching that need to be accomplished, but wait until you put your kids to bed. Or simply decide to wake up an hour earlier so you and your significant other may spend quality time together. You may think about having a conversation with your spouse and/or kids to set expectations for the coming season

regarding working hours or weekends, and how it will only be temporary. By doing so, you and your loved ones will be on the same page about where your priorities are. From personal experience, I have noticed this method motivates me while I am at practice or school. Because I have decided I will be intentional with my time at home with my family, I will use this time away from them to accomplish as much as possible. *Doing what's right, right now* is a new concept to developing work-life balance, but I am confident this will assist you in overcoming the guilt of where you are spending your time and effort during your coaching season(s).

Metacognition

Thinking about thinking, what a weird idea to consider. As teachers and coaches, we have read the literature and been told numerous times how effective metacognition is to the learning process. Despite this, we continue to pass over this step. Whether we say we cannot find the time or we simply forget about it, reflecting on our decision-making in sports is often a lost cause. But if we know metacognition is important for our student-athletes, is it important for us as coaches? The answer is a resounding yes!

For our wrestlers, metacognition comes in the form of a simple one-page checklist of, "Yes," and, "No." It comes from Wrestling Mindset, a company that focuses on the mental side of wrestling, and there is a series of questions wrestlers need to answer, "Yes," or, "No," to, including (but not limited to):

- Did I have a good warmup physically?
- Did I take the first shot?
- Did I hit the first move in the bottom position?

- Did I ever quit?

As you can see, these are questions that are not performance-based but rather behaviors. It is also quick to complete, so our wrestlers never spend more than a couple of minutes on it after a match. Translating this to thinking about your thinking as a coach, you could develop a similar checklist. Whether you want to complete a mental exercise similar to this each day, after practices, or after an event, finding a system that is quick and to the point will pay off better than a lengthy process that you rarely ever complete. Items you could reflect on that center on your coaching could include:

- Did I show up with a positive attitude?
- Did I communicate my vision for the day effectively with my team?
- Did I show love and appreciation for ALL my student-athletes?
- Did I ask others for help?
- Was the flow of practice up to our standards?

By reflecting on your decisions, and extending it further to ask yourself *why* you made those choices, you will be a more mindful coach. And when you keep this practice consistent, you will see growth as a coach that you have never experienced before. Take this a step further, and reflect on the decisions you made at home with your family, out with your friends, or the choices you made for yourself. By reflecting on our decisions as a coach and a human, we are less likely to commit the same mistakes and more likely to improve in our craft.

Reading

The last aspect of becoming the best coach you can be by improving yourself

centers on reading. Let's face it many of us did not enjoy reading growing up, and some of us still do not find comfort in books. However, if you want to reach your full potential as a coach, pick up a book and begin to read! It has been shown that many successful people are lifelong readers, and, in turn, lifelong learners. Never settle for staying within your comfort zone as a leader for your student-athletes. As Ohio University (2020) points out, "Reading, continuing your education, seeking out resources, and discovering what's working (and what's not) in other programs will help you to improve your game, and that will only benefit the athletes you coach."

What type of material should you focus on as you read? Anything that will stretch your mind, challenge you, force you to try new strategies in your coaching, or material that is about your specific sport will do just fine. In my time of "rediscovering my enjoyment of reading," I have found myself to be much more calm going throughout my day when I begin my morning with twenty minutes of reading. At times I am reading a book about financial strategies, other times I am reading a fictional Western book. However, I find I am learning the most when I am reading a successful individual's book, whether it is about concepts of becoming successful or an autobiography.

The craziest aspect of reading to reach my potential, both as a person and as a coach, is that I grow even when I do not enjoy the book or find it to be a quality book. How is that possible? I have adopted the idea of writing on the pages of the books I read. Even if the book is not amazing, the reading I am doing begins jogging my brain and I put my thoughts to the ink inside the book. At times, I find myself having many great thoughts about practice philosophies, competition

schedules, team bonding, and so many other items of coaching simply because my mind can wander a bit as I read a book. Be a lifelong learner. Be a reader as a coach.

As coaches, we are constantly looking to gain an edge on the field, court, or mat. Our first instinct is to look at the tactical side of the sport we are immersed in. However, how great of a coach could we be if we gave our student-athletes the best versions of *ourselves*? Any coach can look at finding the best version of themselves by redefining their work-life balance, embedding metacognition as a coach, and being a lifelong reader. By doing so, you as a coach can stretch yourself outside of your comfort zone and ultimately become a better you for your loved ones and your student-athletes.

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About the Author

Trevor Conrad is a co-head wrestling coach and social studies teacher at Dickinson High School in North Dakota. Coach Conrad has been a head wrestling coach for six years and served as a DHS assistant football coach for

over a decade. He holds an elementary education degree from Dickinson State University, where he wrestled collegiately for the Blue Hawks, and a master's degree in educational administration from Chadron State College. In 2019, the DHS wrestling team won its first state championship in program history.

The “Why” in Coaching

Shawn Kuhnenn, Des Lacs Burlington High School

I always knew that I wanted to be a coach when I was a kid playing in the backyard shooting hoops or throwing the football to my dad. A lot of my reasoning isn't probably what a person would think. While growing up, I saw coaches in the spotlight become famous right in front of my eyes. A lot of my buddies saw it and were like, man I'd love to be famous like Phil Jackson. In the back of my mind, I thought a little bit in the same way, but I knew that wasn't the real reason why I wanted to become a coach.

It all started during my high school years in football. I had a coach by the name of Ben who inspired me to become the type of coach that I am today. He was an assistant coach who had just moved to my small hometown. He was a young new blood that was not from around our area. He came in bringing some new points of view and a lot of energy. I will share with you some of the characteristics that he possessed that drew me to what I wanted to be like as a coach. First, he was a very knowledgeable coach. He knew his Xs and O's. He brought and gave lots of insight to our team on different philosophies on various Xs and O's. Second, he was a coach who developed great relationships with his players. I still have a very good relationship with him. I look up to him as not only a coach but as a confidant to ask questions of. I know he will always be honest with me no matter the situation. He was never in it to be in the spotlight as a coach.

Ben cared for his players. He not only connected on the football field with his players, but he also connected on a personal level as well. He would ask how things were going away from the field as well. He accomplished this with all his players too, which in all my life, I

hadn't had a coach who made it his goal to be in touch with every one of his players. As a coach, I believe it is important to be as honest with your players as possible. Being blunt with them gets them to understand how things work in the real world. Ben was a positive leader with a positive outlook on life. He gave us the respect and encouragement that we needed to be successful. Even if we had an off night or our game was off, he would always point out all the positives that were accomplished during our games. I knew, as a player, that he had our backs no matter what. He was a great communicator as well. If a player had issues with what was happening, he would sit and listen quietly. Letting players vent their frustrations. The main thing is, he didn't hold any of it personally and allowed us to do it, then you would sit us down and talk through our issues. Ninety percent of the time, once the player settled down, they realized they were in the wrong. I can say I was one of them.

Now that I have told the how about getting into coaching, I am going to tell the why I do what I do. Before now, I have never really sat down and thought about the why in detail before. I mean, I knew why I was doing it, but I had never expanded on my own identity as a coach. I think about the principles that define me as a human being. The first one I want to discuss is compassion. As a coach, you need to have the compassion to attain your goals as a coach. I fully believe that players play for coaches who show this trait. Coaches need to show they care for their athletes to get them to trust and buy into the coaches' system; not only on the court or field but also show they care about their athletes personally outside the sport.

Another principle I live by is competitiveness. To be a great team, you need to be competitive. When I talk about competition, I mean that athletes give it their all, no matter how the competition is. Some athletes need help in learning what it looks like and how it is to be a competitive player. Being a good human being and thinking of others is another virtue I like to carry. One reason I coach is to help and show student-athletes what it is like to be a good human being toward others. Be mindful of others and put yourself in someone else's shoes. I guess it would be showing empathy and kindness toward others. One can still be competitive and show respect toward others. I tie that into why I am also a teacher. Being a positive role model to help student-athletes later in life.

One of my philosophies is being a good communicator with my student-athletes. One needs to be open and honest as a coach. Sometimes being a good communicator requires one to be brutally honest with athletes for all the positives and even the negatives. Honesty as a teacher/coach goes a long way in building an open and trusting relationship with student-athletes. Listening to your athletes is a key factor as well. Sometimes in game situations, the athletes who are on the

court/field see what is happening out there. I firmly believe if some of your athletes have some thoughts on what can be changed to better the play, it is up to the coach to consider that. For the end goal to be accomplished, the coach and athletes need to work as a unit. I was lucky enough to be a head coach in an instance when some of my players provided insight midgame and it was beneficial at the end of the game.

My final piece as a coach is being respectful. That goes both ways as well. Not only do my athletes show me respect, but I also show them the same. We are all individuals and deserve that aspect in life. Respect is a virtue that I like to instill in my student-athletes. The end goal as a teacher/coach is to help student-athletes be successful in the real world when they get away from the sports aspect of their lives.

About the Author

Shawn was born and raised on a ranch in Towner, ND. He has a science degree and he teaches at Des Lacs Burlington High School. He has coached numerous sports: Football, Basketball, and Track. He is currently an assistant football coach where he works.

How to Retain and Keep Athletes in a Program

Deana Lefor, South Heart High School

What does an athlete look for in a program and why do they want to play in that program? If you ask an athlete these questions, what do you think their answers will be?

I asked three of my previous athletes and their answers were not quite what I expected. The first athlete I asked stated she wanted a competent coach and one that wasn't a "Karen." The second athlete said he wanted a program that was worth his time, a program that he is going to benefit from and be able to apply it moving forward. And finally, the third person stated that they wanted a place to belong.

I was amazed that not one of the three athletes stated that it had to do with the game itself; it was all about the structure and the person coordinating the event.

The first athlete stated that she wanted a competent coach. So what makes a competent coach? Competency comes with having sufficient training and experience or knowledge along with other qualities that allow that coach to assist an athlete properly. When leaders start hiring coaches or prospective coaches, those leaders need to remember that this cannot just be a warm body. For athletes to succeed, they need coaches who have the tools to help them succeed. Hiring a coach must be based on a set of criteria and standards. It always seems to be about standards, but the common denominator is that standards provide an outline of what one is looking for in applicants.

Secondly, this athlete said along with competency, the person shall not be a "Karen." (A Karen is a pejorative term for a white

woman perceived as entitled or demanding beyond the scope of what is normal.) The athlete stated that the coach does need control but when they become overbearing and excessively dominating, it takes away the athlete's will to compete or perform. This athlete said that it becomes a game of fear versus one of learning. Fear should never be in a practice/game setting, athletes should never fear a coach. A coach is their ticket to success and coaches need to make sure they feel that.

The second athlete stated that he wanted a program that was worth his time. How does a coach make it worth their time? A child will not have an interest in learning proper technique if they don't first enjoy the game. A coach must show up every day with the mentality to work hard, provide learning opportunities, and help the athletes become better than the day before. The coach needs to remember that learning continues to take place after that final bell rings, and what takes place after the 3:30 bell may have a greater impact on the student and the rest of his or her life.

With that being said, this athlete stated that he wanted a program that is going to benefit him and give him skills for later on in life. To achieve this, a coach needs to make sure they are giving guidance and structure and not just teaching the game. During this learning process, the coach needs to incorporate all skills that will enhance the athlete. All sports programs need to provide athletes with opportunities for greater leadership, communication, and lifelong living skills. Coaches must remember that a game is not just about winning and losing, but more importantly, about developing wholesome

young adults that need to be productive in society. This again comes back to being competent and providing athletes with real-life situations that teach the game and the rules and the tools needed to be successful.

The third athlete stated they just wanted a place to belong. This suggests that this athlete was feeling less connection in our school and desired more. When asked what this meant, the athlete explained that they felt in the classroom that they were just a kid sitting in a chair but after school when they hit the basketball court, they were someone, someone who can pass the ball, execute a play, shoot a ball, and score points. Scoring points that gave meaning, meaning that increased the lead or caught the team up. This athlete was looking for a reason and belonging to the team and school athletics gave her just that.

Belonging to the team did not just give her something to do but also increased her attendance, her grades, and other accomplishments. The athlete stated that when a coach encouraged teamwork, cooperation, and leadership, she felt more connected and part of a “family.” In today’s society, many student-athletes have no true connection with family or sense of belonging. Coaches need to make connections with each athlete and make sure they are filling the void the athletes may need. Whether it is discipline, affirmation, praise, or just the common feeling of yes, you matter and you can make a difference.

So why do our student-athletes feel this way? I asked the athletes about the game itself and they stated that the game is just an experience and moment but they needed more. Alone they were just a player but with a coach, they are a team and a member of something.

As a coach, it is your job to remember that athletics are not just sports that students play after school, but an extension to the school and family.

As a coach, I was exposed to an idea of how to impact athletes more by using a four-coactive model of player preparation. This model highlights how a successful athlete’s performance cannot exist without the harmonious interplay between four distinct domains. These domains are physical, mental, tactical, and technical. These domains help develop an athlete more holistically. By focusing on all four domains coaches can provide structure and a sense of belonging that may be missing in the athlete’s day-to-day life. When talking about athlete outcomes, family engagement is at the top of the list. This tells us that belonging to something gives them better grades, attendance, persistence, and motivation. Coaches sometimes forget that the love of the game is not just playing it, but rather, learning skills, communication, leadership, and holistic growth.

In summary, athletes want more than just the game, they want knowledge of who, what, and how, and experiences they can build on. Coaches need to create environments that encompass all holistic approaches along with technical skills and repetitive drive for students to succeed. Athletes need an environment that will teach lifelong skills whether it be winning or losing gracefully, or how to network with teammates. Athletes need more than just the game itself.

About the Author

Deana is an FCS teacher and coach at South Heart High School.

Building Team Culture

Brock Nagel, Bishop Ryan High School

Team culture is the most important aspect of successful coaching. A team that has great culture can succeed not only in the short term but in the long term as well. It is difficult for any team or individual to reach the top of their field or sport, and it is even more difficult to sustain that without the correct culture. If you were to look at the most successful companies in the world or successful sports teams, you would see that the culture they have is what separates them from the rest of the field.

Many coaches look for the quick fix, or quick solution, hoping to succeed now, but without the right culture developed on a solid foundation, that is like a house of cards that will fall quickly. Culture is not limited to any sport, as one can look at dynasties like Nick Saban's Crimson Tide and Cael Sanderson's Nittany Lions and see these two different sports both having great success due to the culture in the building. Different things make up a great culture and ways of building it as well. I will share four pillars I believe help my team in building its culture to hopefully have the long-term success I hope to have like the coaches mentioned above. These four pillars are trust, control, gratitude, and fun.

Pillar 1 - Trust

Trust is necessary for any two people to work together. Without trust, friendships, and partnerships fall apart. It is nearly impossible to work with someone that you cannot trust. Lack of trust causes individuals to hold back from their true potential. A person will not give their all for another person without trust as they feel

it may come back to hurt them. This is also true with groups; in fact, I feel it may be more important in groups as it has more people involved.

Trust in sports comes on different levels. Coaches need to trust each other, teammates need to trust each other, and coaches and athletes need to trust each other. I have seen teams fall apart when coaches do not trust each other, and rather begin working against each other. This conflict is seen by coaches, athletes, and the community they are around. Conflict with coaches amongst each other is a recipe for disaster. Teammates need to trust each other in team and individual sports. I feel it may seem rather obvious that teammates in a team sport need to trust each other for chemistry to work, but as a wrestling coach, I see how trust amongst individuals in an individual sport is very important.

These wrestlers are more likely to compete harder if they know the person beside them has their back and they feel safe with them. Lack of trust among individuals creates an unsafe space that an athlete will worry about causing them not to compete at their best. Lastly, athletes who do not trust their coach will not compete for their best for them. Athletes need to know their coach has their back, and coaches need to know the athletes have theirs. Teams are families and families without trust are not successful. Coaches as leaders, need to be authentic with their athletes. Athletes see and recognize this, which helps build that connection with the coach. They will

work harder for someone they trust which leads to a more successful program.

Pillar 2 - Control

Control as a pillar may seem rather odd. I do not mean control as an authoritarian program where the coach has total control over everything. I like using a saying I first heard from coach Cary Kolat, head wrestling coach at the Naval Academy, "Control what you can control!". This is a mindset for athletes and coaches. I preach it to my wrestlers nearly every day. An athlete cannot always control how their school or home life is, they cannot control how strong or experienced their opponent is, and they cannot control the chaos at an event. These are just a few examples of a long list of uncontrollable.

Athletes can control their attitude and effort. Athletes can control small things in their life that make huge differences. This is also true for a coach. I may have had a long night with my young daughter crying followed by a long day at school, but how my attitude is entering my wrestling room is completely within my control. This control pillar is about a mindset that helps an athlete focus their mind on little things that can help them become successful. When they are focused on these small things that are fully within their control, they are freer to compete and improve. This mindset of controlling what you can and letting everything else fall into place is one of the things I find in successful programs.

Pillar 3 – Gratitude

"I am thankful for the opportunity to wrestle.". My wrestlers say this every day after practice and before every competition. Sports are great for kids, but they are just a small part

of life. It is humbling to remember that every time they can compete in athletics, they are blessed. Not everyone can compete in sports, and you never know when your last day of competing may come.

Gratitude is a virtue that I find extremely important to teach my athletes for life. It is humbling to realize what one is thankful for and what is important in life. As great as sports are, there is a lot more to life. I find that my athletes do not take moments for granted when they remember to be thankful for the moment they are in. Whether they win or lose, they had an opportunity to step on the mat and give their best effort.

Cael Sanderson, head wrestling coach of Penn State, preaches gratitude as the most important lesson in his program. His wrestlers have bought into this and they wrestle freer as a result. He has been the most successful wrestling coach in the NCAA in the last 15 years with this teaching. He was raised with gratitude by his father who was his wrestling coach and has also had a great deal of success. I see his wrestlers talk about how grateful they are for every opportunity they have, and I have seen this virtue help my wrestlers as well. It humbles people and helps them improve not only in sports but life which is why I find it one of my four pillars for a successful culture.

Pillar 4 – Fun

Sports are meant to be fun! I want to ensure that my teams enjoy showing up to practice, getting on a long bus ride, and competing at the highest levels. When something is enjoyable people are more likely to give more effort into it. Wrestling is not always seen as a fun sport, which makes sense as there is a lot of hard work that comes with it. I try my best to ensure that our team is enjoying as much of their experience to alleviate the difficulties that come with it.

One way we try to implement fun is by playing handball for conditioning. We have a team Christmas party, movie practice, and team supper at the end of the season. I have a lot of jokesters on the team which I think is good as they seem to enjoy being together and laughing together. I feel some programs try to stay away from the games and joke around too much which can make a season feel much longer and less enjoyable. I believe the more fun my team is having, the better they are performing and the harder they will work. I know coaching would be less enjoyable if I took that part out of it. The fun memories my team has had over the years have helped keep kids in the sport and competing at a high level.

Summary

Team culture is what decides whether a team will have long-term success or long-term struggles. Since my first day as a head coach, I have been focused on establishing a culture that will lead to long-term success. I have made

mistakes along the way, and I made sure to let the team know when I have made mistakes. I have been authentic with my team, and they have bought into my message.

Building the culture has been a long process that is not yet complete. Every year I get better at helping establish the culture, and every year my team helps me establish it. Not everything in the culture of my team is perfect and it is not guaranteed to be permanent, but trust, gratitude, control, and fun are four things I will continue to preach, hoping to continue to build in my team. Other successful programs I have seen also use these in their programs, and I hope to bring that success to my team as well. Hopefully, these four pillars can help other teams build a successful culture for their team as well.

About the Author

Brock is a social studies teacher and wrestling coach at Bishop Ryan High School in Minot.

Zone Coverage “Shuffle Bail” Technique

Tyler Green, Rugby High School

In our defensive scheme, the majority of our coverage is cover 3. When we play cover 3, or any zone coverage, we use the shuffle bail technique. The idea behind this technique is to be able to see the entire field while not allowing anyone deeper than the defensive back (DB) in their zone.

Defensive players begin 4-6 yards off the widest receiver (#1) facing the receiver shading their outside hip. Players always line up this way to not show what coverage is being played. At the snap of the ball, the DB opens the inside hip and immediately gains depth using a shuffle. The DB wants to keep all receivers inside (towards the field) and not let any receiver deeper than him in his zone, even if a player comes from another zone. As the DB shuffles, his eyes should be looking in through the next inside receiver to the rest of the field to see any players coming into their zone. They use their peripheral vision to see what the #1 receiver is doing. The DB will shuffle until the opponent gets within 1-2 yards of the DB, once this happens, the DB will then bail. Bail means the DB will turn and run to ensure the receiver does not get deeper than him.

When teaching the shuffle bail technique, the focus is on being in an athletic position with knees bent, hips down, and feet not too narrow or wide in the starting position. When shuffling, players should not click heels together and not gallop. We want the head and shoulders to stay at an even level as they shuffle (the head should not be bouncing up and down), this helps to prevent wasted body movements. If a receiver tries to get wider than the DB, they need to open up their hips more

to gain width and depth. We want to try to avoid a combination of backpedaling and shuffling. When bailing, we want DBs to emphasize throwing the up-field elbow to get turned quickly, and as they run, keeping a hand on the receiver’s hip so they can feel the receiver stop and not run past them. We also teach that if a player can’t touch the receiver, they are not allowed to look back for the ball.

Drill #1: Using the traditional W drill setup, line up a DB and a receiver. The WR is there to simulate game speed. The WR explodes off the line so the DB can get used to gaining depth off a receiver's movement. The WR lets up at 5 yards and the DB shuffles to 10 yards and breaks up at an angle as if breaking on a slant. Once they hit the original line of scrimmage, they then open the hip again and shuffle to 10 yards again. They repeat this action three more times but without a WR, similar to a traditional W drill. Then repeat going back so the DB gets used to shuffling both directions.

Drill #2: Breaking on a QB. Line up a cornerback in a traditional position. At the movement of the ball, the DBs begin their shuffle with eyes on the coach who is playing QB. The DB is looking for the shoulder movement of the QB to know where to break. This simulates breaking on different routes. If the coach's front shoulder comes down, the WR breaks on a slant. If the front shoulder turns in, the DB breaks on a dig route, the coach's shoulder out is an out route, and the coach's front shoulder up high is a go route. The DB breaks on the route, the coach (QB) throws the ball, and the receiver has to go get

it. The coach tries not to throw the ball directly to the DB because a real QB will not do this, make the DB go get the ball.

About the Author

Tyler Green is the defensive coordinator and wide receiver coach for Rugby High School. He has nine years of high school coaching experience and played defensive back for Mayville State University from 2005-09.