



Institute for Sport Coaching

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The Value of Quality Trained Sport Coaches

The heart of any athletic team or program is its coaching staff. They provide its continual lifeblood year after year. The turnover of athletes and parents at the interscholastic or intercollegiate level is nearly 100 percent every four years therefore the role of the coaching staff as the keeper of knowledge and tradition cannot be underestimated. The former editor of *Track Coach* magazine, Kevin McGill, put it simply, "...the star of today can be gone tomorrow; the one constant is the coach."¹

Sport coaches play an integral role in human development as they interact with the millions of American youth participating in sports ranging from recreation leagues through Olympic competitions. This interaction creates the opportunity for the coach to impact young athletes in many ways including mentally, physically and ethically. The ability to influence America's youth underscores the necessity to properly prepare coaches for the tasks and challenges they face, no matter what level of athletes they coach. It is through this preparation that coaches are empowered to positively contribute to American society at all levels – from youth development to improved national health and quality of life.²

Sport coaches are also expected to be providers of first aid, substance abuse counselors, personal role models, teachers of character and ambassadors of their communities.³

49 percent of Olympians identified excellent coaches through out their development as having a significant influence on their success.

29 percent of Olympians identified lack of good coaching as an obstacle to their success.

The Path to Excellence: A Comprehensive View of U.S. Olympians Who Competed from 1984 to 1998.

¹ McGill, K. (1998, Winter). From the editor. *Track Coach* (142/1), pp 4520-4549.

² P. Davis, Why Coaches Education? *Olympic Coach*, 15 (4), 16-17.

³ T. Flannery, Should Public Schools Require Coaches to Be Certified? 15 (4), 10-11.

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Moreover, quality trained coaches in the early 21st century will be answering the demand for them caused by:

- Generational Changes
- Sport Participation Trends
- Shortage of Quality Coaches

Meeting the Demand

Generational Changes

The ongoing and future changes in the American workforce are staggering with more than 40 percent of the U.S. labor force reaching retirement age by 2010 with the number of U.S. workers, between the ages of 55 and 64, growing by 51 percent to 25 million. This shift means the fastest-growing segment of the workforce is also the one with the largest potential of retiring soon. Concurrently, the number of U.S. workers between the ages of 35 and 44 are expected to shrink by seven percent.⁴

This demographic shift in the average age of Americans will also create a serious demand for teachers, the largest traditional source of coaches. For an aging teacher population, however, retirement looms as one of the greatest future drains on the pool of current teachers. Almost one-half of current K–12 teachers will be eligible for retirement in the next 10 years.⁵

During the next 10-20 years, with a large number of current coaches approaching retirement along with the rest of the baby boomer generation, the need for recruiting, training and retaining new coaches will increase. This situation will be worsened by the small Generation X and the following large Generation Y as the smaller number of coaches from Generation X become responsible for the sports experiences of Generation Y athletes. Further competition for sport coaches will be created by the increase in the number of sports sponsored at the youth, interscholastic and intercollegiate levels. The increase in sports availability is compounded by the rise in sports participation by young

⁴ K. Greene, bye-bye boomers, Wall Street Journal, p. B1, September 20, 2005.

⁵ P. Murphy and E. Novak, coping with teacher shortages: a resource guide, p.7, Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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women and minorities. The result is more demand for coaches. It is important that this demand is met with quality people who have had quality coaching education.

Sport Participation Trends

Youth sports participation is rising as anticipated with the maturing of Generation Y. According to the National Council of Youth Sports, there was a 14.3 percent increase in participation in organized youth sports from 1997 to 2000 (44.96 million to 52.41 million) (For breakdown by sport, See Table 1 below).⁶

Sport	1980-81	2000-2001	Percent Change
Boys' Baseball	422,310	451,674	+1.0
Boys' Basketball	553,702	540,597	-2.4
Girls' Basketball	423,568	456,169	+7.8
Boys' Cross Country	172,270	190,993	+10.9
Girls' Cross Country	90,224	160,178	+77.5
Girls' Field Hockey	55,656	60,737	+9.1
Boys' Football	937,901	1,023,712	+9.1
Boys' Golf	118,390	163,299	+37.9
Girls' Golf	32,828	59,901	+82.5
Girls' Gymnastics	64,815	21,034	-67.6
Boys' Ice Hockey	25,925	34,652	+33.7
Girls' Ice Hockey	56	6,442	+11,402.5
Boys' Soccer	149,376	339,101	+127.0
Girls' Soccer	41,119	295,265	+96.6
Girls' Softball	206,351	373,214	+67.3
Boys' Tennis	130,047	139,483	+7.3
Girls' Tennis	118,889	160,114	+34.7
Boys' Outdoor Track	507,791	494,022	-2.7
Girls' Outdoor Track	377,995	415,667	+10.0
Girls' Volleyball	297,786	395,124	+32.7
Boys' Wrestling	245,029	244,637	-0.2
Total	4,972,028	6,026,015	

Table 1. Change in Participation in Selected High School Sports 1980-2001.⁷

⁶ *Report on Trends & Participation in Organized Youth Sports*, National Council of Youth Sports, 2001.

⁷ *Athletics & Achievement: The Report of the NASBE Commission on High School Athletics in an Era of Reform*, National Association of State Boards of Education, 2004.

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The current demand for sport coaches has been also created by the continuing increase in the number of sport sponsored by the NCAA (See Figure 2). The number of NCAA sponsored sports has risen from more than 10,000 in 1982 to over 15,000 in 2004.

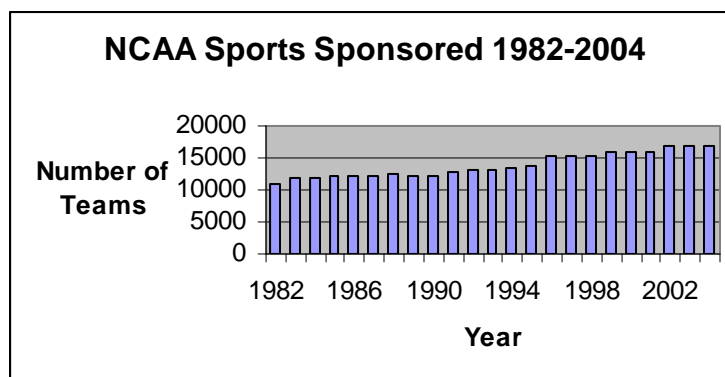


Figure 2. Sports Sponsored by NCAA.⁸

Shortage of Quality Coaches

Sixteen American national sport governing bodies reported they did not have enough qualified coaches.

2003 US Olympic Committee Coaches Education Survey

Thirty years ago nearly every interscholastic athletic coach was a certified teacher, many of them from the ranks of the physical education teachers. However, during the past 20 years, there has been a significant decline in the role of physical education in America's schools, leading to today's situation where the majority of interscholastic coaches are not certified

physical education teachers. Reinforcing this decline is the steady trend of not requiring teacher certification for interscholastic sport coaches. Learning "on the fly" is common. Most people who go into coaching do not seek out professional preparation unless it is required.⁹ This situation has resulted in the coaching profession at the interscholastic level to be dominated by amateurs,¹⁰ who have had little or no coaching education.

"There has always been a shortage of quality sport coaches."

Tim Flannery
Asst. Executive Director, National Federation of High Schools
Source: Personal communication, May 14, 2001

⁸ 1981-82 --- 2003-04 Sports Sponsorship and Participation Report, National Collegiate Athletic Association.

⁹ Education Requirements for Athletic Coaches, National Assn of State Boards of Education, Wash DC March 2003.

¹⁰ M.A. Clark, Who's Coaching the Coaches? In J.R. Gerdy (Ed.) Sport in School: The Future of an Institution (pp.55-65), New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

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According to Tim Flannery, Assistant Executive Director, National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), this is an ongoing problem—“Today, our athletic programs are much larger and many of our coaches come from the community with no training in educational-based athletics.”¹¹ A number of programs have emerged in an attempt to fill that gap—the American Sport Education Program (ASEP), the various national sport governing bodies (NGBs), and degrees (graduate, undergraduate and certificates) in sport coaching at various colleges and universities, etc.

Shortage of Trained Coaches

Less than 5 percent of volunteer coaches in community-based programs receive any coaching education.

Less than 8 percent of school coaches receive any coaching education.

*Coaching Education in America:
A White Paper
National Federation of High
Schools – 2001*

This problem also exists within youth sports in America with the nearly 2.5 million volunteer youth coaching workforce being too small and also considered not competent enough.¹² Despite their good intentions, most of these coaches have no formal training or education in the appropriate coaching methods for the youth they coach.

Why Trained Coaches?

Recognizing that there is a unique body of knowledge necessary for sport coaches to accomplish their many tasks, formal coaching education programs are a primary means of transferring the required knowledge to a large population of new and still-developing coaches. Formal training will also ensure all practicing coaches are trained to standards by testing their knowledge.¹³

¹¹ T. Flannery, Should Public Schools Require Coaches to Be Certified? *Olympic Coach*, 15 (4), 10.

¹² Ewing, M. E., Seefeldt, V. D., and Brown, T. P. (1996). *Role of Organized Sport in the Education and Health of American Children and Youth*. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

¹³ P. Davis, Why Coaches Education? *Olympic Coach*, 15 (4), 17.

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Creating quality trained sport coaches benefits American communities in many ways:

- Combating obesity and inactivity among America's youth.
- Increasing the pool that new coaches are recruited from.
- Delivering positive and safer sports experiences to America's youth.
- Reducing legal liabilities associated with sport.

Supporting National Initiatives against Obesity

Since 1980, the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled among children and tripled among adolescents. The latest data available from the Center for Disease Control shows that between 1999 and 2002 16 percent of children and adolescents were overweight, and another 15 percent were at risk for being overweight. The increases in obesity among children and adolescents cut across all regions, ages, and racial and ethnic groups in the United States; however, more African-American and Mexican-American youth are overweight compared to Caucasian youth.¹⁴

Youth sports are one of the primary ways that communities can increase physical activity and fitness among America's youth.

The quality of any youth sports program depends on the competence of its adult leadership, particularly the coaches. However, the National Youth Sports Safety Foundation, in 1999, found fewer than 10

“Enable youth sports and recreation programs to provide coaches and recreation program staff with the training they need to offer developmentally appropriate, safe and enjoyable physical activity experiences for young people.”

A Report to the President from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education- Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity 2000

¹⁴ D. E. Snider, Jr., Reducing Childhood Obesity: HHS's Public Health Response: Testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, October 5, 2004, www.cdc.gov/washington/testimony/Ob1052004214.htm (Accessed: December 4, 2005).

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percent of the 2.5 million American volunteer coaches and less than 1/3 of interscholastic coaches have had any type of coaching education.¹⁵ The Federal Government also believes better-trained coaches enhance the enjoyment of the team sports experience for young people thus increasing retention rates among participants and helping to reduce sports-related injuries.¹⁶ That belief is backed up by a study that found athletes who played for untrained coaches reported an attrition rate of 26%; whereas those athletes play for a trained coach reported a drop out rate of only 5%.¹⁷

Increasing the Recruiting Pool

With the reduction in the numbers of teaching-certified coaches, many states have adopted or are in the process of adopting certification and professional development for coaches at all levels as school administrators are concerned with change in the makeup of their coaching workforces. The National Association of State Boards of Education believes well-prepared coaches are the key ingredient to a quality athletic program. They have recommended that state boards of education provide requirements for coaching excellence by establishing both certification and professional development requirements for all coaches.¹⁸

Obviously, most coaches and athletic administrators are on the lookout for new coaching talent to aid with their respective programs. If the attrition rate for volunteer coaches (estimated at 50 percent) is any indicator of the turnover of interscholastic coaches, then continual recruiting of new coaches is the key to maintaining a viable long-term program.¹⁹

A sports organization that provides the environment where the coach is prepared to succeed through proper training will attract better quality coaches. Surveys have indicated that coaches prefer to

¹⁵ National Youth Sports Safety Foundation, www.nyssf.org (Accessed: June 23, 2002.).

¹⁶ *A Report to the President from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education-Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity and Sports*, www.cdc.gov (Accessed: June 30, 2001.).

¹⁷ Barnett, N.P., Smoll, F.L., & Smith, R.E., Effects of enhancing coach-athlete relationships on youth sport attrition. *The Sport Psychologist*, (6) 111-127.

¹⁸ *Athletics & Achievement: The Report of the NASBE Commission on High School Athletics in an Era of Reform*, National Association of State Boards of Education, 2004.

¹⁹ *Coaching Education in America: A White Paper*, National Federation of High Schools, 2001.

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participate in training and choose those programs requiring training over those which do not (See Table 3 below.).

67%	Paying a fee would not be discouraging
72%	Mandatory coaching education encouraged them to continue
85%	Prefer a league that requires training
85%	Believe that training increases skill and confidence
86%	Would attend training even if not required

Table 3. Coaches' Attitude towards Coaching Education.²⁰

Formalized training also reduces the reality shock for most novice coaches. It exposes them to the hard work and preparation that is necessary for any coach or any professional to become competent. Reducing the shock of what it really takes will also combat the burn-out rate and allow more coaches to stay active in the coaching profession.

Lastly, the availability of coaching education programs helps alleviate one barrier preventing more people from coaching: A lack of confidence in the skills and abilities needed to coach.²¹ Coaching education, by providing the opportunity for the development of coaching skills, can help expand the coaching recruitment pool that sport administrators recruit from to beyond the typical former athlete population. Now adults, with no previous sport experience, can be trained to be competent sport coaches at the youth and interscholastic level.

Creating More Quality Coaches

Well designed training programs for coaches can result in improved time management thereby resulting in increased motor engagement time, positive changes in specific coaching behaviors and positive personality development in athletes.²² Research indicates formal

The coach is the key to making the student-athlete experience appropriate, positive and educational.

Sports Done Right Report
The University of Maine Sport
& Coaching Initiative - 2004

²⁰ Youth Sport Coach Certification & Training Survey, National Youth Northern Kentucky University, 2000.

²¹ K. Mair, Coaches Count Guide for Australian Sport, International Coach Education Conference, 1999.

²² W. Gilbert and P. Trudel, An Evaluation Strategy for Coach Education Programs, Journal of Sport Behavior, 22(2), 234-250.

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coaching education programs positively influence a coach's ability to affect learning and performance.²³

A group of Michigan high school coaches and college students studying to be coaches were surveyed by Michigan State University's Department of Kinesiology in 2000. The survey found there was a significant relationship between attendance in a youth coaching education program and an increase in perceived coaching efficacy. Even though the education program was short (12 hours long), coaches still showed significant improvements in their coaching efficacy. The researchers concluded that coaching education programs using "approaches that help increase one's confidence in coaching (e.g., mastery exercises), coaches still showed significant improvements in their coaching efficacy. The researchers concluded that coaching education programs using "approaches that help increase one's confidence in coaching (e.g., mastery experiences, challenging and reachable goals, and observational learning) should produce higher confident coaches."²⁴

Over the past 15 years, youth sports researchers have consistently demonstrated children have more positive sports experiences as a result of their coaches having undergone training to improve their coaching effectiveness.²⁵

Aside from the benefits described in the previous two comments, a range of other benefits were documented from certification of sport coaches in the Australian National Coaching Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) program). These include: 1) Advances in technical knowledge; 2) Improved communication techniques with players; and 3) A deeper understanding of sport-specific fitness. Generally, these benefits were expected, as many accreditation courses focus explicitly on these areas. However, two subliminal interconnected benefits were described. These relate to the informal 'contacts' coaches make at accreditation courses, and the subsequent exchange of ideas between coaches during courses.

²³ M.A. Clark, Who's Coaching the Coaches? In J.R. Gerdy (Ed.) Sport in School: The Future of an Institution (pp.55-65), New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

²⁴ D. Feltz and L. Malet, The Effect of a Coaching Education Program on Coaching Efficacy, December 2000, <http://ed-web3.educ.msu.edu/reports/ed-researchrep/00/00dec-report1.htm>, (Accessed: July 30, 2002.).

²⁵ L. Wiersma and C. Sherman, Volunteer Youth Sport Coaches' Perspectives of Coaching Education/Certification and Parental Codes of Conduct, Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 76 (2), 324-338.

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From the results of the interviews, there was a general perception that the NCAS is effective, and is raising the standard of coaching in Australia. More specific findings included:

- Coaches undertake accreditation for a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, but predominantly for the purpose of obtaining formal coaching positions;
- Accreditation courses, in general, meet the immediate needs of coaches;
- Accreditation provides a range of benefits to coaches, particularly the facilitation of coaching ‘contacts’ and the exchange of coaching ideas and knowledge;
- Accreditation courses provide skills that are in excess of those obtained through playing and occupational experiences; and
- Major improvement areas include the development of strategies for the on-going assessment of coaches, and the expansion of formalized mentor programs.²⁶

Creating Safe Playing Environments

Injuries from sports participation are a significant cause of hospitalization and health care costs in

children and adolescents. Sports injuries are the second leading cause of emergency room visits for youth and the second leading cause of injury in schools. Although there are no hard statistics, estimates are that 3 million youth are seen in hospital emergency rooms each year for sports-related injuries, and another 5 million are seen by their physicians and sports medicine clinics for sports-related injuries. These statistics do not reflect the large number of overuse injuries currently presented to pediatricians, family physicians, and clinics.²⁷

COACHING-RELATED FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SPORTS INJURIES

Sports injuries are predictable incidents that are amenable to prevention. Research has identified the following frequent factors attributed to coaches:

- Lack of coaching education
- Hazardous playing fields
- Conditioning and training errors
- Lack of, improper, poorly fitted, or inadequate safety equipment
- Playing while injured or overtired
- Poor nutrition
- Rules and officials
- Improper technique (e.g., in tennis, improper swing may cause the tennis player to develop tennis elbow)
- Inadequate supervision
- Psychological stress

²⁶ Dr. S. Dixon, *A Preliminary Investigation Into The Effectiveness Of The National Coach Accreditation Scheme*, Australian Sports Commission, 2001, p. 20.

²⁷ Dr. L. Micheli, *Prevention of Sports Injuries in Children, Pediatric and Adolescent Sports Injuries*, *Clinics in Sports Medicine*, 19 (4), pp. 821-834.

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Dr. Lyle Micheli, head of the Division of Sports Medicine at Boston's Children's Hospital and Professor at the Harvard Medical School, believes the most effective way to prevent sports injuries in children is to ensure that the program they are in is staffed by a trained coach. He describes certification of coaches as a win, win, win situation. "The coaches will win: They will be better trained and therefore more knowledgeable. Parents will win: They will know their children are being instructed by qualified personnel. And of course, the biggest winners will be the kids: They will be better trained, less likely to be injured, and more qualified to participate in sports and health fitness throughout life."²⁸

Also, the Federal government believes better trained coaches help to reduce sports-related injuries by applying risk-management practices which aid in identifying potential hazardous conditions before they threaten athletes.²⁹

*Protecting Sport Coaches*³⁰

Most of the benefits of hiring a coach who has completed a coaching certification program have been discussed previously. However, below are just a few of the legal issues every athletic administrator should keep in mind when hiring their next coach.

First, and probably most important, under the theory of vicarious liability, an employer is legally liable for the conduct of a subordinate or employee. In other words, if a coach is negligent and one of his or her players is injured, the school or organization will be named in the lawsuit and responsible for any damages that may be awarded. Therefore, trained coaches who understand the legal consequences of their actions, but who also know what to do if an athlete is injured or to practice risk management reducing the chances for injury will reduce the risk an organization undertakes with sports.

²⁸ Dr. Lyle Micheli, *The Importance of Qualified Coaches*, www.lylemichelimd.com (Accessed: September 1, 2004.).

²⁹ *A Report to the President from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education-Promoting Better Health for Young People Through Physical Activity and Sports*, www.cdc.gov (Accessed: June 30, 2001.).

³⁰ This section was written by Professor John Wolohan, Ithaca College.

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Second, coaches not only have a legal duty to provide proper supervision, they must also teach proper techniques and tactics. As a result, one of the first questions any lawyer will ask if an athlete is injured is “was the coach competent to adequately supervise the participants involved, activities conducted, and facilities utilized.” It is, therefore essential that all coaches are properly trained, so that they can warn athletes of potential dangers involved in the activity, and enforce proper safety rules and regulations in order to protect the health and safety of the athletes. This is especially important when the athletes are children or when the activity carries a greater risk of injury, such as football, pole vaulting or gymnastics.

Third, in order to provide proper instruction to athletes, it is essential that the coach be trained in and knowledgeable about the rules of the game. In many sports and activities there are a number of rules that have been adopted for safety reasons. If a coach modifies or fails to enforce such rules, the court will not look on such modification or lack of enforcement of the rules favorably.

Therefore, hiring coaches who are trained and knowledgeable about the rules and their enforcement will help keep your organization out of court.

National Standards for Sport Coaches

One means available for parents, sport administrators and athletes to judge the quality of their coaches is the *National Standards for Sport Coaches*³¹. The *Standards*, published originally by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) in 1995, and recently updated in 2006, are the fundamental competencies sport coaches should possess depending on the level at which they coach. These competencies are designed to serve as the framework that all sport-sponsoring organizations should use to design and evaluate their coaching education programs.

³¹ The second edition of the *National Standards for Sport Coaches* was published in April 2006.

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According to the *National Standards for Sport Coaches*, there are 40 standards grouped into eight domains of sport coach knowledge and ability. These domains are:

- Philosophy and Ethics
- Safety and Injury Prevention
- Physical Conditioning
- Growth and Development
- Teaching and Communication
- Sport Skills and Tactics
- Organization and Administration
- Evaluation

And there is much to do in this area as noted in the 2005 Youth Sports National Report Card, coaching received an overall grade of C-. The national youth sports coaching workforce was noted to “Needs Improvement” in the area of providing an adequate pool of coaches possessing training in coaching techniques and safety.³²

About NCACE

The National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE) is a non-profit organization, established by sport leaders across the United States. It is the mission of NCACE to support qualified coaches for sport participants through programs that provide quality coaching education. The essential function of the Council is to review the quality of coaching education programs and encourage continuous improvement of coaching education. The Council endorses the *National Standards for Sport Coaches* to facilitate certification, evaluation, and selection of coaches. In addition, the Council oversees the development of coaching education and guidelines for the review of coaching education programs.³³

³² 2005 Youth Sports National Report Card, Strategies, 19 (3), 27.

³³ NCACE Mission Statement, <http://www.aahperd.org/naspe/template.cfm?template=programs-ncace.html> (Accessed: December 4, 2005).

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Sport Coaching Education Accreditation by NCACE

NCACE will review coaching education/certification programs that seek accreditation. It is the only such accrediting organization in the US. These reviews will be based on the program's compliance with Guidelines for Coaching Education and the National Standards for Athletic Coaches. Those organizations interested in having their program reviewed should contact via the NCACE website at <http://www.ncaceinfo.org>.