

FOREWORD BY **SHANE BATTIER**

NBA and NCAA Champion

# COACHING UP!

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INSPIRING  
PEAK PERFORMANCE  
WHEN IT MATTERS  
MOST

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**JORDAN FLIEGEL**

with **KATHLEEN LANDIS LANCASTER**

**WILEY**

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## **Praise for *Coaching Up!***

“Jordan Fliegel was an outstanding basketball player who became a brilliant coach and entrepreneur. He brought all three skill sets together in founding CoachUp, Inc., which is so masterfully enabling thousands of coaches and players to work together. Now he is offering all of us his original, creative, and eminently implementable ideas in this remarkable book, which will appeal to everyone who coaches or is coached in sports, business, or any other activity.”

—**Marc Gerson**, Cofounder and Chairman of Gerson Lehrman Group, Thuzio, United Hatzalah, African Mission Healthcare Foundation, and United Rescue

“Jordan’s success as an athlete and entrepreneur can be attributed to his keen understanding of the elements of effective leadership—whether on the court or in the boardroom. *Coaching Up!* is a fantastic read for you if you believe in building genuine relationships with teammates, colleagues, and friends—especially if you want to know how to provide active support and how to inspire success.”

—**John Harthorne**, Cofounder and CEO of MassChallenge, a startup-friendly accelerator whose 835 alumni have raised \$1.4 billion, generated \$575 million, and created 8,500 jobs globally to date

“Jordan Fliegel’s insights and guidelines, based on first-hand experience with professional athletes and top-notch coaches, apply equally well to the coaching needed by students, aspiring entrepreneurs, and executives struggling to meet the challenges of development and growth, as well as to those working to succeed on the playing field.”

—**Edward Roberts**, Professor, MIT Sloan School of Management, Founder and Chair, MIT Entrepreneurship Center (now the Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship)

“*Coaching Up!* soars above the array of books on how to be a good coach or leader by literally practicing what it preaches. In this engagingly written book, Jordan Fliegel addresses his readers directly in a frank, first-person conversation about how inspirational leadership actually works. In doing so, he creates with us exactly the kind of connection he describes as the basis for coaching someone up, i.e., what any writer, coach, executive, or parent aspires to: an authentic and heartening relationship with his or her readers, players, colleagues, or family members.”

—**Adele Pressman**, Child Psychiatrist; Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School; Author of *Pump Prout: a Little League Novel*; and the mother of two Division I athletes

“The way people work has radically changed, and as business leaders we need to evolve our approach to coaching, too. Jordan really gets this and provides actionable guidance for leaders to create the right environment for employee growth and transformation.”

—**Brian Halligan**, Co-founder and CEO of HubSpot;  
Author of *Inbound Marketing: Attract, Engage,  
and Delight Customers Online*

“Employee coaching is such an important part of a successful company culture. As *Coaching Up!* emphasizes, guidance and transparency are more important than ever. They can be the deciding factors between a mediocre and a remarkable company.”

—**Dharmesh Shah**, Co-founder and CTO of HubSpot;  
Author of *Inbound Marketing: Attract, Engage,  
and Delight Customers Online*

“In *Coaching Up!* Jordan Fliegel demonstrates how the best coaches build trusting relationships, focus on strengths, and give specific timely guidance for effective action. Vibrant coaching success stories and proven techniques make this book an essential read for all management and life coaches, and for everyone exercising leadership in families and organizations.”

—**Joan Bragar**, EdD, Author of *Leading for Results:  
Five Practices to Use in Your Personal and Professional Life*

“I have always been an overachiever. Growing up in a family in which my mom and dad were married and divorced four times each and I had lived in 17 apartments by the time I was 18, with a lot of violence in the family unit, I was lucky to have sports and some great mentors to guide me toward a better future. Growing up, I did not have tools like the ones found in *Coaching Up!* That’s the bad news. The good news is that reading *Coaching Up!* has given me great new tools for leadership and for life. I will use these tools to continue to drive and refocus my energy, not only for myself, but also for the benefit of my close business, entertainment, and political associates. Congratulations, Jordan.”

—**Scott Brown**, former U.S. Senator and  
Fox News Contributor

*This book is for all the fathers who have  
steadfastly coached me up over the years:  
my devoted father and best friend,  
Dorian Fliegel; my terrific stepfather,  
Michael Keating; my magnificent godfather,  
Guido Goldman; and my unfailingly  
supportive honorary father, Elliot Levine;  
and for my beloved one and only mother,  
Kathleen Lancaster, who suggested to me  
some decades back that it might be a good idea  
to write things down from time to time,  
and who is still helping me do it.*

*With all my love,  
JLF*



# Foreword

I'm thrilled to be writing this foreword to *Coaching Up!* The fact is, I feel passionate about coaching. To me, coaching means having the ability to move people from point A to point B—taking them one step closer to maximizing who they are and becoming whoever they want to be. It's an undervalued skill in our society. People who serve as that kind of catalyst for others are truly exceptional.

I have a deeply personal reason for appreciating the impact coaching can have: coaching made me who I am. I literally wouldn't be where I am in my life without the people who coached me along the way. I've been extraordinarily lucky to have worked with some of the greatest coaches of all time. Each of them has challenged me, pushed me, and helped me along on my journey. In fact they personified, each in his own way, the three core elements of the Coaching Up Model you'll find presented in this book: building an authentic connection,

providing genuine support, and offering concise direction—along with a whole lot more. They made me a better player, a better team member, and a better man.

In the end, my legacy as an athlete isn't how many points I scored or how many charges I took. Looking over my career, I see two seminal achievements: the fact that I was a multiple champion at every level, from Little League to two National Basketball Association (NBA) championships, and the fact that I was always one of my teammates' favorite teammates. Both of those achievements stemmed directly from the brilliant coaching I received along the way.

But before I get into a few of the most valuable ways my coaches connected with me, supported me, and offered me direction, let me tell you a little bit about how my journey began.

### **In the Beginning . . .**

The greatest coach I ever played for, hands down, was my dad, Ed Battier, known to one and all as Big Ed. I grew up in Birmingham, Michigan, in a very sports-oriented family. Sports were just always present; in fact I learned to read from the sports pages of the newspaper. My younger brother, Jeremy, and my dad and I spent a lot of time together watching sports and playing them.

I was so lucky to have a dad who was a part of my journey every step of the way, from an early age. He was my baseball coach every single year, he was my football coach every single year, but he was never my basketball coach. And that's ironic, because he had a storied career playing for his army base's basketball team in Mannheim, Germany, where he was stationed. His claim to fame, which he never let me forget, was that he once scored 50 points in a game. I never scored 50 points in any game, so Big Ed's got one up on me.

But no matter which sports I was playing, and which teams he was coaching, the personal coaching I got from my dad in the front yard never centered on technique. It was never about "You need to hold your elbow at this angle, or you need to have a high knee kick." Instead, what he taught me—what he showed me—was enthusiasm, dedication, and discipline. He was just always present and unfailingly willing to practice. Whenever I said, "Dad, let's play catch," he would always grab his glove and say, "Let's go."

My dad worked at a steel transportation company for 40 years. He hauled steel, warehoused steel. It was the blue-collar mentality, the assembly-line mentality: every day you show up, you punch in, you do what you do; at the end of the day you punch out, you go and have a beer, and you go home to your family. And the next day you get up and do it again.

That's what I call toughness, and discipline, and living a principled life. Today, being a dad myself, I realize how tired he must have been, coming home at the end of the day. But I never once heard him complain about having to go to baseball practice or having to coach the football team, let alone tossing a ball with me. He really was—and still is—an amazing man in that regard.

He was also a very impressive man generally. For one thing, he was the only black guy in the whole town of Birmingham, Michigan. For another, he was huge: big biceps and a hulking presence. Growing up, I thought he was the strongest dad in the world. So he commanded attention immediately. No one *ever* messed with Big Ed. Every team I was on that he coached always gave him immense respect.

In his team coaching and in our casual games and practices at home, he taught me several key lessons that were seminal to my development as an athlete and as a man. Those lessons, which he harped on every day, were the same ones I took with me to the NBA finals in 2013. He constantly talked about, and demanded, hustle, sportsmanship, attitude, communication (also known as chatter), and looking sharp.

Here, in brief, is Big Ed on those five key lessons:

- *Hustle*: He would never outright yell at his teams to hustle. If he felt that we were loafing, he would shout, “Hey, hey, hey, let’s go!” in a booming voice

that told everyone to put some pep in their step. It always worked.

- *Sportsmanship*: If you focused on Big Ed right at the end of a game, you would not know whether we won or lost because his reaction was always the same: he would hustle over to the opposing coaches and offer a huge smile, a handshake, and big compliments on the completed game. We learned always to respect our opponent regardless of the outcome.
- *Attitude*: One of the rare times my dad would raise his voice was when he saw somebody get down on a teammate or, even worse, down on himself. He would say, "Come on, Shane, you can do it! Now act like it! You have to believe! Change your attitude." There was no room for negativity on our teams.
- *Communication/chatter*: If you were out in the outfield and you weren't verbally supporting your pitcher and your teammates, if you weren't engaging in chatter on the field, you were going to hear it from Big Ed—and no one wanted to hear it from Big Ed. You always supported each teammate verbally and let him know you had his back. Sports were not a silent activity.
- *Looking sharp*: If you looked sharp, with your shirt tucked in, you were going to play sharp. If you practiced sharp and took batting practice or fielding sharp, you were going to play a sharp game. Everything was about game speed and game focus—amazing habits to build.

These are invaluable lessons that I have carried with me every step of the way.

But the single most important lesson I learned from Big Ed was this: when you're playing a team sport, the team comes first. With him, it was never about individual success. My dad never praised me individually for how many runs I scored or whatever—it was always “*Wow, how great was our team tonight!*”

He's not a man of many words. He never said, “I'm going to teach you the lessons of how to be a great teammate or how to be a champion.” But that's exactly what he did teach me. I've learned so much just from being around him, from how he carries himself.

He's the reason I have the legacy I have today, no question about it. Because of his coaching, my aim was always to make every teammate better, from the best players to the thirteenth man on the team, the guy who couldn't hit at all. My dad always taught me that every team member deserves your respect and your support. So that was how I related to my teammates.

When I talk with my childhood buddies who also played with Big Ed, we all marvel at the way he had with all of us. The only time he raised his voice was when one of us was not being a great teammate. That was it. There was never a tirade, ever. There was never a dressing down. Of course, if you didn't hustle up the field, you were going to hear his deep, booming voice—“Hey, hey, hey, let's go!”—which scared the living hell out of you.

But it was done respectfully, and with love. I know that, to this day, all my teammates I grew up playing Little League with would say that Coach Battier—Big Ed—coached with love.

## **Finding Connection and Support**

So, Big Ed gave me my base. After his teaching, I played under a lot of coaches, from childhood up through high school, various camps, college, and the pros. And going in the door, I always respected my coaches. I believed that coaches occupied a position that deserved that respect. I also believed that they deserved my energy, my focus, and the benefit of the doubt, and I gave them all those things.

But my journey wasn't an easy one—far from it. It's pretty obvious, when you're 6 feet tall in sixth grade and 6'4" in seventh grade and 6'8" in eighth grade, that you've got the right body type for basketball. But there's so much more to the game than height and athleticism. I've been so fortunate to have just terrific coaches, who've shown me not only the technical and tactical aspects of the game, but the psychological and strategic aspects as well, and who have enhanced every step of my journey. Moreover, they saw the potential in me and had the patience and the foresight to invest their energy in me.

For instance, my Amateur Athletic Union coach, Burk Kozlowksi; my assistant high school coach, Jay Schwartz; and my high school coach, Kurt Keener, all spent an incredible number of hours in the gym with me. I was a total gym rat. I was the equivalent of a Labrador retriever that would keep fetching the ball and fetching the ball till his joints gave out. I was constantly in the gym. And to have my coaches join me there, and come along on the journey because they believed in me . . . that was an unbelievable motivator.

Not only did they help me hone my skills and boost my confidence, but also, thanks to them, I realized that I wasn't alone. And that was amazing. All that effort, all that striving and striving, can be a pretty lonely thing. Plus you're a kid: you can't grasp everything psychologically; you're just trying to get through puberty alive.

I'm pretty sure that every kid that age experiences uncomfortable self-consciousness and some degree of loneliness. In my case, those feelings were exacerbated by the fact that I was always an outlier. For me, the ultimate motivator was always fear. I was scared that I wasn't good enough, that whatever success I had was just a dream, that I'd wake up and I'd be by myself.

The main thing that defined me as an individual was growing up mixed, with a black father and a white mother. At Pembroke Elementary School, my buddy Eddie Toma was the token Hispanic, and I was the token



black kid. Everyone else was white. When you're just trying to fit in, that's tough for a kid to digest.

And so, on class picture day, when everyone got a comb, I got a pick. And there I was, an outlier, a foot taller than everybody else and the black kid. And when I went into downtown Detroit to get some competition at basketball, the brothers were saying, "Look at that kid from the suburbs who talks so white; look at him." So no matter where I went, I was always different.

But in the end there was one kind of place where I did fit in: on the local sandlot, on the basketball court, and on the kickball field. I realized at an early age that when I helped people win, they liked me and I did fit in. So for me, winning was a social survival tool. And it wasn't about winning by dazzling everybody else with my skills. It was about winning by helping our team—all of us—feel good and play our best. So that's where I learned it. And that's what my legacy is to this day: I always played, at every level, to make whatever team I was on as good as it could be.

So, that was a seminal period in my life; it shaped me, and I wouldn't change it for anything. It was hard as hell when I went through it, but it galvanized me. And having great guides along at my side, acting as a stabilizing force, a motivating force, and allies—that was invaluable.

The other fundamentally invaluable support I had came from my mother and father. They never, ever put any pressure on me to practice sports or to earn high grades in school. The only thing they ever asked of me