
SECTION ONE

PHILOSOPHY



- Chapter 1 : Overview of the Wing T**
- Chapter 2 : Good Coaching**
- Chapter 3 : Practice Philosophy**

My WORST TO FIRST: How to Build a Championship Program will have actual team activities that gets your coaches and players to the places described in this chapter. They are written in lesson plan format.

Good Coaching



What is Coaching?

Coaching is improving performance. There are many different types of coaching and most people consider the coach as an expert in his field. Most definitions of coaching would focus on the present and most coaches themselves are narrowly focused on that practice or that season.

There is a huge difference between teaching someone and helping them to learn. We want to focus on the coach as a facilitator of learning because fundamentally, the coach who is helping athletes improve their performance are helping them to learn. Good coaches believe that every athlete has the potential/skill/answer but only needs a coach to discover that potential/skill/answer.

Coaching is helping athletes to learn rather than teaching them.

THE INNER GAME

This belief that the answers to individuals' problems lies inside them is studied at great length by Timothy Gallwey in his book, "The Inner Game". Gallwey offers the perspective about the distracting little voice inside not only athletes, but everyone's head, which can be the biggest obstacles to success and achieving potential.

Coaches, according to Gallwey, can help their athletes improve by distracting them from the inner, critical voice telling them "Not like that! Lower Your Shoulder! Keep Your Head Up!". The body will instinctively take over if the inner voice is distracting because the body has a very clear idea of what to do when internal dialogues are silenced. An example would be focusing on the football coming at the receiver or the aiming point of the hip for the blocker executing a down block. Don't think about the play, or failure, or what other players are doing. The simple act of focusing on a finite detail will distract the inner voice and allow the body to take over.

The vital part of coaching, then, is to get your athletes to silence that inner voice and allow their subconscious instincts, to take over. Sometimes that means distracting it, and sometimes it's about exploring the 'worst case scenario' and removing the fear. This is often referred to as a "fail-safe system".

FAIL SAFE SYSTEMS

Enquist talks about having a “failure recovery system”.

A failure recovery system is a process that involves restoring an erroneous state to an error-free state.

Every player needs to know how to “restart” after failing at something so that the entire team culture doesn’t crumble and fall apart, i.e. system failure. These fail-safe systems are linear models that allow athletes to clearly know where they’ve been, where they are at that moment, and where they are going. The athlete must believe that his training has prepared him so that he can go back to a time when he did that particular skill well. Detach himself from the “need to win”, “clamp on harder” to what got him there and do what he has been taught.

Players go thru their Fail-Safe System regardless of whether they mess up or are successful. Coaches setup game situations and competitive drills that are very challenging and run a higher risk of failure. These situations need to be constantly repeated so that the athletes’ brain will develop muscle memory. When the athlete fails, we do not expect laughter and joy. We want them disappointed and determined. Confidence not deflated. The first words out of their mouth should be: “I want to do it again.”

We constantly preach “7 seconds of fury” since the average play only lasts for 7 seconds. We want them focused on is being the best they can be for 7 seconds. For 7 seconds master the skill. Then do it again.



In order for athletes to push to their limits and challenge themselves to improve they have to **be free from fear of disapproval and letting people down.** The coach must forgive mistakes, especially when there was maximum effort given. This does not mean the coach lowers his standards but forgives them along the way in pursuit of the standard.

Today’s society will magnify a mistake but as humans we must be better than the one mistake. You bounce back from failure. It’s not about being perfect, it’s about bouncing back when something goes wrong. Playoffs are nothing more than the game in a party dress. “You’ve been here before. You’ve earned the right to be confident.”

POSITIVE CONFIDENCE

Sports is 90% mental and research supports the theory that an athlete who continually practices positive self-talk will improve his sports performance by being more relaxed, focused, and confident. In his book, *What drives winning*, Ledbetter (2015), talks about the importance of replacing negative thoughts because they are among the biggest contributors to pre-game jitters and performance anxiety. Athletes should never entertain pessimistic talk such as “I cannot block that guy” or “I suck”, instead combatting negative thoughts with goal setting, routines, and visualization. Miele (2015).

In my coaching career, I have been a big advocate of routines and visualization. While variety is needed to break up the monotony of training, our players had very structured routines in the weight room, on the practice field, and on gamedays. Visualization was a big part of our Thursday and Friday routine. We would teach our players how to visualize success, making the block, long run, or catch. They would do these visualization exercises Thursday nights at home and we would do them as a team one hour before kickoff.

Another part of visualization is modeling or showing your athletes what “IT” is supposed to look like. Our players learned vicariously by visiting playoff teams’ practices and visiting a college practice every spring. In practice, the offensive backup must play the position on scout defense that his position is assigned to block. In other words, if the Right Tackle is down blocking on the 3-tech and the Right Wing is “B.O.B.” blocking to inside linebacker, then the 3-tech is our backup right tackle and the ILB is our backup wing.

PYGMALION EFFECT

A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

It seems like just plain common sense: if you believe in someone they will succeed. Positive reinforcement leads to good results and those who expect more, get more. The opposite is also true, if you expect someone to perform poorly, there is a good chance that they will. This phenomenon of high expectations increasing results is known as the Pygmalion effect. A corollary of the Pygmalion effect is the golem effect, in which low expectations lead to a decrease in performance.

Coaches that understand this powerful motivator of believe will repeat the words “you’re better than that” until it sinks into the subconscious of the player who now thinks: “Yeah, I am better than that.” Athletes will perform better when they feel as though you actually want to help them achieve their goals, versus them only being there to help the coach achieve his.

While beliefs in the athlete affects performance, a coach is affected by the beliefs they have about themselves. The “self-verification theory” refers to coaches who want to be known as the expert and create situations to prove themselves right. When the self-verifying evaluations fail, they will still look at nonexistent evidence in order to be right, which is “confirmation bias”. The coach ignores any evidence that disconfirms their preconceptions. (Bernier, 2014).

An example of this would be the star JV quarterback who is promoted to varsity. However, the varsity coach does not believe that the player can duplicate his success since varsity is more competitive, so they move the player to wide receiver. Learning a new position mid-season causes the player to make mistakes, which the “self-verification” coach uses as proof that the player was not good to play QB.

Coaches are still humans and have human emotions. They form preconceived opinions of the athletes, however, this is not a self-fulfilling prophecy in itself. **The self-fulfilling prophecy occurs once the coach acts on those beliefs.** I have been guilty of forming these opinions based on past performance, poor effort or a series of bad choices, which caused me to stop giving them opportunities to improve. In other words, I acted on those beliefs and gave up on the kid, which is the Golem effect.

Coaches need to be careful of sharing and possibly enforcing their beliefs of a particular athlete on other coach. A coaching staff should try to use objective measures to evaluate performance. As an example if we have had a running back in the past that may have turned the ball over (fumbled) 6 times in 80 carries, rather than saying he should not carry the ball or he is fumble prone, we would look at the statistics as an indication that we need more work on ball handling and ball security.

Success And The Little Voice

According to dictionary.com, failure is defined as a “lack of success”, and the definition of success is the “accomplishment of an aim or purpose.” John Wooden defined success as being at peace with yourself knowing that you gave your very best effort. UCLA softball coach Sue Enquist (2015) states that failure and success holds hands and believes that a person must be comfortable talking about failure in order to fall in love with success.

Enquist (2015) describes a 3-part process to encouraging risk and creating an environment where athletes are not afraid to fail:

- How you THINK;
- how you SPEAK; and
- how you ACT.

THINKING entails positive thoughts and “staining the brain” to overpower the weak voice with the strong voice. SPEAKING requires her 33% shield that prevents the negative 33% of people from causing

you to speak pessimistically. ACTIONS are the pattern of behavior that becomes your character and character is your legacy.

Every person who has ever walked the planet has a self-sabotaging voice that destroys confidence and promotes self-doubt. The first step every coach must take is to teach their athletes to be aware of the weak voice and train them to drown it out with the positive strong voice. Our players refer to the weak voice as the “little voice in their head” and we constantly shout “Shut the heck up” to that little voice as a fail-safe mechanism to remind them to have positive thoughts.



Enquist then talks about the top 1/3 of the people who are positive and make others around them better. And then there is the bottom 1/3 who suck the life out of you with negative and selfish words. Coaches need to focus on the middle 1/3 who “blow in the wind”. They are in the top third at the beginning of the season but will be dragged down to the bottom third when the team is losing, or they are not starting.

Athletes must be constantly encouraged with words of affirmation. This cannot be done with one speech, it is a culture-mindset that happens daily, drip by drip according to Enquist. When they fail to perform a certain skill or lose a game, they must be reminded of what they did or do well. (Duke, 2014). Examples of this “SUCCESS TALK” would be “Look the Ball In” instead of yelling “Don’t drop the ball”, or “High & tight, 2 inches from chin” instead of “Quit Fumbling.”

Having a PhD in convincing, the coach motivates players to play freely because approval is based on relationship instead of performance. Words of encouragement “stain the brain” like permanent “sharpies”. Require every coach and every player to only talk positive. (Enquist, 2015).

Psychology of Coaching

Psychology is an important part of coaching. Psychology is the study of human behavior; which coaches must certainly be aware of. They should recognize that everyone has needs to be filled, things they want to accomplish, and a way that they want to be. A coach helps their athletes fulfill these needs and accomplish their goals, no matter how small they are.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is psychology, which is inspiring people around you to do things they would not ordinarily do, or thought was impossible. Coaches need to be careful about how they motivate because an athlete who feels like you’re trying to motivate them may resist. Nobody wants to be manipulated or forced to do something.

There are only 2 ways to motivate someone: positively and negatively. Reward, recognition, and accomplishment are POSITIVE stimuli. Fear of punishment, rejection, and failure are NEGATIVE stimuli. Coaches can use either of these 2 extremes to motivate athletes to perform.

Athletes, however, have 2 kinds of motivations: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the enjoyment of the activity itself and extrinsic motivation comes from something outside themselves. External motivators can be winning a trophy or avoiding punishment. It can also be devoting hundreds of hours repeating a non-enjoyable behavior, such as blocking, in order to improve at something, they enjoy intrinsically, dominating their opponent.

Intrinsic motivation is the healthiest type of motivation, which the great coaches achieve by getting their athletes focused on effort rather than focusing on winning and domination of the opponent. The highest level of intrinsic motivation is complete immersion in an activity, to the degree that nothing else matters. This requires a perfect match between the demands of an activity and an athlete’s skill level. Apathy transpires when the highly skilled athlete is asked to perform an activity that is not challenging.

A coach must understand that few people are entirely intrinsically or extrinsically motivated and it is important that athletes have a simultaneous mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This is because intrinsic motivation will push the athlete to better themselves and enjoy their sport while extrinsic motivation will ensure that they want to win and have a strong competitive streak. However, athletes should not depend on extrinsic motivators because they are not sustainable over time. If the motivation is championships and the focus is on the scoreboard, then your team will have to be undefeated every year to be fulfilled.

Until your team reaches a healthy balance of intrinsic and extrinsic, you might have to start with the extrinsic while moving them towards the intrinsic. However, you must quickly get your team to be intrinsically motivated because there will always be a supply of intrinsic motivation. Players can always draw on the desire to win and to play their best because that is 100% within their control.

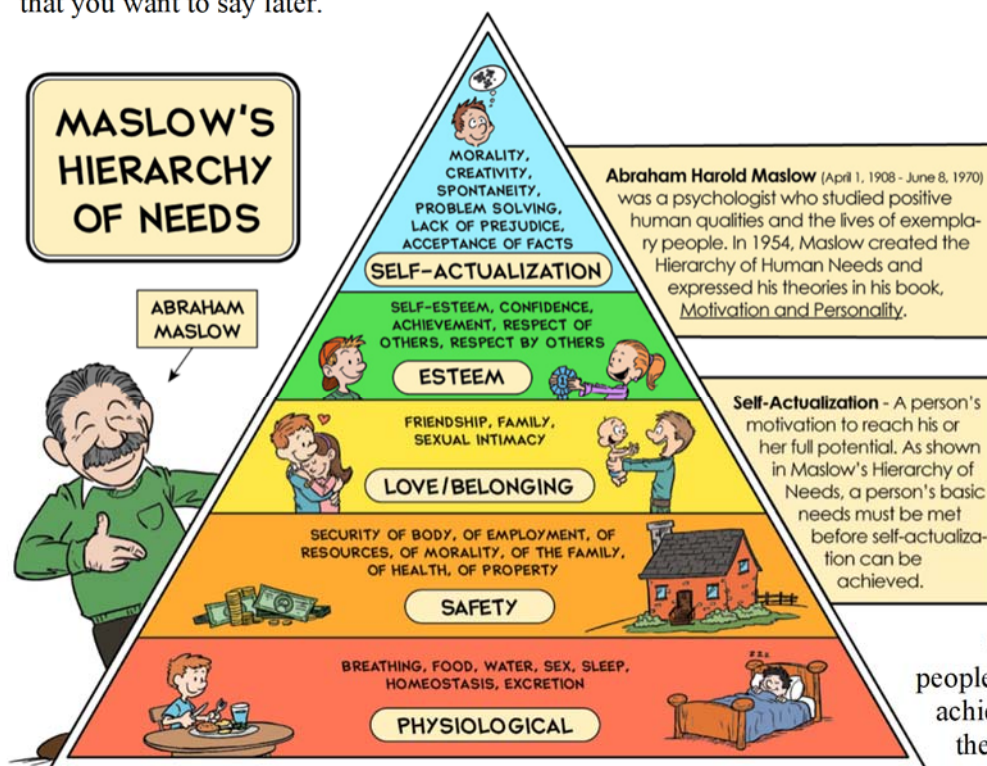
In order to be intrinsically motivated, ensure there are opportunities to develop and enjoy the sport. Provide feedback and praise to increase your player's motivation by boosting self-esteem and confidence. This will push them to do the little things when no one is watching, to keep going when they want to quit.

In order to balance intrinsic with extrinsic and to integrate individual desires with team goals, the coach MUST let his players know the reasons behind everything the coach is asking. Expectations and rules cannot be explained as laws, but in terms of why they are necessary. For example, I want you to be on time because it inconveniences your teammates when you are late. You will be well conditioned because only a well-conditioned athlete is able to perform at his very best period

Be Yourself

Coaches, especially the head coach, cannot interact with players through a third person. This includes trying to emulate your favorite coach. Coaches have to be themselves, develop their own style, and communicate directly. In reality it is impossible to be someone else anyways.

Every coach has been guilty of repeating words or phrases until they become trite and lose their meaning. They will grab what sounds like a great phrase and make a sign out of it. Coaches should avoid worn out clichés, otherwise known as “boxtop” phrases. They demean those movement provoking things that you want to say later.



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Abraham Maslow was a psychologist who created the Hierarchy of Needs in 1943. Maslow wanted to find out what motivated people and he believed that there was a set of motivational systems completely unrelated to rewards or desires.

Maslow believed that people were motivated to achieve certain needs, and once the basic one had been met,

then next need would need to be fulfilled.

In sports, the first PHYSIOLOGICAL need would be to be sure that your players were eating and sleeping properly. This starts with educating them, but also the coach might supply PB&J sandwiches and chocolate milk (GLYCOGENATION) in the weight room, along with Thursday night team dinners and Friday pre-game meals. We have extra PB&J and tuna in our coaches' classrooms, so players are never hungry. Our players bring hard boiled eggs and tuna sandwiches to school to eat during 10am morning break. We call these PANTHER-ROIDS.

Once the athlete is in good physical condition, he can fully tackle the next motivational need: SAFETY. This does not mean having your head up when you tackle or wearing the best equipment. This need is met when players feel safe about what they are being taught and trust that their coach is an expert who cares about them. Rules, organization, and a system is necessary. Goal setting and making a plan is on this level.

Once these things are taken care of then your athletes can focus on excelling and being the best they can be. Maslow's top levels are only reached by highly motivated athletes willing to work on achieving their highest potential. The first two levels were PHYSIOLOGICAL, these levels are PSYCHOLOGICAL.

Players need a comfortable environment of team spirit where they feel like they BELONG. When they feel like they belong, they are ready to stand out and excel. This ties into your Fail-Safe-Systems, the Pygmalion Effect, Affirmative Voice, and players not being afraid to fail. The sense of BELONGING gives a confidence which enables us to step out of our comfort zone knowing that our coaches and teammates have our backs.

Most athletes require respect, admiration, and recognition to boost their feeling of ESTEEM. Feeling that coaches and teammates recognize their contributions and efforts enhances the ESTEEM and guarantees whether they continue in that sport.

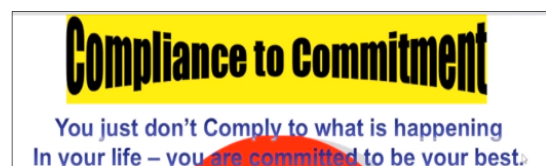
AFFILIATIONS

WE ARE WHO WE
HANG OUT WITH

Finally, the SELF-ACTUALISATION level is the final level in the pyramid and is technically a personal level. One of the steps to this level is a complete understanding that every action has a reaction. All people will want to pull out the "victim" card and make excuses about why they can't or why we can't beat that team. OUR CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT IMPRISON US. Goals and written plan is important here.

The big picture is to get kids to see where they will be in 20 years and gain an understanding that decisions today will either get them or not get them there. Then break it down into smaller chunks until they make the connection between increasing a lifting max to running faster or tackling better. DELAYED GRATIFICATION.

Another saying that we use a lot when we get our team to understanding this level is: ACCEPT BEING UNCOMFORTABLE. They have to do things different, do things they have never done if they want to change or improve. The coach knows that his players are ready for this level when COMPLIANCE turns into ENGAGEMENT. They don't show up because they have to, they show up because they want to. A team of these type of players then go from COMPLIANCE TO COMMITMENT.



Ask Not What Your Team Can Do For You, But What Can You Do For The Team!!

To this day, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs remains valid for understanding human motivation. In 1943 he said: "Our actions are motivated in order to achieve certain needs." So true.

PETE CARROLL: WIN FOREVER

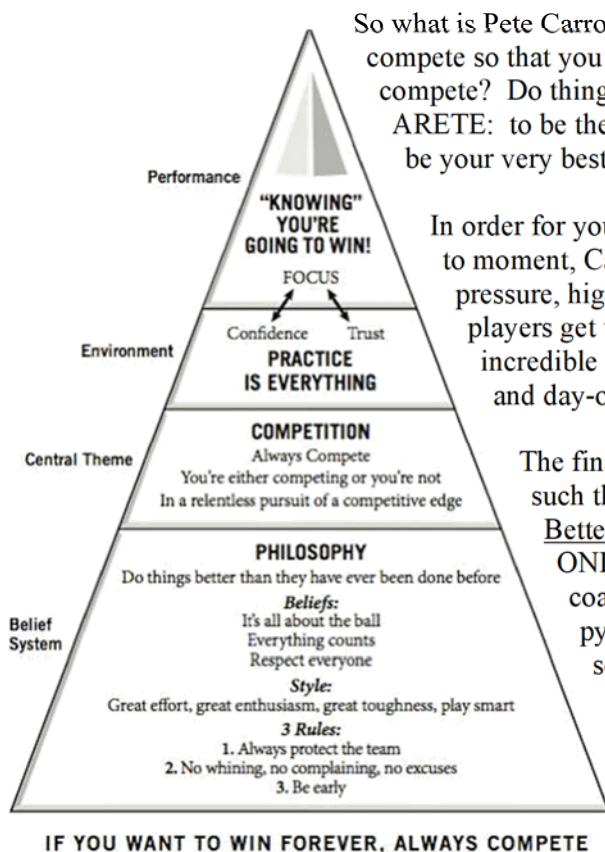
Pete Carroll was influenced very heavily by Maslow. Coach Carroll realized that his job as a coach was to create the environment where these players could self-actualize and maximize their potential and that's what his coaching became all about.

Just as our players learn and grow the most from failure, Pete Carroll realized that he needed a clear philosophy after getting fired 5 times as head football coach. He realized that he failed because he couldn't explain his vision well enough, to both ownership and his players. It took John Wooden 16 years to win his first championship, but Wooden developed an extraordinarily sense of what took to win, he became unbeatable. Wooden could WIN FOREVER.



So he dived deep into three books: John Wooden, Timothy Gallwey, and Dr. Maslow. The first thing he realized was that successful people learn how to turn adversity into a positive. There is post-traumatic stress and there is post-traumatic growth. Carroll learned, and now teaches his players, how to eat stress like an energy bar. To be ANTI-FRAGILE.

The Wind Will Extinguish a Candle, But It Fuels A Fire



So what is Pete Carroll's philosophy? To ALWAYS COMPETE. Always compete so that you can WIN FOREVER. What does it mean to always compete? Do things better than ever before. The ancient Greeks called this ARETE: to be the highest version of yourself in that very moment. To just be your very best during those SEVEN SECONDS of FURY.

In order for your players to be the best version of themselves, moment to moment, Carroll realized that practice meant everything. High pressure, high stress in every single practice. That way when his players get to the game, they know what it takes. They will have this incredible confidence grounded in incredible performance, day-in and day-out. This was the Fail-Safe-System at USC and Seattle.

The final big idea after you Always Compete, live with ARETE, such that you can Actualize Your Potential and Do Things Better than they've ever been done before, is to BE THE ONLY ONE DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING. Your coaches and your players cannot reach the top of the pyramid and actualize their potential trying to be like somebody else. You can't be the best without comparing yourself to somebody else. Don't try to be the best, just be the best version of you.

Again, this all comes back to basing success and goals on EFFORT.

Goal Setting

Once the football coach understands the levels of motivation for his players, his next step is getting his players to believe that personal goals can be sublimated for team-oriented goals. When this happens, players are surprised to see that many of their personal goals are fulfilled by being part of a successful team.

Achievement of goals requires strong self-esteem and a sense of autonomy. Make it perfectly clear what the athlete can be and achieve. These clear expectations are conveyed through personal discussions, which not only helps his old personal image but lends insight into what he would like to be. Remember, the greatest single positive thing that a coach can do is helping your players realize their potential.

These discussions happen at the end of the season, in May, and in August. The player will meet with either the head coach, coordinator, or position coach. Since I started doing this in Year 12 of my career, the results have been amazing. Place in front of your football players a few ambitious but achievable long-term goals along with some medium-term goals that match the long-term goals. However, the most important goals are short-term goals that are only accomplished through effort and practice.

Our players not only have input in their individual goals, but team goals as well. Through our leadership council and team retreats, our players develop goals, expectations, and consequences. Every team has dedicated football players who show up every day and do exactly what coaches tell them. But it is amazing how much more they pay attention and show up when ownership is turned over to the players.

Every talk about motivation says that establishing goals is a must for motivation. However, it's the fulfillment of these goals that reinforces effort and keeps a person going. We believe that players cannot set goals without establishing a plan.

A goal without a plan is simply a dream. WRITE THEM DOWN!

We talk to our players about developing a plan because the concept of goal setting is trite. Making a plan does 2 things; it outlines a series of short ranged objectives and forces a person to vocalize the things he really wants. Remember if you help somebody get what they want they'll do anything for you.

The Problem with Goals

We all have goals we want to achieve. And, like most people, you and your players will probably write down your goals, read them aloud daily, visualize them as if they're already a reality, and put them where you'll see them daily among other recommendations.

The problem is, goal setting can be problematic for three reasons.

1. Falling into the trap of being satisfied once the goal is achieved. Complacency.
2. Setting arbitrary metrics when setting goals. For example, setting a goal of rushing for 1,000 yards. If the player only rushes for 900 yards, he will feel like he's "failed".
3. Players and teams can become obsessed with their goals which can blind them to other options.

" THE PROCESS "

Every young player (and many coaches I might add) make the mistake of setting tangible, measurable goals that are measured with stats and scoreboards. This type of goal setting has always bothered me and I have spent a lot of energy teaching my players the "Chin Up" philosophy of John Wooden:

"...peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming."

I was left with two major questions: what is the process and how does a coach leave a legacy?

Nick Saban has generated a lot of conversation and attention to something he calls the "Process," a simple but profound way of breaking down a difficult situation into manageable pieces.

Many of us washed our parent's car when we were younger. It was important to do it correctly, to a standard of excellence, a perfection. If you washed a car and there were any streaks when your father came, you had to do it over. The lesson our parents taught us was very important. The importance of only focusing on what you need to do next and doing it to the best of your ability.

The process is really what your players have to do day in and day out to be successful. Instead of asking your players to focus on winning the championship or the next big game, ask them to focus on what the next action is. The next drill. The next play. The next touchdown.

To Saban, it's not the outcome that's important, but the process:

“We try to define the standard that we want everybody to work toward, adhere to, and do it on a consistent basis. Being responsible for your own self-determination, having a positive attitude, having great work ethic, having discipline to be able to execute on a consistent basis, whatever it is you're trying to do, those are the things that we try to focus on, and we don't try to focus as much on the outcomes as we do on being all that you can be.”

A Shift in Perspective

If coaches and players are committed to behavioral change in the long-term, having goals isn't enough. They must be committed to the process of taking action on a consistent daily basis.

In other words, they must commit to a system for change; an efficient process where positive outcomes are an inevitable outcome. They must ask: “What can we (I) do daily that would guarantee extraordinary result results? Whatever it is, it has to be an action they can sustain over time.

Let's be clear here: There's absolutely nothing wrong with having goals. In the beginning, goals can often be the catalyst for change, but ultimately, in the long-term, it's an effective process that keeps your team moving forward. When it comes to outcomes vs. processes, processes trump outcomes.

Ledbetter also stresses that a team should focus less on the result and more on the process. He said that goals are good to have since they can provide vision and inspiration if set properly. He defined a goal as being the result of where the effort was aimed and cautioned to not set goals that require things out of your control, such as the talent of the other team. This tied into two more John Wooden quotes: Success comes thru hard work and winning is the by-product, not the goal. (Wooden, 2003).

How to Become Process-Orientated

Saban says that teams must eliminate the clutter and all the things that are going on outside and focus on the things that they can control with how they sort of go about and take care of their business. That's something that's ongoing, and it can never change.

To be seriously committed to your goals, it isn't enough to occasionally attempt new behaviors: You have to learn a tiny, powerful idea and internalize it. Players need to decide what they want, and coaches help them identify the behaviors of the kind of person who already has it. Coaches help players to make those behaviors daily habits and a part of their identity.

When a team commits to a process over an outcome, they redirect their focus on what is within their inner focus of control; discipline, motivation, and organization to name a few, drive the actions needed to necessitate the outcome they're moving towards.

A Final Word

When a team is committed to the process, they always win because they are improving daily. Players are constantly moving towards what they want because of the tiny actions they're taking. There is one caveat to this:

They have to constantly and never-ending improve the process that they're using.

Mike Kryzyzewski is always talking about CHARACTER DRIVING THE PROCESS and how a person will stumble in the process if they lack character. There are two skill sets that make up a person's character: performance and morals. Character is what you do when nobody is looking and a person has character SKILLS, not TRAITS, since they are not born with them, but acquires them through experience

In closing, sit down with your coaches and visualize how you want your team to look, both on and off the field. Then go through some exercises with your players to help them visualize the kind of players and person they want to be. One a picture or "vision" has been created of what the end product looks like: then ask....

“What do we have to consistently do in order to have what we want?”

Then, commit to the process that'll help you and your team achieve it and refine it along the way. The outcome – or one you haven't even considered – will inevitably be a positive one. That, you can believe in. **“It's the journey that's important. You can't worry about end results. It's about what you control, every minute of every day. You always have to have a winning attitude and discipline, in practices, weight training, conditioning, in the classroom, in everything. It's a process.”** – Nick Saban.

TEAMWORK

There are very few activities that place such an enormous premium on effort than the game of football. The mental status is as important as developing physical strength and skills. This is incredibly important aspect of your team. Players with average ability can become great players simply because they played football in high priority and thoroughly apply themselves.

Football requires many one-person successes culminating at the same time. When you work with someone and depend on him, loyalty becomes a necessity. This means that the coach must see that the athlete's individual interests are deeply intertwined with a concern for their teammates and coaches as well. No group effort can be successful without loyalty and paradoxically, disloyalty demeans the individual more than it hurts the group. The concept of loyalty extends beyond individuals, it encompasses principles such as accepting the discipline of training rules.

THE PARADOX is that no team will become great with even a single dissident and on the flip side, only complete loyalty will enable athletes to truly reach previously unreachable goals.

Today's society has shown that fewer and fewer people want to hear rules and regulations. We are a culture that embraces individuality and accepts differences. However, the first ingredient for an exceptional football team, is that everyone enthusiastically joins the team. They must join without reservation, recognizing team goals as well as their own. The second ingredient is placing football as a high priority. Football is not a place for people with casual interests. Obviously, people join for their own personal reasons and that is OK, but they also must be accountable to the team.

**WHILE A YOUNG MAN
MAY BE ASKED TO DIE
FOR THEIR TEAM, THEY
WOULD MUCH RATHER
LIVE FOR THEMSELVES**

TEAM OWNERSHIP

Coaches should give the team to the players via a leadership council as soon as possible. Make it their team and not the coach's team. This procedure begins by selling the responsibility for this success at the outset. Coaches want them to assume the ownership of the group. I usually give this speech to my team:

“I wasn't a very good football player when I was a kid, and now that I can't run tackle or catch the ball, it is likely that I'm not going to be much help to you. I can pick the starting lineup and call the plays, but when things are tough on the field, you'll have to make the big play.”

This may sound humorous, but it does make sense. The coach who keeps total control and ownership of the team robs his players of the one big reason they're playing. They want to have autonomy over their playing experiences. They need to feel that they have a real stake in the overall plan and even the thrill of winning. A coach who delegates this ownership, cannot take the blame for losing either. For example: “I was out coached today”, may sound like a general statement and a coach is taking ownership. However, what happens when the team wins the next week? The implication is that the team won because of coaching. A coach of a player-oriented team can never be greater than his players.

Establishing ownership for a player is one of the coaches most effective psychological tasks. Demonstrating to them that it's their team, and that both the rewards and the embarrassment of failure will be theirs.

My teams have always taken great pride in out working the other teams, especially since I have never coached a scholarship athlete in 27 years, however, we have beaten many teams with scholarship players, including 2 future NFL players. Teaching players how to compete is also very important, especially when I took over three really awful programs. I had to teach them how to hate losing, followed by learning how to win.

It was important that they did not use the scoreboard to define winning and losing (another Wooden quote), but that they understood that winning and losing happens every day. Many of my players have told me that they remember me telling them: “Playoffs are won in January”. In other words, the work in the weight room would define our success in the fall. The 3rd important performance skill is resiliency, because young people want instant success and will give up at the first sign of failure. I am always telling them to “turn the page” and one of my mottos is BETTER TODAY, BUT NOT AS GOOD AS TOMORROW. I am constantly talking to my players about failure being life's greatest teacher.

My WORST TO FIRST: How to Build a Championship Program will have actual team activities that gets your coaches and players to the places described in this chapter. They are written in lesson plan format.

1. The ability to communicate with the players is the most important attribute a coach can have.
2. Be honest and be yourself.
3. Two things motivate: fear of failure and anticipation of the word.
4. View motivation from the players standpoint – be subtle, no one wants to be manipulated
5. The most successful motivational technique is to help each player get what he wants.
6. Be sensitive to individual needs even though football is a team sport.
7. Help your players develop a plan.
8. Answer questions before they are asked. An informed team doesn't ask why.
9. Create an atmosphere of ownership.
10. Self-esteem begins with a sense of autonomy. Make the players responsible.
11. Successful pep talks are the result of certain circumstances and are not staged.

12. Avoid the use of canned phrases.

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