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Philosophy of Coaching

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Abstract

Coaches serve as important role models to athletes by remaining steadfast in their own philosophies. Many coaches, at different levels of sport, have their own philosophies which emphasize different thoughts and beliefs. Youth and high school agencies along with high school and college coaches will help serve as a framework for my own philosophy. The main topics that embody a philosophy include, beliefs about the role of sport, functions or objectives, how to define success and winning, gender equity, racial equity, cutting players, the concept of pay-to-play and personal ethics and sportsmanship.

Philosophy of Coaching

Motivation

According to a study published by the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), more than three-fifths of U.S. adults, approximately 162 million Americans, claim some relationship to sport-related activities (2011). This number includes “25% who are actively engaged in sport as participants, parents of children in sport, coaches, or volunteers” (United States Anti-Doping, 2011). As the report shows, sports are an important aspect of American culture for those who participate actively and passively. Sports are popular because they allow everyone the ability to represent their school, town, city, or country. Whether participating or not, they give a feeling of belonging to a group. The USADA reports that there are many reasons why people believe sports are an important part of our culture. Eighty eight percent of adults agree that sports provide a source of fun and enjoyment, eighty four percent say it can reduce youth crime and delinquency, eighty percent believe it can bring people together in ways that strengthen communities and three fifths believe that sport overall promotes positive values (2011).

As we can see, sports provide many opportunities and offer positive benefits to society. Additionally, they give players and fans an escape from their everyday lives. As a player, stepping on to the field allowed me to forget about all the other stressors or problems that I had for the duration of the game or practice. I was able to focus on the sport in its entirety and not worry about anything else.

Fans often experience the same feeling while totally engrossed in a game. This temporary escape is another reason why sports remain popular. Audiences love the drama and

suspense that goes along with sporting events as well. Mistakes and remarkable plays mesmerize fans which furthers the love for sports. Others watch sports to appreciate the talent and skills that players possess, while some watch for entertainment. Whatever the reason, sport continues to have a vast influence on American society.

Many parents enroll their children in sports at a young age so that they can enjoy the game, learn basic skills, interact with other children, learn respect, be competitive, and have fun. Unfortunately, as kids get older, these values do not always remain constant. Many athletes today forget about respect, for themselves, their team, their coaches, and their fans. Performance enhancing drugs are widespread through all sports. Recent bounty allegations have surfaced in the National Football League. The New Orleans Saints were allegedly paying players to injure opposing players. The Washington Post reports “The fund surpassed \$50,000 at times. Players were paid \$1,500 for a hit that knocked an opponent from a game and \$1,000 for a hit that led to an opposing player being helped off the field” (Maske, 2012). There were allegations that other teams were also involved but none have been proven to date. As a result, the Saints who participated were fined, suspended and the team lost some of their draft picks (Maske, 2012).

There are often scandals where morally questionable acts such as alcohol abuse, violence, and/or cheating are present. Another famous athlete, Tiger Woods, recently disgraced himself and golf. Woods admitted that he had multiple affairs while still married (Sheinin, 2010). His actions were reported over media outlets allowing kids of all ages to see his deplorable actions. Even worse, he initially lied about the affairs which allow young athletes to think that cheating and lying are acceptable, and that if you are successful it does not matter what you do. Athletes are seen as role models to younger athletes, and it has been reported by the USADA, that “if a well-known athlete breaks the rules in a game, it makes children think it is acceptable to break

the rules to win” (United States Anti-Doping, 2011), the same goes for drug use and cheating. The behaviors that these athletes show are not good quality examples for maturing athletes who are learning what is right and what is wrong.

Luckily, for the sake of many athletes, coaches are ranked as the number one positive influence on today’s youth (United States Anti-Doping, 2011). As a coach it is imperative to understand and act upon this knowledge. Coaches must teach the young athletes to respect the game. Sabock and Sabock (2011) say that coaches have numerous roles including but not limited to teacher, disciplinarian, salesperson, public relations expert, guidance counselor, diplomat, organizer, detective, psychologist, judge and jury, leader, mother/father figure, dictator, politician, actor, fund raiser, chief executive, equipment manager, trainer, citizen of the community, and citizen of the school. All of these roles must be embraced by the coach in order to recognize the athletes’ full potential.

Unfortunately not all coaches live up to these expectations. The recent charges against Jerry Sandusky, of Pennsylvania State University, illustrate how a coach can abuse his authority. He was charged with sexually abusing boys he met through the charity he founded in 1977. Due to his power and the lack of action taken by the Penn State athletic department, the sexual abuse started in 1994 and police did not take serious action until 2009 (Associated Press, 2011). Sandusky is a disgrace to coaching. Because of his actions it is important to understand the influence of a coach as well as the ramifications of that influence. Together with my undergraduate degree in psychology, my certification as a personal trainer, and my work experience as a teacher and mentor to children, I hope to successfully embody all of the roles provided by Sabock and Sabock and specifically, to never endanger my players as a coach.

In this paper, I will discuss different philosophies of coaching ranging from youth to college teams as well as to describe my philosophy of coaching. Eight sports agencies philosophies will be examined; two youth sport agencies, Bethesda Chevy Chase Baseball and the United States Specialty Sports Association Baseball, two high school associations, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association and the Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association, two high school coaches, Coach Mike Terry and Coach Larry Friedrichs, and lastly two college coaches, Coach Sue Enquist and Coach Margie Wright. Each of the philosophies emphasizes different aspects of coaching. I will evaluate beliefs about the role of sport, functions or objectives, defining success and the role of winning, gender equity, racial equity, cutting players, pay-to-play, and personal ethics and sportsmanship. In looking at the differing beliefs, I will expound on my own philosophy of coaching and in the end summarize my findings.

Role of Sport

Sports have been and continue to remain an important part of society. Many people differ on what they believe the role of sport should be, especially as athletes' progress and move on to more competitive competition. Coaches and agencies have their own beliefs, sometimes overlapping, but often they view certain concepts as more important than others. Bethesda Chevy Chase Baseball, known as BCC, is a youth baseball organization, based in Maryland that believes the main roles of baseball are developing skills, learning sportsmanship, building camaraderie, and lastly having fun (Bethesda Chevy Chase, n.d.). I agree that at a young age, these beliefs are fundamental in creating well rounded and respectful players. Coach Larry Friedrichs of the Varsity softball team at Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, IL declares that as athletes develop they need to learn how to mature both on and off the field and to

learn to deal with adversity (Adlai E. Stevenson, 2012). By following Coach Friedrich's advice, his athletes will learn to grow in athletics as well as in life after athletics.

Coach Friedrichs makes a solid argument, however the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), adds more beliefs about the role of sport that Coach Friedrichs overlooks. The MIAA stresses that sports teach discipline, organizational skills and how to perform well under stress (Massachusetts Interscholastic, n.d.). The student athletes must learn to manage their time between school and sport, and they will then be able to succeed on and off the field. Additionally, the MIAA (n.d.) says sports teach sacrifice, commitment, effort, accountability, and leadership. All of these qualities are necessary to include in a coach's philosophy at this age because they will give the coach a strong base of knowledge to help them to continue to be successful. The Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association (MPSSAA) states in their philosophy that the role of sport is to contribute to the educational program in the state (Maryland Public Secondary, 2001). I believe that this should be understood in a philosophy.

The majority of athletes will not make a career of their sport and it is therefore necessary to teach them the significance of getting a sound education. William J. Price references the NCAA statistics for professional athletes:

In men's basketball, for example, there is only a .03% chance of a pro career. This means that of the almost 156,000 male, high school senior basketball players only 44 will be drafted to play in the NBA after college, and only 32 women (.02%) out of just over 127,000 female, high school senior players will eventually be drafted. In football the odds are slightly better, with .08% or 250 of just over 317,000 high school senior players being drafted. The sport with the most professional opportunities is baseball, with high school players having a .4% chance of playing professionally. (NCAA as cited in Price, 2010)

As we can see, even baseball, which has the highest probability of drafting is still less than one percent. Coaches and athletes alike need to understand these numbers and highlight the importance of education.

As competition increases, the role of sport changes in many coaches' minds. Former UCLA Coach Sue Enquist (2008) explains that softball teaches the athletes how to prepare, love, and honor not only the sport but the coaches, teammates, and life itself. Coach Margie Wright, the Fresno State Softball coach, wants her athletes to be the best players and persons that they can be (Fresno State University, n.d.). I think abiding by Coach Wright's philosophy is important for all athletes, no matter their age. Coach Wright also believes playing will instill confidence in the players and sports are helpful in developing the individual to better the team (Fresno State University, n.d.). As athletes get older, the roles of sport expand. Sports can teach values, reveal character, and help the athlete realize the type of person they are becoming. I personally believe that the roles of sport should overall remain steadfast as the athletes get older. All sports should teach leadership, respect, good sportsmanship, commitment, and for all people to appreciate their own talent.

Functions or Objectives

Next we will examine the six main functions or objectives of sports: fitness, entertainment, winning, fun, education, and business. Again, depending on the age group, the importance of each of these will change. The majority of the coaches and organizations have education as either their first or second most important objective. The United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA), which is primarily a youth baseball league, believes their role is to develop athletes physically so that they may compete at any level (United States Specialty,

2007). I do not necessarily agree that this is the only objective for a youth league. As a coach I acknowledge that developing athletes is important, but other functions such as fun must not be overlooked. BCC Baseball, on the other hand, acknowledges that it is important to educate the athletes by teaching strong fundamental skills, while also emphasizing fun and camaraderie (Bethesda Chevy Chase, n.d.). For youth organizations, I believe that having fun is essential, followed by education, entertainment, fitness, winning, and lastly business. I hope that at a young age no coach, including myself, makes the sport about business or winning before allowing the kids to have fun.

All four high school representatives believe that education is the number one objective of sports. The MIAA (n.d.) states that education, fun, and promoting healthy lifestyles are imperative. The MPSSAA (2007) also believes that education is at the top of the list followed by health and safety. It is reassuring that two statewide umbrella organizations maintain education as a priority at this level as well. Both high school coaches promote education while Coach Terry also discusses the fitness objective (Adlai E. Stevenson, 2012; Terry, n.d.). My objectives as a coach for high school athletes would start with education, followed by fun, fitness, winning, entertainment, and lastly business.

In college, the concept of the sport changes, and coaches often forget that athletes choose to play sports for the love of the game. Coach Wright emphasizes education as a major objective; however, she also stresses the importance of winning (Fresno State University, n.d.). At this level coaches often fear that if they do not win, they will lose their bonuses/incentives or possibly, even their job. Due to this, the sport also becomes more like a business. Coaches must recruit athletes that they feel will help the team win, they must make sure that the school's administration is happy with their decisions, and they must make sure their sponsors agree with

their objectives. Coach Wright mentions education, business, and winning as some of her objectives in her philosophy (Fresno State University, n.d.). It is difficult for a college coach to manage her team and stay grounded in her beliefs. As a collegiate coach I would do my best to emphasize education and fun above all. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities do expect coaches to win so winning along with business would be my next objectives, then entertainment, and finally fitness. At the professional level, I believe winning and entertainment are the two main functions, followed closely by fitness and business, while education and fun are least important. As the level of playing changes, so do the functions of sports.

Defining Success

Coaches have different perceptions about the definition of success. BCC Baseball (n.d.) does not believe that winning is everything, and if a coach loses sight of that, there are major concerns. Success is based on the athlete's ability to learn strong fundamental skills and appreciate good sportsmanship. A good coach should view success as developing a less gifted player or improving a more talented player's ability. The high school organizations agree that winning is not the only definition for success. The MIAA (n.d.) states that winning does not supersede the primary priorities of high school sport programs. Whether students win or lose, they should learn lasting and positive lessons. Additionally the MPSSAA started a "Respect the Game" initiative which speaks to the heart of sportsmanship. As part of this initiative, participants are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship and let all their actions be guided by respect (Maryland Public Secondary, 2007). The state of Maryland believes that teaching respect and good sportsmanship to the athletes is the ultimate definition of success. I am in agreement with the definitions provided by BCC, the MIAA, and the MPSSAA. As a coach I believe that success comes from every athlete and coach trying their hardest, giving all they have

and working hard. Due to this belief, a winning team gives all their effort and implements what they learned at practice. I would rather coach a team that learns about sportsmanship, builds interpersonal relationships, and learns valuable life lessons than a team who learns none of this and wins all the time. I understand that winning is important, but it is not the only important lesson to impart.

Unfortunately, not all coaches agree with my philosophy. Coach Friedrichs claims that success can be measured by whether the team and individuals statistics improve from the year before (Adlai E. Stevenson, 2012). Additionally, he claims that the ultimate goal is to make it to a championship game. As I mentioned, these are important things to strive towards, however, as a coach, your idea of success should be well rounded. At the college level and beyond, winning seems to be everything. Coach Wright defines success as playing, and subsequently winning the national title game (Fresno State University, n.d.). Additionally, Coach Enquist (2008) points out that her team was successful because they won more National Championships than anyone in softball history. While this is an impressive feat, if they do not win the National Championship the next year, does that mean the season was a failure? I do not think so. There are many ways in which a coach can and should learn about success, whether it is a pitcher learning a new pitch, a volatile player learning to control her rage, or a younger player learning to be a leader as a captain; these are all definitions of success. I understand that as programs become more intense and the coaches believe their jobs will be in jeopardy if they do not succeed, they sometimes change their beliefs. Since most fans would argue that success equals winning, the coach often absorbs that ideology and strives to win. Again, as I mentioned before, winning is important but it is not the only definition of success.

Gender Equity

Another challenge facing coaches in creating their philosophies is the issue of gender equity. At first it seems simple: boys should play on boys' teams, and girls should play on girls' teams. However, as female athletes are gaining more acceptances into the world of sports, especially after the passing of Title IX, the issue of gender equity has become quite unclear. What happens if a girl wants to play a sport that does not have a girl's equivalent? Washington Post writer, Melissa Isaacson reports on Erin DiMeglio, an 18 year old high school student from Florida who faced this problem when she discovered her passion and talent for football. DiMeglio grew up playing flag football and one day was discovered by the Varsity football coach who suggested she come throw the ball around. One thing led to another and she became the first female high school quarterback. For DiMeglio, the players and coaching staff accepted her as a football player, not a girl (2012). This was a big step for the coach who led a successful team with many players scouted for Division I schools. In this instance, I believe the coach made the right choice by allowing her to play football. I believe that an athlete should be able to compete on the opposite genders team if there is no comparable team.

Let us consider another female athlete, Sierra Harr, from Idaho, who is one of the states better female golfers. Harr played for her high school golf team and won the state title her freshman year. Her junior year, not enough players tried out for the girl's golf team. Instead of giving up for the season, she won the Idaho High School Activities Association's approval to play on the boys' team provided she qualified each week. She came in seventh place in the boy's state finals, which caused opposing coaches to become upset. They argued that she could have competed on an individual level on the girls' team. The activities association is trying to move toward a set of rules that will be fair to all individuals. Harr should not have to be penalized because there is not enough female interest in the sport. I believe in this instance they

were right in allowing her to compete with the boys. Harr announced that if they are able to field a girls' team for the following season she will play with the girls, but if not she wants to continue to play with the boys (Associated Press, 2012). This is a unique situation because she is only playing with the boys because there is no girls' team on which to play. What if she wanted to play on the boys' team because she was better than all the girls? In this situation, as a coach there would be no question but to have her remain on the girls' team because the sport is the same.

If this was a different sport, say softball, and Harr wanted to try out for the high school baseball team, I believe she should have the right to try out. Not all schools agree with this. This rule is decided state by state and according to an article in the New York Times, "In at least one state, Massachusetts, high school rules bar girls from trying out for boys baseball in schools that also offer softball. Nebraska dropped its ban in 2008" (Hyman, 2009). I believe that more states should adopt the rule that allows girls to try out for the boy's teams in situations where the sport differs. Some claim that baseball and softball are similar so the genders should be divided. A father fighting for his daughters right to play claimed that "It's like saying Ping-Pong and tennis are the same sport" referring to baseball and softball (Hyman, 2009). In these situations as a coach, I would permit a female athlete try out for a male team, as long as there is nothing comparable and she has the skills to do so.

Growing up as an athlete, I competed on boys' baseball, soccer, and basketball teams simply because I wanted to play with my friends who were boys. I loved to play sports and the fact that these teams usually offered a higher level of competition than girls' teams encouraged me to stay. When I was in third grade I was told that I was no longer allowed to play on the boys' team because there were girls' leagues. I was heartbroken that the Montgomery County

Department of Recreation forced me to quit and leave my friends behind. That however was the only league that enforced this policy on me. I played on a recreational boy's soccer team until middle school while simultaneously playing on the girl's middle school team. I also continued to play recreational baseball through eighth grade. I started playing girls softball in sixth grade knowing that I may one day have to choose between the two and most likely give up baseball. After middle school, I had to make that tough decision; would I focus on softball or continue to play baseball instead? There was a small part of me that wanted to try out for the baseball team in my high school, but the other part of me wanted to continue to play sports through college. I always wanted to play at the collegiate level, and although my coaches believed I had the skills to play with high school baseball players, I knew I could not succeed beyond that. I made a choice to focus solely on softball and was fortunate enough to be able to play in college. Playing with boys proved to be a challenge especially as I got older. I was often mocked by the opposing team players and made to feel inferior due to my gender. All of my coaches were extremely supportive of me and treated me like every other athlete. These were my role models growing up whether I realized it or not at the time. The coaches accepted me for who I was and stood up for me against other coaches. My philosophy will attempt to achieve what my coaches did for me and I will always try and make all of my athletes feel equal regardless of gender.

Other issues regarding gender equity have arisen over transsexual athletes. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided "before the 2004 Athens Summer Games that athletes who had undergone sex reassignment surgery would be permitted to compete in all future Olympic Games", however some international sports committees stipulate that "all international athletes must compete in the category of their birth sex" (Reeser, 2005, p. 697). These issues are becoming more commonplace in sport today, and to deal with it, I do not

believe that there can be one overarching rule. Whether athletes are transgender, transsexual, or have gender identity disorder, as a coach I would transact with that student on a case by case basis and use my judgment to make the best decision for that athlete and for the team.

The last issue that is raised about gender equity is about whether cross-gendered coaching should be allowed. I believe that if the person is qualified they should get the position. For instance, in the University of Connecticut's women's basketball team, Luigi "Geno" Auriemma (n.d.) led the Huskies to seven NCAA Division I national championships and four perfect seasons. Although there are not many female coaches for men's sports, Annemarie Farrell is one of them. She helped create the men's rugby team at Ithaca College (Farrell, n.d.). Any able, competent coach, male or female, should be allowed and encouraged to coach any team or gender.

Racial Equity

Equity for people of color has come a long way in sports since Jackie Robinson. Robinson's courageous move to become "the first baseball player to break Major League Baseball's color barrier that segregated the sport for more than 50 years" would affect all colored athletes in the future (Jackie Robinson, n.d.). Robinson set an example for coaches and athletes to stand for what they believe in. A few years later, Althea Gibson paved the way for African Americans and women in the game of tennis. Gibson became the "first black to win championships at famous tournaments, such as the French Open, the United States Open, the Australian Doubles and Wimbledon in the 1950s" (Althea Gibson, n.d.). During a time of segregation, she fought her way to play the game she loved and in so doing allowed athletes such as Arthur Ashe and Venus and Serena Williams, to name a few, to take the court without issues.

Unfortunately racism still does exist on the playing field and with coaching opportunities. Although on the surface it seems that there are many African-American players in sports, many college athletes still face problems. In an article published in the Marquette Sports Law Journal, the author finds that collegiate male athletes often have to “deal with racial stereotypes, isolation from the rest of the campus, and the reality that they are in school to play sports, not to get a degree” (Anderson, 1996). Although the black athletes have the opportunity to play the sport, there is still a negative stigma associated with integration. “Additionally, we find that that African-Americans are often underrepresented in coaching, administrative and management opportunities once their playing career is over” (Anderson, 1996). Although many times racism is subconscious, it is still prevalent in sports today. It is also an issue of access for African-American women at the collegiate level. They are “underrepresented in all but two sports: Division I basketball, where black women represent 50.6 percent of athletes, and indoor and outdoor track and field, where they represent 28.2 and 27.5 percent” (Rhodem, 2012). In other sports including lacrosse, swimming, soccer, softball, and volleyball the percentages are all under twelve percent. Women are also facing issues in the realm of coaching. Of the 300 coaching jobs in N.C.A.A. Division I women’s basketball, 166 were held by white women, and only 35 were held by black women (Rhodem, 2012) These are just a few examples that portray the injustice that is still occurring.

I do not believe that race should ever be an issue in sports or life. Jackie Robinson and Althea Gibson, two courageous athletes, stood up for what they believed in. They serve as great role models for all athletes and coaches to make a stand. I know for a fact that anyone who plays on my team no matter their race, gender, or religion will all be treated equally and with the same respect.

Along the lines of gender and race equality, religious equality is often overlooked in sports. I feel that the issue of religious equality is similar to that of racial equality because it is necessary for sports to be aware of discrimination of any kind. The most famous examples of religious inequality in sports, outlined by Brian Moynahan, are that of Henry “Hank” Greenberg and Sanford “Sandy” Koufax. Both of these men had important games that fell on Yom Kippur, one of Judaism’s most sacred holidays. Greenberg, nicknamed “The Hebrew Hammer” of the Detroit Tigers attracted national attention when he refused to play during a pennant race. Koufax of the Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodger’s refusal to pitch was in the first game of the World Series. The decision for these two athletes to sit out on the holiest of days was an important decision for young athletes to see. Although it was a personal and business struggle for the men, they both ultimately made the decision to not play (2003). My religious identity is important to me with regard to sport because I also faced challenges. Every season that I was playing college softball, there were games that fell either on or around Passover. I always chose my religion over softball but was penalized for it in one instance. My coach benched me for the game following Passover because I had missed practice to observe the holiday. I do not think this was reasonable or justified. As a coach, I will understand that there are circumstances that come up that are more important than the game. Other religions are impacted in sports as well. During the month of Ramadan, Muslim athletes struggle to decide if fasting will impact their performance. During the 2012 Olympics, the Moroccan men’s soccer team which fields 22 players, said “nine players are observing Ramadan; the other 13 have postponed their fasts” (Borden, 2012). This poses a tough decision because athletes cannot always get the nutrition that they need. However the head Coach, Pim Verbeek, held two sets of meals and two different practices to accommodate

every player's needs (Borden, 2012). Coach Verbeek did an amazing thing that allowed his players religious equality.

Cutting Players

Another topic that often sparks debate is whether cutting players should be included in a coach's philosophy and I believe it changes depending on the age group. Unfortunately, it is not plausible to keep all athletes who try out for your team, but when possible I think the coach should. Often times cutting players can discourage them from trying out again, which denies them the opportunities and lessons that are learned from the sport both on and off the field. The USSSA has the ability to create enough teams so that no player is denied the opportunity to play based on skill level (United States Specialty, 2007). One of their main goals as an organization is to develop these athletes into better athletes no matter what skill level when they join a team. Similarly, BCC Baseball (n.d.) limits the number of kids on each team to allow fair playing time and the ability to have position changes but they never turn away players. Both of these organizations have enough support, both physically and financially, that they do not have to turn away players; they just create a new team.

This dedication that allows no athlete to be turned away becomes a rarity as players get older and teams become more competitive. Coach Friedrichs states that the high school program has four separate teams for their softball program; Varsity, Junior Varsity, Freshmen A, and Freshmen B. Even though there are four teams, he admits that the coaching staff still has to cut players. They do however encourage all the athletes who were cut to talk to the coach to figure out ways for them to improve for the next season (Adlai E. Stevenson, 2012). I believe what Coach Friedrichs and the Adlai E. Stevenson High School did was noteworthy. They gave more

athletes opportunities to play than most other schools where there are only Varsity and Junior Varsity teams. None of the college coaches discussed cutting players because the majority of their team is recruited. Athletes who were not recruited do have the ability to try out for the team at the beginning of the season but usually a coach has picked her players before the walk-ons arrive. At the college level, the competition is very high and usually if a player is not recruited they either get cut or are put in a managerial position. My philosophy is that whenever possible, I would not cut an athlete. Athletics, as I have already discussed, teach important lessons and skills for life. They give an opportunity for kids to play on a team and learn sportsmanship and develop interpersonal relationships while being physically active.

I do acknowledge that not cutting players is not always a possibility, but it should be done with respect and dignity. I have an aversion to coaches who post lists for players to see if they made the team or not. I do not think it is fair for those cut athletes; it is humiliating and they do not always know the reason why they were cut. Each player deserves the respect of meeting with the coach to understand their shortcomings and how they could possibly improve. I would schedule time to meet with all of the athletes who tried out and explain their role on the team. If a player is cut, I would help them understand why, and provide specific pointers on areas of improvement for the next season and most importantly to encourage them to continue playing the sport.

Pay-to-Play

If cutting players is not enough to keep athletes from playing sports, a new concept called pay-to-play is sweeping the nation. With more budget cuts to schools, athletics is among one of the first extracurricular programs to lose funding. As a result, schools are implementing a rule

that forces athletes to pay in order to participate on a team in many states (University of Michigan Health, 2012). I think denying children the opportunity to play sports if their families cannot afford it is one of the saddest things that is happening to the athletic world. The University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children's Hospital did a study entitled "Pay-to-play sports keeping lower-income kids out of the game." They found that participation in school sports for kids between the ages of twelve and seventeen changed dramatically based on household income. When household income was at least \$60,000, there was a five percent decreased participation due to cost. However when household income was less than \$60,000, there was a nineteen percent decreased participation due to cost (2012).

The reported numbers associated with pay-to-play programs are astonishing. "61 percent of children playing middle or high school sports were charged a pay-to-play fee. The average fee was \$93, according to the poll respondents, but 21% of children faced a pay-to-play fee of \$150 or more" (University of Michigan Health, 2012). These prices are not including the basic costs parents have to pay when their child first starts a sport such as equipment, practice gear and uniforms. As a coach I would try and avoid these costs using creative alternatives as much as possible. Some cities are taking matters into their own hands. Bob Cook, contributor to Forbes Magazine reports that

The schools in Dearborn, Mich., where 70 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, after five years are dropping pay-to-play fees, rolling the dice they can make up the \$170,000 in funding through sponsorships, fund-raisers and ticket sales. Other schools, such as Mesa, Ariz., that have considered dropping the fees are instead taking a cue from other districts and putting a ceiling on what's paid by an individual family. And, if your district is lucky, you're like Saginaw, Mich., which charges fees, but had them all covered by an alumnus, Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker LaMarr Woodley. (2012)

It is my hope that the budget cuts will be overturned soon because it is so important that all children who so desire, participate in sports no matter their family income. The only positive I understand for pay-to-play is the fact that school expenditures and ultimately taxes are potentially lower. I dare to challenge the people who believe that this is a good idea because these children will learn valuable lessons that they will take with them for the rest of their lives. There is a large return on the investment for communities with athletic programs. When these athletes become adults, what they learned on the field will help them become more meaningful people in our society.

Personal Ethics and Sportsmanship

One of the topics I continually discuss is sportsmanship, which along with personal ethics is a necessary concept to learn both on and off the field. It is a coach's responsibility to instill good values on all players. BCC Baseball (n.d.) agrees saying that one of their objectives is to teach an appreciation for good sportsmanship. Often time's coaches will encourage their players to bend or break the rules in order to gain an advantage, but most coaches and organizations do not document that in their philosophy. Coach Terry (n.d.) states that it is important to learn to respect each other, the coach, the opponents, and your gear. She preaches that players should be gracious in defeat and victory (Terry, n.d.). The MIAA (n.d.) agrees saying that it is necessary for all athletes to play within the rules and display good sportsmanship. Coach Enquist (2008), who talks about the importance of honor, says that in order to honor the game you have to have good sportsmanship. All of these coaches talk about the sportsmanship and personal ethics that they expect from their players, but none of them mention how the coach individually should act. In my philosophy, I would say that good sportsmanship and

personal ethics are required first by the coach. Coaches are seen as role models and when they do not live up to their own expectations, neither will their athletes.

Summary

Remaining steadfast in your philosophy is of the utmost importance. When coaches waiver from their beliefs, they lose the respect of the game and the players. My goal as a coach is to be committed to my philosophies and my players. The role of sports is fundamental when coaching athletes. It is important for kids to develop athletic skills, have fun, learn the value of sportsmanship and camaraderie, leadership, respect, and commitment. As teams become more competitive the functions of sport change, but overall I hope that having fun remains important, followed by education, entertainment, fitness, winning, and lastly business. Success in my mind is achieved when a player tries their hardest and implements what they learned at practice. Sports should be about learning valuable life lessons and a team that can do this is a winning team. Equity across the board should not be an issue. Whether an athlete is a different gender, race, or religion, he or she should be treated with the same amount of respect. In regards to gender there are still a few vague areas including transgendered individuals, and they would have to be decided on a case by case basis. Cutting players is usually a necessary part of the sport. I would like to keep all the athletes who tried out but understand that it is not always possible. When I am forced to cut players it will be done in one-on-one meetings to explain the reasoning to the athlete and encourage them to continue to play. I am against the concept of pay-to-play and if it were enacted in a school I was coaching, I would do everything in my power to ensure that all athletes who want to play have the means to do so. Lastly, I believe that having strong personal ethics and good

sportsmanship are necessary for a successful team. As a coach I would hold myself responsible first and foremost to show good sportsmanship and then make sure that all my players do so as well. It is important for athletes to see their coach making positive decisions so they too will follow.

Overall my philosophy aims to develop athletes in to good players and even better people while still having fun. I am like Coach Margie Wright, the Fresno State Softball coach, who wants her athletes to be the best players and persons that they can be (Fresno State University, n.d.). I think abiding by philosophies like Coach Wright's and my own is important for all athletes and especially, for all coaches and future coaches. As a future coach, I plan to honor the game, my players, co-coaches, and those around me by upholding my philosophy no matter what obstacles may challenge me.

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