



National Association for
Sport and Physical Education

an association of the American Alliance for Health,
Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

NASPE Sets the Standard

POSITION STATEMENT

Recommended Requisites for Sport Coaches

Position

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends that coaches at all levels possess a minimum level of coaching education and hold appropriate certifications in order to effectively meet the changing needs of the athlete.

Rationale

Sport participation in the United States has grown to include more than 50 million children in non-school sports (Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association, 2007), 7.6 million interscholastic athletes (NFHS, 2012), and more than 500,000 college athletes (NAIA, 2012; NCAA, 2012). It should come as no surprise, then, that sport science research has seen a growing trend in the study of coaching education (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). Much of the current literature suggests that coaches play an extremely important role in the athlete's sport experience (Smith, Smoll & Cumming, 2007). But their influence extends beyond the court or field (Smoll & Smith, 2002) to include development of attitude and effort (Hill, 2007). Therefore, it is critical to ensure that coaches, at all levels, are prepared effectively.

Purpose

This document is designed to help parents, coaches, administrators, sport officials and coaching education providers identify appropriate requisite qualifications of the coach specific to each level of play. The list that follows identifies appropriate actions that programs should take to address those qualifications.

1. Educate Coaches Through Accredited Programs

NASPE's *Quality Coaches, Quality Sports: National Standards for Sport Coaches* (NASPE, 2006) establishes eight domains with 40 standards, accompanied by benchmarks, that provide direction for coaching educators, sport administrators, coaches, athletes, parents and the public on what coaches should know and be able to do. The National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE) uses these standards as its framework for evaluating coaching education programs that provide instructional support for coaches at multiple levels, under the belief that if a program sufficiently covers information contained within the standards, it can be expected to prepare qualified coaches (NASPE, 2006).

Table 1 on the following page is intended to provide empirical support for each of the eight domains within which NCACE grants accreditation.

Table 1.
Evidenced-Based Support for NASPE's National Standards for Sport Coaches

| Domain | Supporting Evidence |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Philosophy & Ethics | <p>About 70 percent of athletes quit organized sport by age 13. The top two reasons are the behavior of coaches and the behavior of parents (Martens, 2012; National Coaching Report, 2008).</p> <p>Many sport researchers (e.g., Arnold, 1994; Shields & Bredemeier, 1995) have posited that sport provides a singular place for developing moral character. Those opinions are grounded in the belief that moral values such as fairness, honesty, respect, compassion and responsibility are integral to all sport (Rudd, Stoll & Beller, 1997). Many researchers also have discussed the importance of coaching behavior and its effect on athletes' moral development (Lumpkin, Stoll & Beller, 2003).</p> <p>Results from the past two decades of research into ethical behavior of athletes generally have shown that athletes in team sports use a lower level of moral reasoning compared to non-athletes (Rudd, Stoll & Beller, 1997).</p> <p>Crone (1999) proposed the development of a theory of sport around three independent variables:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The degree of emphasis on winning. 2. The degree of emphasis on extrinsic rewards (e.g., money, power, prestige). 3. The amount of bureaucratization. <p>The pressure on athletes and coaches to win is intense and may promote the idea of gamesmanship. The culture of sport often dictates a win-at-all-costs attitude, and the job security of coaches depends upon winning.</p> |
| 2. Safety & Injury Prevention | <p>More than 3 million athletes will experience an injury this year that will require time away from participation (Zemper, 2010).</p> <p>Schulz, Marshall, Yang, et al. (2004) followed a cohort of cheerleaders over a three-year period and found a protective effect from coaching education. Higher levels of coach EQT (education, qualifications, training) accounted for a 50 percent reduction in injury risk compared to a lower coach EQT.</p> |
| 3. Physical Conditioning | <p>McGladrey, et al. (2011) found that pre-service physical educators do not possess a sufficient level of knowledge to pass a strength training exam (at 75 percent pass rate).</p> <p>Specificity of program design is becoming even more critical for coaches to understand and apply (Gamble, 2006).</p> |
| 4. Growth & Development | <p>Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) divides the three domains below into subdivisions, starting from the simplest behavior to the most complex. Bloom's taxonomy is easily understood and is probably the most widely applied model for use in teaching today, and it provides a foundation for coaching, as well.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cognitive: mental skills (Knowledge). 2. Affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (Attitude). 3. Psychomotor: manual or physical skills (Skills). <p>Research has suggested that extracurricular and community-based after-school activities foster motivation and intense concentration in adolescents. Specifically, the researchers found that these young people viewed extracurricular activities as an important growth experience in which they learned psychological skills such as goal-setting, time management and emotional control (Dworkin, Larson & Hansen 2003).</p> <p>Steen, Kachorek and Peterson (2003) found that adolescents reported characteristics such as leadership, wisdom and social intelligence as strengths acquired through life experiences fostered by extracurricular activities.</p> <p>In Hedstrom & Gould's white paper on coaching behaviors and their affect on youth participation, positive coaching behaviors were posited as central to keeping youths active in sports and ensuring positive psychosocial consequences such as enhanced esteem and lower anxiety (2004). The paper also suggested that the "quality of adult leadership is a key factor in maximizing positive effects" (2004, p. 7).</p> <p>Athlete-centered coaching emphasizes giving the athletes autonomy to make decisions through empowering them to make choices, develop higher levels of motivation (both individually and as a unit), and learn how to develop solutions designed to enhance their performance (de Sousa & Oslin, 2008). Research by Kidman (2005) suggests that athlete- or player-centered coaching can foster increased player engagement, better communication, improved competence and motivation to perform.</p> |

| Domain | Supporting Evidence |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 5. Teaching & Communication | <p>Most experts and scholars agree that it is the attitudes and behaviors of coaches that determine the quality of the adolescent's sport experience. Treasure (2007) writes: "The educational value of athletics is largely dependent on how the activity is structured, and in general, that means what the coach chooses to teach and model" (p. 33). Lopiano (1986) stated that possessing a teaching credential was not a self-evident qualification to coach. Other scholars suggest non-trained coaches may do an adequate job teaching sport-specific skills (Sabock & Chandler-Garvin, 1986); however, they are likely deficient in other areas such as organizing practices, planning and implementing conditioning programs, caring for and preventing injuries, and using age-appropriate motivation techniques. Smith and Smoll (1996) added that positive coaching skills are learned through systemic coaching education programs.</p> <p>Players who had played for positively oriented coaches exhibited lower anxiety levels (Smith, Smoll & Barnett, 1995). These findings clearly substantiate the powerful effect of positive coaching behaviors on both keeping youths active and motivated in sports and on ensuring positive psychosocial consequences such as enhanced esteem and lower anxiety (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004).</p> |
| 6. Sport Skills & Tactics | <p>Expert coaches working with skilled athletes spend much of their practice time focusing on tactical skill instruction (Horton, Baker & Deakin, 2005), supporting the need for a strong foundation in early skill development.</p> <p>Youth sport coaches have less formal training, indicating that they are likely to use techniques and strategies they learned as players (Lemyre, Trudel & Durand-Bush, 2007).</p> |
| 7. Organization & Administration | <p>Sabock & Sabock (2008) outline the multiple roles of the head coach to include organizer, leader, sales person, public relations expert, fund raiser and chief executive, just to name a few. Coach education can help prepare entry-level coaches to wear the multiple hats necessary in coaching.</p> |
| 8. Evaluation | <p>Only 4 percent of articles in coaching science literature are related to assessment (Gilbert, 2002).</p> |

2. Require a Background Check

The sport coach is in an extremely powerful position; one that can lead to physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Stirling & Kerr, 2009). In 2003, an investigation by The Seattle Times revealed that more than 150 coaches in Washington state had been reprimanded or fired for sexual misconduct. Alarming, 98 of those coaches continued to coach or teach at schools (Willmsen & O'Hagan, 2003). While requiring a background check will not alleviate all abuse in sport, it represents a critical first step in removing predators from the sport environment. The United States Olympic Committee (2012) has identified screening of sport professionals and volunteers as one of the key aspects of their safe sport initiative. At the youth and interscholastic levels, administrators should use diligence when hiring and evaluating those who work with youths.

3. Require Current Certifications

More than 3 million athletes each year lose time in competition due to injury (Zemper, 2010). Coaches at all levels are exposed to athletic injuries ranging from ankle sprains and open wounds to heat-related illness and concussions. Coaches play a key role in preventing injuries by effectively designing progressive training, implementing safety procedures and remaining aware of environmental hazards (Caine, Maffulli & Caine, 2008). Special recommendations have been made by the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA, 2013) to increase the safety of the athletic environment, but coaches also need to know how to respond in emergency situations.

4. Ensure Continued Development

A single bout of education will not produce quality coaches. Coaching is a dynamic process that is learned over time through reflection, engagement and experience (Culver & Trudel, 2008; Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2003; Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Schempp, McCullick & Mason, 2006). For that reason, NASPE has proposed a system of continued development for coaches. Coaches who are classified as "beginner" coaches are those who are either brand-new to coaching or to coaching a particular sport. Beginner coaches require foundational

knowledge in how to teach sport-specific skills, how to plan practices effectively and how to create a positive environment that promotes lifelong physical activity. Parents who wish to coach their children’s teams for a single season provide one example of such beginner coaches. For the most part, such coaches have not been exposed to information about child development or teaching motor skills. They would need a basic session that covers a few introductory topics.

Intermediate coaches are those who have had some coaching experience and are ready to gain more knowledge and skill working with a particular age group or sport. As they remain in coaching, their knowledge and skills would need to evolve in the areas of social development, more complex organization skills, techniques for evaluating athletes effectively and creating developmentally appropriate training plans to address deficiencies. An Intermediate coach is likely to have coached for three to five years, but needs more knowledge to improve his/her coaching practices.

Elite coaches are those who have been coaching more than 10 years and are ready to pass along their knowledge to younger coaches. These coaches likely have coached the same age group of athletes for a long period of time and have a wealth of applied knowledge. They might, however, need updated training about newer evidence-based practices.

Ideally, all coaches should gain experience, knowledge and training that is specific to the population with which they work. Coaching in the high school setting might prepare coaches for some aspects of coaching at other levels, but many aspects will be different. Therefore, it is critical that coaches train in and work with their respective populations.

Appendix A

The visual aid on the following page was created to highlight what NASPE and the rest of the National Coaching Coalition recommends as the appropriate requisites for coaching at each level of sport.

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**Appendix A
 Requisite Coaching Education Grid**

| Recom- mended Coaching Experience at Given Level | Master's Degree | Sport- Specific NGB Certifi- cation | NFHS Certification | | | Basic Coaching Educa- tion Through NCACE- Accredited Programs | | | Organi- zational Orienta- tion | Ethics/ Code of Conduct Form (Yearly) | Current First Aid/ CPR | Legend |
|--|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--------|
| | | | Funda- mentals of Coaching & First Aid | Accredited Interscho- lastic Coach | Certified Inter- scholastic Coach | Ac- cred- ited Level III | Ac- cred- ited Level V | | | | | |
| 0+ years | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3+ years | | X | | X | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 10+ years | | X | X | X | | | X | X | X | X | | |
| 2+ years | | X | | | X | | | X | X | X | | |
| 5+ years | | X | | | X | | X | X | X | X | | |
| 10+ years | X | X | X | | X | | X | X | X | X | | |
| 2+ years | | | | | | | | | X | X | | |
| 5+ Years | | | | | X | | | X | X | X | | |
| 10+ Years | X | X | X | | X | | | X | X | X | | |
| 5+ years | | | | | | | | | X | X | | |
| 8+ years | X | X | | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 12+ years | X | X | | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 5+ years | | | | | | | | | X | X | | |
| 8+ years | | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 12+ years | | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 5+ years | | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 8+ years | | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| 12+ years | | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | Required | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | Recommended | |

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