

ELLISON

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The Art of Coaching - Newsletter Volume 02

Prologue:

Coaching is one of the most humbling, rewarding and complicated feats that can be expected out of the human race. To have the ability to command and direct a room of individuals who may have different backgrounds, morals, and beliefs takes extraordinary bouts of patience and maturity.

In today's newsletter, we will touch on 3 different pillars of coaching, and how each one has its own respective qualities in making a lasting impact for the coach, player, student, and parent.

3 Pillars:

- 1.) Problem Solving***
- 2.) Building Relationships***
- 3.) Adapting and Improvising***

Pillar 1: Problem Solving

In order to become a successful coach, you must locate, define, and plan for a problem within your organization. If you are being specific to the sports performance niche, you have to realize that people are coming to you to solve a problem or weakness within their performance, and are giving you the keys to solve it. Even the most elite athletes in the world have coaches and trainers to work with them because there is always something to improve on even if it is minute. That being said, the responsibility to correctly evaluate a problem falls directly on a performance coach. If somebody comes in to get technique and mechanical work on their acceleration in the sprint, but you fail to recognize a large false step and cycle in their motor pathway, you failed to complete the first step in problem solving. Once you have established the problem at hand, it is extremely important to create an effective yet realistic plan for the athlete to execute. I was listening to the “Bare Performance Podcast” earlier this week, and the host Nick Bare was explaining how he learned the technique “Think ahead, plan backwards” while serving as an Army Ranger in the military. Essentially, he plans out his day backwards based on the amount of meetings, projects, and tasks that he has in his schedule. This allows him to prepare accordingly and become very efficient with his time. This is something that is vital for performance coaches to grasp and conceptualize with their athletes when programming mesocycles and volume blocks. Understand the end goal, plan out volume, build intent. Solve the problem. Simple as that.

However, the problem solving skills that are developed and utilized as a coach can oftentimes be used in corporate, clinical, and professional settings for years later. Even my father has explained how he learned so much about himself as a leader from his time coaching girls AAU basketball when he was in his early 20’s. If you ever find yourself interviewing for a new position, they will often ask you “explain a time where you had a problem, and how you solved it”. Jobs are hiring candidates to fill specific problems and holes within their companies and corporations, so having these skill sets puts you at a significant advantage over potential competition.

Pillar 2: Building Relationships

There are many lessons in history of brilliant people who have failed to become effective leaders because they struggled to build, maintain, and reflect on the relationships with their subordinates. A good leader has qualities of empathy, respect, and discipline, and can command a room no matter the environment. There is one lecture from my undergrad that always seems to stick with me when discussing the topic of leadership and building relationships. In my strength and conditioning class, my professor explained how you could write the best programs ever, and could be the most intelligent strength coach in the building, but if you cannot create buy-in and have an outlasting relationship with the team that you are coaching, it is virtually pointless.

It starts at the door on day one, asking for kid's names, learning about their life, and becoming somebody that they can talk to when having problems both personal and performance related. Bring the energy each and every session or practice and make your expectations clear and concise. The goal from a coaching standpoint is to create a unique environment for athletes to buy in and work their a** off. Some of the best weight room experiences that I had in my collegiate career came from having elite strength coaches that I was personal friends with. I respected them enough to listen to their ideology and was motivated enough to give maximum effort every session because I desired to have their approval.

It is such a unique and euphoric experience as a coach when you have a kid walk through the door and immediately light up with a smile once they see you, or when they're leaving the facility and scream your name before they depart. Great results are built from great coaches, and great coaches are built from great communication.

Relationships are what keeps clients and families coming back to you for years and decades. Sure, results are great too, but if you can make a kid feel more confident within their body, or make them feel like they have an environment to grow as an athlete, you have won in the eyes of many.

I can offer a few tips for building relationships with new players or clients that have deemed to be successful in my experience as a coach.

- 1.) In warm ups, gather as a group for a mobility exercise or stretch and ask something that everybody learned in school, or a fun fact about them. Many kids are shy, so this will get that out of the way right away.
- 2.) Build comradery with the group through competitive drills and exercises such as maximum jump training, capture the flag, relay races, and 1v1 drills.
- 3.) Make them feel like they matter by greeting them when they walk in the door, even if you are all the way across the gym.
- 4.) Take the toxic out of a session, if you have a bad seed in a session that is obviously killing the mood with most of the kids you work with. Pull the kid aside during a break period and put an end to it immediately. Your clients as well as their parents will appreciate it immensely

Pillar 3: Adapting and Improvising

Even if you like it or not, the sports performance industry is a very fast paced and chaotic environment that produces problems more times than not. When thrown into the fire, coaches learn to adapt and improvise or burn alive under the pressure. If done properly, coaches will see themselves develop into a very productive and sporadic person who is capable of handling many different walks of life, a character trait that is looked very highly of from a future employers perspective.

As coaches, we must adapt our sessions to athlete's injuries, training loads, sports seasons, sleep schedules, and many more aspects. Additionally, we must also adapt to new innovations and research within our industry so that we are up to date with the culture. The most common thing that we see is an athlete who is overworking themselves through multiple practices, games, and training sessions per week. We tend to drop the volume, intensity, and complexity of the exercise so that they can continue to adapt to the stimuli without compromising their central nervous system.

Additionally, as of late, at least at 4.40 performance, we have seen sessions that have been booked way over max capacity. As a result, the coaching staff has had to manipulate our plans, drills, and structure of our sessions so that we could operate efficiently and effectively with upwards of 25 kids. Most of the time, doing so on the fly, or within a few minutes.

Outside of a sports performance perspective, and more from a general coaching point of view, head coaches oftentimes have to adapt and improvise to different game plans and strategies used by opposing teams. If a team is set up in a man defense in lacrosse, you're going to have to dodge extremely hard to try and draw the double and dump it off to another teammate. How will you alter your lineup if your best player gets injured, your goalie is playing poorly, or you need to give everybody playing time. Coaching is an art and it is not for everybody, but I would highly recommend that everyone at least gives it a try. In future interviews, employers will often ask how you fare in a stressful and chaotic environment, or how you would deal with certain dilemmas. The worst thing you can do is sit there with no answer because you've never experienced an adaptive environment.

The feeling of excitement, power, and gratitude that you get from commanding a group, team, or session is hard to describe in words. While you still have the chance, give coaching a try, and you will see such a positive change in your character arc, I promise!

Resources:

Thank you for your interest in our newsletter!
Newsletters are released every Friday at 11am EST.

If you enjoyed the content provided today and are interested in further guidance in meeting your health and fitness goals, contact us via one of the following resources.

Email: alex@ellisonperformance.net
1alexellison@gmail.com

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