

What is a Coach

A coach can be many things to many different people. A coach is a teacher, a mentor, a role model, sometimes a friend and confidant. Most of all though a coach must be positive. Below are listed traits of a positive coach.

➤ **Puts players first:**

A positive coach wants to win but understands that he is first and foremost an educator with the development of his players his top priority. He understands that children go through developmental stages and uses age-appropriate coaching strategies. He values the long-term welfare of his players more than looking good as a coach. He avoids the trap of thinking the game is about him rather than for the players. Where winning is in conflict with the long-term benefit of the athletes, a positive coach has an unwavering commitment to what is best for the athletes.

➤ **Develops character as well as skills:**

A positive coach uses the crucible of competition as a virtual classroom. She seizes upon victory and defeat as teachable moments--opportunities to build in her athletes' self-confidence and positive character traits such as determination, courage, empathy and commitment. She wants to win, but even more wants to transmit lessons that will carry over into the rest of her athletes' lives". She is loyal to players and reluctant to "give up" on them, especially "at-risk" athletes who have the most to gain from participating in sports.

➤ **Fosters internal motivation:**

A positive coach encourages players to develop internal motivation with minimal reliance on external punishment and rewards. He listens to and seeks information from his players to learn to better tap into their internal motivation. He is himself internally motivated and sets an example for players.

➤ **Coaches for mastery:**

A positive coach coaches for mastery rather than victory, which she sees as a by-product of the pursuit of excellence. She focuses on effort rather than outcome, learning rather than comparison to others. She recognizes that mistakes are an important and inevitable part of learning and encourages an environment in which players are willing to risk making a mistake. She sets standards of continuous learning and improvement for herself and her players. She encourages and inspires her players, whatever their level of mastery, to strive to get better without threatening them. She is committed to becoming the best coach she can be and continually seeks to improve her own effectiveness.

➤ **Refuses to motivate through fear, intimidation, or shame:**

A positive coach establishes order and discipline in a positive manner. Many coaches are positive when things are going well and the team is winning. A positive coach works to remain positive even through losing streaks. He recognizes that it is often when things go wrong that a coach can have the most positive impact and teach the most important lessons. Regardless of the adversity involved, he refuses to demean himself or his players by resorting to fear, intimidation or shame. He always treats athletes with respect regardless of how well they perform.

➤ **Creates a partnership with players:**

A positive coach resists an authoritarian role in which players are conditioned to please the coach. She involves team members in determining team rules. She recognizes that communication is the lifeblood of effective relationships and works hard to establish clear and effective two-way communication with her players. She seeks to win the cooperation of her players through encouragement and treats them as partners working together to achieve mutual goals.

➤ **Honors the Game:**

A positive coach feels an obligation to the sport he coaches. He loves his sport and shares his love and enjoyment with his players. He feels privileged to be able to take part in his sport. He respects his opponents, recognizing that a worthy opponent will push him and his team to do their best. He understands the important role that officials play and strives to show them respect even when he disagrees with their decisions. He values the rich tradition of his sport and works to honor the spirit as well as the letter of its rules. A positive coach demonstrates personal integrity and would rather lose than win by dishonoring the game. Dishonoring the game is worse than defeat.

Positive coaching should be anywhere and everywhere. It does not, and should not stop at any level. It is, without doubt, the best way to coach. Expectations grow as you move up the levels, but even at college level, even on the US-U19 team, etc. you are still teaching the game. There is no level, where as a coach, you cease teaching the game. As long as you teach, teach in a positive manner. It will produce the best players, and ultimately, the best results.