

Effective Coaching

Introduction

Coaching effectively is essential in improving performance. Gallwey (2000) cited by Whitmore (2002) defines effective coaching as *'...unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.'*

Whitmore (2002) describes coaching as *'...the essential management style or tool for optimising people's potential and performance. Commanding, demanding, instructing, persuading with threats, overt or covert, cannot produce sustainable optimal performance, even though they may get the job done.'*

Coaching essentially involves planning, delivering and evaluating and an effective coach will excel in these main areas. The Sports Coach Foundation (2002) believes that to be an effective coach it is important for the coach to:

- *'Analyse their performance against a checklist to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses*
- *Recognise the different behaviours exhibited in their own coaching*
- *Devise and implementing an action plan to change aspects of your own coaching behaviour where required*
- *Monitor any improvements in their coaching practice'*

Effective Coach Qualities

Wade (1997) believes that in order for coaching to be effective the coach must exhibit a number of qualities. He outlines a number these:

- Leadership and intelligence
- Analytical ability
- Confidence and decisiveness
- Integrity and reliability
- Vision and imagination

- Coping with unpleasantness
- Organisation and administration
- Enthusiastic approach

Effective Planning

Planning involves '*... a written document that guides you and your athletes through training and competition...It is a rational attempt at identifying...how all of the bits of training fit together to produce peak performance(s) at appropriate times, and it identifies what needs to be evaluated and monitored, in judging whether we are on-track to achieving our goals.*' Parks (2000)

Planning is essential to performance as Parks (2000) explains.

'Whether we see our athletes 2-3 times per week, or 10-12 times per week, they can't possibly work on all the things they need to work on in a single training session. Instead we need to focus on different aspects of our athletes' performances. It is how we prioritize and sequence these components of training that is vital if we are going to take advantage of what sport science calls training adaptation. Perhaps more importantly as coaches, one of our goals should be to structure our practices, weeks of practice, months and phases of training and the competition season to maximize every moment of training and to bring our athletes to their peak performance level at the appropriate time in the season.'

Without planning the coach '*...runs the risk of wasting time, or worse - an inappropriate or poorly thought out plan may in fact cause injury, long term damage, and/or may force the athlete to quit your program altogether.*' Parks (2000)

'A professional coach must leave absolutely nothing to chance; every contingency has to be covered.' Wade (1997) An athlete should only be expected to concentrate on one thing, practice. They should not have to worry about the facilities being free next week or equipment.

Vision and imagination within drills and training situations will keep athletes both mentally and physically fresh. An effective coach ensures that boredom should never be an issue during practice.

Effective Delivery

A player must know that they will receive the same treatment as any other athlete regardless of how important they are to the club or coach. This integrity is especially important during times of criticism. Reliability must accompany integrity. The coach who is ever faithful with their timekeeping, may also instil confidence.

'Even dishonest players value honesty in their coach, and they absolutely demand reliability. They will even accept open criticism so long as it is phrased constructively. Coaches become recipients of many personal secrets or confidences; their players must be totally certain of the coach's reliability in protecting those confidences.' Wade (1997)

A decisive coach will gather player confidence. Wade (1997) describes this as *'performer-coach relationship confidence'*. To be decisive requires positive language and communication with the player or athlete, not just verbally but also through body language.

An effective coach *'...applies intelligence to leadership and can involve persuasion and compelling players to go along with them.'* Wade (1997) If a player or athlete is not led or guided appropriately through training they may feel unsure of what the coach is trying to achieve and reluctant to change their training or technique.

A controlled enthusiastic approach can lift a team. *'A coach who is other than consistently enthusiastic, whatever the team's results or mood is in the wrong job.'* Wade (1997)

Effective Analysing

The effective coach should not only be capable of analysing his/her athletes constructively, but themselves also. An evaluation and reflection of the performance should include the good, bad and constructive criticism of the areas which need improving. A good coach should promote an athlete self-evaluation and reflection of their own performances.

Coping with unpleasantness of injuries/personality clashes/parents is an inevitable and testing job for the coach. Wade (1997) notes dealings of such situations are often watched

critically from a distance by those uninvolved. The coach will need sensitivity to handle the situation appropriately.

Conclusion and Summary

From my personal experience and the previous material, effective coaching may improve performance by:

- Relieving boredom of practice
- Allowing the athlete to concentrate on practice
- Raising athlete's spirits to allow peak performance.
- Providing solid confidence foundation for performance
- Suggesting improvements focussing on positive performance
- Encouraging and promoting lifelong learning

Whitmore (2002) is adamant about the importance of a coach. *'If either the quality of a performance or learning from the experience is important, coaching is a must.'* Whitmore (2002) This importance of a coach suggests that effective coaching is necessary for progression of performance.

'Getting better performance from any group or individual, yourself included, means permanent change in the way you think and [coach] Change of this kind is not a single transaction but a journey, and the journey has a specific starting point [reality] and a clear destination [goal].' Stayer (1990) cited by Whitmore (2002)

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