

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, 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

The New Generation of Athletes: How to Prioritize the Mental Health of Athletes And Create Success

Daniel Sharrah, Assistant Volleyball Coach
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The landscape of youth and college sports is changing at an unprecedented rate through aspects of social media, the transfer portal, and NIL opportunities. Now more than ever, college athletes face increased pressure which can affect their mental health in many ways. An NCAA study showed that “30% of surveyed athletes felt extremely overwhelmed, with nearly 25% feeling mentally exhausted (Lindberg, 2021).”

Although it is common for college students to feel overwhelmed with their class load, studies show that signs of depression are considerably higher in college athletes. These increased signs of anxiety and depression can affect their athletic performance, academic performance, and ability to build relationships with others, which can lead to more severe issues like body dysmorphia, anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts. While there are increased numbers of overwhelmed and exhausted athletes, they are also a demographic that is less likely to seek help compared to their non-athlete counterparts (Davoren, et al., nd).

With these scary statistics, it is imperative that coaches are equipped with the skills to create environments that are conducive to their athletes’ mental health while still achieving their team goals. Through the practices of eliminating the stigma around mental health, getting certified to help with mental health challenges, and modeling self-care for athletes, coaches can create a preventative environment

and significantly impact their team.

Fortunately, over the last few years, the discussion of mental health for athletes has gained traction but there is still work to be done. When an athlete sprains an ankle or breaks a bone, it is encouraged and sometimes forced on them to fix that physical injury in order to play at the highest level possible. On the other hand, when an athlete is suffering from anxiety, depression, or other mental illnesses, they are told to push through the pain and be mentally tough. This stigma that exists in college athletics is detrimental to many aspects of an athlete, including their physical performance, academic performance, and self-image which can last much longer than their time on this specific team. When the ability to work on these issues and heal mentally is present, the stigma limits athletes from taking these opportunities.

The article, *Mental health symptoms and disorders in elite athletes: A systematic review on cultural influencers and barriers to athletes seeking treatment* reported, “A study of collegiate athletes showed that they had a significantly lower mean score than non-athlete peers on scales assessing attitudes toward mental health, reflecting less willingness to seek mental health treatment. Concerns regarding how elite athletes will be perceived by their peers, coaches and sport managers could be a barrier even for those with positive attitudes toward mental health treatment” (Castaldelli-Maia et

al., 2019). The environment and attitude created by coaches must shift for the athletes seeking help so they feel less pressure and guilt for putting their mental health at the forefront.

Coaches shape the environment of their team and set the expectations of what is right and wrong within the team. A precedent must be set from the top down about creating a more open and accepting space for individuals struggling with mental health issues. One way to do this is for coaches to obtain certifications to better handle mental health crises.

The Mental Health First Aid Certification is a course coaches can take to better handle situations involving someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. The course consists of an online pre-test and an 8-hour instructional meeting, as well as a post-test to gain the certification and perform mental health first aid. This license does not replace the need for professionals and emergency technicians but allows coaches to have instruction on what to do if someone has a panic attack, suicidal ideation, or multiple forms of trauma. Showing the athletes that a coach is taking these kinds of emergencies seriously and is prepared for a wide range of scenarios can help them feel more comfortable in being open and vulnerable. This can then start to cultivate a culture where a destigmatized view of mental health is present.

Another tool that coaches can utilize to better shape their team's mental health and view of it is creating meaningful relationships with their athletes. Outside of sport, studies have shown that those who enjoy close friendships over their teenage years have a lower rate of depression or anxiety later in life. Inside of sport, it is the same and the age that these athletes enter into a coach's program is essential to set them up for emotional success for the future.

Powers et al., (2020) reported that a coaches' relationship with their athletes

showed a clear association between psychological quality of life and depression and contributed to the prediction of 15% of depression and 12% of the psychological quality of life scores in their sample, after accounting for the effects of gender and personality variables. With these statistics, coaches must put in the effort to create meaningful relationships with their athletes and support them the best they can.

Coaches have an enormous impact on the athletes on their team and they can knowingly and unknowingly impact how they act and behave. During any interaction during a season, athletes look at their coach for cues to mimic "acceptable behavior". Whatever action a coach is displaying often carries more weight than what is said. As much as it is stressed for coaches to model the right form or technique for an athletic skill, the same emphasis should be put on modeling self-care and taking care of mental health. Having coaches who are open and willing to put in the work through the appropriate avenues can help break down the wall that the athlete is alone in the struggles they face. Seeing their role model and mentors go through similar issues and putting in the work to become a healthier version of themselves can encourage them to do the same. The vulnerability and honesty that is associated with modeling these actions can help the athletes open up as well and create a healthy dialogue about their struggles with the ultimate goal of performing better in their sport.

Along with modeling the right behaviors and vulnerability, coaches can set the tone around speaking out about mental health. One assumption athletes often make is that if they struggle with their mental health, they will lose playing time if they tell their coach about their struggle. If staff can eliminate that fear and foster conversations that are led with compassion and understanding, more players can come to them with trust that their off-court struggles will not carry over into the practice or game facility. Trust is the most important thing

a coach can build, and this is another avenue where it can be built within the team.

Finally, athletics is seen through a performance standpoint no matter the competition or level. Prioritizing the mental health of athletes can lead to higher performance and sustainable success while keeping kids in the program. If preventative measures are taken and an athlete receives care for their anxiety, depression, or other mental illness, the athlete can better focus on their sport when they are at practice or a competition allowing them to focus on improvement and victory. Also, if the environment of the team is accepting of players sharing their struggles without the fear of losing playing time or their spot on the team, they will be more likely to seek help and then perform better over time. This can create a culture for the players where they feel valued and want to work harder to give back to the program that lets them fully enjoy their sport. This can keep retention on the team high in an era where the transfer portal is the growing trend and thus allow for team dynamics to be developed more intricately as the year progresses. This framework can help create a foundation for the long-term success of a program as retention rate and fulfillment continue to stay high.

Mental health and its significance toward athletes is a major issue in youth sports that could change the landscape of the industry. Coaches must take the concerns seriously and make changes similar to those listed above to affect their players and programs in the most positive way they can. Creating an open environment, gaining training and experience dealing with mental health issues, creating meaningful relationships with players, and modeling healthy mental health behaviors are just a few of the many interventions that can be done by a coach. These actions will have an immeasurable impact on their players while

they are playing and long after they stop playing.

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About the Author

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Transforming Youth Basketball

Tommy Thompson, Fargo Public Schools

FIBA (Fédération Internationale de Basketball) 3x3 (pronounced three-ex-three) is a fast-paced small-sided game. FIBA 3x3 can help youth athletes develop their basketball skills more quickly than if they played traditional basketball. Every athlete gets more opportunities to make plays offensively and defensively. FIBA 3x3 not only can help develop basketball skills, but also develop a love of the game. A pilot study in Canada found that 3 on 3 basketball games created a more positive environment than five-on-five games (McCormick, 2017). The study also found that athletes playing 3 on 3 had over twice as many offensive touches and defensive plays compared to a 5v5 game. FIBA 3x3 is a small-sided game that can help young athletes maximize their potential and have more fun.

The Birth of 3x3 Basketball

The beginning of FIBA's intensified focus on 3x3 basketball came in 2007. It was chosen because it is a sport with a young, urban, and positive image, as well as for its universality and for the limited infrastructure and equipment required to play. Accordingly, 3x3 basketball was identified as a potential catalyst for the development of the sport of basketball worldwide. 3x3 made its first appearance on the international stage at the 2010 Youth Olympic Games in Singapore and was labeled as "the hottest ticket in town" (FIBA.basketball, nd).

Jay Demings is the USA Basketball youth and development division director. Demings has learned to love 3x3 basketball because of its inclusivity. "He appreciates how having fewer players on the court means more touches, more shots, and more direct

involvement for each member of the team. Plus, each 3x3 squad has only four players — and no coach during games, for that matter — so there is a heavy responsibility on every player, both on and off the court" (Silverman, 2022).

Rules

FIBA 3x3 is played on one half of the court and one hoop. There are two teams of four players. Three players from each team are on the court. There is a twelve-second shot clock for quick offensive possessions. The game ends once a team reaches twenty-one. If neither team reaches twenty-one, then whoever has the most points after ten minutes wins. The game clock is stopped during free throws and dead ball time. In overtime, the first team to score two points wins. Shots inside of the three-point line are worth one point and shots behind the three-point line are worth two points.

Each team is given one thirty-second timeout. A coin toss determines who starts with the ball. The coin toss winner can decide to have the first possession or start with the basketball in overtime. The game starts with the basketball being checked up at the half circle. On a change of possession, the basketball must get past the three-point line before the team can attempt to score. When a basket is scored, the defense then takes possession and transitions to offense. The ball starts underneath the basket. If the basketball is dribbled, then the game is live again. The defensive team may steal the pass but is not allowed to cross inside the restricted area (no charge semi-circle). Since the game is continuous and doesn't stop after a basket, substitutions take place during dead ball situations.

Further rules can be found at the following:

Full Version: <https://fiba3x3.com/docs/fiba-3x3-basketball-rules-full-version.pdf> Short: <https://fiba3x3.com/docs/FIBA-3x3-Basketball-Rules-Short.pdf> Summary: <https://fiba3x3.com/docs/FIBA-3x3-Basketball-Rules-Summary.pdf>

Why FIBA 3x3?

More involvement

In FIBA 3x3, players will touch the ball on average 1/6 of the time compared to 1/10 of the time. This means that athletes will have more time with the basketball in their hands and more opportunities to make defensive plays. Athletes have more opportunities to practice offensive actions. All three athletes on the court need to play defense together. Athletes will figure out quickly that if someone chooses to get lazy, take a break, and not play defense, then their team will likely pay for it. Athletes need to help quicker and communicate more to defend effectively against the offense.

The defense is at a disadvantage with two fewer help defenders, so athletes will learn that they need to work hard and communicate to get stops. Athletes will also be better conditioned. Every athlete must do the little things from boxing out to quickly transitioning to find the open person on offense. In a tournament setting, there is only one sub on a team. Every team consists of four players, so everyone gets to play a lot. When the athlete is not playing, then they are like the coach for the team. All four team members are constantly needing to be involved.

Better Spacing

There are four fewer players on the court. Athletes have more room to operate allowing for more success on offense. The game is

simplified, allowing for better decisions to be made. Offensive actions that are used in a 5v5 game can still be practiced within a 3x3 setting. Offensive actions in basketball at times involve only two or three players. Each athlete has more opportunities to be involved with handling the basketball during the offensive action or potentially receiving the pass. Learning these offensive actions is less confusing to younger athletes since there are not multiple extra offensive players needing to get out of the way. In

FIBA 3x3 it's nearly impossible to hide compared to a 5v5 where that can be a common problem for one or two players. All three players need to work together. The increased space on the court will help more points to be scored. More points being scored will likely increase the joy for the athlete and make the game more entertaining for families watching.

Participation Increase

FIBA 3x3 is friendly to lower numbers or higher numbers of athletes. If you only have six players in the gym, FIBA 3x3 works. If you have 12 players in the gym, now everyone gets a chance to compete instead of two players sitting out and watching. During an open gym or summer camp, FIBA 3x3 allows for more athletes to participate. The games are quick, allowing many athletes to rotate through. No more slow-paced full-court games where bad habits start to form and the gameplay is sloppy. Athletes won't get bored sitting out for extended periods either.

More EnJOYable Experience

Athletes will enjoy the fast-paced game that promotes player involvement and empowers players to lead and coach one another. There are no coaches, so a team of three to four athletes needs to work together. Athletes don't have to worry about getting

blown out by large-point differentials. Blowouts are no fun for either team. The most a team could lose by is twenty-one points and a game can only last for ten minutes. No more long 30+ point blowout games that don't serve either party. The games are quicker, leading to a more competitive environment for athletes to develop good habits and a love of the game. Small towns that only have a couple of players in a grade are now able to be more competitive in local tournaments. You only need four players to be able to compete in a tournament. In a larger town, kids can compete with their friends instead of getting split up into different teams or getting cut and not being able to participate.

FIBA 3x3 is a great game to play in the offseason for high school athletes as it gives each athlete more opportunities to make plays, experiment, and perfect new moves. Many times 5v5 games in the offseason can turn into minimal defense and bad basketball in general. This can lead to bad habits being formed and athletes wasting their valuable time since they are not improving. Similar skill levels can pair up more, helping to make games more competitive.

Youth Development

Athletes should have more success with there being two fewer defenders. Offensive actions will be easier to practice since there is more space and fewer teammates to organize. Athletes also have more time to make decisions. Younger athletes need more time to recognize opportunities to take advantage of. Two fewer defenders give an athlete the space and time to have more success.

The pace of the game is still really quick, but athletes get more opportunities in the half-court. Athletes will have more transitions from offense to defense and defense to offense while playing on one side of the court. Players don't have time to complain or stop playing for

a moment after a play doesn't go their way. Athletes will learn to develop a next-play mentality. If they decide to stop and complain for a moment, the other team will likely be getting a wide-open shot. Athletes are put in an environment where they need to transition quickly and do the next right thing.

In 5v5, there is a lot of time spent running from one side of the court to the other side. This isn't as much fun for the players at a young age or for their families to watch their kids run back and forth. In youth basketball, teams are discouraged from pressing and playing zone defense. FIBA 3x3 eliminates the possibility of teams doing either. FIBA 3x3 encourages athletes to play in any position they would like. Every athlete can play any position.

A Lesson from Soccer

The World Cup was just recently completed. We can maybe learn a lesson from the game of soccer and how many youth soccer programs are run. Soccer isn't played 11v11 on a full-size field at the youth level, that would be crazy! Soccer uses small-sided games (known as Futsal) to help develop its athletes. When a kid starts out playing soccer, there is a gradual increase as they get older in ball size, field size, and the number of athletes playing on the field. It is interesting though that basketball is played many times 5v5 and on a full-size court at the youth level. Youth basketball players could benefit from the soccer model of gradually increasing the court size and number of athletes playing on the court as they get older.

Dream

Imagine in America if small-sided games were the norm for youth basketball, just as in soccer. What if it was uncommon for youth players to play 5v5 full-court games? Young athletes wouldn't start playing 5v5 full-court games until 7th grade. Would our athletes develop quicker and achieve more of their

potential within their careers? Would the athletes have more fun due to the increase in involvement and activity around the basketball? In soccer, you would never see 3rd and 4th graders play 11v11 on a regular-sized soccer field. Yet many elementary-age kids are playing 5v5 on a full-size court.

3v3 basketball is key for the development of skill and enjoyment of young basketball players. The small-sided game of FIBA 3x3 can help all individuals get more involved. Each athlete will be put into more situations to make plays on offense and defense. Most importantly, FIBA 3x3 can help each athlete have more fun and grow to love the game of basketball. The experiences and lessons athletes learn from small-sided games like

FIBA 3x3 should help each maximize their potential and transition better to 5v5 games.

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Qualities of a Great Coach

Laulewasika Bendolph, Dover Air Base Middle School

When a coach retires, people will either view him or her as a successful coach, or an unsuccessful coach. The common mistake with most people's judgment is that most of them will judge a coach's success based on the number of trophies, wins, awards, and championships that he or she has after they retire. Judging a coach's success based on the number of trophies, wins, awards, and championships is an inefficient way to judge their success as wins and losses do not, and should not define a coach's success.

A coach's success should be judged based on his or her ability to make a positive impact on their athlete's character and use their strong leadership skills and emotional control to build relationships that foster trust between player and coach, help their athletes reach their full potential, and improve their players' self-esteem (Tearse, n.d.). If a coach uses these qualities to 1) impact their players on and off the field, 2) make a difference in the experience their players have throughout their years as athletes, and 3) impact the outcomes at the end of each season, they are successful coaches (Tearse, n.d.).

Many people measure a coach's success in terms of wins/losses, but the immeasurable coach-athlete relationship is arguably equal, if not more important (Emma & Daniel, 2015). Successful coaches can impact their athletes' character. Coaches are in the "influence business." They can influence and impact an athlete's character by teaching them what leadership looks like, how to communicate, and how to build relationships, behave, and carry themselves even during times of adversity (Emma & Daniel, 2015). They influence how

their players articulate, how they speak to themselves, and how they speak to others.

Coaches have the power to influence their athletes' minds, hearts, and bodies in a positive way which will help them become strong human beings in life. Coaches have an incredible platform to accelerate their player's personal development, respect for others, focus, and engagement, all of which will be strengths they will carry with them for their entire life.

The environment a coach creates, the way he or she communicates their behavior, and the way he or she conducts themselves as a coach, has a major impact on how they shape every athlete on the team. For example, most athletes are still heavily influenced by their role models such as coaches, teachers, parents, etc. even after their time as an athlete. Athletes soak in their role model's values, mannerisms, and mentality like a sponge.

If a coach motivates their players and supports them on and off the field, this will have a positive psychological effect on them. For example, motivating them to work hard, have each other's backs, and never give up will help shape their mentality and values in life. This coaching style will help players grow into individuals who value hard work, support those who need help, and fight through adversity when the going gets tough.

If a coach were to consistently yell at his or her players, insult them, and/or allow them to be lazy during practice and games, this coaching style may have a negative psychological impact on their athletes which may cause them to grow into individuals who

are lazy and believe that the best way to communicate with others is to yell at them and insult them.

After a coach's players "hang up their cleats" and are no longer an athlete, they will have to start a new chapter in their lives. This new chapter will require them to interview for a job or become a part of a staff or team for an organization. The influence a coach has on his or her players may play a huge role in an organization's decision to hire them or not. If coaches influence their players to value hard work, support those who need help, and fight through adversity when the going gets tough, their chances will be a lot better than an athlete who was allowed to be lazy and believed that the best way to communicate with others is to yell at them and insult them. A successful coach can impact not only their athletes' athletic performance and success in the sporting arena but also their mentality, behavior, leadership, and how they conduct themselves off of the field. Doing this enables their athletes to have the qualities necessary to succeed in life when it is time for them to move on in life.

Successful coaches are leaders who are capable of leading their teams by building relationships that foster trust between players and coaches, help their athletes reach their full potential, and improve their players' self-esteem (Tearse, n.d.). Athletes will not engage their full selves, mind, body, and spirit for a coach who does not care about them (George & Clayton, 2022). Athletes seek a personal connection with their coach before they invest themselves wholly in their assignments on and off the field (George & Clayton, 2022).

Coaches must provide a level of access, openness, and depth for their athletes to develop a personal connection with their coach (George & Clayton, 2022). A coach can provide a level of access, openness, and depth by ensuring their need for "love" is met. Athletes are going to be more willing to invest

themselves wholly in their assignments on and off the field for a coach who ensures that their needs for love are met. Athletes prefer to be on a team with players and coaches they consider their friends and family. A successful coach ensures that all of his or her players view their team, players, and coaches as a family from home. When a coach succeeds in completing this task, they build trust with their athletes. Athletes will be more willing to trust a coach they love and view as a family, than a coach they view as a stranger or an associate. For example, when players arrive before practice starts, coaches can approach their players with positive energy and talk to them about how their day was at school to show them that they care about them and that they are excited to be at practice with them. A coach can also have meetings, fundraisers, end-of-the-season banquets, and team bonding activities so that players and coaches can learn more about each other and create meaningful and valuable relationships with one another. Doing so helps players feel like they are loved, have friends, and are part of a family. A team whose needs for love are met is a team full of people who trust one another.

Successful coaches have the leadership skills to help their players reach their full potential. Coaches complete this task by 1) demonstrating and explaining how to perform a specific skill or play, 2) allowing players to apply the skills they learned during practice in drills (during the drills, a coach should give their players positive feedback and constructive criticism so that they can make corrections and are better prepared to perform the skills or plays during the games), 3) making sure their players are properly conditioned to ensure that their cardiovascular endurance is good enough during the games because if they are fatigued, that will affect their performance, 4) building up their players' self-confidence so they believe that are capable of performing specific skills or running plays, and 5) having their players set long-term goals so they have

an objective to focus on and the steps needed to achieve those goals.

A successful coach allows their athletes to apply skills they learned during practice in drills, are properly conditioned, have confidence, and be given positive feedback, long-term goals, and constructive criticism. These opportunities will help players reach their full potential. Successful coaches can use their leadership skills to build up their players' self-esteem so that they are motivated during practice. For example, during practices or games, a successful coach knows how to promote positive self-talk. He or she makes sure that they praise their athletes when they are performing a specific skill correctly or give them positive feedback when they make a great play because if they hear their coach praise and positive feedback, that can help build up their self-confidence and self-esteem.

When players are told they are capable of doing something or when they are told that they performed a skill properly, they may begin to say to themselves "Hey, I actually can do this!" If a coach only tells them what they are doing wrong but never praises them when they are doing the right thing, they may start to develop negative self-talk which can cause them to believe that they are not capable of performing well on the field or the court. A player who has self-esteem and confidence is more motivated to perform well during practice or game situations because they believe that they are capable of achieving the task at hand.

The misconception is that the majority of people judge a coach's success on their win-and-loss ratio and the number of accolades he or she has received throughout their coaching career instead of the development of their athletes. Coaches who develop their players the right way do not have to choose either because winning and development go hand in hand (Cammarata, 2015).

Winning matters but an athlete's development matters more, therefore a coach should be judged based on their athletes' development as players and people, not their win-and-loss ratio or the number of accolades he or she received throughout their coaching career. Coaches who make a positive impact on their athletes' character and use their strong leadership skills and emotional control to build relationships that foster trust between players and coaches, help their athletes reach their full potential, and improve their players' self-esteem, are the ones who are truly "winning."

Coaches with these qualities are winning because they helped develop players into people who will have strengths they will carry with them for their entire lives. When their players "hang up their cleats" they will have helped develop people who are influenced by positivity, leadership, love, and self-confidence which is much more valuable than any number of wins or championships.

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Developing Character Through Strength and Conditioning

Danielle Holt, Bellevue University

The role of a strength and conditioning (S&C) coach is multi-faceted. A strength and conditioning (S&C) coach's job is to act as a supplement to athletes and teams, improve athlete's physical and mental resilience, and develop athletic ability. Strength and conditioning have developed over time from various long-standing disciplines; the S&C practitioner is required to draw on knowledge from a range of disciplines such as psychology, biomechanics, nutrition, and exercise physiology. These disciplines allow coaches to be optimally effective in a dynamic social context (Jeffreys, 2014).

The purpose of this article is to understand how a S&C coach executes both character development and psychological training through S&C practices. A large amount of research and articles about strength and conditioning involve examining how the S&C coach physically prepares their athletes for the demands of their sport and life. It is vital to examine how psychological interventions are used by S&C practitioners in facilitating the development of S&C as an expanding discipline. Sport is not forever for most athletes. As a coach, one of the aspects of psychological training is helping athletes understand this concept, and many more mental aspects of human development.

“The real value of sport is in helping athletes become stronger humans for life. Sport provides a platform for us humans to engage in personal development - mentally and physically, respect for others, focus, engagement, determination, teamwork,

persistence, fairness, gratitude, emotional control, resiliency, and positivity. These are all strengths that can carry the athlete the entirety of the rest of their lives.”
Dr. Jim Loehr.

The Environment

Effective S&C teaches athletes how to use the safest and most effective positions for their bodies to optimize performance. A strength coach teaches an athlete a skill or ability so they can apply said skill to their sport. Coaches should select activities that are ideal to meet the needs of their athletes and the desired adaptation. Once the activities or program has been decided by utilizing knowledge across different capacities, the coach must focus on the execution of the training plan. To create an optimal environment and execution of the training plan, the coach must be directly involved in the training session. The coach's ability to manage the room is the most important step in developing character through S&C. This includes the presentation and explanation of the program, the quality of instruction and feedback, and the quality of error detection and correction. Without the ability to present, explain, teach, and correct, athletes are left to decipher their stimulus and standards. Be clear. Be direct. Say it as you see it. Everyone must be aware of the goal and the end game.

The execution of the training plan should be monitored and controlled directly by the coach. In a literal sense, this means the coach goes through every exercise with the athletes. The professional is to explain the

stimulus/standards for the movement before execution. The coach is to watch every set and rep. (This idea does vary based on group size and allotted time.) An athlete does not lift until signaled by the coach to execute said movement. This allows the coach to ensure that the athlete is being successful, challenged, and engaged. The coach and athlete should have a short collaborative discussion after the set is complete. These moments are crucial for development in the training session. This moment allows for human connection, feedback, and a chance for the coach to give an appropriate constraint for that particular athlete.

The Standard

The standard for a strength and conditioning coach is a tool to keep athletes accountable, consistent, efficient, and safe, no matter the constraints. The standard is the measure of how we complete tasks. As discussed above, the coach sets the standard for their team. Eleven-time NCAA Women's Basketball Champion Coach Geno Auriemma once stated that athletes do not do something for two reasons: 1. The athlete does not know how and 2. The athlete does not feel like it (*What Drives Winning*, 2018). The coach must teach the standard to ensure attainment of knowledge leaving no room for confusion or laziness.

Over time the coach adds or takes away constraints to the standard. Constraints in the strength and conditioning world can equal many different things. Some simple examples would be reps, load, rest time, or fatigue. All of which are physically and mentally challenging. These constraints make reaching the standard more challenging. When an athlete is faced with a challenge they will succeed or fail. Without standards, this idea of success or failure can be arbitrary. The standard plus added constraint is where character development is demonstrated. By adding constraints to the movement we do not only

find physical adaptations but also mental adaptations.

When things are difficult will the athlete give up? Will the athlete persevere to meet the standard? The choice is ultimately up to the athlete. During a conditioning session will the athlete sprint through the end line when they are tired? Or will the athlete jog through the end line because they do not feel like it? Will the athlete do the right thing in a time of adversity? When athletes push through adversity they reap the benefits of adaptation and growth. This instills the idea that no matter what difficulties you go through in life, you should always do the right thing. The right thing may not be easy or fun, but it is still the right thing.

Athletes who push through adversity can make connections to the real world. They are aware of the large and immediate specific consequences of their actions. The athletes who do not push through adversity and fall short of the standard remain stagnant. These athletes are those individuals who fail to see a relationship between their actions and outcomes. These failures will come. It is the coach's job to address an athlete's shortcomings and connect them to a real-life situation allowing for psychological adaptation.

The Intent

Intent is a determination to perform a particular act or to act in a particular manner. It is an aim, design, or resolution to use a certain means to reach an end. Our intention is what unites our soul, body, and mind and unlocks our true potential. Intent is our “why?” Intention in S&C is crucial for mental and physical adaptations. Without intent, training is mindless and meaningless. Individuals do not get better by just completing activities. Individuals develop by partaking in what is called deep practice. Deep practice consists of stretching yourself just outside your comfort zone, stopping and reflecting when errors occur, making adjustments, and continuing this

process over time. Coyle (2020), stated, “A coach’s true skill consists not in some universally applicable wisdom that he or she can communicate to all, but rather the supple ability to locate the sweet spot on the edge of each individual's ability and to repeatedly send the right signals to help the athlete reach toward the right goal” (p.156). The coach is to create variations that require an athlete's intent to meet the standard. Some specific examples would be adding tempos or pauses to a given movement or standard. Other ways of driving intent would be to create a competitive environment between athletes.

Intention in S&C instills the practice of being in the present moment. Being in the moment is crucial for success in life and sport. Moments bring time and space together. Being in the moment creates awareness allowing us to interact with the world in front of us - giving us a small but powerful chance to learn from outside sources.

The Connections

Communication is crucial for team sport success and individual personal success. The importance of communication is practiced in strength and conditioning from a team aspect and a coach-athlete relationship aspect. Athletes within a team are to work in groups. The team must communicate and work together to meet the standards of the training session. Leadership or the need for leadership will arise. This provides a teaching moment for the S&C coach to discuss how leaders lead.

The coach-athlete relationship in strength and conditioning allows the athlete the ability to work with the coach as an individual. This is accomplished by setting mutual goals, adapting training programs to specific needs, and discussing the dynamic social conflicts of the student-athlete life. For effectiveness, the

athlete must be vulnerable and attempt to build trust. If the athlete does not they may not receive the experience they are searching for. By allowing the athletes to advocate for themselves, develop a relationship, and build trust, the S&C coach is reinforcing good relationship-building skills. These relationship-building skills will carry on to future relationships.

The purpose of this article was to understand how an S&C coach executes both character development and psychological training through S&C practices. Strength and conditioning provide a safe environment to test physical and mental capacities. The strength coach can alter constraints to target said physical ability or character development. Strength and conditioning can simulate high-pressure scenarios that can reveal our character in the face of adversity. It is the S&C coaches’ job to utilize these moments of exposure and relate them to real-life lessons as much as possible. I believe the ultimate goal of strength and conditioning is to prepare humans for the sport of life.

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How to Positively Change a Team Culture: Beyond the Field of Success

Emily Savona,

When you hear the name, Anson Dorrance, it is often synonymous with winning programs. Dorrance is the head women's soccer coach at the University of North Carolina and has won 21 NCAA National Championships. As a former youth soccer player, it is easy to constantly be surrounded by Dorrance and his legacy of former players who have made it to the top of their careers. Many have played on the USWNT and competed in the biggest matches on the world stage. It is also apparent, how much of an impact Dorrance has made on their lives, and it is evident in their support of the program years after they graduated from the University of North Carolina.

What Dorrance has created in Chapel Hill is incredible, however, young, eager coaches can look at the storied program and find pieces of that team's culture to adapt to any other institution. It is important to emphasize that a positive team culture will eventually lead to a successful athletic program. In finding inspiration to replicate for your program, the following are a few takeaways from what Dorrance has done with his team off the field, which has, in turn, led to great on-field success:

Core Values

North Carolina has a list of 12 core values, with importance, and associates them with quotes that help describe and embody those values (Visser, 2020). A couple of times a year, he has players evaluate each other

against those core values and grade on a 4.0 scale. Rarely does he share their scores with them, but it gives the coaches an idea of what their team culture and buy-in look like in who lives by these 12 core values and how often they prioritize them (What Drives Winning, 2015a).

For many, it is common for teams to have a set of values they live up to. With the team I am currently working with, we call them pillars. The five pillars our players live by as humans, students, athletes, etc. are resilience, commitment, confidence, belief, and character. In fact, on my tour of the facilities on my first day, I took a picture of them on the locker room wall before knowing how much they meant to the program I was about to join. It has been greatly beneficial to help positively change the team culture from the previous season by refocusing on these pillars in spring season team meetings and defining what they mean and what actions a player/person does and looks like. One of the main focuses was body language. In creating awareness around a player's body language, they can see what they need to do to change and adjust and be better for the team.

Play for Something Greater Than Yourself

Inspired by a concept by former Argentinian Coach Cesar Luis Menotti, "small societies" are a way of breaking up the field into smaller working groups. Breaking up the team into a small society drives players to play for each other. Playing for the player to the left, right, in front, and behind them. Playing for

something bigger than themselves. It also adds a sense of accountability. When a team is constructed in parts of small societies, they work for one another and depend on each other to overcome adversity and get through difficult moments. They want to succeed for one another (What Drives Winning, 2015). Playing for something bigger than yourself can unite the group in an unbreakable way. There is great power behind the bond teammates share and the lengths they go to overcome obstacles in their way.

Senior Letters

In continuation of playing for something bigger than themselves, Anson has created a tradition of writing each senior a letter, giving them a copy, and presenting them to their teammates before the championship game. This year, as documented by their social media team—he read some before the semifinal and the rest before the championship game. Anson writes about the human contribution they have made to the team, not their athletic accomplishments. Over the course of a player’s four years, a lot can happen. Some players are starters and major contributors on the field and others take a more behind-the-scenes leadership role, caring for their teammates and getting limited playing time (What Drives Winning, 2015b). Focusing on a senior’s human involvement with the program, allows the team to fully back their soon-to-be graduating teammate and give them the send-off game they deserve, a National Championship.

Give the Players What They Need

Great players need coaches to help them reach their next level. When Dorrance coached the USWNT, he would hold player conferences pregame to build his players’ self-confidence. Michelle Akers, one of the most complete players ever, wanted her pregame conversations to give herself criticisms for how to improve her game. Always look to find another level. If a player hasn’t reached their

potential, you went too soft on them. Ride a player’s self-belief as long as you can (What Drives Winning, 2018). Another example Anson often uses is the importance of protecting this current team against the traditions of the program—from the success of previous squads. Almost every graduating class has graduated with at least one National Championship. The pressure to continually achieve such a high level of success can overwhelm athletes (What Drives Winning, 2016a). His athletes need to play freely in a way to reach their potential.

A third example comes from his famous note, *The Vision of a Champion*, which is a concept that “the final measure of athletic greatness... is what you do on your own” (What Drives Winning, 2016b). The concept and way of thinking have since turned into a full book and podcast series by Dorrance, not just a sticky note quote he wrote to Mia Hamm years earlier. Sometimes the best thing a coach can do is give them space to become the best version of themselves. Guide and mentor them when they truly need it, not when you want to give yourself as a coach an ego boost.

Championship Flowers

Later down the road, a combination of great team culture and great athletic players can lead to a team achieving a life-long goal of winning a championship. For Dorrance, he ‘rewards’ his players with flowers for winning a regular season title, conference tournament, and national championship. His analogy of using a flower as a championship symbol shows how quick and fleeting that championship win is. When you win a regular season title, the next day you are chasing a conference championship. When you win a conference championship, the next day you are chasing the NCAA tournament national championship. When you win a NCAA championship, the next day you are moving on to how you can improve for the next season. To celebrate the team’s accomplishments while symbolizing the fleeting feeling of what it looks

like to move on to the next. Dorrance wants his players to have a great experience, but he doesn't want them to live in the past and lose the competitive nature to fight again (What Drives Winning, 2015). Success in athletics is temporary.

Conclusion

Even an individual early on in their professional career in athletics can show all aspiring coaches what a successful coach looks at all divisions and experience levels. There is a clear importance that if as a coach, you lead the group as humans, they will want to perform to be the best players they can be. Results will follow, sometimes it's just quicker than outsiders expect.

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