MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Coaching Research Studies: 2003-2013

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Purposes
1. Summarize and present the coaching-related research studies we have conducted at the ISYS over the last 10 years.
2. Identify current projects
3. Outline future research directions

Areas of Coaching-Related Research
• Coaches Perceptions of Sport Parents and Principles for Working with Sport Parents
• Coaches Role in The Development of Life Skills
  - Coaching Life Skills: Needs, Principles and Practices
  - Coaching Underserved Youth
  - The Coaches Role in Developing Youth Leadership
• Coaching Related Book Chapters

Coaches Perceptions and Experiences with Sport Parents

Coaches Perceptions and Experiences with Sport Parents “Summary”
• Quantitative and qualitative studies
• Identified positive and negative parental influences
• Discovered and explored optimal parent push
• Coaches perceived the majority of tennis parents (64%) to have a positive influence on their child’s development
Coaches Perceptions and Experiences with Sport Parents “Summary”

- 36% of tennis parents perceived to have a negative influence on their child’s development
- Effective communication based on honest and open interaction and listening to parents were strategies seen by coaches as most useful for working with tennis parents
- They recommended that coaches and administrators proactively educate parents and that coaches should be trained to do so


- Initial studies focused on identifying coaches perceptions of athletes life skills needs
- Failure to take personal responsibility, lack of motivation/work ethic, poor communication/listening skills, problems with parents and poor grades were the most frequently cited problems encountered in coaching high school athletes today


- Barriers to the character building potential of sport:
  - inappropriate behaviors in high school sport,
  - increased expectations for success,
  - ramifications of over-commitment,
  - health issues
  - coaching and administrative issues, and
  - unmet affiliation needs of athletes which impact the motivation

- Competitive university coaches were found to highly value athletes with life skills, character, and other intangible assets (e.g., trustworthiness, maturity, work ethic).
- Award winning high school coaches were characterized by philosophies that placed primary importance on life skills development, developed strong relationships with players, understood the context their programs were situated in and intentionally fostered life skills development.


- Award winning coaches embraced core philosophical principles that drove their coaching.
- Young athletes perceptions of their coaches behaviors (e.g., positive and negative rapport, helping athletes develop competitive strategies, emphasis on life skills) have been linked with more favorable life skill development scores (e.g., identity development initiative, teamwork and social skills).


- Developing positive rapport and avoiding negative rapport with athletes was found to be particularly important.

Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth


Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth “Summary”

- Like their better served counterparts, underserved young athletes prefer a positive orientation to coaching that emphasizes a mastery-oriented environment (Whitley, Bean & Gould, 2011).
- There is a strong association between developmental ‘life skills’ outcomes and how much a caring, mastery-oriented climate is created by the coach (Gould, Flett, & Lauer, 2012).
Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth “Summary”

- Experienced urban youth coaches described positive relationships with their players’ parents and valued organization and administrative responsibilities (Flett et al., 2012).

- Inexperienced coaches described more conflict with parents and overlooked the importance of organizational skills for coaches.

- More so than for novice coaches, experienced coaches emphasized positive, individualized, autonomy-building strategies that promoted a supportive team climate (Flett et al., 2012).

- Less-effective coaches tried to create a sense of family within the team, but used very negative, militaristic coaching strategies that were not developmentally appropriate (Flett et al., in press).

- Less effective coaches justified the negative approach because of the perceived dangers in the inner city and attempted to toughen their players through harsher methods (Flett et al., in press).

Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth “Summary”

- More-effective coaches challenged players while being supportive, attempted to develop close relationships along with a positive team climate, and promoted autonomy and the transfer of life skills from sport to life (Flett et al., in press).

- More-effective coaches appeared to be more open to coach training and others’ ideas – they could be described as life-long learners (Flett et al., in press).

- South African youth coaches with experience working with underserved youth were interviewed for the purposes of better understanding:
  (a) the realities of the underserved sport setting,
  (b) the experiences of coaches and young people in these underserved communities, and
  (c) what approach to take when designing, implementing, and evaluating sport for development programs.

  - Whitley, Wright & Gould (2013)

Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth “Summary”

- Coaches talked the most about their interest in developing their players holistically. They stressed that the players needed to believe that they could become something other than a sports star, since many players do not make it “big time.”

- The coaches discussed how many of their players did not have dreams of their own (which reflects the “live for the moment” mentality that often occurs with individuals living in poverty)

  - Whitley, Wright & Gould (2013)

Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth “Summary”

- Coaches also talked extensively about exposing their players to a variety of opportunities, such as meeting other people, seeing other places, and having a variety of new experiences, since many of the young players are often so isolated in their communities.

- The coaches also felt that sport could help these children and youth stay busy, thereby avoiding the bad things that were happening in their communities.

  - Whitley, Wright & Gould (2013)
Coaching Life Skills: Coaching Underserved Youth “Summary”

- Coaches shared their hope for the power of sport to help the country in the future, especially the racial divisions and perceptions from the past that still exist in South Africa today.

- The most significant issue that was cited by the coaches in all of the focus groups was the overall lack of resources, including a lack of facilities, equipment, funding, and transportation.

  - Whitley, Wright & Gould (2013)

The Coaches Role in Developing Youth Leadership “Summary”

- High school sport captains indicated that they received little training from their coaches on how to lead or be a captain (Voelker et al., 2011).

- A follow-up study of coaches known for developing leadership in their captains revealed that these coaches were very intentional in training their captains (Gould et al., 2013).

Coaching Research Book Chapters


Current Coaching Research

- High School Coaches Opinions and Practices Regarding the Training and Use of Captains: A National Survey

- Coaching Mental Skills: A Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation of an Intensive Wrestling Camp
Current Coaching Research

- Coaching Mental Skills: Lessons from 35 Year of Working with Junior Athletes
- An Examination of 10 and Under Tennis Implementation: Coaches Focus Group Findings

Future Directions

- Continue to study the process by which coaches facilitate the development of life skills in their athletes.
- Determine the effectiveness of helping coaches foster leadership in their athletes, particularly team captains.
- Assess the effectiveness of efforts to educate coaches using online programs.

Summary