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# Preface

Coach Stewart has taken three losing programs to the playoffs within his first two seasons at the helm. Since none of these schools **had any scholarship players on their roster**, Stewart's system gave his players a chance to be successful versus superior talent.

- McFarland, a small, agricultural school of 600 students with no weight room, had lost 21 games in a row. Stewart served as offensive coordinator and went 8-2 with a playoff berth.
- Stewart returned to McFarland as head coach and took a 1-19 program to playoffs in Year 2;
- Broke an 0-27 losing streak at 900-student Corcoran, winning an undefeated league title in Year 2;
- Porterville, a large, rural school of 2,000 students, won 40 games in 5 years, including back-to-back section runner-up's after only winning 8 games in the 5 years prior to his arrival.

With 27 years total high school experience, 12 as a head coach, Stewart started out as running an under center, traditional Wing-T offense before evolving to the Pistol formation which opened up the passing game. The powerful running game has Buck, Belly, Down, and Jet along with Midline and Veer. Built into every run play are QB reads of unblocked defenders which accentuates the "defense is never right" philosophy of the Wing-T.

The versatile passing game has 1 and 3-step drop back passing which involves smash, stick, mesh, and Hi-Low concepts. The sprint out attack has a cover 3 beater that looks like 24 different plays to the defense! There are also a 2-safety and man beater concepts. The passing attack wraps up with perimeter and middle screens, as well as Stewart's signature wraparound sally draw play.

## A Message From Coach Stewart

You can have the most complete, well thought out offensive system that football has ever seen and none of it will matter if **YOU CAN'T TEACH IT TO YOUR PLAYERS!!!**

"The scariest offense is the one that practices 1 play a thousand times  
instead of practicing 1,000 plays only ONE time."

The purpose of this book is to show you how to maximize your practice time. Practice fast, efficient, and physical. Not only put them in, but rep them enough times to be really good at running them. This requires a very organized coaching staff who can "coach on the fly" and run practices at high tempos. It also requires "MASS TEACHING" where players are constantly getting reps and not standing in lines.

As you take in all of these techniques and drills...please remember the most important job that you have as coach: To teach your players to be better sons, husbands, and fathers. As hundreds of coaches will testify on my behalf, I enjoy giving back to this great game and am always available to answer questions at

rick@allaccesscoaching.com.  
GOOD LUCK!!!

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## SECTION ONE

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# PHILOSOPHY



**Chapter 1 : Overview of the Wing T**

**Chapter 2 : Good Coaching**

**Chapter 3 : Practice Philosophy**

My WORST TO FIRST: How to Build a Championship Program will have actual team activities that gets your coaches and players to the places described in this chapter. They are written in lesson plan format.

# Good Coaching



## What is Coaching?

Coaching is improving performance. There are many different types of coaching and most people consider the coach as an expert in his field. Most definitions of coaching would focus on the present and most coaches themselves are narrowly focused on that practice or that season.

There is a huge difference between teaching someone and helping them to learn. We want to focus on the coach as a facilitator of learning because fundamentally, the coach who is helping athletes improve their performance are helping them to learn. Good coaches believe that every athlete has the potential/skill/answer but only needs a coach to discover that potential/skill/answer.

**Coaching is helping athletes to learn rather than teaching them.**

### THE INNER GAME

This belief that the answers to individuals' problems lies inside them is studied at great length by Timothy Gallwey in his book, "The Inner Game". Gallwey offers the perspective about the distracting little voice inside not only athletes, but everyone's head, which can be the biggest obstacles to success and achieving potential.

Coaches, according to Gallwey, can help their athletes improve by distracting them from the inner, critical voice telling them "Not like that! Lower Your Shoulder! Keep Your Head Up!". The body will instinctively take over if the inner voice is distracting because the body has a very clear idea of what to do when internal dialogues are silenced. An example would be focusing on the football coming at the receiver or the aiming point of the hip for the blocker executing a down block. Don't think about the play, or failure, or what other players are doing. The simple act of focusing on a finite detail will distract the inner voice and allow the body to take over.

The vital part of coaching, then, is to get your athletes to silence that inner voice and allow their subconscious instincts, to take over. Sometimes that means distracting it, and sometimes it's about exploring the 'worst case scenario' and removing the fear. This is often referred to as a "fail-safe system".

## **PYGMALION EFFECT**

### **A Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

It seems like just plain common sense: if you believe in someone they will succeed. Positive reinforcement leads to good results and those who expect more, get more. The opposite is also true, if you expect someone to perform poorly, there is a good chance that they will. This phenomenon of high expectations increasing results is known as the Pygmalion effect. A corollary of the Pygmalion effect is the golem effect, in which low expectations lead to a decrease in performance.

Coaches that understand this powerful motivator of believe will repeat the words “you’re better than that” until it sinks into the subconscious of the player who now thinks: “Yeah, I am better than that.” Athletes will perform better when they feel as though you actually want to help them achieve their goals, versus them only being there to help the coach achieve his.

While beliefs in the athlete affects performance, a coach is affected by the beliefs they have about themselves. The “self-verification theory” refers to coaches who want to be known as the expert and create situations to prove themselves right. When the self-verifying evaluations fail, they will still look at nonexistent evidence in order to be right, which is “confirmation bias”. The coach ignores any evidence that disconfirms their preconceptions. (Bernier, 2014).

An example of this would be the star JV quarterback who is promoted to varsity. However, the varsity coach does not believe that the player can duplicate his success since varsity is more competitive, so they move the player to wide receiver. Learning a new position mid-season causes the player to make mistakes, which the “self-verification” coach uses as proof that the player was not good to play QB.

Coaches are still humans and have human emotions. They form preconceived opinions of the athletes, however, this is not a self-fulfilling prophecy in itself. **The self-fulfilling prophecy occurs once the coach acts on those beliefs.** I have been guilty of forming these opinions based on past performance, poor effort or a series of bad choices, which caused me to stop giving them opportunities to improve. In other words, I acted on those beliefs and gave up on the kid, which is the Golem effect.

Coaches need to be careful of sharing and possibly enforcing their beliefs of a particular athlete on other coach. A coaching staff should try to use objective measures to evaluate performance. As an example if we have had a running back in the past that may have turned the ball over (fumbled) 6 times in 80 carries, rather than saying he should not carry the ball or he is fumble prone, we would look at the statistics as an indication that we need more work on ball handling and ball security.

### **Success And The Little Voice**

According to dictionary.com, failure is defined as a “lack of success”, and the definition of success is the “accomplishment of an aim or purpose.” John Wooden defined success as being at peace with yourself knowing that you gave your very best effort. UCLA softball coach Sue Enquist (2015) states that failure and success holds hands and believes that a person must be comfortable talking about failure in order to fall in love with success.

Enquist (2015) describes a 3-part process to encouraging risk and creating an environment where athletes are not afraid to fail:

- How you THINK;
- how you SPEAK; and
- how you ACT.

THINKING entails positive thoughts and “staining the brain” to overpower the weak voice with the strong voice. SPEAKING requires her 33% shield that prevents the negative 33% of people from causing

## A Final Word

When a team is committed to the process, they always win because they are improving daily. Players are constantly moving towards what they want because of the tiny actions they're taking. There is one caveat to this:

**They have to constantly and never-ending improve the process that they're using.**

Mike Kryzyzewski is always talking about CHARACTER DRIVING THE PROCESS and how a person will stumble in the process if they lack character. There are two skill sets that make up a person's character: performance and morals. Character is what you do when nobody is looking and a person has character SKILLS, not TRAITS, since they are not born with them, but acquires them through experience

In closing, sit down with your coaches and visualize how you want your team to look, both on and off the field. Then go through some exercises with your players to help them visualize the kind of players and person they want to be. One a picture or "vision" has been created of what the end product looks like: then ask....

**"What do we have to consistently do in order to have what we want?"**

Then, commit to the process that'll help you and your team achieve it and refine it along the way. The outcome – or one you haven't even considered – will inevitably be a positive one. That, you can believe in. **"It's the journey that's important. You can't worry about end results. It's about what you control, every minute of every day. You always have to have a winning attitude and discipline, in practices, weight training, conditioning, in the classroom, in everything. It's a process."**

– Nick Saban.

## TEAMWORK

There are very few activities that place such an enormous premium on effort than the game of football. The mental status is as important as developing physical strength and skills. This is incredibly important aspect of your team. Players with average ability can become great players simply because they played football in high priority and thoroughly apply themselves.

Football requires many one-person successes culminating at the same time. When you work with someone and depend on him, loyalty becomes a necessity. This means that the coach must see that the athlete's individual interests are deeply intertwined with a concern for their teammates and coaches as well. No group effort can be successful without loyalty and paradoxically, disloyalty demeans the individual more than it hurts the group. The concept of loyalty extends beyond individuals, it encompasses principles such as accepting the discipline of training rules.

THE PARADOX is that no team will become great with even a single dissident and on the flip side, only complete loyalty will enable athletes to truly reach previously unreachable goals.

Today's society has shown that fewer and fewer people want to hear rules and regulations. We are a culture that embraces individuality and accepts differences. However, the first ingredient for an exceptional football team, is that everyone enthusiastically joins the team. They must join without reservation, recognizing team goals as well as their own. The second ingredient is placing football as a high priority. Football is not a place for people with casual interests. Obviously, people join for their own personal reasons and that is OK, but they also must be accountable to the team.

**WHILE A YOUNG MAN  
MAY BE ASKED TO DIE  
FOR THEIR TEAM, THEY  
WOULD MUCH RATHER  
LIVE FOR THEMSELVES**

## TEAM OWNERSHIP

Coaches should give the team to the players via a leadership council as soon as possible. Make it their team and not the coach's team. This procedure begins by selling the responsibility for this success at the outset. Coaches want them to assume the ownership of the group. I usually give this speech to my team:

*“I wasn't a very good football player when I was a kid, and now that I can't run tackle or catch the ball, it is likely that I'm not going to be much help to you. I can pick the starting lineup and call the plays, but when things are tough on the field, you'll have to make the big play.”*

This may sound humorous, but it does make sense. The coach who keeps total control and ownership of the team robs his players of the one big reason they're playing. They want to have autonomy over their playing experiences. They need to feel that they have a real stake in the overall plan and even the thrill of winning. A coach who delegates this ownership, cannot take the blame for losing either. For example: “I was out coached today”, may sound like a general statement and a coach is taking ownership. However, what happens when the team wins the next week? The implication is that the team won because of coaching. A coach of a player-oriented team can never be greater than his players.

Establishing ownership for a player is one of the coaches most effective psychological tasks. Demonstrating to them that it's their team, and that both the rewards and the embarrassment of failure will be theirs.

My teams have always taken great pride in out working the other teams, especially since I have never coached a scholarship athlete in 27 years, however, we have beaten many teams with scholarship players, including 2 future NFL players. Teaching players how to compete is also very important, especially when I took over three really awful programs. I had to teach them how to hate losing, followed by learning how to win.

It was important that they did not use the scoreboard to define winning and losing (another Wooden quote), but that they understood that winning and losing happens every day. Many of my players have told me that they remember me telling them: “Playoffs are won in January”. In other words, the work in the weight room would define our success in the fall. The 3rd important performance skill is resiliency, because young people want instant success and will give up at the first sign of failure. I am always telling them to “turn the page” and one of my mottos is BETTER TODAY, BUT NOT AS GOOD AS TOMORROW. I am constantly talking to my players about failure being life's greatest teacher.

**My WORST TO FIRST: How to Build a Championship Program will have actual team activities that gets your coaches and players to the places described in this chapter. They are written in lesson plan format.**

1. The ability to communicate with the players is the most important attribute a coach can have.
2. Be honest and be yourself.
3. Two things motivate: fear of failure and anticipation of the word.
4. View motivation from the players standpoint – be subtle, no one wants to be manipulated
5. The most successful motivational technique is to help each player get what he wants.
6. Be sensitive to individual needs even though football is a team sport.
7. Help your players develop a plan.
8. Answer questions before they are asked. An informed team doesn't ask why.
9. Create an atmosphere of ownership.
10. Self-esteem begins with a sense of autonomy. Make the players responsible.
11. Successful pep talks are the result of certain circumstances and are not staged.
12. Avoid the use of canned phrases.

# Practice Philosophy



**“Coaching” is putting each player in his own game situation as many times as possible, as many different ways as possible. – Bud Wilkinson**

Your practice organization should reflect the major thing you ask of your athletes – a drive for perfection. Developing an organization for success is your way of showing the importance of practice and your interest in assisting them.

There seems to be several misconceptions about football practice that you should clarify with your team from the beginning. First, contrary to the old adage, “practice makes perfect,” we believe that only “perfect practice makes perfect”. We believe that we can only play in a game as good as we practiced. We do not believe it is possible to play better than you practiced.

Second, I have noticed there is a feeling among many players that they will suddenly have the intensity necessary to win when they play in the game. It is our opinion a team develops speed and intensity levels during practice that will determine their game hardness and the quality of their play. Practicing at half speed would be analogous to baseball players taking batting practice against a pitcher throwing underhand. It won’t help prepare for a game. We insist that our practice is game speed.

Makes Practice Valuable – Makes Game Attractive. Middle school and youth athletes rarely practice. They come to you with no clue about practicing since chances are that their Dad coached them and just ran plays for 2 hours.

Your players must believe in the necessity of practice. Many of the old drills and ways are worthless! Don’t be afraid to change the paradigm.

### **Practice Organization Is The Number One Yardstick by Which Coaches Are Evaluated**

- Organized – All coaches coaching, players playing
- Intense – Must practice at “game speed,” must practice TEAM situations at “game speed.”
- Applicable – Does what you are doing in practice get done in the game? Run-pass percent in practice should equal the run-pass percentage in the game.
- Valuable – You only have time for the most important things.
- Provide for Repetition – Someone doesn’t improve a skill by doing it once. They must take “batting practice”. Skills vary tremendously by position.



## **RACEHORSE MENTALITY**

The Wing-T offense has a lot to install, especially the Pistol Wing T. It is imperative to move through practice quickly and efficiently in order to cover it all. Every coach should want maximum reps. Many coaches make that claim, but the racehorse philosophy really does get maximum reps. Everything within this philosophy is designed to facilitate getting maximum reps for teaching.

### **Coach on the Fly**

When coaches make corrections, you do not want them to earn their doctorate by giving a dissertation on the field. Our coaches must get in the habit of using the **BUZZWORDS** that we created in the spring. The drill or play should never stop to correct one player. The correction must happen while the drill is happening. If the correction takes explanation, sub the player out.

Stopping a play should not happen very often. The only coaches who can make the team get back on the ball is the head coach and offensive coordinator. This should only be done if several players need to be corrected. NEVER put 22 players on the ball to fix 1 or 2 players. Sub those players out so practice keeps moving, have them stand by their position coach so corrections can be made, and then get them back in.



### **Use Meeting Times to Talk**

Make sure to use practice time to improve on individual techniques. Times will arise during practice when an assignment period is necessary, but for the most part, assignment review can and should be left to meeting time. Practice time is very valuable and should not be wasted. Your coaches can make longer explanations or demonstrations once they see the film.

### **Simulate Snap Count on EVERYTHING**

There are two important points to keep in mind. First, always simulate the same cadence in drills as you do in a game (“Ready” – “Set” – “Hit”). It makes no sense to use some generic command such as “Go” or “Hit”. You want that cadence ingrained in the players’ minds.

When doing drill work, you save time by not using long cadences. By the time practice ends, you may have wasted a lot of time by calling cadences throughout practice. On sound means the quarterback or the coach running the drill will say, “Ready.” On the “R” in ready, the ball will be snapped, and the players will take off.

We assign the same snap count to each play. We don’t change the count in the huddle. That helps eliminate those aggravating off-sides penalties. It also makes 2-min offense easier and coaches don’t have to remember to change the snap counts.

### **Practice shifting and motion in team tempo period**

This offense has a lot of shifting and motions. However, every time you shift or go in motion during 11-on-11, you waste time. You do not want to take those extra minutes out of team period, when you could be getting more reps. We still do a little bit of shifting and motion during team so that we can see the timing, however, most of our shifts and motions are done during team tempo period.

Remember, our QB do not put Wings in motion. The QB never changes his routine, regardless of the snap count or whether a wing is in motion. He scans the field, lifts his foot, and barks “Ready”. It is up to the Wings to know if and when they go in motion.