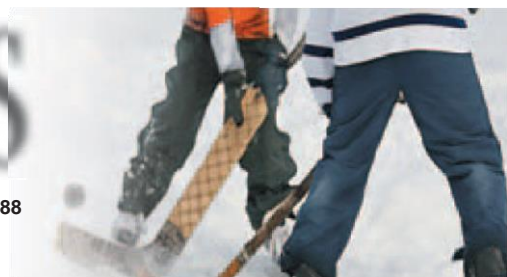


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Assistant coaches a critical part of any team



Tara Chisolm
Training Matters



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There are movies, books, and entire television series dedicated to the stories of great head coaches. These stories often tell of someone who led their team through adversity and defied all odds. And as true as these stories may be, the one thing that I notice they usually forget to do is shed light on the underbelly of that story.

How often is the crew of staff that helped the head coach showcased? Let's acknowledge the critical but often forgotten leader, the assistant coach.

What does not get portrayed in a made-for-TV sports movie is that often, the first group that the head coach thanks after their family (and sometimes before) is their coaching staff. Great head coaches know that sport leadership is not conducted by one person alone. There are many people with a variety of roles that contribute to the success of a team or athlete.

Assistant coaches are a crucial piece to a well rounded sports program. There has not been a lot written about what makes a great assistant coach but I have picked up some ideas on it over the years.

An assistant coach must be a great communicator. They communicate not only to the head coach but can act as a bridge between the athletes and the head coach. Often referred to as a players' coach, many assistants find it easier than the head coach to get to know the players on a deeper level. It is often thought that this may have to do with their lack of control of things like playing time where they may not have as much say.

Another thing that I have noticed with great coaching teams are they are just that —teams. Each person has strengths and weaknesses that help to round out a team and make it whole. The head coach may have years of experience whereas the assistant coach is full of new ideas on emerging skill development and strategies in their sport. An open acceptance of individual strengths will only add to the knowledge that the players will be able to receive.

My assistant coaches need to have trust in my process but also not be afraid to give suggestions. As a head coach I will only get better if people push me outside of my own comfort zone with new ideas and thoughts. By being able to discuss our ideas with one another we can both learn and grow. Ultimately, the growth of coaches will lead to growth in players which can allow for team transformation to reach the set goals.

Assistant coaches usually only get recognized once they get selected to coach their own program. Some never get selected and some may feel that a head coaching role is not for them. However, what I think we can also stand do a better job of is truly give credit to those assistant coaches in our lives.

When I look back at my time as an athlete, it was often those assistant coaches that took the time to get to know me that gave me some of the greatest support and encouragement at that point in my life. Who were those coaches for you?

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