

Coaching Association of Canada Research Symposium 2006

Ethical Issues in Coaching:
Coaching as a Formative Process

Dr. Emilio Landolfi
University College of the Fraser Valley



✦ **Olympic Ideal:** (de Coubertin)

✦ Sports' Ability To:

✦ 1) Enhance human "development"

✦ 2) Instill humanitarian "values"



Coaching as a Formative Process

- ◆ **Sports can provide significant “formative” experiences and instill indispensable life “skills” such as:**
 - ◆ leadership
 - ◆ initiative
 - ◆ self-discipline
 - ◆ responsible behaviour
 - ◆ creativity
 - ◆ strong human relations
 - ◆ ability to establish and work toward goals

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ Sports can also teach people about “themselves” and their place in relation to “others” in society
- ✦ Contribute to personal and ethical “development”
- ✦ Self-growth; moral, social, personal fulfillment
- ✦ Instill a strong work-ethic
- ✦ Collegiality through sportsmanship
- ✦ Development of outstanding citizens (“respect for others” learned through the ethics of fair play)
e.g., greater likelihood of community involvement

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ **Much of what is learned is transferable!**
- ✦ Children consciously apply some of the basic principles learned in sports to their everyday lives (Muuss, 1990)
- ✦ Continued personal development and a lifetime of strong interpersonal relations (bonding in sports)
- ✦ Training received by playing sports in childhood and youth is an important preparation for life (Keating, 1973)
- ✦ Sport possesses tremendous potential to enhance one's life & develop athletes to their full potential

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ Sports can provide strong foundation for self-growth!
- ✦ Expectations drive the enormous investment made toward sports (e.g., time, money, resources, etc.)
- ✦ However, many believe sport does not always achieve its full potential

Coaching as a Formative Process

✦ **Current Trends**

- ✦ For some, their athletic experiences fall short of being “developmentally” rewarding
- ✦ Positive sport experiences are too few and too far between

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ Numerous scholars propose that sport, particularly when engaged in at highly competitive levels, may be both physically and psychologically “harmful”

Orlick and Botterill (1974)

Butt (1976)

Brohm (1978)

Rigaur (1981)

Adams (1998)

Pipe and Best (2002)

Donnelly and Kidd (2003)

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ Donnelly and Kidd discuss gap between “potential” & “practice” (2003)
re: CCES survey of >2,000 Canadians
- ✦ Sports’ ability to promote “positive values” and “develop character”
- ✦ Only 19% of Canadians believe this
- ✦ Greatest problem = overemphasis on winning
- ✦ Other “very serious” problem was doping

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ Some scholars believe that young people are “damaged” rather than “enhanced” by their sport experience
- ✦ Opportunities for growth and development subjugated by “win at all costs” philosophy
- ✦ Considerable number of athletes fail to reap the full benefits of sports due to over-emphasis on “performance”

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ Major deterrent to youth reaping full benefits of sports is their relationship with adults – parents, coaches, officials and administrators (CCES)
- ✦ These relationships can make or break the quality of experience in youth sport



Coaching as a Formative Process

✦ “The values and practices employed by adults can be powerfully enabling and enriching, or can drive someone out of sport for a lifetime”

* Donnelly and Kidd (2003, p. 34)



Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ While young athletes perceive this behaviour as 'normal' during their athletic careers, they later describe their sport experiences as "cruel" and "damaging" (Hadden, 2001)
- ✦ Every coach needs to recognize the effect of his or her comments on athletes; young athletes can be crushed by a coach's comment (Coaching Association of BC, 2000)
- ✦ When dealing with children, one damaged kid is too many (Kerr in Hadden, 2001)
- ✦ As a society, performance - winning at all costs - is often valued over "health"

Coaching as a Formative Process

- ✦ While everyone enjoys winning, coaches must acknowledge that performance encompasses both “physical” and “psychological” attentiveness (Promotion Plus, 1999)
- ✦ Coaches must assist athletes in developing “mentally” as well as “physically”
- ✦ Assume that participation in sports automatically ensures “development”

✦ **Coaching: Present and Future**

- ✦ How can coaches contribute to the “overall” needs of athletes so that their development is inclusive of physical, mental, and social health?

Coaching as a Formative Process

✦ **Suggestions**

- ✦ “Don’t focus on **winning**; focus on **playing well**. Take the scoreboard away. Good performance is the goal”
* Spencer Robinson, Rugby Coach
(Coaching Female Athletes. 2000:8)

Coaching as a Formative Process

+ **Suggestions**

- + “Children learn to feel good about themselves through **accomplishment**. The crucial element of self-worth is not consistent success, but the experience of **progressing**, becoming better, succeeding where you’ve failed”

* Zimmerman and Reavill (1998)

Coaching as a Formative Process

✦ **Suggestions**

✦ Use techniques which allow for variety and flexibility in practices and training to keep athletes “interested” and “enthusiastic”

✦ ↓ emphasis on the score or outcome

✦ focus on athlete’s accomplishment

Coaching as a Formative Process

✦ **Suggestions**

- ✦ Help athletes set “high” yet “realistic” goals, and re-examine goals throughout season
- ✦ Allow athletes to work on a skill, take a break and then come back to that skill
- ✦ Understand your athlete’s wants, needs, fears, and motivations

✦ **Questions for Discussion**

✦ What do we mean by the educational values of sport?

✦ How do we improve the quality of experience for young athletes?