Coaching Effectiveness and Why It Matters

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Why Coaching Effectiveness?

- **Personal background and interests...**
  - At UWL: education and experience
  - Interest in “how things work” ...it runs in the family
  - What we learn vs. how we learn
  - Passion for teaching and learning!

  My challenge to you... the five R’s
  - Reflect
  - Recognize
  - Realize
  - Respond
  - Resolve
Why Coaching Effectiveness?

• We all bring something different to the table...
  • Business
  • Exercise physiology
  • Marketing
  • Political science
  • Psychology
  • Administration
  • Education
  • Human performance
  • Mathematics

Our education, interests, and experiences all play a major role in how we perform as coaches!
4 categories...

- The Athletes
- Content
- Instruction
- Professional Responsibility
Athlete Development

- **We must understand how our athletes grow and develop!**
- Patterns of learning and development vary individually
  - Two freshmen
    - Hurdling for four years
    - Multi-event athlete learning for the first time
  - Regularly assess individual and group performance

- When planning instruction, take into account the needs of each athlete...
  - Older, experienced athlete
    - Refinement and consistency
  - Younger, less experienced athlete
    - Fundamentals
Athlete Development

• Understanding your athletes’ development...
  • Cognitive
    • post-race workout decision
  • Social
    • outgoing, confident freshmen vs. quiet, introvert senior
  • Emotional
    • senior with self-doubt
  • Physical
    • freshman vs. sophomore year

• The development in any one area may affect performance in others!
  • Weigel-4 years of growth

• **Respect** each individual’s differing strengths
• **Commit** to using this information to further their development
• **Take responsibility** for promoting their growth and development
Learning Differences

• We must use our understanding of **individual differences** and **diverse backgrounds** to ensure inclusive learning environments

• **Design, adapt, and deliver** instruction to address each athlete’s diverse learning strengths and needs
  • Verbal, visual, sensory...using a combination to reach everyone
  • Start to first hurdle...stride length visual, listen/feel tempo, connection with “good” and “bad” takeoff...and using video

• Make appropriate provisions for those who need it

• Build on their prior knowledge and experiences
Learning Differences

• Understand that our athletes bring different items to the table...
  • Experiences
  • Abilities
  • Prior learning
  • Peer and social interactions

• Help each athlete reach their full potential
  • Everyone can contribute in different ways (character, leadership, etc.)

• Respect differing backgrounds, skills, abilities, and perspectives
  • We coach human beings who are student-athletes...find a balance!
  • Track is not their life...but it is a pretty important part of it!

• Make our athletes feel valued (and help them learn to value each other!)
  • Probably one of the biggest reasons for our team success
Learning Environments

- Create a positive learning environment for athletes
  - Openness
  - Mutual respect
  - Support
  - Inquiry

- It’s essential that as coaches we are thoughtful and responsive listeners and observers

- Afternoon practice session
  - Greeting athletes as they arrive before warm up (relaxed and open)
  - General warm up (time to decompress and connect with teammates)
  - Specific warm up (shifting our focus to technical elements)
  - Pre-workout “huddle” (share objectives, Q&A if necessary)
Learning Environments

- How can you best coordinate your resources for **time**, **space**, and the **attention** of your athletes?
  - Expectations (start time, understanding timeline of practice)
  - Routine (consistency is comforting...but always be flexible)
  - Organizational structure
    - Tasks to be done... Block cart? Hurdles? General and specific set-up?
    - If you don’t know, ask!

- What kind of training environment do they need to be successful?

- How much of that environment is something we can control?

- We want our athletes to be **actively engaged** in their personal development
  - **How do you handle distractions?**
    Good/bad weather, multiple practices occurring at once, opposite genders or other teams
Content Knowledge

- We must understand **all aspects of our sport** in order to effectively teach and train our athletes!
  - Exercise physiology, biomechanics, motor behavior, training theory, psychology, technical elements, etc.

- Not only understanding and recognizing mechanics of movement, but understanding what causes a specific outcome
  - **If you don’t know...how can you find out??**
  - Not always formal education or training
  - Exp. with Pilates/yoga: alignment and posture, awareness, mindfulness

- Realize that this is not a fixed body of facts...our knowledge of the sport is **complex** and ever-evolving!

- **What does science and research tell us?**

- **What have we learned historically?**
Content Knowledge

• We should appreciate multiple perspectives and be open to analyzing these perspectives!

• Coaching education
• Clinics and camps
• Publications
• Technology
• Formal/informal conversations*
  • Absolutely critical...more learning happens here than some realize

• Reflect on prior knowledge
• Link new concepts to familiar concepts
• Make connections to our athletes’ learning experiences
Application of Content

• We need to understand how to connect these concepts to engage our athletes in their personal development

• **Technical symposiums...**
  • Information is familiar
    • “Oh good...I’m on the right track!”
    • “Hmmmm...I never really thought about it like that.”
  • Coaching situations are so different (type of athlete, institution, resources, etc.)
    • “How can I apply this information to MY situation?”
Application of Content

• Not only knowing the “nuts and bolts” of our sport, but also
  • understanding different modes for communicating information
  • understanding critical thinking processes of our athletes

• What kind of vocabulary/terminology are you using?
  • Force application...what do they need to know?
  • “Who understands and who thinks I’m crazy?”

• Are you telling your athletes or are you creating an opportunity for them to engage in what they’re learning?
• Trail leg mechanics
  • “This is the trail leg” vs. “What do we know about the trail leg?”
Assessment

• We need to understand and use multiple methods of assessment in order to
  • Engage our athletes in their personal growth
  • Monitor their progress
  • Guide our decisions

• What is the goal? What are we doing to attain that goal?
  • How we use goal sheets...
Assessment

- Summative
  - Formal evaluation
  - Race results, times/distances
  - Data received from various testing opportunities
    - Fall – multiple testing items

- Formative
  - Helpful in receiving immediate feedback in order to adjust plans if necessary
  - “Checking in” with athletes
  - Observations, questioning, discussions
    - Think about not only what you say, but when and how you say it (positivity!)
Planning for Instruction

• Putting it all together...using our knowledge, experiences, and skills to create a relevant learning experience for our athletes

• Planning in response to the strengths and needs of each athlete
  • Individual reps vs. race simulation
  • Building excitement for certain workouts (3-3-5 drill)

• Knowing when and how to make adjustments
  • Going back to athlete differences...adjust plan for their needs
  • # of reps (quality over quantity)...feeling good about the effort

• Value the input of colleagues and athletes
  • Leading up to championship time...what do athletes feel they need?
  • Finding a balance between what is necessary while enabling athlete to feel confidence going into the meet
Instructional Strategies

• We need to understand and use a variety of instructional strategies to help our athletes connect with specific concepts
  • Direct instruction – command style
    • What, why, and how
  • Peer teaching – athletes should share insight with each other
    • “This is what works for me”
    • “I like to think of it this way”

• What is our role?
  • Instruct
  • Facilitate
  • Coach

• What do you do on meet day?
  • Short, simple, and positive...fight the urge to overcoach!
Instructional Strategies

• Use of technology in our instruction
  • A useful tool for our athletes to see things...what can we do to help them better understand something?
    • Recognizing the blocking action at takeoff vs. understanding how it’s affecting hurdle clearance

• Video review...find a balance between coach pointing out specific elements and letting athlete identify details...they might be focusing on something completely different (and that’s not a bad thing)
  • Coach might notice the blocking action
  • Athlete might notice the height over or delay in “getting off the hurdle”
  • Discuss the connection!

• When to use video?
  • Immediate feedback at practice session (focusing on one element)
  • Outside of practice (analyzing elements as they relate to the big picture)
  • More experienced athletes – let them analyze on their own and discuss together after
Professional Learning

• Take advantage of learning opportunities to develop your own knowledge and skills!

• What are your needs as a coach?
  • Are my responsibilities expanding?
  • Is it time for a “refresher” course or experience?
  • Do I need to get back to my roots? See the big picture again?

• What are the needs of your athletes, program, or institution?
  • Young, talented hurdle group...looking toward the future
  • Developing a more competitive event group in the program
  • Resources don’t allow for big time event group...how much emphasis then?
    • Facilities, coaching staff, etc. (pole vault, high jump, multis...)

• Do you analyze and reflect on your own practice as a coach?
• How do you use this information in your planning?

• Create a plan for professional growth!
Ethical Practice

• Appropriate vs. inappropriate practices of a coach

• What does it mean to be a “professional”?  
  • Codes of ethics  
  • Professional standards of practice  
  • Relevant laws and policy

• Our actions, values, and dispositions... a direct reflection...
  • Ourselves
  • The team/program
  • The institution
  • The sport

• One of my proudest coaching moments...
Leadership and Collaboration

• Seeking out appropriate leadership roles...and taking advantage of opportunities when they present themselves
  • At your institution (campus or department involvement)
  • State, regional, national, or international level

• Some of us are natural go-getters...others need some encouragement (a little nudge can go a long way!)

• Surround yourself with positive people
  • UWL, WIAC, and many other coaches I’ve met and worked with
Leadership and Collaboration

• Embrace the **challenge** of continuous improvement and change

• **From a big picture perspective...**
  • Personal development (professionally and personally)
    • Natural leader vs. working on leadership skills
  • Contributing to the knowledge and skill of others
    • You may have much more to offer than you even realize!
  • Being a role model
    • For your athletes, colleagues, and the next generation of coaches
  • Being an advocate for your program and sport as a whole
    • **How can your voice be heard?**
To conclude...

- It helps to have talented athletes
  - And what you are able to do with that talent can be pretty great!
- Don’t be quick to judge
  - Some athletes just need time to develop
- Check your ego at the door
  - It shouldn’t matter what level you coach at, how long you’ve been coaching, or what kind of success you’ve had... we should all strive for self-improvement

- It is possible for our athletes to have fun AND be competitive... you’d be surprised at what they can achieve!

How can I be a better coach tomorrow than what I was today?
Thanks!

• Questions? Comments?