

CONTROLLING YOUR DESTINY AS A COACH

By DeAngelo Wiser, Wiser Sports Leadership, a former high school girls' soccer head coach. With 20 years and 223 victories, Wiser is currently ranked 4th all-time in the state of KY. He coached in 357 games, and participated in four state playoff Elite Eights, four regional championships, seven district championships, and two regional runners-ups. He has been an NSCAA member since 1994.

Coaching has so many dynamics. Some we can control while others are out of our reach.

Want to have a long, illustrious career? Then only be concerned with what you can control. As I look back, I can see some of the dynamics that helped me live my dream. Did I win a state championship? No, but the journey with the players, parents, officials and my assistant coaches was one I wouldn't trade for any trophy. Here are my keys to a long and rewarding career as a coach:

Keep the Ego in Check

Remember, it's not about you any more, it's about your players and your team. It's not how much you know and boast about, it's how you act and represent your team. Good coaches do not know everything; rather, they exhibit humility and appreciation. Showing you're human and making mistakes will carry you much farther than a demanding demeanor.

Look Professional

You represent your school, your family and your team. Think of them when you get ready for a game or practice. Your appearance speaks volumes about your respect for the game and your team.

Be Prepared

That means for practice, games, scheduling and travel. Leave nothing to chance. Taking care of every aspect beforehand allows you to be relaxed and creative and to concentrate on other challenges.

Keep a Calm Demeanor

Regardless of the situation, be the one in control of your emotions. Becoming enraged or upset will hinder your ability to make sound decisions at crucial times. Be especially cautious after games when you're upset because the team didn't play well.

Represent Your Team

Attend every meeting pertaining to player recognition (such as all-state and all-region,) where coaches vote. If you're not there, you're letting your players down.

Take the Blame and Give the Credit

After a loss, take the blame in front of the team and the media. After a win, give all the credit to your team. Players and teams know when they didn't play well. You can take care of the details at practice. Never call a specific

player out in front of the team during the game or after.

Outwork Your Team

Work every hour possible for the team and the program. Long hours are part of the profession, whether it's reviewing film, planning practice, scheduling, or working on the field. If your team is selling a product to raise money, you need to do it as well. We expect our players to work hard; so we need to do the same.

Learn Every Day

Search every source possible for new material and new ideas to help you become a better coach. We spend a lot of time searching for technique and tactics but often forget to spend an equal amount of time researching leadership and team building.

Trust Your Team

Teach them every day at practice, then trust their decisions on the field or on the floor during the game. You learned to coach through the experience of seeing what worked and what didn't. They will also learn when you show encouragement and confidence in everything they do.

Be Quiet

Knowledge is power, so don't feel like you need to use it to disarm someone, whether it's a player, parent or another coach. Develop your listening skills and acknowledge other ideas.

Delegate

Use your staff in the best way possible. They want to contribute and are an integral part of the team's success. Give them specific duties at every practice and game. Doing this frees you up to take care of other areas.

Don't Feel You Have to Win Every Battle

Whether it's a player or parent who offers suggestions or complains, don't feel you have to win every battle. Acknowledge what they have to say and explain your point of view in a calm professional way. They may not agree with you, and it's not earth-shattering if you don't win that battle.

Feed Your Passion

Attend every clinic, convention, residential course and seminar possible. Get the school or booster organization to pay for all or part of the costs when you can. Learning new concepts from the elite in your profession will inspire you to reach new heights.

Take Time for Yourself and Family

Your family and your health should be your top priorities. Take time away from your job to relax and enjoy being with your family. You will never be able to relive moments taken away by your career, and without your health you won't be able to do your job. Work-life balance is key.

Escape

Develop a plan for releasing all the tensions of your job, either every day, every other day, or every week. It might be a workout routine, walking, running, hiking, listening to music, or taking a small trip. It's important that you escape those pressures, and return each day with a clear mind ready to face new challenges.

Embrace Your Players

Players need to know you care about them. Find out all you can about their hobbies and interests. I highly recommend having a talent show for your team. You will be amazed at the talent they possess away from the field! When you show a genuine interest in their lives, they're willing to work harder for the benefit of the team.

Recognize Your Assistants

Being an assistant coach is the purest form of coaching. Assistants don't have to worry about issues and paperwork that come with being the head coach. However, sometimes they aren't recognized at the district, regional or national level like head coaches. So go overboard and recognize them in the local media and at the banquet.

Communicate and Cooperate

Develop a good relationship with the booster or parent organization. They work hard behind the scenes for the benefit of their children and the team. Pitch in and help whenever possible; it will earn you bonus points. Work with your athletic director in a positive manner. When he or she helps your team, let them know how happy you are and that you're thankful for their efforts.

It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day responsibilities of coaching. However, by keeping the ideals outlined here in sight, you can serve in a way that will enhance everyone's experiences and keep that coaching fire burning bright. That's what coaching is all about.