

The Unbeaten Path to Coaching:  
An in depth project to the blueprint (3 credits)

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The Unbeaten Path to Coaching

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By

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## **Abstract**

### **The Path Unbeaten**

Teaching and coaching go hand in hand. This research paper talks about the basics of coaching and how it parallels with teaching. It elaborates on personal experiences and observations, including research. Touching on the philosophies of different coaches, in various sports and academic areas. It talks about the communication that will help prepare students and athletes for the rest of their life. The relationships that are gained and the fundamentals that are learned are all viewed in this assortment of research. Motivation is one of the biggest keys in business, athletics, or academics. Coaches and teachers both have different ways to motivate kids.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Coaching and teaching in our society today go hand in hand. Coaching is nothing more than an extension of teaching where the classroom is the basketball court, film room, and weight room. I want to explore the ways to reach the top from the very bottom of the totem pole before you get a foot in the door and progress to what happens on a day-to-day basis.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many people do not and cannot find a direct path to career and research development in the coaching career. There is not enough research documented on paths and journeys to become a coach.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Coaching** can be defined as the method of directing, instructing and training a person or group of people, with the aim to achieve some goal or develop specific skills. There are many ways to coach, types of coaching and methods of coaching.

**Teaching** is the act of implementing knowledge of or skill in; give instruction in.

### **Delimitations of Research**

There are no delimitations in this research.

## **Method of Approach**

This will be a qualitative description of my research and experiences that I have taken along my journey to become a coach up until the point of the next semester. I will be able to gather research from coaches, documents, interviews and previous research. My experiences thus far I hope to help me with my career in a documented form.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

### The Transition

As the great Vince Lombardi once said, “They call it coaching but it is teaching. You do not just tell them...you show them the reasons (Maraniss,1999).” Whether one is an athletic coach, academic coach, business leader, or counselor there are many similarities and characteristics in what they are doing day in and day out. Coaches are first and foremost role models and teachers. Good coaching is about asking themselves each day “Is what we’re planning as a coach, in the best interest of the kids?” Whether athletes realize when stepping on a court or field it is just like walking in a classroom, they are about to broaden and enhance their

knowledge and skills. If children are not learning and improving their skills, it can't be fun. If it isn't fun, children won't want to come back to practice. Coaches and teachers must know "the game" and proper skill progressions, and provide the child with numerous opportunities to explore and discover through participation having their "students" want to come back. How would one become a great coach, teacher, and mentor wanting their students to come back day in and day out eager to learn and seek guidance?

When one thinks of coaching, practice planning, scouting strategies, and playing a game all come to mind. All of those are valid, but that is not the whole picture. To coach an athletic team, a person often has little to no preparation to teach sports skills or techniques. The only qualifications are the person's participation in high school, college, or possibly profession career and passion for what they want to do. Growing up as a little kid, being involved in sports, one is usually looking up to the fathers of your friends or maybe even your own father, as a role model and a leader. A lot of great coaches believe that competition breeds success and brings the best out of everybody. Coaches tend to relate coaching to teaching because competition in the classroom produces the same result. Good students try to be the best, not only in the classroom but also in their graduating class.

To be a teacher, one needs to attend a lot of school and have a passion for learning and working with kids. The same thing applies to coaching, only the classes you need to take come from the experiences that gained along the way or observed in other coaches (Drewe, 2000). Coaches get their passion and drive to coach from all different walks of life. Some receive it from their fathers and try to follow their footsteps. The Ryan brothers in the National Football League have both have successful coaching careers thus far, and both received guidance from their father Buddy Ryan, who also coached in the NFL.

The majority of coaches, in whatever sport, usually played that sport at some period in their life. When you have a passion for a sport there comes a time in your life when you no

longer will be able to compete at the level that you would like to. At that time, you can choose to keep trying to play or still be around the sport but in a different role. As human beings, some of us all think we have the answers, which is why people get into coaching to implement their game plan.

Coach Bo Ryan of the University of Wisconsin Badgers believes coaching and teaching go hand in hand. Preparation is a huge part of competition. The job I am in right now, as the video coordinator, is an important tool. We use the video as a teaching tool. This is one of the more important tools, when we talk about preparation and learning.

When coaching a team sport, you are dealing with a lot of different types of learners. Some are visual learners and prefer to have information presented in video format, graphs, webs, and idea maps so they can comprehend it better. Another type of learners is an aural learner. Aural learners process information better when they listen. The third type of category of learners is the reading and writing learners. These learners comprehend and pick information up better by reading, research, or notes. More often than not these learners will be more organized. Lastly, is the kinesthetic learner. Kinesthetic learners comprehend information best by doing and experimenting with the tasks at hand (Dunn 2010).

### The Parallels

Being passionate about what you do makes your job seem as if it isn't a job. If one is lucky enough to do the things you really like to do for fun as job, then your job does not seem as hard. As the legendary Coach Jim Valvano (Yeager, 2001) once said, "How do you go from where you are to where you want to be? I think you have to have an enthusiasm for life. You have to have a dream, a goal, and you have to be willing to work for it." Being enthusiastic is a huge part of what I believe a coach must bring to the table. When you talk about character, it is a

huge part of life. I believe that sports are a huge developmental and learning tool for students, athletes, and children. Sometimes in athletics you are going to have turnovers and adversity that you need to work through in order to go to the next possession or stage in life. You are going to lose and learn tough lessons sometimes. Therefore, you need to learn to better yourself in the long run. Similar to receiving an F on an assignment in the classroom, students will learn character and bounce back and see what they need to do next time in a similar situation. Their ability to perform comes from the character within themselves and the effort they put into performing well. You are also going to win sometimes and with winning you need to learn how to be humble and strive to do things the right way. The same situation applies to life and academics. If you get an A on a test and your peer did not do as well, one needs to learn how to be humble.

“Everyone tries to define this thing called Character. It’s not hard. Character is doing what’s right when nobody’s looking” (Eikenberry, 2010).

Character is something one needs in sports, but will also need more importantly in life. I believe that sports do not build character, but reveal it. One will go through things in life that are a lot tougher than the things they will go through in athletics. Coaches have helped to instill values in athletes that they will use throughout life similar to how teachers instill value in their students in the classroom. Ambition is the strong drive for success. It is a positive personal character trait. A person with ambition can achieve a lot. Another reason that former players tend to coach is to pass along knowledge to the up and coming athlete. Sometimes as a coach you see the game in a different angle and you are able to pass on your thoughts and visions to others (Cushion et al. 2006).

As a coach, emotions play a huge part in athletics. Coaches need to help players channel their emotions and use them in a positive manner in the sport that they are playing. Coaches also need to keep their emotions in check because as a leader of the program, you can’t lose your

cool, be too emotionally high, or too emotionally low. Coaches need to plan and organize practice, film, games, and everything with their program in which everyone at different abilities can learn and be successful. Likewise, teachers have to adhere to everyone's different learning abilities in the classroom and base their lesson plans off of that. The learning setting should be accommodating to everyone's needs. Structure and organization is key to being able to stay in control and accommodating all needs (Chelladurai,1996).

Paying dues in life no matter what type of job it is, is a necessity. Sometimes you have to take a step back before you take a step forward in the coaching world. Some of the wealthiest businessmen have done the same thing in their field of work. The opportunity of a lifetime only lasts as long as the lifetime of the opportunity. When I was given this opportunity here at the University of Wisconsin to be the video coordinator and come off the floor coaching from the University of Wisconsin Platteville it was a tough decision because I felt like I was taking a step backwards from coaching. You need to always keep your eye on the goals you have set for yourself. I was reminded of that and realized that being a part of the staff at the highest level was an opportunity I could not pass up. Coaching is not the most glorious professions when you start out, because you don't make a lot of money, but people do it because they really enjoy the lifestyle.

The ability to communicate is a huge tool for coaches to have because you are dealing with so many different types of people and personalities. As a coach you do not just deal with your players, you deal with boosters, administration, and obviously the parents. Parents want to know that their son or daughter is playing well and performing to the best ability. Similar to how parents want to know that their student is performing well, getting good grades, being respectful, and gaining as much knowledge to help them in the future.

Preparing young adults for life is what coaches do (Eikenberry,2010). At any level of coaching, you have a chance to make a major impact influencing a child or young adult to do

things right and to work hard. These will be tools that will make them successful as adults whether it is working in the field, parenting, or just living. Competition every day in practice and games, will prepare you for other competition outside of athletics.

One's philosophy plays a major role in how they teach and coach their students. Teachers have to adapt their philosophy based on the needs of their students; what works best in their learning atmosphere. Going into teaching one may believe something will work, but realize they need to adapt that philosophy to motivate their students and help them learn to the best of their ability. Likewise, coaches go in with a philosophy concerning how they want to run their program (Birch, 2001). Coaches need to be able to adapt to how their players are learning, what is working for them as a team, and how they can better the program.

Trust and communication go hand in hand because a coach needs to trust that when they ask their athlete to do something, they will execute (Martens, 1987). These relationships usually have a lot longer effect on both parties than just athletics. The reason that I have the job I have is because of relationships I had while being recruited. Coach Ryan and staff were running the program at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. When I decided to go Penn State University, we kept the lines of communication open and after my third year I decided I needed a change. Coach Jeter, who was Coach Ryan's head assistant, contacted my father about another athlete that was in my father's traveling basketball program. My dad mentioned that I was looking to transfer and when I visited the campus at Wisconsin during my spring break the conversation and dialogue went very well and I decided to transfer and finish my career with the Wisconsin Badgers. I traveled around coaching in various places: Milwaukee, Francis-Marion, and Platteville. In late September I received a call saying a position was open. I decided this would be the best move in helping fulfill my dream of being a head coach.

### Chapter 3: Conclusion

When you build a house, you build it from the base up starting with the essentials, such as the frame and foundation. Coaches like to do the same thing, starting with the basic fundamentals such as proper form and technique. I have learned that the best teams start out their practice sessions with the most basic and fundamental drills. An example of this would be basic passing and catching drills, form shooting, and shell defensive drills. Coaches also need to be able to manage their team during competition; for example they should be able to substitute and be able to correct a player when they have doing something wrong or against the team's philosophy. Satisfaction for coaches is watching their players succeed after performing what the coaches asked. Coaches also need to have strategies and game plans to prepare for competition against other teams. Scouting reports with video and statistical information help with this.

Some examples of great coaches, who followed their philosophy while adapting to their "students" needs include Vince Lombardi, John Wooden, Bo Ryan, and Tony Dungy (DeMarco et al., 1997). Sports are a great tool for young kids to get involved in, not only for their health, but also for their personal development resulting from mentoring from coaches.

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