

REPORT

Executive Director's Report - Brian Fryer

Coaches Clinic/NCCP: In conjunction with the annual Univ. of Calgary/FA Coaches Clinic a NCCP Technical clinic will go on at the same time. Coaches must attend both clinics to receive the Technical completion because of the total hours required from both areas. Annual Coaches Clinic date is March 7-8/03. The NCCP course will continue on after the Awards Luncheon from 3:00 – 7:00 and Sunday from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.

A separate form will be sent for a list of upcoming NCCP clinics. Remember, any local league/ass./team may host a clinic. You must have at least 12 coaches and a location. We will line up the course conductors/dates. To avoid confusion in regards to Certification, following the completion of the technical and theory NCCP components, one season of coaching must be completed before a Practical form can be filled out (available by contacting Football AB).

Pull Your Price & Donate Fundraiser Winners:

Here are the winners from the 2002 F AB Team Fundraiser. Teams raised \$2,400 for these programs. Thanks to everyone for participating and hopefully next spring more teams will take advantage and participate.

- 1st Prize Grey Cup Package (Value of \$2,000)
Lindsey Labrosse of Calgary
2nd Prize Stampeder Season Tickets for Two (\$500)
Brad Ford of Calgary
3rd Prize Audio Mini Stereo CD System (\$549)
Terry Clement of Edmonton

Websites to Check Out:

www.footballcanada.com www.usacoaches.com
www.humankinetics.com www.nflcffutures.com

Compassionate Coaching Makes a Difference

The following article is from the NFSHSA Magazine for high school coaches (Spring 99' edition) and offers some principles and suggestions for practicing concepts of compassionate coaching in any sport.

By: Wilbur Braithwaite

More than 50 years have gone by since a poignant memory of my college coach's decision to start me at a game, even though I was a bench warmer at the time. My parents, who had never seen me play in college, along with relatives, former high school team-mates and friends, were in the stands. It was a surprise to hear the announcer intone, and starting tonight at forward is 6-foot-3 Wilbur Braithwaite. My mentor coach then, Reed Swenson, was a compassionate man who found little ways to bring the human touch to coaching and the teaching process. Like many of his former players, I found him to be not only a coach for two seasons, but a life-long friend and confidant.

In my retirement year of coaching basketball (1988) I visited my old coach and he remained a mentally active 90-year old optimist. Visiting at his home, I discovered that he not only knew all about my team, but also shared coaching tips, gave encouragement, reminisced about the "good old days"

and extolled the virtues of sending cassette-recorded oral letters: to children and grandchildren. Throughout the visit, he had a twinkle in his eye. He said he was busy writing a book to be titled, *How to Raise Cain At One Hundred If You Are Able*.

Good coaching involves good teaching. Good teaching is based upon caring. Caring is all about compassion. Compassion is being sympathetic to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of others. The compassionate are especially concerned with those individuals, who for whatever reasons, are in a state of distress. Because of the very nature of competitive sports, athletes in the field of fire are often wounded in the fray. The wounds may be physical or emotional. Good coaches find ways to ease the burden of players.

Enumerated below is a starter list of principles, illustrations and suggestions for practicing concepts of compassionate coaching. Readers can readily add to this beginning effort.

1. **Athletic Injuries.** The physical trauma of injuries, in many cases, is not as great as the mental trauma. Once one of my players severely sprained an ankle in a game. I scurried out on the floor. Tears were trickling down his face. "Kim, this ankle must be very painful," I offered. "No coach," he quickly responded, "what really hurts is knowing I can't play."

Wounded players do not look for exaggerated sympathy from the coach. They know the risks of competing. However, they do appreciate and recognize genuine empathy. Empathy being "the capacity to participate in another's feelings..." (Webster's) The follow-up of injuries by the coach is of extreme importance for humane reasons, if nothing else. Medical assistance by doctors and therapists is crucial, but support of the coach and team-mates is a powerful catalyst for the healing process.

2. **The Return to Competition.** My better personal judgment tells me that too many injured players return too soon to the field of battle. As a coach, I plead guilty to that charge. Too much trust, in certain situations, was placed in tape and the "quick fix" of a few days of icing. In retrospect, I regret not having played backups more. A backup at full strength is likely to out-perform a less-than-whole starter. By so substituting, team depth and experience increases, morale often benefits and likely the chance of winning is enhanced. Most importantly, rates of re-injury are decreased.

3. **Athletic Slumps.** Confidence reigns king in sports. Like *The Little Engine That Could*, athletes have to repeat, "I think I can! I think I can! Without confidence, losing becomes a high probability for both teams and individuals. Confidence is a complex phenomenon. Lifelong roots and native personality may strongly influence its genesis. Being able to execute fundamentals quickly, consistently, accurately and artfully, under game pressure, breeds confidence. So does previous success. Yet, sooner or later every player must work his or her way out of a slump. This is time for coaches, as the saying goes, "to step up" and try to make a difference. The key to the return to form might turn upon correcting a slight flaw that has crept into skill technique.

Frequently a word of encouragement can do

wonders. A quote cited in the Utah High school handbook is insightful: "The mind is capable of powerful influence. It can talk us in or out of defeat; it can talk us in or out of victory." If a field-goal kicker missed on two consecutive attempts, a positive comment or gesture by the coach may aid the player in relaxing and concentrating, so he makes the third try. Good coach's sense when a player needs special individual help and acts in accordance with that premonition.

4. **Substitutions.** How effectively a mentor works with subs is one barometer of the "Compassionate Coach's Index of Success." Sometimes coaches say, "We don't have substitutes. We are one team only." This is a play on words. Of course there are backups on every team. One cardinal truth is this: Any Competitive Player Wants to Play. Realistically, a coach must play his most skilled players to have a chance to win. But a coach who is sensitive to all of his or her players always looks for creative opportunities to fulfill the natural and healthy desire of all squad members to compete.

An insidious philosophy has crept into sports. It is the deviant notion that the leading team, no matter how lopsided the score, should substitute only after the opponent has conceded defeat by removing regulars. This practice seems to be especially true for basketball, but still applies to other team sports.

A coach who looks beyond rankings or trying to intimidate present and future opponents by "running up the score" will see merit in another approach. He or she will still play to win not only in score, but also in ways beyond the score. Substitutions will be made when the game is well in hand with several minutes left to play; certainly there is risk in doing so. Yes, miracle comebacks do occur. However, if substitutions are not made en masse so as to completely disrupt team rhythm of play, and if backups are slowly blended with experienced players already in the game, the odds of winning remain very high. Conversely, how much real satisfaction is gained by anyone when a mass substitution is made in football, for example, when the score is 39-0 with three minutes to play.

5. **Discipline.** There is a seemingly paradoxical line in Shakespeare's Hamlet: "I must be cruel only to be kind." A twist on that could be, "A coach must discipline to be compassionate." Coaches are in the business of teaching value-systems – systems based upon consideration, respect and responsibility for others. For the sake of the individual player, as well as the team, it would be ultimately unkind for us to ignore behaviour that violates the bounds of decency, team rules and common sense. "Hazing" is a good example. Players expect their coaches to enforce boundaries of behaviour in practices and games, just like any competent classroom teacher has criteria to which a student must adhere.

Yes, times have changed. In an earlier era the coach essentially acted as the originator and enforcer of practically all team rules. Nowadays, with the real threat of deviating from due process and looming court suits therefrom, school boards often dictate the course for dealing with student-athlete infractions of specified

rules.

Coaches can charter standards and requirements necessary to sail the often bumpy waters of individual versus group rights. This includes standards of game conduct, practice expectations and team training rules for their particular circumstances. Team input can serve a valuable purpose in the process. Someone has said, "There is a fine line between discipline and harassment; discipline breeds success, harassment breeds contempt." Wilfred Petersen in an essay on leadership gave this sage advice: "Carefully assemble and assess all of the facts and options possible, but before making a final decision, take a last peek with your heart."

6. **Keeping Perspective.** On any age level, and especially during the emotion-filled teenage years, competitors must be taught how to cope with defeat and disappointment – conditions that can crowd out self-worth with self-doubt. Being cut from a team, or suffering losses, often leaves one with an empty feeling. Most sports are won, not so much with spectacular plays, but because of opponent's mistakes. Wise coaches help individuals overcome mistakes with proactive teaching principles. Yelling and screaming is a suspect ploy used for decreasing errors.

One of the greatest contributions a coach can make, and one with life time implications, is how to win and lose gracefully, without diminishing competitive spirit and the will to win. Our North American culture has glamorized the winner so much that the losers, by inference, often feel like a failure. Winston Churchill's noteworthy comment on this subject is a formula for sports and life: "Success is never final, Failure is never fatal, it's courage that counts."

The following is one example of compassionate coaching that deserves to make the "Hall of Fame of Memorable Moments in Sports." In the finals of the 1982 NCAA tournament, Georgetown was leading North Carolina by one point with but seconds remaining. A Georgetown guard made a flat cross-court pass at the top of the key directly to a surprised North Carolina player who drove $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the floor for the winning layup. Georgetown coach John Thompson went directly to the heartbroken player, put his arm around him as they walked off the court together. Later the coach said the involved player had been a vital cog all season long and without him the team had no chance winning the final. The player, "Sleepy" Floyd went on the play professional ball. He learned from his mentor, as someone has said, that "failure is the ignition key to success."

Finally consider the words of an 18th Century English poet, William Wordsworth: "Not in the clamour of the crowded street nor in the shouts and plaudits of the throng, but within ourselves are victory and defeat."

In every sport there are moments when a player-oriented coach can make a difference in the life of an athlete. Even moments that can live on brightly – for more than 50 years. There are moments that transcend scores, trophies, medals and artificial trappings of fame. Occasionally such happenings will be written in indelible ink to last forever on the tablets of memory of impressionable youth. This article only touches on the myriads of ways to implement the possibilities. Every coach has the marvellous opportunity each day to enter the wonderful world of becoming a more caring, compassionate teacher in his or her own special way.