

XX. Thoughts on Leadership/Coaches Legal Duties

Leadership <

Five Essentials for Leadership in Coaching

A leader must be a doer, not a posturer. When the going gets tough, he must be ready to roll up his sleeves and take command. A leader must have a deep insight into character - to be able to read quickly and to separate the chaff from the wheat.

Decisiveness is also essential. A good leader doesn't shrink from the decision making, but also subscribes to the democratic process. The staff is involved in decisions and responsibilities are delegated to subordinates. Such involvement helps improve staff morale and promotes better performance. A word of caution: Whenever you begin to seek group approval before making a decision, you will lose respect and stature. Don't delegate too much of your responsibilities to others. You may find yourself labeled "unessential" and possibly out of a job. If everyone is going to your assistants for answers,

they may perceive you as a mere figurehead.

Always be the unifying and coherent force. Have assistants report on their progress and then follow up on their performance. Yes, everyone wants to be liked but it is more important to be strong-minded and run a tight ship than to be thought of as "a nice guy without a backbone."

Recommendation: 1. Do a self-evaluation. Are you a proper role model for the administration, faculty, coaches, and athletes? Do you practice what you preach? Are you in reasonably good shape and take pride in your appearance? Do you have the ability to express yourself both verbally and in writing and do you work to improve yourself in these areas? 2. Your administrative proficiency will be judged by your visitors the minute they step into your

office. Assure a professional atmosphere by neatly arranging your papers, books, magazines, and decorations. 3. Organize your files strategically by classifying the contents by subject or alphabet so that the items can be easily located and retrieved.

4. Color code your monthly and yearly calendars and post them prominently in your office. 5. Put your goals, policies, and procedures in a handbook. It should include such items as: Specific job description for every assistant coach. Eligibility standards and procedures and deadlines for team lists. A code of behavior for coaches and players, plus disciplinary standards and penalties. It's not enough to have them written down, they must be carried out if violated with no exception.

Difference Between Managing and Leading

Management and leadership, although often thought of as being the same, are actually different animals. Management is a process of working with both people and resources toward achieving organizational goals. Leadership, in contrast, is an influencing process that affects other people and groups toward the achievement of those goals.

A good manager would hopefully use leadership skills to accomplish team goals and objectives. The manager/coach who can both lead and manage a team is a great asset.

A capable leader must have three types of skills: 1) *Intellectual skills*. Diagnosing a situation, identifying the problem and knowing what should be done about it. 2) *Adaptability skills*. Adjusting your behaviors and resources toward moving from where you are - to the objective - which is solving a specific problem. 3) *Communication skills*. You must be able to convey to players and assistant coaches a sense of understanding during the process of solving problems and working through the ups and downs of a season.

The person in charge has to possess a clear sense of where we are as a team; adjust the environment (including personnel) to move in the correct direction. Communicate empathy and constructively criticize while promoting team ambition along the way. The manager/coach who uses such skills is acting as a leader.

Recommendation: 1) Write down all the problems that you will face before, during, and after the current season in their order of importance. Deal with the biggest first. List four steps you will take to solve with each problem.

Adjust your own behaviors and resources toward constructive action.

2) Set incremental steps and monitor progress. Provide players and assistant coaches with feedback as they make the changes you want to see accomplished. Be patient and don't be afraid to make hard decisions that are not popular.

3) Tell your team what needs to be accomplished and talk about it often. The ability to influence all those in your sphere to focus their attention on a goal is vital. This sense of importance is what coaches often call "creating a sense of urgency".

4) Remember that our communication comes in many forms. 7 % is the actual words you speak, 37 % is the tone and style in which you speak, and 56 % is non-verbal. Always be aware of the messages you are sending out to your team.

5) Here is a list of leadership qualities to grade yourself on. If you possess them and your players would describe you in these same terms, then you are not only a manager/coach, but a leader as well.

Adaptable, alert, ambitious, assertive, cooperative, decisive, dependable, influential, energetic, persistent, self-confident, resilient and responsible.

P.S. Be on your guard against using coercive tactics to reach goals. This approach may be effective for short-term goals, but can destroy the all-important concept of followership in the long run.

The nine legal duties of a coach

You watch in horror as one of your soccer players crumples to the ground after a violent collision while she was trying to head the ball. As she falls, her arm twists grotesquely beneath her. When you reach her, she complains not only about her arm, but about her neck. She says her legs tingle.

Should you relieve the pressure on her injured arm by moving her?

You know the arm is causing her pain. But if you move her, you risk further—and more serious—damage to her spinal cord. Do you wait for an ambulance, or do you move her just a little to try to ease her pain?

Serious injury to an athlete is a coach's nightmare—and responding incorrectly can worsen matters. By learning basic emergency procedures and the nine legal duties of a coach (discussed first in Rainer Martens' *Successful Coaching* and later adapted in Melinda Flegel's *Sport First Aid*), you can protect both your athletes and yourself from serious consequences.

The nine legal duties of a coach

1. Properly plan the activity.

Make sure that athletes are in proper condition. Teach sport skills in a progression so that athletes are prepared to handle more difficult skills.

2. Provide proper instruction.

Keep up-to-date on better and safer ways of performing sport techniques. Teach athletes the rules and the correct skills and strategies of the sport.

3. Provide a safe physical environment.

Periodically inspect playing areas, the locker room, the weight room, and the dugout for hazards—and remove them. Prevent improper or unsupervised use of facilities.

4. Provide adequate and proper equipment.

Make sure athletes are using top-quality equipment. Inspect the equipment regularly. Teach athletes how to fit, use, and inspect their equipment.

5. Match your athletes.

Match athletes according to size, physical maturity, skill level, and experience.

6. Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity.

Enforce rules requiring all athletes to submit to preseason physicals and screenings to detect potential health problems. If

pain or restriction of function, immediately remove her or him from the activity.

7. Supervise the activity closely.

Do not allow athletes to practice difficult or potentially dangerous skills without proper supervision. Forbid horseplay. Do not allow athletes to use sport facilities without supervision.

8. Warn of inherent risks.

Provide parents and athletes with both oral and written statements of the inherent health risks of their particular sport.

9. Provide appropriate emergency assistance.

Learn sport first aid. Use only the skills that you are qualified to administer.

Determining negligence

Most cases brought to court over sport injuries fall into the civil, not criminal, category and charge negligence. According

to Gary Nygaard and Thomas Boone's *Coaches Guide to Sport Law*, for the court to rule a coach negligent four conditions must all be met:

1. A duty, or responsibility, must be present (such as those listed in this article).

2. That duty or responsibility must have been breached.

3. The negligence must significantly affect the injury.

4. The extent of the injury must be proven.

The best way for a coach

to avoid these problems is through a combination of awareness, knowledge, and preparation. Understand your duties and responsibilities as a coach. Ask your athletic director about your state's standards.

Prepare yourself to deal with injury situations. Take a sport first aid class, learn CPR, and get signed consent forms from your athletes' guardians before the season begins.

—Dawn Roselund

Sports Medicine Update

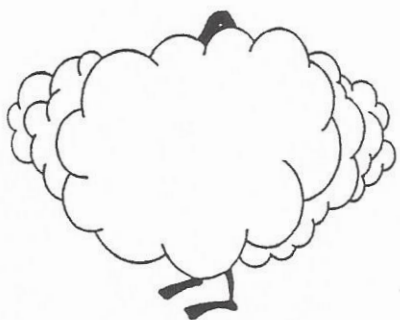
Good Samaritan laws

Many states now have Good Samaritan laws designed to protect from liability those who provide emergency medical assistance and who are not health-care professionals. If you, in good faith, have done your best to provide the necessary medical care to an injured athlete, a Good Samaritan law may protect you. Each statute is different, so be sure to find out how your state's law applies to coaches and to sport first aid. Either your athletic director or your state coaches' association should have this information.

NINE LEGAL DUTIES OF A COACH



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2. Provide proper instruction.
3. Provide safe physical environment
4. Provide adequate and proper equipment.
5. Match your athletes.
6. Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity.
7. Supervise the activity closely.
8. Warn of inherent risks.
9. Provide appropriate emergency assistance.



FACTS VS. MYTHS REGARDING LIABILITY FOR SPORTS INJURIES

1. It can't happen to me.
2. If it happens, I can't possibly win.
3. If I haven't had any serious injuries, I don't have a problem.
4. If I don't know about an injury risk, I'm not responsible for preventing it.
5. If I comply with the rule book, I've met my legal responsibility.
6. If it's not in my job description, it's not my legal responsibility.
7. If everyone does it, I can't be held liable for doing it.
8. If no one else does it, I have no legal responsibility to do it.
9. If I'm sued, it's the insurance company's problem.
10. If I do clinical outreach, liability for sports injury is the school's problem.