

A QUALITY ATHLETIC PROGRAM BEGINS WITH QUALITY COACHES

Providing our youth with a rewarding and enjoyable athletic experience should be Job #1 for any school district. It can never be assumed that our students, by merely participating, will automatically attain the virtues that we believe are so prevalent within our athletic program. High school athletics must promote education based programs that reinforce the values that are taught in the classroom – commitment, dedication, hard work cooperation to name a few. If teachers are considered to be the central figure in the classroom, it would only seem logical to identify the coach as the central figure within our athletic arenas. Coaches are the life blood of our athletic programs. They create the climate that determines if a student's athletic experience is joyous or miserable.

Quality coaches are the decisive element in the organized sports world. A quality coach knows how to plan dynamic practice sessions, teach sound fundamentals with proper learning progressions, incorporate age appropriate sport specific drills, instill the virtues of integrity, discipline and fair play and create a healthy and productive athletic environment. A quality coach will communicate more effectively by using judicious amounts of positive/negative feedback, technical instruction and general encouragement that will motivate their players to not only participate but to excel.

Today, more than ever before, Athletic Directors must produce a quality athletic program within an ever tightening budget. In these days of downsizing, accountability and increased parental involvement a quality coach has become our program's most valuable commodity. And with the growing emphasis of athletics at the high school level the need for knowledgeable and effective coaches is greater than ever before.

Our student's development and enjoyment is predicated on the quality of coaching they receive. Research shows that if a student enjoys an activity their desire to remain in that activity and their willingness to try harder while they are involved also increases. It would seem logical therefore, that Athletic Director's provide their coaches with the opportunity to maintain appropriate, relevant and

ongoing sports training. This initiative should transcend all levels of experience, from the first year coach to the elite.

In support of this professional need the NFHS has developed a Coach Certification Program. It is designed to deliver the highest quality professional development online at an affordable cost. The objective of the program is to:

1. Help coaches minimize the inherent risks faced by participating students.
2. Improve the sport experience of participating students.
3. Recognize coaches nationally.
4. To introduce coaches to current methodologies of teaching sport specific skills and team/individual strategies.
5. Develop a sense of personal and professional accomplishment.
6. Enable coaches to increase liability insurance coverage through membership in the NFHS Coaches Association.

Level 1 – Accredited Interscholastic Coach (Available Fall 2009).

A coach must complete the following courses:

1. NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching
2. NFHS First Aid for Coaches (American Red Cross) or its equivalent.
3. Fundamentals of Coaching (Sport specific) or Teaching Sport Skills.

Level 2 – Certified Interscholastic Coach

A coach must complete the following:

1. Level 1 requirements + (Core Courses and Elective Courses – to be determined).

Level 3 – Master Interscholastic Coach

A coach must complete the following:

1. Level 2 requirements + (Core Courses and Elective Courses – to be determined).

All information and registration procedures can be attained through www.nfhslearn.com

In closing, Athletic Directors need to take a leadership role by encouraging their coaches to enroll in the NFHS program. I believe that our students will ultimately be the beneficiaries if they are coached by properly trained individuals. By developing a quality coaching staff we are taking an important step in ensuring that our students will have a rewarding, enjoyable and enriching athletic experience.

This article was written by Ted D'Alessio. Ted is the Athletic Director at Milburn High School in New Jersey.