

Coach: A Word That Transcends The Wisdom of Coach John Wooden

There are few teachers who cross the boundaries and are relevant in all walks of life: weather coaching basketball, hockey, football, strength and conditioning, or a business leader looking for better ways to allow others to attain their potential for greatness. All professionals can grow and become more complete individuals/teachers when acting on Coach John Wooden's wisdom. I had the opportunity to read Coach Wooden's book: "*Wooden On Leadership*" and my highlighter almost ran out before I finished the first chapter. Below are his important bits of advice that transcend the word "Coach". When applied correctly, this information can bring us one step further in our quest for personal greatness.

Coaching Wisdom

- **The Best leaders are lifelong learners:** "When you start having all the right answers, you will stop asking all the right questions" (Wooden). Constantly seek ways to improve! Learning also means learning from other's mistakes. Abraham Lincoln used to say, "I never met a person from whom I didn't learn something, although most of the time it was something not to do."
- **Do not Equate Professional Expertise with your Ability to Teach It:** Teaching is different than playing. Just because you played at a high level DOES NOT mean you can teach at a high level. Coaching is an art that needs to be constantly nourished.
- **Don't Cause Indigestion:** "The greatest holiday feast is eaten one bite at a time. Gulp it down all at once and you get indigestion. I discovered the same was true in teaching. To be effective, a leader must dispense information in bite size, digestible amounts" (Wooden). As strength coaches, don't speak "Greek" to your athletes, and provide proper regression in your exercise selection. This prevents "indigestion" and information overload.
- **Remember that Good Demonstration Tops a Great Description:** The fundamentals of coaching/teaching: explanation, demonstration, imitation, feedback and repetition. Action trumps words!
- **Expanding Time:** "My record keeping was comprehensive but really no different from that of a banker who accounts for every penny and can show you the records of transactions going back years and years" (Wooden). As Coaches we need to keep meticulous notes, past workouts and results. This information allows us to grow and become more efficient at what we do further reaching our potential for greatness. This also allows us to use time more efficiently. Time is of essence as coaches. Use it wisely for you will never get it back again.
- **"There is no progress without change, but not all change is progress."** What a powerful statement! Think of how much has changed in the world of strength and conditioning. The more I learn, the more I realize how much I still don't know. Although there has been change in our industry (i.e. core

training), not all change has been progress. The “functional” era created a frenzy of athletes waving 5lb dumbbells around while balancing on BOSU balls. Not all change is progress!

- **Systems:** What is your system as a Coach/business owner? Coach Wooden’s systems for greatness with his teams were: Condition, Fundamentals, and Unity. These ingredients were a “blueprint” used to produce champions. What are your ingredients?

Professional Wisdom

- **Choice:** The choice to become a GREAT coach rests in the decisions we make. “There is a choice that you have to make, in everything you do, So keep in mind that in the end, the choice you make, makes you.” –Anon
- **Attain Personal Greatness:** “I believe that personal greatness is measured against one’s own potential, not against someone else on the team or elsewhere” (Wooden). We all have the capacity to become great coaches and teachers. It’s a never-ending road that we do not walk alone. The important thing however is to become the best that YOU can be. Don’t worry about comparing yourself with others. Your athletes and clients will thank you for it.

Coach Wooden’s wisdom spills over into everything that we do as coaches and leaders. He was always seeking improvement in trying to reach for the impossible, perfection. As Coaches’, we need to take his wisdom and put it into practice measuring our potential for greatness one-step at a time. This is the stamp of a “successful” coach, a word that transcends.

Reference

- (1) Wooden J, Jamison S, *Wooden on Leadership*, McGraw-Hill Books, 2005.

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