

Successful Coaching

THE BEST
SELLING
COACHING
BOOK

Updated
Second
Edition


Rainer
Mortens

SUCCESSFUL COACHING

Updated Second Edition

**A Publication for
the American Sport Education Program
and the National Federation Interscholastic
Coaches Association**

**Rainer Martens, PhD
ASEP Founder**



Human Kinetics

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Preface to the Updated Second Edition

The first edition of this book, *Coaching Young Athletes*, is the most-read coaching book ever written in North America, with nearly 100,000 copies sold since it was released in 1981. Why change the title of such a successful book? Because many coaches and sports administrators interpreted “young” in the title to mean prepubescent children, not teenage athletes. Thus, by changing the name to *Successful Coaching*, with no reference to age, I hoped to encourage coaches at every level to read this book.

The first edition of this book was the text for the Level I Course of the American Coaching Effectiveness Program (ACEP). Although many community-based sports programs offered the ACEP Level I Course, others told us that the program was more comprehensive than what they wanted to offer for their volunteer coaches. Thus, we reorganized the ACEP curriculum to create a *Volunteer Level* for volunteers who would probably coach for only a season or two while their sons or daughters participated in a sport. We also created a *Leader Level* course for those who want to pursue coaching as a vocation or serious avocation. (In Appendix A you will find a complete description of the Volunteer Level, the Leader Level, and the more advanced Master Level, as well as the many resources that comprise the comprehensive curriculum.)

Released in 1990, the second edition of *Successful Coaching* was revised to be the text for the ACEP Leader Level Course. It was a comprehensive introduction to the art and science of coaching. The book introduced a positive coaching philosophy; the principles of coaching as digested from the fields of sport psychology, sport pedagogy, and sport physiology; and useful advice from the field of sport management.

The second edition retained the highly practical, understandable, and concise content of the first edition, but it also contained significant changes that came about through the constructive suggestions of many coaches and sports administrators. I rewrote the sport pedagogy part to make it even more practical for developing instructional plans. I added a chapter to help you understand how athletes learn sport skills.

I also revised the sport psychology and sport physiology parts to include important new findings from these sciences since the first edition was written. Perhaps the most significant change was the deletion of the sports medicine section. I removed sports medicine not because it was any less important, but because it was so important that for the Leader Level we created a separate course and book called *Sport First Aid*.

Finally, I added a new section called sport management. It included highly practical chapters on managing your team or program, managing risk, managing your stress, and managing time. Not only will these chapters help you coach more successfully, they will help you grow as a coach and individual.

In 1990 the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA) joined with ACEP to form a single national interscholastic and club sport coaching education network. Working together, ACEP and the National Federation Interscholastic Coaches Association (NFICA) formed a special version of the ACEP Leader Level, known as the National Federation Interscholastic Coaches Education Program (NFICEP), and the second edition of *Successful Coaching* was its text.

ACEP continued to grow, and in 1994 we expanded our mission, developing programs for parents and sport administrators. To reflect this expanded mission, we also changed our name to the American Sport Education Program (ASEP). Today, ASEP's program has blossomed into a 16-course curriculum, and the original ACEP program has been designated SportCoach. The partnership between ASEP and the NFSHSA has continued to grow, and this book is being released in conjunction with revisions of our Leader Level

Sport Science and Sport First Aid courses to reflect the latest knowledge in sport sciences and sports medicine. This updated second edition of *Successful Coaching* is the textbook for the Leader Level/NFICEP Sport Science Course, now called the ASEP/NFICEP Coaching Principles Course.

In addition to updating the content of *Successful Coaching*, we have responded to cries from coaches, administrators, and parents for more practical information about how to prevent athletes' use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. I have deleted the Drugs and Sport chapter of the second edition of *Successful Coaching* in favor of the latest entry to ASEP's SportCoach curriculum: the ASEP/NFICEP Drugs and Sport Course. Today, ASEP and the NFSHSA continue to work together providing coaches with practical, essential information for becoming successful coaches.

The first edition of this book has been used to educate coaches in almost every sport at every level—team and individual, women and men, contact and noncontact, beginner and advanced. On occasion administrators have said, "I like the book but I wish it had more examples for our sport. Our coaches won't relate to examples in those other sports." Obviously it is not possible to write this book for each sport, nor do I think it is necessary. I have provided representative examples for all the categories I listed. Furthermore, *Successful Coaching* is about the *principles* of coaching, and most of the principles apply to all sports. Even if a specific example does not directly fit another sport, I find coaches can readily apply the principle to their sport. In fact, some coaches tell me they find it helps their understanding to make comparisons across sports.

Much has happened in coaching education since the release of the first edition of this book. More than 150,000 coaches have completed ASEP/NFICEP courses. Sport administrators across the country are much more aware of the need for coaching education. National, state, and local organizations are taking steps to implement coaching education programs, especially the ASEP/NFICEP curriculum. Colleges and universities are rejuvenating

nating their coaching curriculums through cooperative efforts with ASEP. And perhaps the most encouraging development is that more and more men and women who are choosing to make coaching a vocation or serious avocation are eager to acquire this education.

I authored the first edition of this book with three special friends—Robert Christina, Jack Harvey, and Brian Sharkey. Although Drs. Christina and Harvey did not contribute directly to the current edition, their contribution through the first edition permeates this revision. I also wish to express my thanks to

Brian Sharkey, my former mentor, for authoring the revision of Part IV, “Sport Physiology.” Ted Miller spent many hours helping me locate resources and finalizing the details of the manuscript, for which I wish to thank him. A very special appreciation goes to Linda Bump, who contributed significantly in developing the content of several sections and to Jan Colarusso Seeley, who served as my editor. Finally, I wish to thank the hundreds of coaches and administrators who have shared with me their knowledge about coaching and their ideas about how to make this book more helpful.

Becoming a Successful Coach

Welcome to coaching! If you've not coached before, you have many new experiences awaiting you. Perhaps you've already daydreamed scenes of your athletes carrying you off the field on their shoulders after winning the championship and your friends and neighbors congratulating you for masterminding the perfect season. Or perhaps your daydreams turn to nightmares—you see yourself making a tactical blunder, and some loudmouth spectator ridicules you. Then you lose your temper and say things you regret. If you have coached before, perhaps these daydreams and nightmares, or similar scenarios, are real experiences for you.

Like any profession, coaching has its highs and lows, but if you are prepared, they can be mostly highs. If you already have the teaching skills of an educator, the training expertise of a physiologist, the administrative leadership of a business executive, and the counseling wisdom of a psychologist, you can throw this book away; it won't help you. But if you don't, join me to find out what makes a coach successful.

Is success winning games? Yes, in part, winning is an aspect of successful coaching. But successful coaching is much more than just winning games. Successful coaches help athletes master new skills, enjoy competing with others, and feel good about themselves. Successful coaches not only are well-versed in the techniques and skills of their sports, they know how to teach these skills to young people. And successful coaches not only teach athletes sport skills, they also teach and model the skills needed for successful living in our society.

Being a successful coach is an enormous challenge. And good intentions are not enough to be successful; you need all the knowledge you can get. *Successful Coaching* will help you acquire this knowledge by teaching you more about sport science and sport management. It does not discuss the teaching of techniques or tactics for specific sports, although both are certainly important. Successful coaches need to know about both (a) sport

science and management and (b) techniques and tactics. In the past coaches emphasized the latter because little was known about the former. But that's changed now, and *Successful Coaching* will give you a firm foundation in the practical application of sport science and management.

In this introductory book you will learn about three sport sciences—sport psychology, sport pedagogy, and sport physiology—and about sport management. Don't worry if you come across terms, like sport pedagogy, that are new to you. I'll introduce these sport sciences to you in understandable and, I hope, entertaining ways. I don't want to lose your interest because of needless scientific mumbo-jumbo, but becoming a successful coach does require you to learn some new terms. Just as carpenters must know about miter boxes, soffits, and wainscots, modern-day coaches need to know about aerobic and anaerobic training, intrinsic motivation, muscle glycogen, optimal arousal, plyometrics, and risk management. In this book you will find out about all these things and much more in language you can understand and in ways to help you become a successful coach.

Most coaches have learned the skills of coaching through years of trial and error. But, oh, how some of those errors hurt! *Successful Coaching* will help you shorten that learning process—and reduce those painful errors—by drawing upon the wisdom of experienced and knowledgeable coaches and the research of hundreds of sport scientists who have studied sport over the past 40 years. The unique emphasis of this book is the integration of sport science research with the practical knowledge acquired by highly experienced coaches.

This book, of course, does not contain all the information you will need to be a successful coach. There is much more to learn. This book is only a starting point, a foundation for building your knowledge of the sport sciences and management. As the text for the ASEP/NFCEP Coaching Principles Course, it is followed by a series of more advanced texts in each of the sport sciences that com-

prise the Master Level. (See Appendix A for complete information about the American Sport Education Program courses.) But even after you study at the Master Level, much will remain to be learned. These books are only one source of information. Another way you can learn is to watch and talk with other coaches. They can teach you both effective and ineffective coaching practices; what you must do is distinguish between the two. *Successful Coaching* will help you do that by providing you a foundation in sport science and management.

Of course, another important way for you to learn is from your own experiences. As you coach, examine your experiences periodically and think about what you are learning. What can you do differently to coach more successfully, and what do you want to do the same because it works well? Some coaches have 20 years of experience, but have learned little because they do not think about and adjust to their experiences. Other coaches may have only a few months of experience, but learn much quickly and adjust to successful and unsuccessful coaching practices.

It won't take you too long to read *Successful Coaching*, but it may take some time to know its contents, and perhaps even longer to put into practice what you know. Just as an athlete doesn't learn to play shortstop overnight, you won't learn the skills of coaching in a day. You will need to read and reread parts of this book, practice the skills described, observe other coaches, and learn from your experiences through thoughtful analysis. As you undertake this self-study, you will see that successful coaches are those who can learn new skills, who are flexible enough to change old ways when change is needed, who can accept constructive criticism, and who can critically evaluate themselves. Throughout *Successful Coaching*, I will ask you to do all these things. In fact, I am going to urge you to put forth the same effort to become a successful coach that you will expect from the athletes you coach.

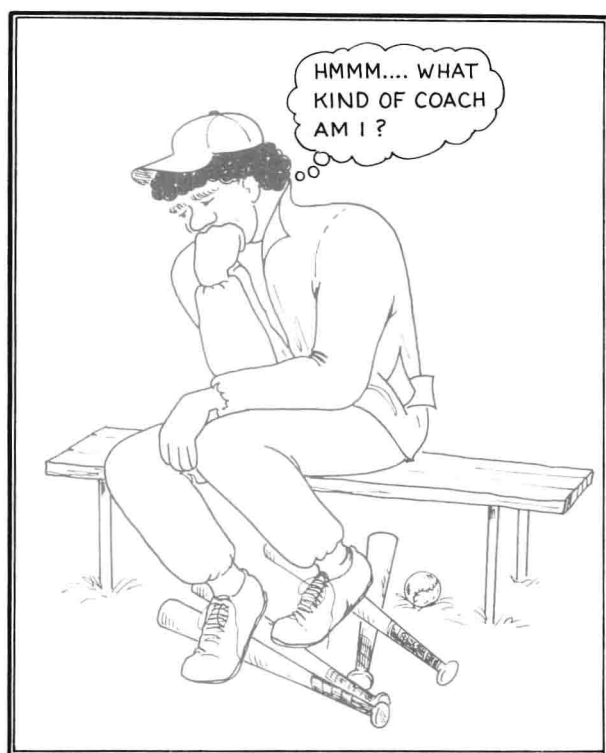
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Part I

Developing a Coaching Philosophy



Chapter 1 *YOUR COACHING OBJECTIVES*

Chapter 2 *YOUR COACHING STYLE*

Your success as a coach will depend more on your coaching philosophy than on any other factor. By philosophy I mean the beliefs or principles that guide the actions you take. It is the foundation on which all your knowledge about sport science, sport management, and techniques and tactics will be built. Your coaching philosophy will determine how wisely you use this knowledge.

Part I is devoted to helping you develop your coaching philosophy by asking you to think about the two most important decisions a coach makes. The first decision, discussed in chapter 1, is de-

termining which objectives you will seek to attain when coaching. In chapter 2, I ask you to think about the coaching style you will use to achieve your objectives.

How you make these decisions will form two vital parts of your coaching philosophy and, to a large extent, will determine how much success and enjoyment you and your athletes will have. Obviously, no one can make these decisions for you; however, I will encourage you to consider several important issues as you develop your coaching philosophy.

Chapter 1

Your Coaching Objectives

One of the two most important decisions you will make as a coach concerns the objectives you will seek to achieve with your athletes. Stop for a few moments to think what your objectives will be, and write them down. In this chapter we'll first consider the objectives you have for your team or athletes and then will consider the objectives you have for yourself.

Three Major Objectives

Coaches often list many specific goals they hope to achieve when coaching their athletes; usually their goals fall under three broad objectives:

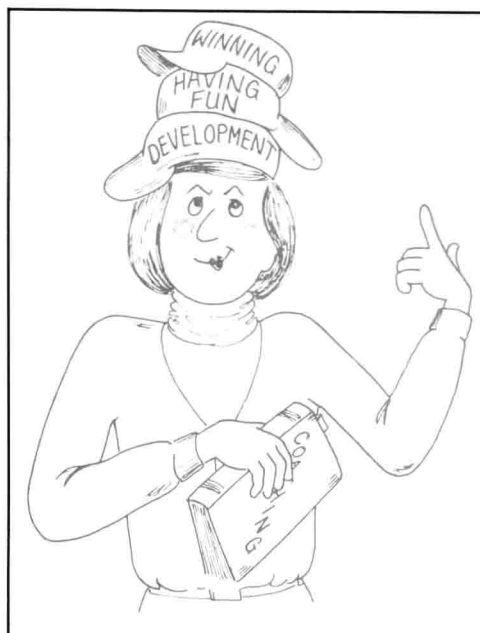
- To have a winning team
- To help young people have fun
- To help young people develop . . .
 - a. *physically*, by learning sport skills, improving physical conditioning, developing good health habits, and avoiding injuries;
 - b. *psychologically*, by learning to control their emotions and developing feelings of self-worth; and
 - c. *socially*, by learning cooperation in a competitive context and appropriate standards of behavior.

Which of these objectives is important to you? Winning? Having fun? Helping young people develop? Perhaps you believe all three are worthwhile. But are they equally important? What if you must choose between them (which at times you will)? Coaches often must decide whether to pursue victory at the possible expense of an athlete's well-being or development. What will your priorities be?

Assessing Your Objectives

The short questionnaire here will help you decide about your objectives for winning, having fun, and helping young athletes develop.

Read each statement and the three options that follow. Decide which of the three you feel is most important and write the number 3 in the blank next to that letter. Then decide which option is least important to you and write 1 in the corresponding blank. Put 2 in the remaining space. Although in some cases you may think all three choices are important, indicate which is the most important and which is the least important of the three. Try to answer each question as you honestly feel.



1. The best coaches are those who
 - A. Give individual help and are interested in young athletes' development. A. ____
 - B. Make practices and games fun. B. ____
 - C. Teach athletes the skills needed to win. C. ____
 2. If a news story were written about me, I would like to be described as
 - A. A coach who contributed to the development of young people. A. ____
 - B. A coach for whom athletes enjoyed playing. B. ____
 - C. A winning coach. C. ____
 3. As a coach I emphasize
 - A. Teaching skills that young people can use later in life. A. ____
 - B. Having fun. B. ____
 - C. Winning. C. ____
- Total ____ ____ ____

Now let's score the test. Add up the scores in each column. Each total should be between 3 and 9; the higher the total, the more you emphasize that outcome. The first column shows your priority for the development of young athletes, the second your priority for having fun, and the third the ranking you gave winning.

Most coaches' scores indicate they believe winning is least important and helping athletes develop is most important. Did you answer the same way? Is it true of how you coach?

A Philosophy of Winning— A Winning Philosophy

No single decision is more important in determining how you coach than your priority for these objectives—especially the significance you give to winning. Some coaches who say winning is least important don't behave that way when they coach. For example, coaches who play only their best athletes, who play injured athletes, or who scream disparagingly at athletes who have erred demonstrate that winning is more important to them than athletes' development.

Be honest. Do you at times overemphasize winning? Do you at times make decisions that reflect more concern about winning the game than the development of your athletes? It is easy to do in a society that places so much value on winning!

Many coaches face a dilemma about their objectives when they coach. Society clearly rewards winners. Yet society also looks to sport as a means to help young people try out life, build character, and develop leadership skills. Coaches who want to help young people develop physically, psychologically, and socially through sport often find they are evaluated only on their win-loss record. Perhaps altruistic at first, too many veteran coaches are conditioned by the organizations for whom they coach to pursue the objective of winning regardless of the cost.

This must change, and coaches must take responsibility for making the change. While society may be fickle about its objectives for sport participation, coaches must resist the forces that encourage them to win at all costs. Coaches now more than ever need to be clear about their objectives when coaching.

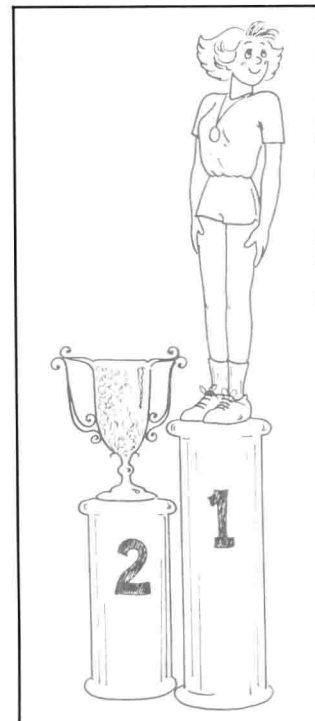
I want you to consider the following objective as the cornerstone for your coaching philosophy. It is an objective that many national sport organizations, experienced and successful coaches at all levels, professional educators, and physicians endorse. It is an objective I hope you will endorse as well, and more importantly, one you will put into practice! The objective is this:

**Athletes First,
Winning Second**

What I mean by this is quite simple: Every decision you make and every behavior you display is based first on what you judge is best for your athletes and second on what may improve the athlete's or team's chances of winning.

Athletes First, Winning Second is the philosophical foundation for the Bill of Rights for Young Athletes, which is presented on page 6. Take a moment to study these rights. Think about how your coaching might deny an athlete these rights, and then about how you can coach to help ensure that each athlete is given them.

Athletes First, Winning Second is an objective simple to state, but not simple to implement. Today many sport organizations are led by administrators who demand that coaches reverse this objective—Winning First, Athletes Second—either because winning is their personal objective or because these administrators are pressured by others. Coaches who skillfully help young people become better humans but fail to win an often unknown quota of games are considered losers, and all too often are fired. This is the regrettable reality in sport today, but it must and will change. In the final analysis, it's not how many games you win, but how



BILL OF RIGHTS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Right to participate in sports

Right to participate at a level commensurate
with each child's maturity and ability

Right to have qualified adult leadership

Right to play as a child and not as an adult

Right of children to share in the leadership
and decision-making of their sport participation

Right to participate in safe and healthy
environments

Right to proper preparation for participation
in sports

Right to an equal opportunity for success

Right to be treated with dignity

Right to have fun in sports

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many young people you help to become winners in life.

So what do you do now if you are in this situation? If you believe the *Athletes First, Winning Second* is the right priority, resist the temptation to abandon your principles because the pressure to win threatens your job, or worse, your self-worth. Resist transferring this threat by threatening the well-being of your athletes. Stick to your principles and seek to convert those who are pressuring you to win to your objective—*Athletes First, Winning Second*.

Striving to Win

Having *Athletes First, Winning Second* as your objective does not mean that winning is unimportant. The immediate short-term objective of any contest is to win. Striving to win within the rules of the game should be the objective of every athlete and coach. To play sports without striving to win is to be a "dishonest competitor," says Michael Novak in *Joy of Sports*. Striving to win is essential to enjoyable competition.

"Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing," said Vince Lombardi, or so we are told. Actu-

ally Lombardi did not say it quite that way; that was a reporter's mutation. What Lombardi actually said was, "Winning isn't everything, but striving to win is." And that statement more accurately reflects his coaching philosophy.

Does it make sense that the emphasis on winning should not be on the winning itself, but on the striving to win? It's the pursuit of the victory, the dream of achieving the goal more than the goal itself that yields the joy of sports. Many outstanding athletes candidly say that their best memories of sport are not the victories themselves, but the months of preparation and anticipation and the self-revelation before and during the competition.

Commitment

Competition and the striving to win are significant in another way. Today we hear much about our alienated youth, their lack of commitment to our established institutions, and their lack of desire to achieve excellence. Sadly, many young people are not finding activities in their home, school, or place of worship worthy of their commitment. But America's youth are being turned on by sport; they find sport a challenge worth pursuing. And what is that challenge? It is the competition—the comparison of abilities and efforts, the striving to win, and the recognition for excellence achieved.

Larry Smith was one of these "uncommitted" youth. He was too lazy or disinterested to do his schoolwork; he usually sat around the house watching television and eating, which resulted in his becoming overweight. But for some reason Larry went out for football, where at last he found a challenge. To make the team and meet the maximum weight limit, he needed to improve his grades and lose 10 pounds. His parents and teachers had tried to get him to do both for months, but had failed. Now he did them of his own accord!

Recently a 16-year-old youth with mental retardation received an award on national television for his outstanding accomplishment as a swimmer. What was remarkable about this young man was that at the age of 12 he could not speak or perform the basic self-help skills

of feeding and dressing. But through the Special Olympics, he learned to swim and compete—and this challenge brought him out of his inner world. He learned not only to feed and dress himself, but also to speak and, even more remarkably, to teach other young people how to swim.

In discussing some of our schools' problems, the noted educator James Coleman observed that humanity's great accomplishments come about when individuals make an intense commitment to something, when only their total concentrated effort may result in success—but even then success is not guaranteed. Sports attract that type of commitment and often result in great personal accomplishment.



Ethical Behavior

The element of competition in sport has value in yet another way. Through sport young people can develop morally—they can learn a basic code of ethics that is transferable to a moral code for life. Competitive sport—where winning is a valued prize—provides opportunities for high levels of moral development to occur.