

COACHING TIPS ✓✓✓

Positive Coaching

Sport undoubtedly has the ability to have a positive influence on individuals at many levels, both on and beyond the playing field. However participating in sport itself does not teach values and character, indeed it has been commented that sport doesn't build character but reveals it. If sport is to be the positive influence that it has the undoubted potential to be then coaches, administrators and parents need to be conscious of the values that they are promoting, both consciously and unconsciously.

Jim Thompson established the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), based at California's Stanford University, in 1998 having witnessed both the positive and negative effects of sports participation on youngsters. A major emphasis of the *Positive Coaching* philosophy is to use sports to teach youngsters skills and attitudes that will help them to succeed not only in sport, but in life.

The PCA has a number of high profile supporters and its spokesperson is Phil Jackson, coach of the Los Angeles Lakers Basketball Team with whom he has won 3 NBA titles, and former coach of the Chicago Bulls with whom he won 6 NBA titles. According to Jackson *Positive Coaching* as promoted by the PCA, *'fused a lot of my thoughts about coaching and being a parent of young athletes. I recommend it wholeheartedly for all coaches. Being a believer in motivation through support and praise, I know it works at a professional level too.'*

The messages of *Positive Coaching* are comprehensively covered in two books by Thompson: *Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem through Sports* (1995); and *The Double-Goal Coach: Positive Coaching Tools for Honouring the Game and Developing Winners in Sports and Life* (2003). These books are aimed not only at coaches but also teachers and parents. Indeed, the importance of supportive parents and tips for encouraging positive parenting in sport are key features of both books.

Key ideas that are explored in the books and promoted via the PCA include the development of youngsters' self-esteem, recognising and maximising opportunities to build character, how to make the most of mistakes, the role of winning and the lessons in losing, and developing a positive team culture. The idea of the Double-Goal Coach refers to a coach with the twin goals of developing winners in sport and in life. A key concept here is the definition of 'winner', which in this context relates to the achievement of task mastery and individual goals.

Thompson highlights that *Positive Coaching* is about setting high standards and then supporting players to achieve those standards through encouragement rather than fear and intimidation. He also promotes the fact that this approach can result in sport being a more enjoyable experience for youngsters thus helping to reduce drop-out and burnout.

To conclude, in Thompson's own words the PCA, *'is all about helping coaches help kids to develop a lifelong love of sports and physical activity, to extract life lessons from their ephemeral moments on the playing field, and to acquire an enhanced sense of self that will enlarge their possibilities in the uncertain game of life. My personal definition of a coach is someone who draws extraordinary performance from ordinary people; someone who, over time, helps ordinary people become extraordinary. It is my hope that the PCA assists coaches in creating a legacy of helping the children that they coach and/or parent become the extraordinary individuals they are meant to be.'*

For further information on the Positive Coaching Alliance please visit www.positivecoach.org