

The Role of an ASA Manager/Coach

Most people used to think of a coach as someone who taught boys and girls to swing a bat, kick a ball or score a goal. But does a coach's responsibilities stop there? Do they not go much further? More and more people are coming to believe that the responsibilities do go much further. They realize that a coach also embodies strong qualities of leadership.

For too long, anyone who had a passing knowledge of a game was eligible to coach. Teaching game skills was the only end to work towards. But today, LEADERSHIP is even more important. A leader sees skills and games as important tools, as a means to a more lasting end. The coach is concerned with imparting wholesome attitudes and practices which will influence and direct girls and boys after they no longer play a particular sport.

Young people with whom you come in contact are in the most formative period of their lives. Attitudes formed and habits molded now will be lasting. Whether these attitudes and habits will be good or bad, rests to a large extent, upon you as a leader.

Sports is a rich medium for influencing character, and its effect on young people will be in direct proportion to the quality of leadership you provide.

There unfortunately are situations when sportsmanship is at a low ebb among players, coaches and spectators alike. A "win-at-any-cost" attitude prevails. We have all heard of incidents when visiting players have been threatened, and officials booed and even attacked as they step off the field. How often have you seen the "smart" coach take advantage of a weak rule, or jump screaming from the bench to protect every close decision? You as a coach and leader, more than any other individual, have the responsibility and authority to discourage such conduct. Your good example will do much to assist player and spectator appreciation for sporting ethics.

Of equal concern is the attention given the few athletes with exceptional ability to the neglect of the many who are not as skilled. If we agree to the basis assumption that sports are good for people, then we must make it possible for everyone to participate, irrespective of their skill level. The real leader is just as interested in the average player as in "star" athletics.

And certainly, a major objective for the coach should be to enable every person to play a game from which enjoyment and a feeling of satisfaction can be derived.

In the heat of a close, hard-fought game, a player's true self is going to show through. Life situations and game situations can be very similar. A leader who is really interested in helping the players will watch for these innumerable incidents

and take time out to teach a lesson in a subtle manner. These "teachable" moments can be utilized to impart healthy character traits, which will stick as indelible memories with each team member.

These added responsibilities may seem to be far removed from the old idea of coaching, but they are not. Rapidly it's being realized and accepted that leadership and coaching cannot be separated. They must go hand in hand.

You, the coach, exert a tremendous influence. Players experience a natural feeling of "hero worship" toward you. They look to you for inspiration and guidance, and will inevitably follow your example. It's your job to ensure that the example you set is a good one.

How do you measure up as a leader?

Can you answer a "yes" to the following:

Do you insist that your players play fairly?

Do you encourage and promote good sportsmanship among players?

Do you employ every available means to promote good sportsmanship among spectators?

Do you set a good example of sportsmanship for others to follow by your conduct both on and off the field?

Do you openly applaud a brilliant play of your opponent?

Do you treat officials with respect?

Do you lose a game with dignity?

Do you always try to impart more than just game skills to your players?

Do you give equal attention to the average players as well as to the stars?

Do you exploit "teachable moments" to install sound sporting attitudes and practices?

Do you analyze yourself, your habits, practices and teaching methods regularly?

If you had a young relative, would you be the person whom you would choose to lead him or her?

You, as a leader, can render a service to young people. It is not always an easy task. The challenge is great. Yet the satisfaction derived is well worth the effort.