

The Ethics of Sport: Moral Guidelines for Effective Coaching



May 2, 2003

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HCOM 475: Senior Capstone Seminar
Spring 2003

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To everyone who helped me get through this year and this project. Many of you helped me in ways that you will never know. To the people who have guided me through my tumultuous years in organized sport. You were my coaches, my teammates, my trainers, my *friends*. Thank you. And to my parents. Thank you for pushing me when I needed it most. You supported me through thick and thin.
I love you.

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Introduction

Coaching is a position that is becoming more recognized as a profession and less as a recreational job. Coaches at many levels of sport are being intensely pursued and then hired at very high salaries. A coach's reputation often follows him or her and can either help or hinder him or her in getting prestigious coaching positions. There is more and more scrutiny surrounding the coaching profession as well. When coaches decide to act unethically, they often tarnish not only their own reputation but also the reputation of their team or employer.

Recently in college sports, some coaches have lost their jobs and faced public ridicule for their ethically suspect actions. Jim Harrick, the men's basketball coach at the University of Georgia, was suspended from his head coaching position when it was discovered that he encouraged his players to sign up for a class taught by his son and then to never attend the class. George O'Leary, head football coach at the University of Notre Dame, lied about his credentials claiming that he had a masters degree from NYU and also falsely stated that he was a letterman at the University of New Hampshire in order to get his prestigious position as the head coach. Not only were these coaches reprimanded for their unethical behavior, but their teams suffered as well.

Unethical decisions by coaches affect everyone involved - athletes, parents, schools, organizations, athletic directors, communities – the list goes on. It is important that at every level of sport, coaches are aware of the consequences of the decisions that they make. Most schools and organizations with athletic programs have codes of ethics and/or ethical standards. Even though these codes are easily accessible, coaches often are not aware of their existence and when faced with an ethical dilemma feel that they have no guidelines to turn to.

This paper will discuss two sets of ethical codes, one for the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and one for the National Alliance of Youth Sports (NAYS). There are also several ethical frameworks that coaches can turn to in solving ethical dilemmas, which will also be discussed. I will also discuss three common dilemmas that coaches face and work through them using the guidelines stated above. This paper will hopefully provide a reference for coaches and serve as a stepping stone into their own ethically sound coaching practices.

Ethical Standards

Codes of Conduct

The National Association of Intercollegiate Basketball (NAIB) was founded in 1937. The organization was the brainchild of Emil S. Liston, Dr. James Naismith, Frank Cramer, and a group of Kansas City business leaders who wanted to provide Kansas City-area fans with exciting amateur competition and to provide a framework for small colleges and universities to determine a national basketball champion. In 1948, the NAIB reaffirmed its commitment to equality by becoming the first national organization to offer intercollegiate post-season opportunities to black student-athletes. Unprecedented action was taken in 1953 when historically black institutions were voted into membership. In 1952 the strictly basketball organization became the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and spread its wings to other sports and developed the first all-encompassing set of rules and standards (naia.org).

With the Association's new name came the addition of national championships in golf, tennis, and outdoor track and field. Football, cross-country, baseball, and swimming

and diving were added to the championship calendar in 1956. Wrestling (1958), soccer (1959), bowling (1962-78), gymnastics (1964-84), indoor track and field (1966), and men's volleyball (1969-80) were later additions (naia.org).

The NAIA revolutionized national collegiate athletics with the establishment of athletics programs for women on August 1, 1980. The championship calendar for women began that year with basketball, cross-country, gymnastics, indoor and outdoor track and field, softball, tennis, and volleyball. Soccer was added in 1984, and golf was included in 1995 (naia.org).

Since the beginning, the NAIA has administered programs and championships in proper balance with the overall educational experience. In 2000, the NAIA reaffirmed its purpose to enhance the character-building aspects of sport. The NAIA adopted an initiative called "Champions of Character" in which awareness, education and community involvement would be used to continue to develop an atmosphere of integrity in sport. Through this initiative, the NAIA wanted to create an environment in which every student-athlete, coach, official, and spectator can commit to the true spirit of competition through five tenets: respect, integrity, responsibility, servant leadership, and sportsmanship. The program was designed to educate and create awareness of the positive character-building traits afforded by sports and to return integrity to competition at the collegiate and youth levels (naia.org).

Throughout its existence the organization has adopted and continued to develop a Code of Ethics and a Coaches Code that each member school must adhere to. A Code of Ethics, the NAIA says,

is the essential tool with which to protect and promote the interests of athletics and the coaching profession. Its primary purpose is to clarify and distinguish ethical practices from

those which are detrimental and harmful. Its secondary purposes are to emphasize the values of athletics in American and Canadian education institutions and to stress the functional contributions of coaches to their schools and players. Ethics must be defined as the basic principles of right action. Proper ethics in athletics implies a standard of character which affords confidence and trust. (NAIA Code of Ethics)

The NAIA has a Conduct and Ethics Committee that oversees the Code of Ethics and its implementation at member schools. The committee reviews any reports of violations and holds the rights to expel member institutions or deny specific sports sponsorship for member schools which have violated the Code of Ethics.

The essential elements in the NAIA Code of Ethics are honesty and integrity. The organization believes that coaches whose conduct reflects these two characteristics will bring credit to the field of athletics and to themselves. They state, “It is only through such conduct that athletics can earn and maintain a rightful place in our educational program and make a full contribution to our way of life,” (naia.org).

There are also specific mentions in the Code of Ethics to a coach’s role in a student-athlete’s acceptance into the university. The Code has specific guidelines for a coach’s responsibility to the institution, conduct of administrators and coaches, officials, public relations, scouting, and student recruiting. These principles are clearly outlined and each member institution must adhere to them in order to stay in good standing in the NAIA. The Coaches Code is a document that every coach at a member institution of the NAIA must sign and agree to uphold during their time as an NAIA coach.

The National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS), a non-profit organization based in West Palm Beach, Florida, was founded in 1981 as the National Youth Sport Coaches Association (NYSCA) with the mission of improving out-of-school sports for the more than 20 million youth participants under the age of 16. The Alliance believes that (1) participation in youth sports develops important character traits and values, and (2) the lives of youths can be positively impacted if the adults caring for them have proper training and information (nays.org).

As the NYSCA, a national education program for volunteer youth sport coaches was developed that has since been utilized by more than 1.3 million coaches in America. This intensive training program provides coaches with information and skills that positively affect the children in their care. The organization was also instrumental in the creation of the National Standards for Youth Sports in 1987, which placed in motion a national policy for children's sports (nays.org).

With the realization that volunteer coaches are only one aspect of the youth sports equation, the Board of Directors expanded the NYSCA to form the National Alliance for Youth Sports in 1993 (nays.org). Today, the Alliance has become the nation's leading youth sports educator and advocate with nine national programs that educate volunteer coaches, parents, youth sport program administrators, and officials about their roles and responsibilities in the context of youth sports, in addition to offering youth development programs to children.

Alliance programs are provided at the local level through dynamic partnerships with more than 2,000 community-based organizations such as parks and recreation departments, Boys and Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, YMCA/YWCAs, and other independent

youth service groups throughout the country. The Alliance also has a strong presence on military installations worldwide, including every Air Force base (nays.org).

The goal of the NAYS is to make sports safe and positive for America's youth. The Alliance believes that this can only happen if:

children are provided with a positive introduction to youth sports, administrators, coaches, and game officials are well trained, parents complete an orientation to understand the important impact sports have on their child's development and youth sports are implemented in accordance with the *National Standards for Youth Sports*. (nays.org).

Similar to the NAIA, the NAYS provides an ethical code for its coaches, administrators, and officials.

Ethical Theories

From Aristotle to Emmanuel Kant to Ayn Rand to the Dalai Lama, philosophers have been discussing ethics and virtue for centuries. Some frameworks have been rejected by many, while some have been accepted and praised by many. Some ideas have holes and while they work in theory, in practice they don't hold up. Other theories have become strongholds in our society and have been embraced by many as a way to lead a virtuous and fulfilling life. The following frameworks were chosen for this project because they not only speak closely with the dilemmas presented, but they also are theories that have been widely used and regarded as legitimate practices.

Ethical egoism is concerned with a person's best self-interests. The egoist identifies happiness with the pursuit of rational self-interest. Happiness is therefore the purpose of

ethics. Ethics must define for us the means of achieving this happiness whether those means be direct or indirect (Boss 236).

Egoists do not recommend that we mindlessly act out our desires but that we instead rationally calculate which actions would most benefit us. Sometimes, egoists agree, we must forego our immediate desires to fulfill our long-term interests (Boss 236).

Seeking our own interests doesn't necessarily mean that we should ignore the interests of others, because our long-term interests might be best served by allowing others to pursue their interests as well. Egoists are, however, opposed to putting other people's interests before their own. Egoists say that we are only justified in considering the interests of others only if it is in our own self-interest to do so. If by pursuing our own interest we benefit someone else, there is no problem. Helping others is often in our own self-interest, because they will then be more likely to help us when we need them. In fact, sometimes the best way to get ahead is to do something for someone who is in a position to give us something we value in return (Boss 236).

Utilitarianism is also known as the "Greatest Happiness Principle." Although there are various versions of utilitarianism there are certain fundamental ideas common to all utilitarian theories. Most importantly, utilitarian theories are future looking. Actions themselves are neither intrinsically right nor wrong. Instead the rightness and wrongness of an action is determined solely by its consequences. Utilitarians agree that "the ends justify the means." The theory is also oriented towards a particular goal: the greatest net happiness for all. According to Utilitarians, the desire for happiness is universal, and humans intuitively recognize it as the greatest good (Boss 266).

Most utilitarians believe that people are naturally sympathetic and concerned with promoting the happiness of others as well. What counts is not just our happiness but also the happiness of the whole community. Utilitarians believe that pleasure makes humans happy while pain and privation of pleasure cause unhappiness. Actions that produce the most pleasure or happiness are good; those that promote pain are bad. The only intrinsic good, in other words, is pleasure; the only intrinsic evil is pain (Boss 267).

The principle of utility (the Greatest Happiness Principle) states that “actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness,” (Boss 268). If an action conforms to the principle of utility, it is morally right, if not, it is morally wrong. The principle of utility also requires that we be impartial; each person who will be affected by our decision should get equal consideration. Most philosophers believe that intentions are important when judging the morality of an action, but for utilitarians the sole criterion is the action’s consequences (Boss 268).

Deontological theories regard duty as the basis of morality. According to deontologists, moral duties are transcultural and universally binding. If a cultural norm or law conflicts with a moral duty, the moral duty should take precedence over the legal duty (Boss 299).

For deontologists, moral law is not defined in terms of consequences or whether it promotes some goal, as it is in ethical egoism and utilitarian theory. Instead, the moral law is an end in itself. Moral duty requires the recognition of and submission to moral laws or rules. This involves having the right intentions. Emmanuel Kant taught that we should act purely out of good will, not because of rewards or punishment or other consequences. Hindu

ethics also teach that righteous living requires discipline and acting out of a sense of duty rather than out of concern for the consequences of our actions (Boss 299).

Virtue ethics emphasizes *right being* over *right action* (Boss 385). The sort of person we are constitutes the heart of our moral life. More important than the rules or principles we follow is our character. A virtue is defined as an admirable character trait or disposition to habitually act in a manner that benefits oneself and others. The actions of virtuous people stem from a respect and concern for the well being of themselves and others. Compassion, courage, generosity, loyalty, and honesty are all examples of virtues. Virtue is often thought of in terms of individual traits, yet it is more correctly thought of as an overarching quality of goodness that gives unity and integrity to a person's character (Boss 385-6).

Virtuous people can be counted on to act in a manner that benefits others. They also show a willingness to go above and beyond what is required by everyday morality. Vicious people, on the other hand, only perform "beneficial" actions when it benefits them.

The Dalai Lama speaks to the ethic of virtue stating that "it is important to realize that transforming the heart and mind so that our actions become spontaneously ethical requires that we put the pursuit of virtue at the heart of our daily lives," (Dalai Lama 112). The Dalai Lama also reminds us that everyone has the desire for happiness and to avoid suffering. Therefore, we must work to cultivate an environment in which everyone can openly pursue this goal.

Dilemmas

A dilemma is defined as one of two things: 1) a situation with equally unsatisfactory alternatives, and 2) a different, persistent problem. We all face dilemmas everyday. Some are life altering and seem impossible to find an answer to while others are more simple and easier to solve. The coaching profession is full of ethical dilemmas that are often extremely complicated and difficult to solve. The following are three common dilemmas that a coach will most likely face in their time in this profession.

Pursuit of Excellence

Developing skills in sport to an elite level is an essential and fundamental feature of sport as a practice. David Kirk holds that “expertise and heroism in sport are crucial to a culture’s values and its collective sense of itself” (403). He goes on to say that cultures need heroes and heroines as people who embody the values we wish to preserve and transmit to young people. In the pursuit of excellence, however, a dilemma often arises. Can the pursuit of excellence in sport, requiring as it does years of toil and sacrifice, complement other goals of practicing sport, such as the educational nature of sport (403)?

Kirk affirms that “In order to become a member of a sport, young people must learn to accept the authority of the standards of excellence and to subject oneself to rules and traditions as one attempts to achieve the goods that are defined by participation in that sport and the respect and admiration of those with whom one is engaged in that sport practice” (404). This position depends on members of the community of the practice (the school, coaches, players) having a concept of excellence, having models of excellence, and having

incentives to strive for excellence. This is why heroes and heroines are so important in sport because they stretch the limits of excellence. Without these concepts, models, and incentives, there are no standards to which one can subject oneself, and there are no “goods” intrinsic to the practice itself - there is nothing extraordinary to strive towards.

Kirk argues that all practices generate both intrinsic and extrinsic goods. Intrinsic goods are unique to the practice itself and cannot be gained in any other way than through wholehearted participation in a practice. He also suggests that it is possible that some performers may be motivated solely by goods external to a practice. For example, someone may be motivated to play a sport because they excel at it and make lots of money doing it, but once they aren't winning as much and making as much money they aren't interested in the sport anymore. There is no true passion for playing the sport in this individual. They play simply for the goal of material gain (404-5).

The pursuit of excellence is logically necessary for the existence of sport practices in the first place. Without elite development, there are no extraordinary standards to which an individual can strive toward. There are no models and no incentives. It follows, then, that elite development is a central goal for junior sport. External goods are not easily dismissed, nor should they be, because their existence is undeniable and a legitimate goal to work for. External goods become problematic only when they begin to dominate the practice of sport. Forces working on young people to consider using performance-enhancing drugs, and the inappropriate and misguided behaviors of some parents and coaches towards their young players are some of the consequences of the dominance of external rewards. The reality is that the promise of external rewards often has an influence on sport practices and cultures that is out of proportion to the internal goods (Kirk 406).

This discussion of the pursuit of external vs. internal rewards in sport leads to certain questions. How much emphasis should a coach place on external rewards? Is there such thing as “over-encouragement” to win championships and titles? Can a coach place too much emphasis on winning and in turn sacrifice an opportunity to teach athletes the values and skills of the game, sportsmanship, team building, and individual character? Can and should a player’s or team’s success be measured by something other than winning?

This dilemma is complicated because there are many things to take into consideration when looking at how to solve it. The interest of the coach, the player, and the school (or organization in youth sports) must be taken into consideration. In the case of college athletics the coaches and players are expected to maintain a certain standard of excellence since they are competing at a collegiate level. However, since the NAIA is not as huge an organization as for example the NCAA, the pressure to win isn’t quite as great. This does not mean that NAIA coaches do not face this dilemma.

In order for an NAIA coach to work through this dilemma the organization’s Code of Ethics and particularly their Coaches Code should be consulted. A number of the items in the Coaches Code speak to the dilemma of the pursuit of excellence. Out of the seventeen points, eight of them speak in some form to the pursuit of excellence in sport. Most of the points speak to building character, sportsmanship, fair play, and the pure enjoyment of sport above all else when participating in sports.

The twelfth point in the code states, “I will not sacrifice the values to be gained through wholesome enjoyment of challenging sports activity for institutional pride or commercial ends,” (naia.org). This point speaks to the heart of the dilemma. The NAIA

clearly believes that a coach at a member school should encourage their student-athletes to enjoy their sport and not use their athletes' talents for any selfish gains. A student-athlete should be able to pursue their love of the sport without having the pressure of their coaches to win championships or trophies for the school.

Point nine of the code states, "I will strive to instill in every youth great purposes and aims in living and will use the desire to play not as an end, but as a training ground for the student's highest development," (naia.org). Coaches should facilitate an environment that nurtures an athlete's desire to play the game and not an environment in which winning means everything. A coach should instill in their athletes the idea that sports are not always just about winning but that they are about the enjoyment of the sport and about developing their skills as a player. The NAIA firmly believes that the pursuit of excellence should focus on intrinsic goods and not focus on the pursuance of extrinsic rewards.

The NAYS must take a slightly different approach to this dilemma because this organization deals with young players rather than college level athletes. The interests of the organization, the coaches, the players, and the parents must all be taken into consideration. These coaches are dealing with athletes who are young who can be taught many valuable lessons through their participation in sports. The NAYS recognizes how important it is to have the right balance of elite development and enjoyment of the game.

The first point in the NAYS code of ethics states, "I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win," (nays.org). There are times when an adult coaching young children becomes very wrapped up in their personal

desire to win that they neglect the general well-being of their child athletes. The pursuit of excellence can cloud the judgment of an adult coach because there is often pressure from the parents or other outside forces to win. As the tenth point reminds coaches, “I will remember that I am a youth sports coach, and that the game is for children and not adults,” (nays.org).

While, as Kirk pointed out, it is important for young athletes to have a standard of excellence to strive toward, it is equally as important for coaches to not place all of their emphasis on the elite development of their young players.

For ethical egoists, stating that the coaches would place the emphasis on pursuing their own self-interest would easily solve this dilemma. Most likely, an egoist coach would strictly be interested in winning because this would best serve them immediately and in the long run. The interests of others involved, the players, parents, schools, would not matter since pursuit of their own self-interest is the only means of solving a dilemma according to ethical egoism.

Utilitarians would also place the emphasis on winning and the pursuit of excellence because this would produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. If the coach were to place all emphasis on elite development, their players would essentially become excellent players and therefore be able to perform at high levels of the sport. This would produce championship athletes and therefore extrinsic rewards would become a natural part of the athletes’ lives. This would produce a great deal of happiness for a large number of people. Therefore utilitarians would encourage the pursuit of winning and excellence because this would produce the best consequences thus the greatest net happiness is satisfied.

According to deontologists, one must act out of a sense of duty rather than out of concern for the consequences of our actions. This leads me to say that a deontologist would encourage the coach to look at the pursuit of excellence as part of their duty and therefore part of their job. The coach was hired to teach athletes how to play the game and to help them develop their skills. Therefore, the coach should encourage the pursuit of external rewards as a natural part of an athlete's life.

Virtue ethics would react to this dilemma in a different way from the rest of the ethical frameworks. While the other frameworks view the pursuit of excellence as a means to an end and a legitimate coaching practice, virtue ethics emphasizes character building and the concern for other's happiness over our own. A virtuous coach would encourage character development over elite development. This coach might place more emphasis on team building than individual achievement. The NAYS and NAIA codes of ethics are based upon a virtue ethic point of view.

Coach-Player Relationships

The relationship that a coach has with his/her student athletes is unique at all ages and stages of development in sport. There are many issues to contend with and many aspects that go into this exceptional relationship. The most evident dynamic is the power and authority that a coach has over his/her players. The power dynamics can put a strain on the relationship as well as help to make clear the lines that should and should not be crossed between the two individuals.

The relationship that an athlete has with his/her coach can, and most often does, govern the level of enjoyment that an athlete gets out of their sporting experience. Coaches

often find themselves forming close bonds with all or some of their athletes. Many of these athletes have impressionable minds and a close coach-player relationship could become misconstrued by the athlete as something more. This unfortunate outcome, if simply created in the athlete's mind, can not be blamed on anyone and can only be dealt with in the most careful manner.

Trust in this relationship is essential to ensure the enjoyment of both parties' experience and to produce a positive learning environment. An athlete must have faith in their coach and trust that he/she knows what is best for the athlete. A coach must trust that their athletes will listen to their advice during and after practice (such as taking care of injuries when the coach can not be there to supervise). If this trust is broken in any way, such as through an inappropriate comment or a deception being revealed, the relationship suffers and in team sports the relationship with the entire team can suffer as well.

Keeping in mind that many athletes, especially in youth sport, are sometimes impressionable we must ask certain questions. What type of boundaries should be set when a coach is the opposite sex from their athletes? Is it appropriate for a coach to have a relationship with their athletes outside of the sport? How should a coach approach an athlete if that athlete has a misconception about their relationship? Where does caring about an athlete cross the line into an inappropriate relationship?

Coming up with a solution to this dilemma needs to be looked at and solved according to the ages of the athletes involved. At the college level the relationship between a coach and his/her athletes is much different than a coach with youth players. There is a big

difference at the college level as well because most of the athletes are over the age of 18 and therefore technically considered adults.

In the Coaches' Code for the NAIA there is no criteria or warning about a coach's relationship with the athletes they oversee. Because of the great emphasis that the NAIA has recently placed on character building, most of the points refer to that area of a coach's job. Nothing can be found on the NAIA's website about sexual harassment. There are also no guidelines for coaches in their navigation through the relationship with their athletes. This is a downfall of the NAIA's Champions of Character initiative. Since there are no guidelines for coaches to follow in this area it leaves room for coaches to "make it up as they go" when dealing with their coach-athlete relationships. Certain guidelines should be discussed with each individual coach before they are hired at a member university.

At the college level a coach's relationship has more opportunity to develop into a lasting friendship than at the youth level. This can be a very valuable relationship for both parties but must be delicately formed. There should be no signs of a relationship that goes beyond coach-player or friendship. At the first sign of this type of relationship, the coach should take the initiative to end it. A coach at this level, however, should feel comfortable acting as a friend, counselor, and advisor. A coach may find him or herself in a position where the players feel that they can ask for advice about academics or other things in their lives. The coach should embrace this possibility and attend to it professionally.

The NAYS website also has a lack of information on how a coach should handle the relationships with their athletes. This is a disappointment since younger athletes are so impressionable and can easily be taken advantage of by their adult coaches. These

relationships need to be looked at carefully and coaches must take care to not give their young athletes the wrong impression or to over-step their boundaries as a coach.

Opposite sex coaches need to be especially careful because as children make their way through puberty they often develop crushes on the people, including adults, around them. A coach needs to be careful if something like this arises and needs to have the skills to deal with the situation gently and firmly so that the athlete knows where the boundaries are drawn in the relationship. The coach needs to also be aware of his/her words and actions towards their young players so that they do not give off the wrong impression to the athletes.

Evaluating this dilemma through the ethical theories is difficult because the dilemma is somewhat abstract. The consequences of an inappropriate relationship between a coach and his/her player(s) while although clearly damaging are hard to predict. Solving this dilemma from an egoist point of view is complicated because it is difficult to determine what the self-interest of each individual coach may be. If the coach's self-interest were served by having a relationship beyond coach-player, perhaps (in the case of a college student) by obtaining a spouse from the relationship, then egoism would counsel him or her to pursue the relationship. An egoist would not pursue this type of relationship if it were simply to promote the interest of the athlete. This would be against egoism because the coach would be putting someone else's self-interest before his or her own.

From a utilitarian point of view, the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people would have to be served by a special relationship between a coach and a player. Utilitarianism would discourage this type of relationship because it would not serve the good of the entire team. If the coach gave one player on a team special treatment the rest of the

team would feel alienated from the coach and therefore not be happy. Therefore, the Greatest Happiness Principle is not being followed.

Taking a deontological perspective on this dilemma is probably the most difficult. Determining one's moral duty is subjective to every person and therefore complicated to speak about in broad and hypothetical terms. This being said, however, it is rather unlikely that one's moral duty would be best served by having a relationship outside of coach-player. I believe it would take a person with an almost complete lack of awareness of moral right and wrong to justify this type of relationship.

Through the eyes of virtue ethics, any relationship that might serve to hurt an athlete would be unacceptable. A coach must take responsibility for his or her own actions and concentrate on maintaining a virtuous character throughout their career as a coach. If an athlete desires a special relationship, the coach must consider whether or not that relationship would be morally "clean." It is safe to say that this type of relationship would not be in most cases.

A Coach's Involvement in the Academic Lives of the Athlete

For all of the athletes that have been discussed, education is a portion of their lives that must be balanced with the sport aspect of their lives. They must find a way to balance homework and projects and attending classes with practices and competitions for their sport. At the college level, many sports competitions conflict with classes and therefore an athlete is often forced to choose between going to class and attending a competition. At the youth level, school does not normally conflict with competitions but practices are most often held

after school and a young student then must sometimes choose between completing homework and attending practice.

When a conflict between school and sport arises for an athlete a coach can take either an adversarial or advocating approach. It is important for a coach to have rules about attending practices and games but should these rules be so strict that a student-athlete must be forced to make a tough decision between education and the sport they love? For some athletes this decision is not difficult. Some athletes are not serious about school and would jump at the chance to miss school or postpone homework for a sport. Other athletes might not be as serious about sports and may find it easy to choose school over athletics. For others, the choice is a true dilemma.

This raises the following questions: What role should a coach play when dealing with a highly skilled athlete who does not have a serious attitude toward academics? Should that student-athlete be dealt with differently than his/her teammates who are demonstrating a serious attitude toward academics? Should a coach allow athletes to miss practice or competitions without punishment when there is a conflict with their education?

Member schools of the NAIA differ in their emphasis on athletics in their institutions. Some colleges are sports-based and offer scholarships for their student-athletes while other universities offer no scholarships and do not see sports as a big part of their university. All NAIA schools have eligibility rules requiring student-athletes to complete a certain number of units each semester while maintaining a certain Grade Point Average (GPA). A student is not allowed to compete if their academic transcripts do not meet these requirements.

The academic eligibility requirements are as follows:

[The student-athlete] must be enrolled in 12 institutionally approved or required credit hours at the time of participation. [The student-athlete] must have accumulated a minimum total of 24 institutional, or required, credit hours the two immediately previous terms of attendance.

[The student-athlete] must, upon reaching junior academic standing as defined by the identified institution, have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.000 on a 4.000 scale as certified by the institutional registrar. (naia.org)

These requirements are not difficult to maintain in the eyes of the NAIA because each student-athlete should be making their way towards a baccalaureate degree.

At the college level, coaches must set rules for their athletes about attending practice and have consequences for missing practices, for example being excluded from one competition immediately following their absence. Enforcing these rules in the same way for every athlete on the team is also important so that each individual is held responsible regardless of their position on the team. However, this gets complicated in certain situations.

If a student-athlete needs to miss practice because they have put off doing an assignment and they need extra time in getting it done, the coach should enforce their ‘missing practice’ rules as usual. Part of being a member of an athletic team in college is learning time management and learning how to balance sports with education. However, in a case where a player is forced to choose between practice, or a competition, and for example an exam, the situation is more complicated. A professor may not be sympathetic to an athlete’s needs to miss class or take tests on different days than the rest of the class. In this case, how should a coach advise their student-athlete?

The Coaches’ Code has one point that somewhat speaks to this issue. The fifteenth point of the code says “I will encourage each student to avail himself/herself of the best

experience to be gained in a well-rounded education and to progress normally toward graduation. I will never encourage participation in athletics as an end in itself,” (naia.org). Coaches at these universities must remember that each member of their teams are at the university to receive an education and that their involvement in athletics is an extra-curricular activity that will serve to enhance their college experience. Coaches should not coerce their student-athletes to put athletics before academics.

Youth coaches must take a slightly different approach to the academic lives of their athletes. Since school and sports are not directly connected in this case, it is hard for coaches to establish rules regarding missing practice for school. However, youth coaches can play a part in the educational lives of their players.

The NAYS has no recommendations about education and the athletes involved with the organization because they have no affiliation with schools. Coaches should, however, be sympathetic to the fact that the athletes that they coach are in school and have an obligation to their studies. They should also have an open relationship with the parents of their athletes and be able to communicate with them about concerns that the parents may have.

If an athlete is struggling in school it is up to the parents to determine whether or not their extra-curricular participation in a sport is interfering with their education. If a parent decides to take their child out of the sport or a practice or competition, the coach should support that parent. Education is important and youth coaches should not attempt to get in the way of an athlete’s academics simply, for example, if the athlete has exceptional skill. Also, if a coach notices or hears or is told something by an athlete about one of his/her

players struggling with academics, they should notify the parents so that they can take over the situation.

Since all of the ethical theories have very different viewpoints on right and wrong, there are many different solutions to this dilemma from those views. An egoist coach would have to be concerned with his or her own best interest. In a situation where, for example, the most talented athlete on the team might need to miss a competition for something school related an egoist would encourage the player to skip school. Having this athlete compete is in the coach's best self-interest because the coach's interest is winning. It would not serve the coach to have an athlete, even if not the most talented on the team, miss practice or a competition.

A utilitarian perspective is probably the most difficult to predict in this dilemma. It is difficult to determine what the greatest happiness would be. One must consider the parents', the athlete's, the coach's, the teacher's point of view to begin with. It is hard to say how a coach would satisfy the greatest number of people. All of these parties would need to be consulted in each individual case. Speculating in hypothetical situations for this particular dilemma is difficult because the greatest net happiness is unknown.

While it is also unclear how deontological theory would solve this dilemma, speculations can be made in this case. It is fairly safe to say that a coach's moral duty would focus on doing their job in the most effective way possible. As a professional a coach has a duty to produce a winning team. Therefore, missing practice or competitions for any of the athletes on that team would be unacceptable no matter the reason.

A virtue ethicist would place education over sport. The Dalai Lama stresses how important education is and would probably agree that it would not be very virtuous to place sports above education. People won't always be able to participate in sports but they will always be able to utilize their education. Therefore, education should be regarded as more important when a conflict arises between it and athletics.

Recommendations

Ethics requires dialogue. Ethical issues cannot be resolved and ethics cannot be maintained without ethical and effective dialogue. Dialogue is defined as “a process of communication *with* (rather than at, to, or for) others and the sharing of a mutual commitment to hear or be heard,” (Cooperative Argumentation 46).

According to Makau and Marty, there are certain key elements of ethical and effective dialogue. The goal of competitive arguments is to persuade the opponent to agree with their side, while cooperative arguments facilitate the development of relationships in which change, growth, and new understanding are encouraged (Cooperative Argumentation 48).

When looking at ethical and effective dialogue we must take into account certain critical emotions. It is difficult to maintain dialogues across differences because often the desire to be “right” overshadows our disposition to be open to other perspectives. Strong oppositions to specific alternative points of view hinder our willingness to examine and take into account those points of view opposite to our own. As the authors point out, “a reluctance to dialogue with others also may stem from a power imbalance among the

participants that generates feelings such as disregard, insensitivity, invisibility, and futility,” (Cooperative Argumentation 48).

Empathy and compassion are valuable resources for creating an atmosphere where ethical and effective dialogue can take place. Empathy is the “capacity for participating in the feelings or ideas of another,” (Dictionary 237). In creating effective dialogue the importance of empathy is absolutely necessary. A lack of empathy can lead to communication breakdowns.

While empathy motivates us to look at things from another person’s perspective, compassion encourages us to be present without preference; to be neither for nor against an opposing opinion, but open to it. “Compassion is the emotional capacity to recognize and respect one’s own and others’ vulnerability. By regarding ourselves and others compassionately, we are able to remain open-minded and engaged in dialogue even across critical and difficult differences,” (Cooperative Argumentation 49).

In order to navigate through dilemmas including, but not limited to the ones discussed, coaches must be open to other points of view. They must be empathetic and compassionate towards their players, as well as the parents and institution that employs them. It is essential that coaches keep in mind that their decisions affect many people. Keeping open the lines of communication is essential to everyone having a positive experience. It is also the best way to ensure that the most beneficial and ethical decision is made.

Conclusion

Around the world the coaching profession is becoming more and more lucrative. Coaches often find themselves under much public scrutiny having their actions and decisions

examined. Many organizations have codes of ethics or some kind of guidelines set up for coaches that are designed to aid them in solving difficult dilemmas. However, many coaches are either not aware of these guidelines or they choose to ignore them. This becomes problematic when coaches are faced with a dilemma and they have nothing to refer to in attempting to solve it.

Three major dilemmas that were discussed were the pursuit of excellence, coach-player relationships, and a coach's involvement in the academic lives of their athletes. These dilemmas are all common and a coach in the profession long enough will face at least one of them. Each of the three quandaries, however, can be navigated using codes of ethics already established and/or by consulting existing ethical theories for guidance. No matter what means a coach uses to solve any dilemma that he or she faces, dialogue is an integral part of this process. Keeping lines of communication open with the athletes and the parents is essential to ethical coaching. Coaches must remember that keeping an open mind and dialoging will only help in making their coaching practice as ethical and effective as possible.

Appendix

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NAIA Coaches' Code

[1] I believe in the power of athletics as a program for the training of youth for a strong and efficient democracy.

[2] I believe in athletics for the building of good character and personality.

[3] I believe in athletics as a significant part of a sound educational program.

[4] I believe in athletics as a constructive force in the lives of millions of sports followers throughout our nation. Therefore, I will hold sportsmanship and fair play high above all other values to be gained through sports participation.

[5] I consider the privilege of guiding youth through participation in sports as a sacred trust and not merely a means of livelihood.

[6] I will always keep the best interests of each student-athlete as my aim. I shall never be guilty of enhancing my professional progress by the use of a student's skill for my benefit.

[7] I will ever keep before the students under my direction the high ideals, honesty, sincerity, and integrity which have made our nation great. I will not encourage, or ever tolerate, any form of trickery or evasion of rules in order to gain an advantage over an opponent.

[8] I will do all in my power to instill in those under my direction a tolerance for all races and creeds, and I will stand out against intolerance wherever it may occur.

[9] I will strive to instill in every youth great purposes and aims in living and will use the desire to play not as an end, but as a training ground for the student's highest development.

[10] I will strive to teach each student to be humble in victory and gracious in defeat, to be above bragging or using alibis, and shall help develop inner strength and poise.

[11] I will use only fair and honest means in my desire for personal achievement and shall count the goodwill of my peers far above any achievement unfairly gained.

[12] I will not sacrifice the values to be gained through a wholesome enjoyment of challenging sports activity for institutional pride or commercial ends.

[13] I will use only fair and honest means of securing talent for athletic teams and never stoop to trickery or insincere promises in influencing students in the selection of their educational experience.

[14] I will use every means at my command to protect the moral, mental and physical health of the students under my guidance and will never be party to the use of athletics for the financial or political gain of any office or group.

[15] I will encourage each student to avail himself/herself of the best experience to be gained in a well-rounded education and to progress normally toward graduation. I will never encourage participation in athletics as an end in itself.

[16] I will help each student under my guidance toward the development of honest habits of work and pride in work well done and I shall not practice or allow evasion in any obligation surrounding the athletics program.

[17] I will shoulder my total responsibility as a leader through athletics and will not allow that responsibility to be transferred to any person or group outside the educational institution. I will not violate this sacred trust for financial support or political prestige.

NAYS Coaches' Code:

I hereby pledge to live up to my certification as a NYSCA Coach by following the NYSCA Coaches' Code of Ethics:

[1] I will place the emotional and physical well being of my players ahead of a

personal desire to win.

[2] I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.

[3] I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.

[4] I will promise to review and practice basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players.

[5] I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.

[6] I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.

[7] I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.

[8] I will be knowledgeable in the rules of each sport that I coach, and I will teach these rules to my players.

[9] I will use those coaching techniques appropriate for all of the skills that I teach.

[10] I will remember that I am a youth sports coach, and that the game is for children and not adults.

Prospectus

Section One

Sports Ethics: Is Cooperation Present In This Competitive Environment?

For my capstone I will explore the ethical issues of communication between coaches and players in sports focusing mainly on high school and college sports. I will examine the differences between coaching techniques at the different levels of high school and college athletics. There are different factors that affect coaches in different ways according to how competitive their schools are. For example, an NAIA college (such as CSUMB) has different pressures and expectations for its sports teams than a Division I university (such as UC Berkeley) has. The same sort of thing happens at the high school level as well.

Since I will be focusing on student athletes and their coaches, there are issues surrounding the coach's involvement in the academic lives of their students. What kind of obligation does a coach have to encourage their student athletes' academic success? There has to be some kind of involvement because at all levels of school there are rules about GPA and a student's eligibility.

I will also explore different coaching techniques and how they may or may not be ethical and/or effective. Sports are carried out in a competitive arena where winning is the goal of every sports event. Is a cooperative environment feasible in this competitive arena? There are issues surrounding a coach's encouragement of his/her players to win. How far is too far for a coach to go to have a winning team and can success be measured on a different scale than simply winning and losing? There are also issues about coaches compromising their athlete's moral development for the sake of producing a winning team that I will look into.

There are also issues surrounding gender that I will be exploring in this project. There are some sports where it is very common for coaches to be the opposite sex of their players. However, there are also sports where different sex coaches are unheard of. If the coach is the opposite sex of his/her players, should their coaching techniques change to suit the sex of the players? Should opposite sex coaches be allowed? What issues arise when it comes to opposite sex coaches?

The issues of this project are important because sports are becoming a huge part of life in the United States starting at a very young age and through college. Wherever there are players of a sport there are always coaches and their role in their players' lives should be examined for ethical dilemmas and moral decisions should be discovered for the problems as they arise.

Section Two

The first MLO that I plan to incorporate is MLO 2 – Research Skills. Through the work done on my capstone I will use diverse and appropriate methods of inquiry to analyze the issues of concern. I will also demonstrate my ability to acquire, evaluate, interpret, synthesize, apply, document, and present the knowledge that I gain through these methods of research. I will conduct personal interviews with players and coaches; I will use resources such as books and other materials to give me a complete understanding of the subjects.

The second MLO that I will integrate is MLO 3 – Relational Communication Skills. The ideas behind this MLO will be at the core of my capstone project. I will use the skills that I have acquired in this area to show the importance of ethical and effective interaction in interpersonal and group communication decision-making processes. Ethical and effective

skills in this area are key to coaching and through the research that I do I will find out how coaches meet this criteria.

The third MLO that I will include in my project will be MLO 5 – Critical Cultural Analysis. Much of my research will be based on gender issues in the realm of coaching. Through researching this topic I will unravel the complexity among a coaching relationship not only from coach to athlete in general, but from coach to athlete with gender specifically in mind.

Section Three

- What coaching techniques are most ethical and effective?
- How does a coach provide a cooperative learning environment in such a competitive atmosphere?
- Is cooperation feasible in a competitive arena?
- What role should a coach play in the academic lives of their student athletes?
- What kind of obligation does a coach have to encourage their student athletes' academic success beyond meeting GPA eligibility rules?
- Should a coach's gender in relation to the gender of their players affect their coaching style? I.e. should a man adjust his coaching style when coaching girls?
- How does coaching compare, for example, at a NAIA college with a Division One university? In high school, how do JV and Varsity compare?
- How much should winning influence a coach's techniques and decisions?
- Should developing the skills of the game, sportsmanship, team building, individual character be placed above winning?

- Can success be measured on a different scale than simply winning and losing? Should it be?
- Should personal morals be compromised for the sake of being competitive?
- Does being brought up in a competitive atmosphere i.e. participating in sports since childhood effect one's moral development?
- What role does a coach play in developing his/her players' moral character?

Section Four

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Section Five

There is much information that I still need in order to have a successful capstone project. The CSUMB library website has been and will continue to be very helpful in finding information. I have used EBSCO to search for articles so far and will continue to use this site as it is extremely helpful. WorldCat is another search engine that will be essential to

finding a good variety of research sources. I will use Voyager to search through subjects in order to find helpful books. The Subject Guides to Resources by Institute is another helpful tool in finding good sources for my project. The library website is a great aid in conducting research for my capstone project.

Section Six

The form for my capstone project will be a research paper that includes in depth research answering my main research question. The research that I will have conducted will also include oral interviews that will help in answering my research question.

Section Seven

The main roadblock that I have faced so far with my project is narrowing down my topic. There are so many aspects of coaching and sports and so many different levels of sports that it is hard for me to decide exactly what I want to research. There is also a lot of information on each aspect of coaching ethics and sports ethics that I can't narrow down my topic simply by what information is abundant. I also want to make sure that I am thorough in my research and I need to keep careful track of my sources throughout my project.

Section Eight

I would like to archive my project. This capstone project is such a huge undertaking and will be a wonderful achievement once it is finished that I would be honored to have it archived so that people can see my work. Also, if it is archived I can access it for future

employment purposes and future capstone students or students researching for papers can access my capstone to help in completing their projects.

Reflection

My experience with Capstone has been overwhelming, challenging, educational, challenging, fulfilling, tedious, and did I mention challenging? I've had many friends who have passed through Capstone before me and I've heard all about their experiences with it. Their stories varied with the major that they were in and also with the size of the project that they took on. With so many different opinions about the class, I wasn't quite sure what to expect.

It all started with writing my proposal in the spring of 2002. Coming up with a project was difficult. I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to spend so much time on while satisfying all of the necessary requirements. I decided that I wanted to do something with sports ethics but I didn't really know what. Meeting with my advisor, Debian Marty, was extremely helpful (as it was throughout the life of the project). I got the proposal done and approved and I promptly forgot about it for the entire summer and then through the majority of the fall semester.

I started coaching a junior varsity girl's soccer team at York School, a private high school here in Monterey, Ca. I knew that this would be great research for my project so I tried to keep a journal every day. Every day turned into every other day, to once a week, to "journal...what journal?" Nonetheless the experience was not only personally rewarding, but also helpful in seeking out the dilemmas that I wanted to discuss in my paper.

Come time for spring semester, I dreaded going to Capstone class all week. Friday afternoon came and there I sat, greeted by friends and other familiar faces. It was odd to have an entire class of people that I had had at least one class with in my four years at CSUMB. We went around the classroom and gave a brief description of our project and I

was impressed by everyone's clever ideas. I was nervous that people would think that mine was silly compared to their in-depth and complicated projects. It didn't matter too much to me, however, because I knew that my project would be my baby and that it was something that I would enjoy working on and be proud of in the end.

Another force factoring into my nervousness was how much research people had already done on their projects. Some people were expanding on projects they had done in previous HCOM classes while others, like me, were starting from scratch. My fears were confirmed and at the same time put to rest when I heard how much some people had already done and how little research others had completed. With forty people in the class I should have known that I wouldn't be alone in my lack of initiative.

Throughout my educational experience before college I prided myself on being the Princess of Procrastination. As I navigated my way through four years at CSUMB my procrastination came and went. Entering my senior year, however, it reached a whole new level. I now felt comfortable proclaiming my position as the Queen Mother of Putting Things Off. As the semester progressed I slowly got going on my project. Sluggishly I researched my topic trying to decide exactly what I was going to write about. The work came gradually but I finally felt like I had done enough research and that I was ready to write...or so I thought.

My senior year has been the hardest out of all four for me personally. I don't know if it had to do with me getting ready to end the education part of my life and start the "real world" part of it, or if I was just "lucky" enough to be put through so many trials in one year. Either way, in the fall, I found myself putting school after all of the turmoil that was going on in my life outside of academics. It looked as though spring was going to be no different.

Needless to say getting started on the actual writing part of my project started extremely late in the semester.

It took a weekend in Carson City at my parents' house to get some real writing done and to start feeling like I actually had something accomplished. After that my writing came in spurts. I'd never worked on a project so huge; for papers I usually write the entire thing in one sitting. However, this paper was obviously too huge to write in one day so I would randomly get inspired to write and would have to act on it whenever the urge hit me.

Finalizing the body of the paper has proven itself to be quite a task. Never in my life have I had so much trouble motivating myself to finish a paper. One would think that I would want to get it done just to have it finished. Apparently I had a different idea and would try to find anything to do besides finishing my capstone. Needless to say it is done. And it feels great.

I can honestly say that I've learned a lot from participating in a class where the sole outcome is an individual (huge) project. I've learned what interests me about coaching and its ethics. I've also realized just how much I've learned and grown from the various classes on ethics I've taken in my time in the HCOM department. I've learned that sometimes I just have to lock myself in my room and not come out until I've accomplished something. The best advice I can give to someone who passes through Capstone after me is this: DON'T PROCRASTINATE. Coming from a professional (who has been known to write 20-page final papers the night before the due date), if there is one project in your whole life that you choose not to put off until the last minute, this is that project.