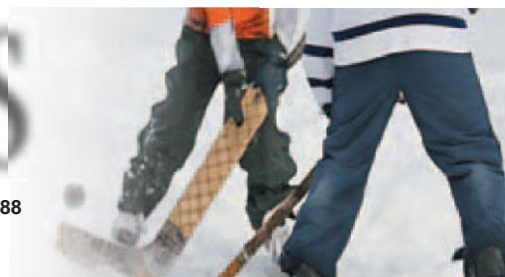


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What makes a good coach?



Tara Chisolm
Training Matters



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Growing up in Canada with a hockey loving father, I was accustomed to hearing Don Cherry's voice ring out across our living room telling us who lost their job today in the NHL. Other times I would be catching a late night Sportscentre broadcast (and then proceeding to watch the rerun five more times) on who was going to take the Calgary Flames all the way this year. At that time I didn't know that I wanted to be a coach, but something was telling me that either a lot of people were going to be really happy with you or really upset.

As I started into my coaching career I took part in my fair share of coaching clinics. In these clinics, they talked about the characteristics of a good coach. It was often suggested to look back on your own playing career and decide who made a positive impact in your life and why that was. Or, maybe even easier, look back and see who made choices that negatively impacted your sporting career and what you would do differently in that situation if you were the coach.

For some people, these positive or negative experiences are the reason why they are becoming a coach in the first place.

I now facilitate coaching clinics and find that this very open question of what makes a good coach often elicits some of the most in-depth conversations. I'd like to share with you some of the responses that I have heard.

One of the most common things I hear is that good coaches are also great life teachers. Individuals said that they learned just as much about how to treat people and work on skills to improve themselves outside of sport, as they did learning the actual tactical and technical skills of the sport.

Another common response was the good coaches model the behaviour that they want to see from their athletes. For example, one participant stated a negative experience where their coach would use profanity towards the officials and often get kicked out of games. Due to the coach's behaviour it was hard for the players to model appropriate behaviour when their main role model did not.

Having a coach who is honest, approachable and fair was often cited within the top responses. It was reflected on that having a coach you could talk to at any time to get honest feedback on how to improve was one of the most helpful characteristics of a good coach. A negative experience often shared was coaches who had all this knowledge but either were not approachable or only invested time with certain players.

There are many opinions on what makes a good coach. This often changes depending on your own coaching philosophy and the life experiences that you have had. Therefore, I encourage you when you have a spare moment to look back or even reflect on the present and ask yourself "What makes a good coach?"