

Introduction

This essay documents my coaching philosophy. My coaching experience is primarily limited to youth sports however I have competed at high school and university and remain a fan of sports at all levels. At times my coaching philosophy varies depending on the age group and competitiveness of the groups involved. Young children learning a sport have different needs than professional athletes and this should be reflected in a coaching philosophy. With regard to Youth sports (through High School) my overall philosophy is very simple and can be summarized as follows: At the end of the season every child that plays on my team should want to play again the next year. If they want to come back, then you've done your job.

My beliefs about the role of sport

“As we think about the changes that have occurred in our society in the past 40-50 years, we quickly realize that the role or function of sport within the American society has changed dramatically. In the 1950's and 1960's sport was a way to provide youth with a leisure activity in which they could learn sport skills.” (Robbins, *Functions of Sport in American Society*, Kin-855 website).

I would argue that the core role of sport is largely unchanged from the 1950's and 1960's and remains to provide people - youth, teenagers and adults - with a leisure activity, to help with the development (or maintenance) of motor coordination and skill, to promote fitness and a healthy lifestyle, and to provide a venue for meeting and making friends. The growth of the business side of sports however is undeniable. The average major league baseball salary,

adjusted for inflation has gone from \$86,000 in 1962 to \$2.4 million in 2002, a 2,800% increase (Anonymous, *The Economic History of Major League Baseball*, <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/haupert.mlb>). Sports business has encroached on the traditional role of sports in society and has placed more emphasis and pressure on winning, high-performance and the development of professional athletes. Still, at its core, the role of sports is unchanged: health, fitness, socialization and leisure.

Ultimately I believe sports play the following roles in society (listed in order of importance):

- Leisure/fun - Sports provide a venue for people to play and participate with others in a variety of competitive/non-competitive and team/individual environments.
- Fitness/health - Sports emphasize physical activity which is a significant element of any healthy, active lifestyle.
- Socialization - Sports offer a chance for people to meet and make friends and to develop relationships.
- Community development - Expanding upon the benefits of 'socialization' above, sports provide an opportunity for participants and spectators to meet and further develop bonds within a community or neighborhood.
- Career opportunities/scholarships - Sports provide individuals with opportunities to pursue professional athletic careers or attend universities based on their athletic prowess.
- Entertainment - Sports give people a chance to watch athletes, of all ages and abilities, compete.
- Business - Increasingly sports, at the most competitive levels, have become money making opportunities for business owners. This has placed further pressure on coaches

and athletes to win. Winning teams often - but not always - correlate with better profits.

Functions or objectives (e.g., fitness, entertainment, winning, fun, education, business) of sports at various levels (rank objectives with justification for various age groups)

Youth (and recreational sports at all age categories)

- Fun - Fun is the most important element for youth and recreational sports. There are numerous benefits that result from participating in athletic endeavors however participation will be limited if the event itself is not enjoyable.
- Fitness - This is particularly important at the youth level given problems with youth obesity which are linked to inactivity. Sports can get children off the couch, out of the house and active.
- Education - Children can learn a lot about the value of teamwork, dedication, loyalty, hard work etc... by participating in sports.
- Winning - The importance of winning is often overstated at the youth level. We need to ensure the emphasis of sport - particularly at the recreational level - remains fun and fitness.
- Entertainment - Although the business part of entertainment (television rights, radio broadcasts) are insignificant at the youth sport level, entertainment is a relatively important element of sports for interested spectators like family and friends. Personally, I get more enjoyment out of watching my children play than I do watching most professional sporting events.
- Business - The business of sport should have a very limited role in youth athletics

High School

- Fun - This role declines somewhat as the pressure from the 'business of sports' and winning increases. Regardless, this remains the primary reason that children participate in high school sports.
- Fitness - This remains a significant role of sport in high school although I believe the importance of fitness and health declines as the players get older and more competitive. This will be discussed in more detail under Collegiate athletics below.
- Education - As with fun and fitness above, the importance of education begins to decline with the increased emphasis on winning in high school. That said, fun, fitness and education remain more important than winning at the high school level.
- Winning - Unfortunately success at the high school level starts to become more correlated with winning. This ushers in an increased emphasis on not only winning, but also the business of sport.
- Business - The business and career elements of sports begin to play a more prominent role as athletes get older and the financial benefits of having successful athletic teams becomes apparent to school administrators and team owners.
- Entertainment - While high school sports play a significant role in the community in some parts of the country (boys high school football in Texas as an example), in many other places high school sports are less significant and the role of entertainment is minimal.

College

- Winning - Although its importance grows through high school, the emphasis on

winning achieves preeminence in College athletics. The pressure to win in high profile, competitive collegiate sports is intense and relegates fundamental elements of sport (such as fun and fitness) to lesser roles.

- Business - One of the reasons winning is so heavily emphasized at the university level is the correlation between winning, revenues and business. Winning teams generate significant revenues for their respective institutions via ticket and merchandise sales, donations from alumni, television revenue etc...
- Education - Athletic scholarships provide athletes with an educational opportunity that otherwise many of them would not be able to enjoy. Although there are significant questions and concerns with regards to the legitimacy of the education received by some student athletes, the opportunity to attend university or college remains significant.
- Fun - Enjoyment of a given sport declines in importance with the increasing emphasis on winning. Regardless, athletes need to enjoy a sport to be willing to meet the time and energy demands at the collegiate level. They need to have fun to want to continue.
- Entertainment - This is an important role of sport at the collegiate level and is inextricably linked with winning and business. I believe however that it is less important than the other roles mentioned above.
- Fitness - Health and fitness have a mercurial relationship with collegiate athletics. While collegiate athletes need to be in peak physical condition to be able to participate at an elite level in their respective events, often the sport itself can be detrimental to their health. There are significant concerns now regarding professional and collegiate football players with some asserting that the violent contact and the weight of the players are contributing factors to a reduced life expectancy. In addition, the emphasis on winning occasionally leads athletes to use performance enhancing drugs which may also lead to health risks.

Professional

- Business - Professional sports are a business. This is emphasized this year with the ongoing NBA lockout and the brief NFL lockout. While the athletes, owners, coaches and fans often care intensely about their teams, these are business operations nonetheless.
- Winning - While winning remains important and correlates with business success, some teams do not need to win to be profitable. The Toronto Maple Leafs are an enormously profitable business model that has had miserable results on the ice for the last decade. While winning remains important, business is the dominant role of professional sports.
- Entertainment - As at the collegiate level, entertainment is linked with business and winning. The importance of the business element increases the relevance of entertainment as an entertaining product will often generate higher revenues through increased ticket sales, sales of merchandise etc...
- Fun - Although the importance of fun has declined, most professional athletes love participating in their respective sports. For many millionaire athletes, it is the joy of the game (and its related perks) rather than their salaries, that keep them driven to continue to participate.
- Education - Education is of negligible importance at the professional level other than, perhaps, the role of athletes in emphasizing the significance of education for young children. Although education may not be important for the professional athletes themselves they can advocate on behalf of education to the younger children who admire them.
- Fitness - As mentioned in the section on collegiate sports above, while professional athletes must try to remain in peak physical condition, the intense requirements of their

sports can lead to long term physical and mental issues. During the summer, three professional hockey players died in a variety of circumstances (drug overdose, suicide). All three of the young men were ‘enforcers’ or fighters for their respective teams. This has increased concern with regards to the impact of contact sports on the mental health of participants.

Definition of success as a coach

As mentioned at the outset, given the chance to step back from a specific competition and reflect on success as a coach, my definition is simple: My goal is for every child that played on my team to want to play the sport again the following season. For this to happen a number of things (we’ll call them the “Five Objectives”) have to occur during a given season.

1. Fun - Create a fun environment where children want to participate.
2. Opportunity - Provide an opportunity for children to participate and succeed in a variety of different roles.
3. Skill development - Children need to be shown how to develop skills relevant to their sports and general motor skills relevant to athletics in general. In addition, children need to be provided with opportunities to practice, develop and use these skills in a variety of scenarios.
4. Challenge/competition - Children need to be challenged both individually and as team-members.
5. Socialization - Your team environment should be such that the players become teammates and friends.

If a coach follows the Five Objectives, creates a fun and friendly environment during games and

practices, provides children with a chance to develop and showcase those skills in a variety of competitive scenarios, then it is likely that the children will enjoy themselves and want to return to the sport the following season. This is how I define success as a coach.

Role of winning

I am very competitive and winning is important to me as an individual. That said, winning should play a secondary role to the Five Objectives discussed above. This often creates conflicting objectives during the course of a game as you try to balance the importance of winning with the importance of providing an opportunity for all children. Will you substitute a weaker player, who is deserving of equal time for one of your stronger players near the end of a close game?

Winning also has short-term and long-term implications. From a short-term perspective your team will likely win more frequently by relying on your stronger, more skilled players. I do believe however that by providing more opportunities to all your players during the course of the season your team will become stronger and more capable of winning consistently towards the end of the season.

Aaron Wilbur was an experienced and respected coach at the Vancouver Minor Hockey Association. We invited him to speak to our rep (high level) coaches and he stressed the importance of 'rolling the lines' and using all of your players particularly during critical points of close games. He said that to win the Provincials (Canadian equivalent of State championships) he would need all three lines of forwards and all six defencemen to contribute consistently. One of his stated team objectives was to ensure that by the end of the season his 3rd line of forwards and 3rd set of defencemen were able to contribute to the team's success as well as the 1st two

lines. To do this, they had to have experience playing in critical situations during critical games which resulted, occasionally, in losses that the team might have otherwise avoided. He thought the long-term advantages out-weighed the short-term losses. In the moment however these losses are painful, a pain which is often exacerbated by the second guessing that can come from parents, players and even assistant coaches.

Equity

The issue of equity is extremely complex, particularly at the more competitive levels of sport, and unlikely to be resolved within the confines of this paper. Thankfully the issue of equity is more straightforward (or should be more straightforward) at the youth and non-competitive levels of sport. My philosophy with regards to equity at the youth levels is as follows: Everyone gets to play and the Five Objectives apply equally to everyone on the team. This philosophy resolves one of the most significant element of the equity issues which is the question of access, as again, everyone can and should be able to play. Some of the more complex equity issues (as they apply to gender, race, disabilities and skill) are discussed below.

Gender equity

Youth sports teams

Girls are welcomed to play on co-ed Little League Baseball and Minor Hockey teams in Canada. They also have access to 'girls only' softball and hockey. The major issue with regards to girls on co-ed teams is whether they are treated fairly by the coaches and other team-mates. Again, it is the coaches responsibility to ensure that the Five Objectives are applied evenly and fairly to all the players on the team. Often there is an assumption that girls will not be as athletic as the boys.

Coaches need to ensure that they are not biased by gender with regards to ensuring girls have equal opportunities to participate in a game.

I have heard coaches state that certain players should not play in the infield because their skills were weak and, as a result, there were potential safety issues. I believe this can be a valid concern as at Little League level you can occasionally see children throwing baseballs at 60+ miles per hour. Putting someone at first base who is not able to catch a ball is a safety issue. As coaches we need to ensure however that these decisions are being made based on ability rather than gender.

During the course of games it is also important for coaches, players and parents to ensure that gender is not a part of their running commentary of the game. I remember hearing a coach, who had never seen our team play, yell “infield in!” as my daughter approached the plate in a baseball game. At that point all I wanted her to do was crush the ball into the outfield...unfortunately it didn’t happen, but it would have been nice. Ultimately, as long as the Five Objectives are applied equally to all players then gender should not be an issue on youth, co-ed and non-competitive teams.

Competitive youth sports

Occasionally there is concern that girls should not be playing on the same teams as boys once they have reached puberty. I believe these concerns are overstated. A girl has played on my son’s rep ice hockey team for 2 of the last 4 years. This is a very competitive hockey team and Kaitlin has earned her position on the team. She changes in a different dressing room from the boys and then joins everyone in the main dressing room ten minutes prior to game time so the coach can discuss strategy. I have never heard a player state that they were uncomfortable

with Kaitlin in the dressing room or on the team. The children grew up understanding this to be normal and, as a result, it is. Unfortunately the parents are not always as unbiased as their children.

Should men and women have to prove their sex or gender orientation?

Thankfully, the issue of gender testing seems to only really become a significant issue at the most competitive levels of sport. The South African runner Caster Semenya is the most recent in a long-line of high performing female athletes whose dominance in their sport has been questioned. This is not a new phenomenon, Stanisława Walasiewicz, was a world-record holding sprinter in the 1930's whose gender was questioned and tested during her athletic career.

This issue is problematic for a number of reasons, a primary one being that it is difficult ultimately to define genders with absolute precision. Essentialist's argue that "for any specific kind of entity, there is a set of characteristics or properties all of which any entity of that kind must possess. Therefore all things can be precisely defined or described. In this view, it follows that terms or words should have a single definition and meaning" (Various, *Essentialism*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essentialism>). This view contrasts with those of the non-essentialists who believe "In philosophy, non-essentialism is the belief that any given entity or subject cannot be propositionally defined in terms of specified values or characteristics, which that entity must have in order to be defined as that entity." (Various, *Non-essentialism*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-essentialism>). I find both these philosophies problematic and I can't fully reconcile either to my personal beliefs. I do however believe that to-date modern science has not been able to create a test that conclusively proves gender. For example, many of the current gender test are

based upon assessment of genitalia, unfortunately these tests have proven to be inconclusive in several instances. I also do not believe that those in charge of organizing and managing sporting events at any level have the social mandate to test for gender. I concur with this article in the Journal of American Medical Associations which states:

“For nearly 15 years, we have advocated abolition of laboratory-based, on-site testing for gender verification in sports competition. The ostensible goal of gender verification is to ensure that female athletes do not unwittingly compete against men. Given that men presumably would have an unfair competitive advantage on the basis of speed or muscle mass, such a policy superficially seems endorsable on the grounds of fairness. In reality, gender verification tests are difficult, expensive, and potentially inaccurate. Furthermore, these tests fail to exclude all potential impostors (eg, some 46,XX males), are discriminatory against women with disorders of sexual development, and may have shattering consequences for athletes who "fail" a test.”

(Simpson, J.L., *et al.*, *Gender Verification in the Olympics*, JAMA (2000) vol.284; pp.1568-1569.

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/284/12/1568.extract>)

This is an extremely complicated issue however and, ultimately, I'm just very happy that it is not something that I need to address at the youth sports level where I coach. At the youth level the Five Objectives remain relevant for all children regardless of gender orientation.

Cross-gendered coaching

Coaching decisions should be merit based, i.e. the best available person should get the job regardless of gender. This applies to women coaching men's teams and vice versa. Merit however is an easy word to champion, but frequently a difficult word to adequately define.

Often 'merit' is synonymous with 'access' and coaching positions are awarded to those coaches that are known or connected. An 'old boys network' is sometimes cited as the reason for the inequitable number of female coaches.

A 2005 Penn State study entitled "CAGE: The Coaching and Gender Equity Project" noted that "Female athletes are half as likely to have female coaches today than they were before enactment of Title IX in 1972, even though there are 10 times more female athletes to feed the pipeline to coaching, according to a Penn State study" and that "The decline in coaching can be attributed to sex discrimination, extreme workloads, family-unfriendly jobs and the fact that race and sexual orientation remain important," (Staff reporter, *Equity in Coaching Declining as More Men Coach Women*, <http://live.psu.edu/story/13129>). The study also emphasized the inability for women to obtain significant coaching positions within men's collegiate teams and, surprisingly, stated that female athletes themselves have a tendency to prefer male coaches which leads to problems in recruiting players for collegiate programs coached by women.

Certainly there are excellent female coaches however there is a perception amongst some circles that there are not as many capable female coaches as there are capable male coaches. I believe a directive similar to Affirmative Action would help support better gender equity in coaching positions. I believe that until you mandate change, there will be no change. Title IX is an excellent example of this. A mandate was made to ensure there was equal representation of female and male athletics at universities, as a result female athletes have increased 1000% since Title IX was enacted. A similar mandate needs to be enacted with regards to coaching at the collegiate level, particularly for publicly funded schools.

The 'merit' argument is often used against Affirmative Action type programs. This argument states that selection decisions should be based entirely on ability however they rarely address that

the starting points for the various interested groups are imbalanced. Women, in general, don't have the same access to coaching positions as men. One key element is the importance of having female Athletic Directors as they play a key role with many hiring decisions. The *2010 College Sport Racial and Gender Report Card* (<http://bcasports.cstv.com/genrel/030711aaa.html>) notes that 8.3%, 15.5% and 27.4% of the Athletic Directors are women at Division I, II and III schools respectively and these numbers are relatively unchanged from preceding years. More women are needed at senior athletic administrative positions as they play key roles in hiring and may be less apt to apply favorable hiring treatment to men.

If women are to coach men's teams the standard objections will be made: women shouldn't be in men's changing rooms as the men need their privacy to shower and get changed; there will be too much sexual energy and conflict etc... These were the same concerns that were stated when female reporters were finally allowed access to men's changing rooms. A friend of mine, Karin Larsen is a sports reporter for the CBC. She said that while she initially faced resistance from some male athletes (She said some member of the BC Lions CFL football team would intentionally stand naked behind the subjects she was interviewing so that the video image could not be publicly broadcast) that with time those issues have dissipated and that now, with the rare exception, she is treated by the athletes no differently than her male colleagues. The situation between certain members of the New York Jets and the female reporter Ines Sainz indicates that gender issues haven't been entirely resolved but most indications are that they have improved with time. The same would likely be the case with women coaching men's teams. There would be a period of adjustment and then the coach would be seen as the coach...regardless of gender.

Issues of marriage and children

The Penn State study suggests that the excessive time demands of head coaches also need to be reduced to ensure that these coaching positions are attractive to women who may be interested (or already have) family responsibilities. I'm not sure that such a policy could ever be enforceable and would, therefore, be difficult to institute. Many coaches at the competitive professional, collegiate and even high school levels make their coaching jobs their lives. The following quote relates to football coaches and comes from a website which lists coaching vacancies:

“Assistant coaches will put in an average of 60 to 70 hours per week once the season gets started, but head coaches typically put in close to 100 hours per week and many sleep in their offices at least two or three times a week during the season, which lasts from August (the start of camp) to December or January (the end of the season).” (<http://www.jobmonkey.com/sports-coaching/college-football.html>)

These kinds of hourly demands reduce the pool of potential applicants just as it would with any demanding time-consuming profession. Again however I think it would be very difficult to mandate less hours as, ultimately, coaches on competitive teams are judged based on wins and losses. Many coaches feel the extra hours dedicated to their work can translate into more competitive teams or athletes and, ultimately, more athletic success. It would be useful however for colleges to implement ‘balanced work-life’ programs at their schools so the coaches are at least exposed to the benefits of having more symmetry between their work and personal life.

The Penn State study makes the following recommendations which I agree with (although, as mentioned above, I find the ‘family-friendly’ element difficult to enforce):

“The study suggests that colleges and universities should work to increase the number of women in the coaching pipeline; and that they formalize hiring and decision-making processes, training and career paths. Institutions should seek to make coaching jobs more family-friendly. And finally, they should provide a more inclusive environment within athletic departments, teams and organizations for women, people of color and individuals with nontraditional sexual orientation.”

(Staff reporter, *Equity in Coaching Declining as More Men Coach Women*, <http://live.psu.edu/story/13129>)

Disabled athlete equity

As with most of these equity issues, disabled athlete access becomes more complicated as the level of competition increases.

Youth

At the youth recreational level all athletes should be invited to compete regardless of disability (mental or physical) except if the disability creates a significant safety issue. If the inclusion of the disabled athlete significantly disrupts the ability for teams to participate in a given game then the coach should discuss this with the association and the parents to see if a better arrangement can be made. Again however, the starting point should be inclusion of all athletes regardless of ability.

As athletes get older and the sports become more competitive, the inclusion of physically disabled athletes becomes more challenging.

Collegiate and Professional

Recently many of the arguments for exclusion of disabled athletes from able bodied events have been based around the arguments that the disabilities actually provide an advantage over able bodied athletes. This argument has been used against the inclusion of Casey Martin and Oscar Pistorius in golf and track respectively.

Casey Martin is a golfer who “suffers from a birth defect in his right leg known as Klippel Trenaunay Weber syndrome” (Various, Casey Martin, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casey_Martin) which requires him to use a golf cart - rather than walk - during competition. The PGA tried to exclude Casey Martin from participating in tour events arguing that walking during the event was an intrinsic part of golf and that a player using a golf cart would have a decided advantage. Ultimately the Supreme Court concluded that the PGA Tour could not exclude Martin and that he would be able to use the cart during tournaments. Martin had a moderately successful golfing career thereafter and the issue received never received significant prominence thereafter.

Oscar Pistorius is a double-amputee sprinter from South Africa. He is known as the “Blade Runner” because he runs with blade shaped prosthetic devices. The various track governing bodies have challenged Pistorius’ inclusion in able-bodied events arguing that the prosthetics give him a significant advantage over able-bodied athletes. In May 2008, the Court of Arbitration for Sport concluded that his prosthetics do not give Pistorius a measurable advantage over his able-bodied counterparts and that he is eligible to compete in able-bodied events. While Pistorius is undeniably an elite level athlete his personal best times in the 100M, 200M and 400M events are one to two seconds behind the World Record times in those events. As a result Pistorius’ story, like Casey’s, is not yet significant enough to challenge the top athletes of the

day and therefore it remains a 'tier II' news story. As the funding and prominence of disabled athletic events increases and prosthetic technology improves it is inevitable that there will be a disabled athlete capable of breaking world record times. It will be interesting to see the response from the able bodied athletic world.

Racial equity

In the United States and Canada, I believe that race no longer plays as significant a role in team selection in most of the major sports. One of the advantages of having coaches that are obsessed with winning is that they appreciate the advantage of having a larger pool of potential applicants for any given team. This is as obvious in sports as it is in any endeavor, increasing the number of possible participants increases the number of participants who will excel. That said, racial inequity still exists to varying degrees dependent on the sport, the coach and the region of the country.

Coaches at the youth and high school level need to be wary of acting on long-held stereotypes (white men can't jump, black men can't swim etc...) when selecting players and teams. My experience with youth sports has been that race has not been a significant issue with regards to the Five Objectives and that, in general, players are treated equally regardless of skin colour or nationality. It should be noted however that I live in a very integrated part (East Side) of a very integrated city (Vancouver) so my experience may be different than that of coaches in less integrated areas of the country.

Where coaches can have a significant impact on racial issues is with regards to racial epithets during games between teams. A black player on my son's hockey team has had racist comments

directed at him from the opposition. This happens once or twice a year usually when we are playing one of the teams from a less integrated area around Vancouver. In one of these instances the coach of the opposing team pulled his team aside at the end of the period, discussed the incident, had the player involved apologize to my son's team-mate and then had the player sit for the remainder of the game. The coach did a very professional job of addressing an uncomfortable scenario.

A similar scenario occurred in Toronto last year. The coach of the play who received the racist comment asked the coach from the opposing team to discuss the issue with his team and sit the offending player for the remainder of the game. The opposition coach refused and so the coach of the Peterborough minor hockey team, after discussing the issue with the players, removed his team from the ice and forfeited the game. In an interesting conclusion, the coach of the Peterborough team was subsequently suspended from Minor Hockey for forfeiting the game. (Staff Reporter, *Hockey Coaches Faces Ban for Opposing Racial Slur*, <http://www.thestar.com/news/article/900955--hockey-coach-faces-ban-for-opposing-racial-slur>)

Cutting players

In Minor Hockey, players are 'cut' from rep teams beginning in Atom (9-10 years of age). In Little League, All-Star teams are created as early as age 6. Kids are exposed to the process of cutting at a very early age in most sports. Ultimately if you agree that it is necessary that highly skilled players play with other highly skilled players to improve, then a competitive stream is necessary and there will be cuts. Personally I favor the Little League model, particularly for younger kids, wherein all players participate together during the regular season and then a select team is chosen for the all-star season. For younger children I prefer this to a completely

stratified system wherein players are segregated by skill level throughout the season.

I have had to personally 'cut' children from Little League All-Star teams and my son has been cut from select hockey teams. By and large this process has gone smoothly as long as the following guidelines are met:

1. The assessment process is transparent. This is best met by providing the parents and players with a written document explaining the assessment process.
2. The assessment process is fair. A fair assessment process includes the following elements:
 - a. A sufficient number of assessment times are provided. I have found that 4-6 sessions are sufficient in most scenarios.
 - b. At least 3 independent assessors who are unfamiliar with the children should be involved in the assessment.
 - c. The assessment should be heavily weighted towards 'in game' scenarios rather than skill testing as, ultimately, for competitive teams we are looking for the most competitive players. Often players have very strong skill sets but are unable to apply them during game situations.
 - d. If at all possible, parents should not be coaching (and should certainly not be assessing) the players as this tends to lead to questions of fairness and impartiality.
3. The delivery of the information is handled appropriately. Although many people disagree with this process, I believe the results of the assessment (and the cuts) should be delivered to the parents of each child via e-mail. I prefer this process over the other

traditional approach wherein coaches meet with players immediately after a practice or scrimmage. The reason I dislike the -in-person approach is that after being told they have been cut, the children then need to walk through a gauntlet of their friends who are all asking 'Did you make it?'. This is a difficult situation for a child to address immediately after he or she has been cut.

While children are sometimes upset that they were cut, I often find it is the parents rather than their children that are most delusional about the players abilities and are intent on finding a flaw in the process once the bad news has been delivered. This is yet another reason that the three principles noted above should be followed during the assessment and 'cutting' process.

Cutting becomes more problematic in High School since children that are not accepted onto a given team often have no other alternative athletic option. If you don't make the competitive high school basketball team, for example, there may not be a recreational basketball team that the child can join. This is particularly important given the issues with fitness, health and obesity facing children today. Schools and coaches should do their best to ensure that there is a non-competitive athletic route available for all children who are not selected onto the competitive school teams. Given budgetary and time restrictions this may be difficult to implement however school administrators should do their best to ensure this option is available.

Pay-to-play (pros and cons)

Pay-to-play, wherein students are required to pay to participate in school extracurricular activities may be a relatively new phenomena in high schools however it is the standard for most sports outside of high schools. I would prefer it if all sporting activities were free for youth

however given the budgets of local schools and municipalities this seems unlikely. As coaches I think it is important for us to try to minimize costs beyond essentials to ensure there is equity and access to sports for all children regardless of their economic ability. Here are my proposed guidelines for minimizing costs on any team.

1. Pre-game uniforms should consist of standard clothing. My recommendation would be clean white t-shirts, blue jeans and running shoes. Players should then change into black shorts for the pre-game warm-up. The children should be taught that it is their attitude and bearing, rather than the cost of their clothing, that establishes them as a team to be respected.
2. If team sweatsuits and jackets are necessary then associations and high schools should have one standard design for jackets and sweat pants. There is no need to change the design each year and require children to buy a new set with each new team.
3. Coaches should try to avoid attending tournaments that involve significant amounts of travel. My son's hockey coach would like to take the team to Denver for a hockey tournament even though we have tournaments of the same (or higher) calibre in Vancouver. While I do not doubt this tournament will be a fun experience for the children, I know the price tag (approximately \$800) is causing some of the parent's significant financial grief.
4. Coaches should be aware, and notify parents, of not-for-profit organizations that offer bursaries and assistance for athletes in lower income families.

The cost of sports are increasing. As coaches we should do our best to control these costs so that all players are eligible to play and that no-one is excluded on the basis of financial need.

Personal ethics and sportsmanship

Coaches should model ethical behavior and sportsmanship. The Manitoba High School Athletics Association provides the following guidelines for ethical behavior which I believe are a reasonable ethical starting point for any coach (<http://www.mhsaa.mb.ca/pages/sportsmanship.php>)

Expectations of Coaches

- Always set a good example for participants and fans to follow, exemplifying the highest moral and ethical behavior.
- Instruct participants in proper sportsmanship responsibilities and demand that they make sportsmanship and ethics the No. 1 priority.
- Respect judgement of officials, abide by rules of the event and display no behavior that could incite fans.
- Treat opposing coaches, administrators, participants and fans with respect. Shake hands with officials, opposing coach in public.
- Develop and enforce penalties for participants who do not abide by sportsmanship standards.

Performance enhancing drugs

If performance enhancing drugs are illegal, unhealthy or not allowed by the governing body of their sport then they should not be tolerated by coaches. Coaches need to be pro-active in this regard and discuss the issues surrounding performance enhancing drugs in an informed manner supported by scientific evidence.

Hiring coaches who have engaged in unethical practice

Coaches need to be hired based on merit. Unethical practices that a coach has engaged upon in the past should be considered in assessing 'merit'. Certainly the range of unethical coaching practices is very broad (for example swearing at a referee compared to striking a player) and each action should be weighted appropriately when considering hiring a coach. In addition, the

hiring committee should consider whether there is a consistent pattern of unethical behavior in which case they should be very cautious about hiring the coach.

Recruiting in high school sports

High school athletic governing bodies have specific rules with regards to recruiting players. Coaches (and school administrators) must ensure that they do not violate these rules. At a personal level I believe that children should play at their local schools and in their local communities. One of the roles of youth sports is to develop bonds within a community, this is not done as effectively if children from a given neighborhood are scattered onto teams throughout a city.

Conclusion

I consider myself to be very liberal and I think this is reflected in this coaching philosophy essay. This highlights one of the main problems with philosophy discussions, namely it is easy to say (or write) about your intentions however it often becomes much more difficult to ensure your actions are consistent with your words. This potential discrepancy - between words and actions - tends to become more apparent when winning becomes the imperative. Ultimately as long as my emphasis remains on the Five Objectives - rather than winning - my main goal can be achieved: Every child that plays on my team will want to return to our sport the following season.

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