



# COACHING ESSENTIALS FOR EVERY SPORTS COACH

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# Coaching and Mental Toughness

There have been many attempts to define and measure mental toughness in coaching textbooks, [academic literature](#) and even in the [popular media](#).

Words like "persistence", "perseverance", "determination", "commitment", "resilience" and "uncompromising" seem to be used to describe mental toughness: something which clearly means different things to different people.

For some people, mental toughness is about being able to maintain composure, calm and control in difficult situations.

For others, mental toughness is related to physical "**hardness**" and the ability to endure pain, fatigue and stress in competition conditions and still prevail.

There has been a lot of work from the academic sector to attempt to define and measure mental toughness, with most of the recent literature discussing mental toughness in terms of "situations" and that mental toughness is a complex set of different attributes expressed differently by people in different situations.

[Coaches](#) all agree however, that for competitive athletes, mental toughness is a highly desirable athletic quality: one which is as prized as outstanding physical abilities, excellence in skills and technical knowledge.

But how can you [coach an athlete](#) to be mentally tough?

## Mental Toughness: Two Basic Coaching Approaches

There are two basic approaches to coaching mental toughness:

1. Toughen the body to toughen the mind and
2. Toughen the mind to toughen the body.

*"All of us get knocked down, but it's resiliency that really matters. All of us do well when things are going well, but the thing that distinguishes athletes is the ability to do well in times of great stress, urgency and pressure."*

*Roger Staubach*

### Mental Toughness Coaching Approach 1: Toughen the body to toughen the mind

This has been the most commonly used approach by coaches to try and develop mental toughness in their athletes. The essence of this approach is [hard work](#), i.e. the harder I work, the tougher I get.

The core philosophy behind this approach is: "[Make training more challenging and more demanding, physically and mentally, than the competition you are preparing for](#)".

This approach has several good things going for it and it is relatively simple to do. Through this approach, athletes develop confidence in their ability to meet the physical demands of the

competition environment and in their ability to deal with whatever is "thrown" at them during competition because they **know** ( i.e. confidence comes from knowing) that their [preparation has been better in every detail than that of their opposition](#).

Many, many [football competitions](#), world championships and Olympic Gold medals have been [won](#) by coaches and athletes adopting the toughen the body to toughen the mind approach.

However, for some athletes this approach can be too confronting, too demanding and ultimately can actually cause athletes to become [de-motivated](#) and even intimidated by the [training environment](#). Some athletes will fall to the stress and strain of the intense physical loads required by this approach and break down through over-training.

A big mistake however that coaches make is to assume that athletes who fail to respond to this approach are "soft" and therefore unable to compete successfully. **The fact is that all athletes (people) are different.** Some respond incredibly well to endurance training...some don't. Some respond positively to strength training...some don't. Some respond strongly to the toughen the body to toughen [the mind](#) approach...some don't.

### **Mental Toughness Coaching Approach 2: Toughen the mind to toughen the body**

The second approach to Coaching Mental Toughness is the [toughen the mind to toughen the body approach](#). Coaches who adopt this approach focus on developing the athlete's mental skills and teaching them the psychological techniques to thrive in the competitive environment.

There are many excellent mental skills techniques which can enhance an athlete's ability to perform to their full potential under the pressure of competition including [Sports Mindfulness](#) which among other things teaches athletes to live in the moment and to not overly think about the past (e.g. mistakes which may have just been made) or the future (e.g. the pressure of the situation and the need to score points).

An athlete who masters a technique like Sports Mindfulness can be, by any definition, mentally tough, as they have the ability to perform to their full potential regardless of the situation.

### **So which approach is the right approach?**

The right approach is:

- a. The one which suits your own [personal coaching philosophy](#) and
- b. The one which works with the individual athlete you are coaching.

There is no one size fits all coaching method to enhance mental toughness. Some athletes respond well to Mental Toughness Coaching Approach 1. They thrive on hard work. They love being physically challenged. They grow and mature as athletes through an uncompromising commitment to [training as hard as possible](#). And some athletes do not respond this approach. Others respond far better by learning to master their mind and to tap into the almost unlimited potential that lives between their ears!

*"Win or lose you will never regret working hard, making sacrifices, being disciplined or focusing too much. Success is measured by what we have done to prepare for competition."*

*John Smith*

**And the biggest question of all....can you turn a "soft" athlete into a "hard" athlete through [great coaching](#)?**

The short answer is **Yes**.

A "soft" athlete is one who lacks the mental abilities to compete to their full potential - particularly when things get difficult, challenging or unpredictable. Coaches, believing they can identify "soft" athletes then embark on a training program to help the athlete [develop the skills and abilities](#) to better manage competitive situations and therein become "hard", i.e. tough, resilient etc.

Some athletes are naturally hard: and by naturally, I mean they have learnt to be hard through necessity, overcoming adversity and setbacks in their lives both inside and outside of sport. They then carry this "hardness" into their preparation and performance, i.e. *"the way you do anything, is the way you do everything"*.

For others, "hardness" (mental toughness) is a skill and like any skill it can be learnt, practiced, enhanced and mastered. In the same way you would not teach an athlete complex, difficult, advanced sporting skills and techniques in their first year of [training](#), mental toughness is not something that athletes learn from a single lecture, sporting autobiography or audio recording. Mental toughness needs to be introduced, nurtured, developed and enhanced and systematically measured in both training and in competition situations over an athlete's career just as any other sporting skill or technique.

*"I've never known anybody to achieve anything without overcoming adversity."*

*Lou Holtz*

### **Summary**

1. Mental toughness is a much talked about, much investigated aspect of sports performance yet surprisingly, while many people believe they know what it is, where it is and how to find it, very little is understood about [coaching it](#).
2. Whether you adopt the "body to mind" approach or the "mind to body" approach, coaching mental toughness is about understanding your athlete and what they need to enhance their mental abilities to thrive in competitive situations.
3. There are times when both approaches can be used effectively in the preparation of athletes. [Coaching is an art form](#): and an important part of the art is knowing what to do, when and how.

*"It may sound strange, but many champions are made champions by setbacks."*

*Bob Richards*

# GOOD TO GREAT

By Wayne Goldsmith

Go from **Good to Great** in Ten Easy Steps???

The Good to Great part is easy.....**it's writing about it in Ten Easy Steps that's the hard bit!**

**G TO G ONE: Excellence is not the issue - everything is excellent - it's about relevance and context.**

It is no longer about **what** you know - the internet has made sure that everyone knows **what** you know - it's now about **how, when, where and why you do what you do;**

**G TO G TWO: The name of the game is living success** - having a set of rules that guide the direction of your life, the decisions you make and the destiny of your dreams...**everyday** - try these four:

- **P - Persistence** - Never, ever give up;
- **A - Attitude** - they can who believe they can;
- **C - Consistency** - it's not about the end result every year (in the annual report) - it's what you do every day that makes a difference;
- **E - Energy** - Passion, excitement, enthusiasm - these things give you the energy to power success.

**G TO G THREE: Change is critical.** But - you need to accept that **everyone** is changing - the real challenge is to **accelerate your rate of change faster than your opposition;**

**G TO G FOUR: All change is personal** - all real change must be made at an **individual level** - so in the end change comes down to your ability to engage the hearts and minds of everyone in your team;

**G TO G FIVE: The difference between good and great is simple: it's about doing more - more often.**

Most people do the minimum standard - the great ones do more than they are asked - they challenge themselves to improve and get better - **they do more than is expected.** How can you be great if you do the "average" - being great is about doing more than the average;

**G TO G SIX: Greatness means being different - it means being unique.** It means being first. It means taking risks. No one becomes great by being the best copier or best at being someone else: **be yourself - back yourself;**

**G TO G SEVEN: And.....conflict is inevitable.** Learn to thrive in conflict. Learn to fight hard (but fair) for what you believe in. All the greatest people in history have had to face conflict and challenge (and even ridicule and resentment) when they decided to stand up for what they believed in;

**G TO G EIGHT: Understand who you are - who you really are - and be happy being you.** You cannot be successful being someone else, living someone else's biography or following someone else's mantra. **Be yourself - back yourself;**

**G TO G NINE: Make tough choices every day - and stick to them.** No leader who has been successful is known for being a soft, quiet, uncertain person who cannot make decisions. Decision making is a core quality of great leadership and a fundamental aspect of greatness;

**G TO G TEN: Continuous improvement is everything.** It is not about winning once - it is about continually challenging, changing, learning, evolving and improving so that you are always striving to be better. Believe like you are number one - but passionately and relentlessly pursue improvement like you are number two.

# Greatness in Coaching

By Wayne Goldsmith

*Whilst all great coaches are unique and very special individuals, there are some common factors – some common championship coaching characteristics that they all share:*

1. A commitment to **continuous improvement**.
  2. A **belief** that anything is possible.
  3. An understanding of where your sport has been (history of the sport), where it is now and most importantly a **vision** for where it is going.
  4. The confidence to be yourself – to be **unique**.
  5. The **energy** to work hard **consistently**.
  6. The strength and courage to **not compromise**.
  7. Outstanding **communication** abilities.
  8. An understanding of **who you are**, what you value and what motivates you.
  9. A **passion** for winning – a **desire** to be the best.
  10. The capacity to **persevere and persist** and continue to fight hard no matter what obstacles you face.
- **A commitment to continuous improvement.**

**Success is a moving target:** winning this year is no guarantee of success next year. Great coaches continue to pursue excellence and relentlessly chase personal and professional improvement. They understand that the time to make the most significant and effective changes to their coaching is

when they are successful – i.e. they reject the notion that winning means they have all the answers. They may be number one but they think, act and strive to win like they are number two. They are allergic to complacency and they reject routine, habit and sameness. They know that they must **accelerate their learning** and their rate of change to win and to stay ahead of their competition. They are not afraid to ask hard questions of themselves or to invite honest, hard, direct and uncompromising criticism from colleagues and competitors. They know that if they are not honest with themselves and if they fail to strive to identify and overcome their weaknesses, their competitors will find them and exploit them at the next competition.

- **A belief that anything is possible.**

**Belief has to come *before* excellence is possible.** Great coaches believe in themselves and back themselves. They understand that belief is the foundation of success. They possess a belief which is able to withstand negatives and setbacks and obstacles and failures.

The belief that drives a great coach is like the flow of a great river – it is unstoppable and it sweeps aside all resistance in its path. **Real progress is only possible when fuelled by real belief.** Great coaches have a sense of self belief that says to their competition “I am here to win – and to beat me you will need to be at your best”. Their belief gives them confidence. Their belief provides them with composure. Their belief keeps them calm in the face of any competitive storm. Their belief gives them clarity. And the only thing greater than their self-belief is the belief they have in their athletes.

- **An understanding of where your sport has been (history of the sport), where it is now and most importantly a vision for where it is going.**

**Great coaches are students of their sport.** They have insight and understanding about the physical, mental, technical, tactical, strategic and cultural aspects of their sport that is second to none. But more importantly they have a clear vision for where the sport is going and strive every day to get there first. They do not follow. **They lead the direction of the sport through their creativity, their**

**innovations and their intuition.** They lead – and force their opposition to follow – to have to chase them. They set the standard and challenge everyone else to try and match it. They change the direction of their sport – they determine the future of their profession and they become the benchmark for future generations.

- **The confidence to be yourself – to be unique.**

**The essence of greatness is uniqueness.** It is uniqueness and daring to be different that sets the great coaches apart from the rest. It is their courage in being innovative, their courage in being creative and the capacity to be futurist in their thinking that helps them achieve special things – and importantly to achieve them before their competitors. Being the same – copying / replicating / duplicating: these things do not create greatness. Think of all the great people you know or know of. What makes them great? **Difference, individuality, uniqueness.** Great coaches do it their way. They learn from the great coaches of the past and the present only to improve on them in the future. They know that being the best means doing it differently. It means having the faith and courage in yourself to keep being different when everyone around you is telling you that difference is wrong.

- **The energy to work hard consistently.**

**Greatness is not free. Excellence is not easy.** World class coaches have an energy and an enthusiasm which is infectious. They are often the first ones to arrive at the training environment and the last to leave. Their attention to detail and level of understanding about the sport, the team, each individual player and staff member comes from spending more time working on being the best of the best.

**They leave nothing to chance – they do not assume or presume – they just get on and do it day after day after day.** They inspire not with words, but with actions and the consistency and passion and professionalism they demonstrate in all that they do. They do not ask for respect: they earn it as a consequence of living the highest possible standards – consistently, when fatigued and under pressure, every day of their lives. They expect and insist on quality, detail and intensity in

preparation and understand that success comes from ensuring training is consistently more challenging and demanding than any competition environment ever could be.

- **The strength and courage to not compromise on the important things.**

**Compromise kills performance.** It is a disease which rots the performance potential of athletes, teams and organisations from the inside. Great coaches know this – and know that the team who compromises the least over the season wins the premiership. All teams begin the season talking about attitude, professionalism, team work and standards. And most teams accept small compromises in their attitudes, professionalism, team work and standards before the ink is dry on their Season Trademark / Season Mission Statement documents. **Great coaches create systems, structures, processes and people who do not compromise on the things that matter.** They know that when it comes to winning and small things, that there are no small things. They are uncompromising when it comes to honesty and seek out athletes, coaches and staff who similarly embrace honesty as a core value.

- **Outstanding communication abilities.**

**Coaching is communicating.** And not just yelling and shouting or screaming instructions from the sidelines. Coaching is understanding – communication and all its subtleties. It's being able to sit quietly with a player, talk with them about what's important and change his / her life. It's about understanding how to communicate with individuals through understanding who they are, what they value and what motivates them. **It's about understanding how to communicate with Generation X, Generation Y, Generation I and every Generation because you take an interest in everything about every person you coach.** It's about listening. It's about teaching when you need to and learning more from the people you coach than they learn from you. Great coaches understand that the best communication is delivering the right message at the right time in the right way – and to do this means knowing when each person is ready to listen.

- **An understanding of who you are, what you value and what motivates you.**

**To coach someone to achieve their best requires you to know as much as you can about them:**

who they are, what they value and what motivates them. And you can't coach anyone else unless you understand yourself, what you really value and what motivates you. Great coaching comes with great personal understanding. It comes from being able to be more honest with yourself than anyone ever has or ever could be. **Great coaches have a great sense of self – they know who they are and why they are coaching. They know their strengths and they understand their weaknesses and strategies for managing both.** They do not need to be loved or popular or win friends or be invited to parties. They do not need the approval of other people to make them happy – their happiness comes from creating a winning environment and from the satisfaction of knowing their coaching was the difference between winning and losing.

- **A passion for winning – a desire to be the best.**

**A lot is written about balance. The great coaches have none.** Balance is only for those who do not live excellence or who find the challenge of competition stressful and difficult. To the great coaches there is winning or there is nothing. Great coaches thrive in competition. They seek opportunities to test themselves against the best. They pursue opportunities to challenge themselves in the toughest and most demanding situations. **To them, the harder the competition, the greater the challenge and the more difficult the environment, the more they love the contest.** Nothing excites them more than the competitive environment: the grand final, the Olympic Games, the world titles....they live for the contest.

They do not experience competition anxiety – only impatience for the opportunity to test themselves again. They only play golf or jog or go to the gym or go to the movies to give themselves more time to think about coaching. They do not switch off – they are only coaching or sleeping and even then most of them will dream about coaching.

- **The capacity to persevere and persist and continue to fight hard no matter what obstacles you face.**

**Great coaches are fighters.** Their commitment, their desire, their passion and their self-belief fuels their capacity to fight for what they believe in. They know that no one will make their life easy or their path to greatness simple. They revel in politics. **They thrive in conflict.** They enjoy passionate argument. They invite intelligent objection knowing that in professional coaching nothing provides the opportunity for growth like conflict. They know that nothing worth having comes easy and that real friendships and enduring relationships grow from adversity. They can say “no” – and in doing so provide opportunity for learning. They can say “no” and stand by their decisions in the face of overwhelming obstacles and political pressures.

Many coaches believe that being world class means another accreditation. Or another award. Or one more degree.

Some believe being the best of the best means having the best sports science, the most equipment, the best facilities and the most talented staff.

Others believe it is simply a matter of good luck, good timing and being able to buy the best athletes.

For the great ones, **coaching is who they are** – not what they do. It is their personality, their character, their ambition, their drive, their passion, their values and their soul. It is the air they breathe and it is every beat of their heart.

**Summary:**

**World class coaching:** Do *you* have what it takes?

- **Continuous improvement**
- **Self-belief**
- **Vision**
- **Uniqueness**
- **Energy and consistency**
- **No compromises**
- **Communication**
- **Self-knowledge / self-understanding**
- **Passion / desire**
- **Perseverance and Persistence**

# Ten Habits of Highly Effective Coaches

**By Wayne Goldsmith**

The great philosopher (and possibly football coach) Aristotle once said, "*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.*"

That being the case, (and with apologies to [Stephen Covey](#)) - what are **The Ten Habits of Highly Effective Coaches?**

What are the things that **great coaches** do every day that makes them great?

**Make training more challenging and more demanding than the competition your athletes are targeting;**

Great coaches realise that competition is not the time to find out where your athletes' physical and mental limits are. Training needs to be more challenging and more demanding - physically, mentally, technically, tactically, emotionally - than the competition your athletes are preparing for.

*Example: A few weeks before a major international professional Tennis Championship I observed a leading professional player play 6 sets of 9 games (i.e. first player to 9 games with a 2 game lead, e.g. 9-7) and against 4 different training opponents (one left handed and three right handed), i.e. as opposed to a standard competition match of 5 sets of 6 games against 1 opponent. His coach made the training practice tougher, more challenging, more demanding and more difficult than any tournament match could ever be. Result...he won!*

### **Learn and develop as a coach at a faster rate than your athletes;**

Great coaches realise that success is a moving target and to stay relevant they must be committed to life-long learning, honest personal and professional evaluation and continuous improvement.

*Example: A swimming coach realised that two of the athletes in his team had the potential to be world record holders but that he had not coached world record holders previously. He raised some money and invited two world class coaches from other nations to come and honestly review his coaching and his program regularly to ensure his knowledge and skills were also world class. Result: One world record.*

### **Accelerate your rate of learning faster than your opposition;**

The Internet has insured that there are no secrets in sport. Everyone knows what you know. Anyone can get anything, anytime, anywhere and for free. Everyone is learning something every day. Great coaches understand this and strive to accelerate their rate of learning faster than their opposing coaches.

*Example: A high performance rugby coach with an outstanding success rate at the highest level spent one month each year, immediately following the end of the competitive season traveling the world learning from other coaches in other sports in other nations to ensure his rate of learning and development was superior to other coaches in his sport. Result...the most outstanding coaching record in professional rugby.*

### **Enhance your creative thinking skills;**

Creativity is the defining difference between good coaches and great coaches. Good coaches can follow programs: great ones invent winning programs and in doing so create new directions and new ideas which in turn change the sport. Copying kills. Following others and trying to duplicate their success is a recipe for failure.

*Example: One leading track and field coach I know enrolled in a creative class of some kind every off season. One year it was "Improv" comedy classes. The next year it was "Creative Writing". The following year he took up Piano. He realised that his capacity to create and to understand creativity was the key to his future success. Result: Some of most innovative and creative training programs the sport has ever seen.*

### **Coach individuals - even in team sports;**

There are no true team sports left. Every significant moment in every sport is "person on person" and with performance analysis now at the level of millimetres and fractions of seconds, every athlete's strengths and weaknesses are well known by their opposition. Great coaches engage with athletes and inspire them: they inspire them to consistently prepare with passion and to realise their full potential.

*Example: A national football coach invited two world class triathlon coaches to attend his pre-season training camp. His thinking was that triathlon was all about individuals being pushed to their physical and mental limits in training and competition and that for his team to become the best in the world, each individual within that team must also be the best in the world. Result: World Champions.*

### **Ensure that every athlete that you work without prepares (in every aspect) their opposition;**

The days of winning by having the "fittest" athletes are over. Sport is so multi-dimensional that winning comes from being the best in every aspect: training, preparation, skills, attitude, recovery, gym-training, sleep, travel management, nutrition etc. etc. Great coaches know this and strive to create winning environments where a culture of excellence underpins everything and everybody.

*Example: An international level swimming coach arranged for every swimmer in his team to learn how to shop for the right foods, how to cook, how get better quality sleep, how to meditate and how to manage their time, so that their non-training activities were at the same high standard as their training and preparation. Result: 3 swimmers in the Olympic team.*

**Adapt your training plans and programs to optimise their impact on each individual athlete at every training session;**

The best coaches plan: they plan meticulously and with great attention to detail but, ultimately they also understand that the core goal of every training session is to ensure it provides the optimal environment and opportunity for their athletes to prepare.

*Example: A track and field coach, preparing a middle distance runner included an even paced 1000 metre run at a relatively easy pace in every warm up. He would assess how the athlete completed the "test" run: measuring heart rate, stride rate and RPE for the run and comparing them to the results of previous workouts. He would then change the workout based on the knowledge of the athlete's capacity to complete the workout. Result: National Champion at 800 and 1500 metres.*

**Performance practice - *not* practice makes perfect;**

Everyone practices and lots of coaches believe in the "*practice makes perfect*" approach. But great coaches take this a step further: *performance practice makes for perfect performance*. Want to master a skill? Adopt the "*practice makes perfect*" approach. Want to master a skill so that it can be executed **the right way at the right time in a competition**? Then follow the "*performance practice*" philosophy.

*Example: A successful college basketball coach has three rules.*

- *Rule 1: Teach the basics of the skill in under 2 minutes.*
- *Rule 2. Allow each player to learn the skill by doing it.*
- *Rule 3. Make the skills practice as close as possible to game speed, pressure and intensity as soon as possible. Result: 5 State College Basketball titles in 11 years.*

**Adopt an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to talent development and performance enhancement;**

Athletes are only athletes for an hour or two at most each day. For the other 22-23 hours each day they are human beings. Many coaches concentrate on preparing the athlete to perform: the great ones prepare the human being to be all they can be, then, as a result, the athlete will perform.

*Example: A high school hockey coach had a philosophy about people: "Treat people the way I would want to be treated". She made the commitment to arrive at training 10 minutes early each day and spend ten minutes one on one with a player to talk about their school, their pets, their family, their hobbies - anything except hockey. She also stayed back every training session to spend ten minutes with another player. As a result, every two weeks, she had got to know every player in her team as a human being which completely changed her perspective and approach to preparing them. Result: Undefeated Champions in their League.*

**Lead.**

The great coaches are leaders. They dare to be different. They do things that others are not prepared to do. They drive change. They thrive in creative conflict situations and fight hard for what and who they believe in. They take risks. They are comfortable talking about winning: it is, after all, what they were born to do. They are individuals. They are unique. They are the best because they are prepared to lead and with it accept the responsibilities that come with leadership.

*Example: A swimming coach believed his sport needed to change. He felt that traditionally there had been too much focus on endurance and threshold training and not enough focus on speed: he would dare to be different. He introduced speed training in every training cycle all year round. He broke the mould of the traditional approach to periodisation, i.e. one week microcycles and developed training cycles focused on each individual's adaptation capacity. He challenged his athletes to race more than any athletes in the history of swimming at international level. Result: 4 Olympic Gold Medals.*

# Coaching the Uncoachables

**By Wayne Goldsmith**

When it comes down to it, the day to day coaching of sport is not that difficult.

Get the physiology right. Teach the basics well. Come up with sensible, logical game plans and competition strategies. It's not rocket science.

However, these things are **not coaching**. They are merely teaching the mechanics of the sport: they are more about learning than leadership, more about information than innovation and more about instruction than inspiration.

And, these are not the things that determine success: these are not the things that mean the difference between winning and losing.

The things that *do* determine success and the things that *do* mean the difference between winning and losing are much harder to find and even harder to measure.

They are the **un-coachables**: those intangible, elusive factors which make champions champions and winning teams unbeatable.

So, how can you **Coach the Un-coachables?**

**What are the Un-coachables?**

The Un-coachables are eight factors which you will not find in any coaching text book. You will not learn about them in any coaching course. You cannot research them on Google and you can't do a PhD on them. They are not tested for in talent id programs and no one has found a piece of equipment to measure them. But, their impact on performance is immeasurable. Their role in success unparalleled. Their place in excellence unmatched. Their effect on winning unsurpassed.

The **Un-coachables** are:

1. **Desire**
2. **Desperation**
3. **Hunger for success**
4. **Determination**
5. **Resilience**
6. **Passion**
7. **Motivation**
8. **Unbreakable self-confidence**

So, now you have to ask.....if these un-coachables are critical for success, and I am a coach, and I want my athletes to succeed, how can I coach things that can't be coached?

Great question. Here's how.

**Coaching the Un-coachables is what Coaching is really all About**

**The difference between a good coach and a great coach lies in their ability to coach the un-coachables.**

Sure planning and programming are important. Teaching skills is important. Getting the physiology right is important. Great communication skills, vision, leadership, knowledge of the sport etc. etc. - it's **all** important, but your capacity as a coach to coach the un-coachables is what it is all about.

You can train someone to **coach the coachables**: i.e. the physical, mental, technical and tactical aspects of your sport relatively easily. A well designed coaching course, some intelligent assessment

processes and some ongoing professional development and continuous improvement and bang! We have ourselves a coach who can coach all the things in our sport which are coachable.

And, with the amazing resources of the Internet, anyone, can find out anything, anytime, anywhere and for free so increasingly anybody from parents to presidents can learn the coachable things just by turning on a computer or smart-phone.

But does that mean the coach, and more importantly the coach's athletes will be successful? No.

Because the things that **really matter are the un-coachables.**

### **So how do you Coach the Un-coachables?**

The short answer is, **you don't.**

By that I mean, you don't include coaching the un-coachables in your coaching process and your learned coaching methodologies.

You coach the un-coachables by understanding the individual athletes you are working with and providing them with the environment and opportunity to discover the un-coachables for themselves.

You can't force someone to have "desire".

You can't run a training program about "desperation" or "hunger for success".

You can't get a motivation expert in to create "motivation" in your athletes - it does not work.

You can't artificially create "passion".

**You don't coach the un-coachables:** you work with your athletes and help them to discover the un-coachables for themselves.

### **Be a human being first, then a coach**

**All the un-coachables are core human characteristics.** They may be hidden behind a stack of text books about physiology or under a bookshelf loaded with motivation manuals, self-help books and sporting autobiographies but they are there all the same.

The art of coaching is being able to tap into these core human characteristics, both in yourself and in your athletes. It's about understanding yourself and your athletes and creating the environment that is needed to encourage and induce those characteristics to be expressed in all aspects of preparation and performance.

**And the million dollar question. Can all athletes discover the un-coachables for themselves and in doing so become champions?**

No.

For many athletes and many coaches, sport is never more than the coachables. They believe that all they need to do is hit the gym, buy the supplements, work on their techniques, do the training, add some water and POW! They will win. But they are wrong. Very, very wrong.

Because we have reduced coaching to a set of rules about periodization and planning, training systems and structures, programs and processes, tests and techniques, the un-coachables are rarely even seriously discussed, let alone taught.

The un-coachables: the critical ingredient in the success of every athlete, every team and every coach are usually put in the too hard basket and ignored: replaced by our focus on the "real" and the more measurable and tangible aspects of coaching: the things that can be taught and learnt.

You can measure VO2 max: you can't measure the athlete's determination to push themselves to almost unconsciousness striving to do their best in the test.

You can measure peak Lactate levels: you can't measure the athlete's desperation to succeed: so desperate that they will endure the burning pain in their legs and agony in their lungs as they fight to find their limits.

The things that really matter in sport cannot be measured: but that does not mean they are not absolutely vital to succeed.

Coaching success is much more than just training, education and development. It's about being yourself, about understanding yourself, about believing in yourself, about being honest with yourself and who you are and expressing that through your coaching.

## Summary

1. **Coaching the un-coachables is what coaching is all about.** Anyone can learn the "coachables" - those aspects of sport which can be measured, seen and heard.
2. But **winning, success and performance is all about the un-coachables**: the hard to define, difficult to measure and impossible to create aspects of sport.
3. Ultimately success in coaching is determined by your capacity to coach the un-coachables, and, as these factors are core human factors, to be a successful coach you need to **focus less on coaching the coachables and more on being yourself**: your real self.
4. **Invest time and resources into learning** and accepting who you are as a human being, then greatness in coaching is possible.

# Motivation and Coaching

**By Wayne Goldsmith**

Motivation is something many coaches talk about.

Some read about it and try to learn the secrets of motivation in a bid to help their athletes achieve the impossible.

Others spend money on motivational speakers to try and motivate their athletes through a passionate team talk or an explosive, emotional pre-performance presentation.

Others attend courses, go to workshops and enrol in mental skills programs to learn the mysteries of motivation.

Coaches...don't waste your time and money.

No one can motivate anyone to do anything.

You need to understand Motivation and Coaching.

## **Motivation and Coaching: Understanding Motivation.**

Motivation is desire. It is the "fire" that fuels great performances, outstanding victories, persistence, perseverance, determination and drive.

It is the explanation for why some athletes have a winning "attitude".

It is the rationale behind "mental-toughness".

It is the strength and the character that allows athletes to overcome adversity, setbacks, disappointments, injuries and non-selections.

It is the seemingly endless energy driving athletes to complete even the toughest, most challenging and most exhausting workouts.

Motivation is the cornerstone of success for every great athlete and every great athletic achievement.

Coaches constantly seek the magic pill or the miracle ingredient or the breakthrough technique to motivate their athletes and it is all a waste of time: you can't motivate anyone to do anything. And besides....motivation is not your job.

Motivation and Inspiration: There is a difference.

What most people think is motivation, i.e. the motivational speaker talking about money, power, success and glory is actually inspiration.

The two can work together, i.e. you can be inspired to change your behaviours to help you realise a dream, but there is a difference.

Inspiration is something that comes the outside: from listening to another person or being involved in an event or through observing something which triggers an emotional response.

Motivation, however, comes from within. Motivation is a fire: a fire which is ignited by a dream and fuelled by passion.

So, what is the coach's role when it comes to Motivation?

Simply, the coach's role is to create the environment and to provide the opportunity for the athlete to express their motivation in all that they do.

It is the coach's role to support the athlete and encourage them to unleash their "fire" in preparation and performance.

It is the coach's role to help athletes discover their own motivation: to find their "fire".

It is the coach's role to inspire athletes to feel confident in themselves and to feel empowered to let their "fire" free.

Motivation is a powerful ally for coaches and an important aspect of successful coaching.

How do you help athletes find their Motivation?

Simply: do nothing.

Just watch. And listen. And observe.

Motivated athletes stand out like a street light at midnight in winter.

The athlete who arrives early to help set up the training environment.

The football player who stays behind to help clean up the gym.

The swimmer who, at the end of a hard training set asks the coach for more.

The field hockey player who encourages her team mates every time they try something new.

The basketballer who asks the facility manager to leave the lights on for another five minutes so they can practice 20 more free throws before they leave.

Motivation will, given the opportunity, express itself....if you allow it to.

Subtle Coaching: The path to Motivation.

Too many coaches over-coach in a bid to motivate their team. They believe that the key to motivation lies in constantly talking, "*psyching-up*" and providing a high energy, high enthusiasm coaching environment.

Motivation does not work like that: in fact, it's just the opposite.

Try, giving your athletes some free time. Tell them, *"Hey guys, you can do whatever you like for the next 30 minutes. Work on an aspect of your performance that you enjoy"*. Then stand back and watch them.

People, by their nature, given free time, will do the things they love to do, which are for the most part, the things they are also good at: their strengths.

Watch what your athletes do during their free time. Chances are, they will go straight to their strengths and in doing so provide you with a doorway to their dreams and a window to their motivations.

Know thy Athletes.

Every coach needs to get to know his / her athletes.

Try scheduling a five minute one on one session with a member of your team before each training session and another five minute "one on one" with another athlete after each training session. Over a few weeks, you can arrange to spend some quality one on one time with everyone in your team. Talk with them about school, family, their life, their dreams, their concerns, their favourite movies - anything - just get to know them and to understand what it is that fuels their preparation and performance.

Because motivation comes from the inside, it is by nature a personal thing.

The key to better understanding what motivates your athletes is to get to know them as human beings.

Summary:

Motivation is like digging for gold: it can be difficult to find but if you persevere and persist until you find it, the rewards are immeasurable.

Coaches cannot motivate athletes: rather coaches must seek to provide the environment and opportunity for athletes to discover what it is that motivates them as individuals.

However, if coaches understand their athletes and what it is that motivates their athletes, great things are possible.

# Coaching and Creativity

**By Wayne Goldsmith**

Coaching is creativity.

To the successful coaches of the future, creativity will be a core coaching skill: right up there with communication, passion, empathy, commitment, the ability to engage athletes and sports specific technical skill.

But what does it mean to be creative and to coach creatively. And to coaches who are not naturally creative, can they learn to be?

Or to the coach with a hammer, is every athlete a nail?

Outside the box? I don't think so.

I am often asked to provide "outside the box" thinking to coaches, athletes, Clubs and sports who claim to be looking for real innovation, genuine creativity and some new ideas to give them a performance advantage over their competition.

However, most are not really looking for something "outside the box". They really want something that just makes their current "box" a little bigger to hold more of the same stuff in it or they want short term, quick fix solutions - using the "box" analogy - they want some nice wrapping paper and a pretty ribbon to make the old "box" look new.

It is rare to find anyone in sport who embraces a genuinely creative, innovative, "outside the box" approach to building a sustainably competitive high performance program: those who do are the real greats of high performance sport - the best of the best.

Sport is inherently conservative.

Sport is inherently conservative and therefore it does not progress as fast as it could and the real breakthroughs in performance that are possible take far longer to evolve than they need to.

Many times, in spite of the best solution often being obvious and readily available, we do not take it, preferring instead to adopt the solution which is the most politically saleable or the solution which will cause the least possible "stakeholder" objections: we compromise creativity in the interest of political cohesion, co-operation and consensus.

This may be OK for Administrators. It might be fine for Management. It could even be acceptable for Boards and Executive leaders.

But for coaches and athletes, compromising creativity kills.

Compromising Creativity Kills Coaching.

In high performance sport, where winning is about daring to be different, to take intelligent risks and to take the lead in introducing real breakthroughs by being unique, more innovative and more creative than your competitors, compromising what's possible in the interest of what's politically tolerable is a recipe for disaster.

So how can you be more creative in your coaching?

1. You have to look outside your sport. It is safe to say that thanks to the Internet, anyone can find out anything, anytime, anywhere and for free. So the chance of you finding a winning edge or performance breakthrough by looking *within* your own sport is very very low. Look at how other sports, other coaches and other athletes - outside your sport - solve performance problems and achieve peak performance breakthroughs;
2. You have to look outside sport. Sport is one very small part of society. There are medical professionals working as multi-disciplinary problem solving teams in hospitals all over the world and saving lives under the pressures of time and limited resources.....do you think

they could help you improve your own sports science / sports medicine program? There are some outstanding educators around the world who have mastered scenario based learning, problem solving based learning and creative, tailored learning solutions to optimise the learning potential of individuals.....do you think they might be able to enhance your communication skills and the learning environment you have created for your athletes? There are some amazing things happening around the world in other fields of endeavour which have the potential to revolutionise your coaching program...all you have to do is look;

3. You have to look inside yourself. Inside everyone is the potential. We all dream. We all have imaginations. Creativity is taking your imagination and your dreams of what's possible and turning them into actions and coaching behaviours. Everyone has the potential to coach creatively but it means looking inside and listening to the "little voice" - you know the one - the "little voice" that had lots of new ideas and crazy thoughts when you first started coaching - the same "little voice" you have stopped listening to now you are an older, more experienced coach and as a consequence started coaching like everyone else. Coaching creatively starts with looking inside and listening to the "little voice" once again: imagination leads to creativity and coaching *is* creativity.

Coaching is creativity.

Experience is often the process of learning to take fewer risks, to try fewer new ideas and to keep doing what you have done in the past: to play it safe.

High performance sport is not the place to be conservative. It is the place where the best ideas win and the best ideas come from the people who dare to be different, who dare to dream and who dare to think things and do things that no one else dreamed possible.

Dream big. Imagine what's possible. Coach with Creativity. There are no limits.

# About Wayne Goldsmith

Wayne is one of the most respected and authoritative sporting and business coaching minds in Australia.

His list of high performance and high profile sporting clients includes Tennis Australia, Racing Victoria, Swimming Australia, Triathlon Australia, Diving Australia, the Australian Rugby League, the Australian Rugby Union and the Australian Sports Commission. He has also worked with the Wests-Tigers, Sydney Roosters and Gold Coast Titans (NRL), the QLD Reds, NSW Waratahs, Western Force and ACT Brumbies (Super Rugby), the Gold Coast United (A-League) and the North Melbourne Kangaroos, Brisbane Lions and Melbourne (AFL).

Internationally Wayne has worked with the United States Olympic Committee, USA Swimming, British Swimming, the Singapore Sports Council and the South African Olympic Committee.

He has been awarded the Eunice Gill Prize for the Outstanding Contribution to Coach Education in Australia, the Outstanding Contribution to Swimming in Australia and the International Trophy for Creativity in Sport.

Wayne has also worked with numerous corporate clients including the Integrated Group, the Abi Group, MLC, Minter Ellison, Bond University, Macquarie Bank, L J Hooker, First Folio and KPMG.

Wayne speaks with the knowledge and experience of 20 years working at the highest level of world sport and brings his understanding of peak performance and what it takes to be the best to every audience.

He is an author for the ABC Drum news network and a regular presenter on the ABC's program

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