



Coaching; The Act of Inspiring Others To Be At Their Best

Long-range planning for the improvement of officials, coaches, teams or players requires a learning environment balanced by accountability and support. Planning for systemic change and improvement of the performance of officials across all USL local boards, require consistent actions towards supporting the growth and performance of officials. One manner in which local boards have begun support the growth and performance of lacrosse officials is through the coaching and mentoring of others.

Coaching is generally considered the act of one who teaches, trains, advises, and facilitates the learning and improved performance of others. Executives may be the recipients of coaching, just as teachers, players, teams and officials are similarly so. Today we focus on coaching and supporting the growth and improvement of lacrosse officials across the nation.

Often, players have coaches, teammates, personal trainers and others supporting their performance. Officials, also need to have *supportive others* in their corner. Sure, knowledge of the rules, training, fitness, communication, game management are all essential skills for officials, and require hard work in doing so. So, what do good coaches do, to support and hold accountable, those with whom they work? They ask questions, identify goals—short and long term, act with reciprocity, share ideas, engage and motivate others, ensure that others have a voice, interact well with all levels of players or officials, listen, and whenever possible—offer choice to those they coach or teach. (Adapted from Jim Knight, *What Good Coaches Do*, Educational Leadership, 2001)

What are some of the undeniably noticeable assets in those great coaches out there? What are the reoccurring themes and actions by a person that makes them a great coach--one that is remembered?

- Relational—The coach understands how to interact with varying types of learners and those with varied ability levels. They relate well to the star performer and the performer with the most challenges. Their fairness speaks for itself and is unquestioned. They may have Connectedness and Relator as Strengths noted by Gallup. This coach knows others intuitively and relates well to them. They care about the individual and the team.
- Motivational—The team, official, or player is affected by this coach because this coach motivates them. The coach motivates the individual and in turn they want to perform well for them and to get better in all aspects of the game. Individuals and the team put in the work because they believe in what this coach is saying. A Gallup Strength of this coach may be described as being an Activator. An activator is one who is quick to act and pushes others to act. They feel an urgency to act, an urgency to start, not to wait. They are a catalyst for others to get moving and get started. They are opportunists to get moving in the right window of time.
- Consistent—The coach is consistent with their messaging, expectations, and the provision of feedback day in and day out. The execution of consistency leads to a common understanding of individual and team goals. Gallup would say that this strength is having a keen awareness about the need to treat people the same, across a group. Synonyms are egalitarian, even-handed, selfless, orderly, fair, and uniform.



- Reflective—This coach recognizes that an individual or team’s improvement happens over a period of time. She reflects often on the performance of individuals and of the team so that she can be planful in promoting positive change and improvement.
- Strength based rather than deficit based approach—This coach recognizes and acknowledges the strengths of individuals, knowing that each individual has areas to be improved. While focusing on strengths provides a positive focus, promoting a growth mindset is equally important. A growth mindset allows for the individual to recognize areas they have not mastered “yet.” “Yet”—defined as not knowing up until a specified time, is a powerful word since the presumption is that a skill will be mastered in the future, even if not mastered to date.
- Learner—This coach continues to learn and perfect her craft. Gallup notes that the theme of learner includes the motivation of one to think and enjoy the process of learning. They are energized by continued learning rather than being on a learning plateau.

Just as players must begin to amp up their training based on the quickly approaching 2016 lacrosse season, so do all levels of officials. Let’s prepare ourselves, while supporting and mentoring others around us, as they too prepare for a productive 2016 lacrosse season. Let’s push ourselves while pushing for the benefit of others. Providing a calculated amount of challenge, balanced with support facilitates the improvement of others. That’s what good coaches do. As many current coaches do, day-to-day, my college coach, Mrs. Suzanne Tyler knew the balance and the dance of challenging while supporting those around her to promote positive change in others. It’s time to get out there and “do the work!” Wishes for a productive, positive, growth-filled season!