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The Professional Preparation of Coaches for Olympic Sports

BY DR. MATTHEW G. MAETOZO

INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

E/ Positive human relations, within a framework of Olympic competition, could aid tremendously in the eventual measure of success in international relations. I look upon the Olympic Movement as the epitome of expectation with regard to exhibiting a proper example through human contact.

The greater ability to interact with other peoples could lead to a greater capacity to understand nations the re-evaluation of confused values, the placing of more emphasis on human life, the gravitation of nations towards a better life. Therefore, the importance of present and future relations of an international nature should be given considerable thought by all of us.

The athletes and coaches can contribute as they travel and participate at home and abroad. We shall receive as well as give, learn as well as teach, and understand as well as be understood.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING

It is important that the Olympic coach has a foundation in the fields of psychology and other social sciences. He must be more than a technician. His background in general education should be broad and should have some depth. His exposure to Humanities and natural sciences should be more than cursory.

The Olympic coach should be a student of the Olympic Movement. He should be well versed in the facts of history as it applies to our way of life as well as having developed a moral philosophy commensurate with that knowledge. He must be aware of and believe in the spirit of the true concept of competition.

The "New York Times" wrote that *"The essential base before becoming a scientist, a technician or anything else is to obtain a glimpse of the broader horizons of life, literature, the arts, history, philosophy, languages, classic studies which constitute the foundation of a culture, and place them in relation to the ages and experiences of mankind that have gone before"*.

An Olympic coach should be knowledgeable in the area of group dynamics and know how to stimulate group consciousness.

The coach must be a purveyor of psychological concepts that lead to greatness. He must help the athlete to discipline himself both physically and mentally and find the way to aid each athlete in moving back the physiological barriers thus becoming a superior performer.

It is therefore logical and desirable that Olympic coaches have specific professional courses, special competencies and actual experiences which qualify them to care for and to coach Olympic teams.

A perusal of research studies and related literature has indentified the fact that planned professional preparation for the person who wishes to coach has been of concern to educators in the United States since the mid-1930s.

There are seemingly professional practices which can be standardised to the advantage of Olympic athletes, the coaches, the authorities and the country.

Although the coaching of Olympic sports is generally recognised as being important, there does not seem to be any consistent pattern of accepted standards for the preparation of these coaches.

The literature on the subject of coaching shows that there is some agreement concerning the areas of course preparation, competencies, and experiences necessary as background Olympic coaching.

COURSE PREPARATION

It is agreed that the course preparation centres should deal with the following subjects:

1. Biological sciences (anatomy, physiology, physiology of exercise and kinesiology;
2. Safety, first aid, training and conditioning and care and prevention of injuries;

3. Athletic philosophy, principles and problems of coaching, organisation and administration of sports;
4. Psychology of coaching, public relations in athletics, counseling and guidance of athletes;
5. Theory and techniques of coaching in a sports' specialty, awareness and application of research findings pertinent to sport.

COACHING COMPETENCIES

A competency could be identified as a skill, an insight, an understanding, a qualification or ability which can be used to meet a life situation.

The development of competencies can best take place through a series of planned experiences based upon the interests, the needs and the demands of coaching at the international level. It is recognised that the development of competencies is a never-ending process. In addition, the degree of development varies among individuals.

Nevertheless, a more purposeful attempt to prepare personnel for Olympic level coaching can be made.

The following competencies have been selected as most pertinent. Obviously many more could be identified in a detailed listing within the ten mentioned:

1. A coach should be an expert in the game in which he instructs. He must have advanced knowledge of techniques, strategy, offences, defences and skills. He must have outstanding technical, theoretical and practical knowledge and experiences.
2. The coach should understand how an athlete functions at his particular level of development. This implies knowledge of growth and development, physical and emotional expectations, body mechanics and exercise, fatigue and rest, and mechanical analysis.

He must understand the various relationships of structure to function as well as the effects of stress on structure and function. He should, therefore, be knowledgeable in such subjects as applied anatomy, exercise physiology and kinesiology, which necessitates a basic background in biology, chemistry and physics to be well understood.

3. The coach should be a master of teaching advanced techniques and skills. He must know the laws of learning a variety of teaching methods in connection with the sport

to be coached, how to present advanced information most effectively and how to apply social psychological principles to his coaching.

4. He should be a fine example for the athletes. His character and sportsmanship must be well beyond reproach.
5. He should be broadly educated with general knowledge of social structure, function and process.
6. He must be a leader of youth who can plan and organize for athletic events and practices.
7. He must know how to relate well to trainers and team physicians with regard to conditioning athletes.
8. He must understand the international relatedness of his coaching through appropriate emotional control, effective speaking and writing and the ability to meet people.
9. He must have an appreciation of the importance of maintaining proper relationships with game officials.
10. He must have some understanding of the true meaning of the Olympic Games.

EXPERIENCES

It would be ideal if coaches of Olympic sports had participated in the sport at secondary school and college or university levels. Laboratory experiences in coaching could be further developed during student teaching assignments. Undergraduates and graduate assistantships in sport should be available. Campus and community internships could be considered. Involvement in other related experiences would prove highly beneficial. These would include officiating of contests, working with youngsters at sports' clubs, recreation centres, summer camps, special sports' camps, schools and youth organisations.

Planned experience under the supervision of superior coaches as assistant coaches and inservice sessions would be very helpful as a coach progressed to advanced levels of coaching. High school and college or university coaching in a sports' specialty could eventually culminate in clinics, workshops and seminars specifically designed to assist in the preparation of Olympic coaches. Selected individuals would attend these sessions followed by assignment as assistant Olympic coaches. With Olympic coaching experience, some would become head coaches.

CONCLUSION

Prospective coaches of Olympic sports should be encouraged or required to complete specified professional studies in physical education and sport which seem most pertinent to coaching at the international level.

Specifications to be used in appraising candidates for these coaching positions should be developed. A position analysis could be structured which would include duties, responsibilities and obligations. The matching of qualifications and position requirements would encourage selection of coaches on the basis of course preparation, competency and experiences rather than upon experience, friendships or politics.



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