The Institute for the Study of Youth Sports (ISYS)

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Coaching Life Skills

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Defining Life Skills (Gould & Carson, 2008)

- Those mental, emotional, social attributes, characteristics, and behaviors that athletes develop or refine through sports participation and have the potential to transfer for use in other life situations.
Example Life Skills

- The Ability to Set and Achieve Goals
- Confidence
- Leadership
- Discipline
- Emotional control
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Moral Reasoning
Why Coaching Life Skills?

- Personal Development Has Been a Goal of Sport Since It’s Inception
- Most Sport Organizations Have Personal Development as a Major Goal
- Societal Need to Facilitate the Development of Youth
- The Loss of Potential in Top Sport Due to a Lack of Life Skills in Elite Athletes
MSU Institute for the Study of Youth Sports (ISYS)
Life Skills & Personal Development Through Sport
Project Portfolio

- Outreach Projects
- Research Projects
- Teaching
ISYS Outreach Projects

- *Think Detroit Police Athletic League (TDPAL) IMPACT Coach Training Program*

- *Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Captains Leadership Training Program*
ISYS Research Projects

- **Athlete Needs Assessment Research**
  i. NC Coaches Athlete Life Skill Needs Survey
  ii. MHSAA Focus Groups and Surveys
  iii. TDPAL Coaches Survey

- **TDPAL**
  i. Successful Versus Less Successful Coaches
  ii. Athlete Interviews
  iii. YPQA-YES Baseball and Softball Study
ISYS Research Projects

- High School Athlete and Coach Studies
  
  i. YES-Coaching Behavior Studies
  ii. NFL Coaching Life Skills Study

- Captains Leadership Training Studies

  i. HS Captains Interviews
     - The experience of being a high school captain
     - How high school captains learn to lead
  ii. Outstanding Coach Captain Developers Interview Study
ISYS Research Projects

- **South Africa Positive Youth Development Studies**
  
  1. Youth Coach PYD Focus Group Interview Study
  2. Black Township Community Stakeholder Interview Study

- **Other Student Run Projects**
  
  1. Flett et al. (under review) Canadian University Coaches Views of the Importance of Life Skills in Their Players
  2. Carson (in preparation) Coaching for Transfer of Life Skills Study
ISYS Teaching Project

- MSU Online Coaches Course on “Promoting Personal Development Through Sport”
What Have We Found: Example Project Findings

- Athlete Life Skills Coaching Needs
- Preliminary Evidence for a Lack of Captain’s Leadership Training
- Coaching Factors Influencing the Development of Athlete Life Skills
- Coach NFL Teaching Life Skills Model
Current Youth Sports Research Studies


HS Coaches Perceptions of Player Life Skills Issues
HS Coaches Perceptions of Player Life Skills Issues

Ratings of Problems In Sport Today
(1 = Never Faced; 4 = Often Faced)

- $M = 3.31$ Failure to Take Personal Responsibility
- $M = 3.07$ Poor Communication/Listening Skills
- $M = 3.07$ Lack of Motivation/Work Ethic
- $M = 3.07$ Athletes Having Problems With Parents
- $M = 3.05$ Poor Grades
Leadership Experiences of High School Captains

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PURPOSE

- Gain an in depth understanding of high school sport leadership experiences

- Identify…
  - Roles and duties
  - Ways their leadership ability was developed
  - Attitudes towards sport leadership development programs
RESULTS
Coaching Actions Used to Develop Captains

- **Little or No Training**
  - 11/13 Captains

- When Provided Training Was Indirect or Implied
Results: Coaching Actions Used to Train Captains

“I just think it was kind of implied. Cause I mean we were both freshman and we both came up 4 years seeing both bad and good captains… [Coach] just assumed that we could take it from there…I wouldn't say that he taught directly, I would say he taught like indirectly. You know where you take it from him.” – Captain 9

Strategies Outstanding H.S. Coaches Use to Develop Life Skills & Character in Players
Strategies Outstanding H.S. Coaches Use to Develop Life Skills & Character in Players

**Purpose**
To identify the strategies that award winning high school football coaches use to develop life skills and character in their players.

NFL Charities Grant
Strategies Outstanding H.S. Coaches Use to Develop Life Skills & Character in Players

- **Sample**: 10 NFL H. S. Coach of the Year Nominees or Winners
- **Sample**: 10 Former Players of These Coaches
Strategies Outstanding H.S. Coaches Use to Develop Life Skills & Character in Players

**Coaching Life Skills Model**

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<th>Philosophical Foundations</th>
<th>Coach-Player Relationship</th>
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<td>Environmental Considerations and Resource Utilization</td>
<td>Specific Life Skill Development Strategies</td>
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Developmental Gains Youth Learn in Sport  (Gould et al., 2007)

**Purpose:** Examine the relationship between life skills development in youth and the kinds of coaching behaviors they perceive their coaches emit.

**Sample:** 190 former high school athletes completed.
Developmental Gains Youth Learn in Sport  (Gould et al., 2007)

Method: Correlational Survey Study

Measures:
- Youth Experiences Scale [Hansen & Larson, 2005].
- Coaching Behavior Scale for Sport (e.g., rapport, goal setting) (Côté et al., 1999)
- Coaching Items based on Gould et al. (2007) qualitative study of hs coaches
Developmental Gains
Youth Learn in Sport (Gould et al., 2007)

Significant Canonical Correlations

**Athletes who reported:**

- having coaches who helped them with competition strategies and goal setting practices,
- developed a positive rapport with his/her athletes and
- talked about how sport lessons related to life

were more likely to report:

- emotional regulation and cognitive skill development,
- improvements in one’s ability to take and receive feedback,
- lessons about and opportunities to adhere to pro-social norms, and
- the development of links to one’s community through their high school sport participation.
Conclusions and Implications for Coaching Education

- Athletes Learn Good and Bad Life Skills Via Sport Participation

- The Importance of Making the Distinction Between Instrumental and Moral Life Skills
Conclusions and Implications for Coaching Education

- Coaches as Key Amplifiers of Life Skills Development
  
  1. Coaching Rapport and Caring
  
  2. Motivational Orientation
  
  3. Emphasis Placed on Intentional Teaching of Life Skills
  
  4. Integrating Life Skills Teaching Within Ones General Coaching
  
  5. A Preliminary Model of Coaching Life Skills
Conclusions and Implications for Coaching Education

- The Importance of the Intentional Teaching of Life Skills in Sport
- Coach Selection and Philosophy: Getting the Right People on the Bus or Truthfully Advertising What We Do—Coaching Education May Not Change Some People
- The Importance of Teaching and Facilitating for Life Skill Transfer
Future Directions


- Determining If Coaches can be Taught to Teach Life Skills and Factors Which Influence Doing So
Future Directions

- Identify the Limits of Competitive Sport as a Life Skills Teaching Vehicle
  
  1. Is Sport Too Adult Dominated to Teach Life Skills
  
  2. Does the Nature of the Sport Influence the Types of Life Skills Taught
     
     - Wrestling especially good at teaching hard work
     - Golf especially good at teaching patience
     - Tennis especially good at teaching independence
Future Directions

What Role Does Winning Play in the Teaching of Life Skills

1. Motivational Orientation Superiority of Ego Goal Findings
2. NFL Study Finding: Coaches Won 77% of Games
4. Flett et. al (under review) University Coach Study
Plato

“The moral value of exercises and sports far outweigh the physical value.”
Pierre de Coubertin

- “For each individual, sport is a possible source for inner improvement.”

- “Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of a good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.”
Contemporary Youth Sports: Pop Warner/Little Scholars Football

- The mission statement of Pop Warner Little Scholars, a national U.S. youth sport organization that provides football and cheer programs for boys and girls, is to “teach fundamental values, skills and knowledge that children will use throughout their lives”
Think Detroit Youth Athletic League

- 40% of Detroit’s youth will not graduate from high school.
- 35% of those youth who do not graduate from high school will be incarcerated by age 35.
- TDPAL using sports to promote character and personal development in Detroit’s young people.
Wasted Top Sport Talent as a Result of Poor Life Skills
Defining Life Skills

- *Jones* (2009)