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The Value of Internships in a NCACE Accredited Coaching Education Program

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Each year millions of youths participate in sport programs in the United States. The value ascribed to their experiences depends largely on the quality of their coaches. Unfortunately, many coaches are not qualified, having had little or no formal training in areas such as coaching pedagogy, sport skill analysis, and injury prevention. Due to the substantial growth in sport participation and the increasing intensity of competition, legislatures are beginning to require training for all coaches. Moreover, these legislatures believe there is a need for a unified body of knowledge that extends across all youth sports. They are cognizant of the value attributed to a sports program that is largely dependent upon the quality of its coaches. Coaches are also realizing that the best way to provide a positive experience for the participants in their programs is to become knowledgeable about the responsibilities and liabilities involved in coaching. The purpose of this article is to emphasize the importance of requiring coaching education training for all coaches, and to discuss the coaching internship which is an essential ingredient of the coaching education program.

The National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE) is a professional organization facilitated by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). The National Standards for Sport Coaches were developed, reviewed, and revised by experts from national governing bodies of sport and then published by NASPE (NASPE, 2006). NCACE grants national accreditation to educational programs that meet the essential requirements for ensuring that coaches have the opportunity to develop the appropriate skills, knowledge, and values to function as a coach. The goal of NCACE is to maximize the number of qualified coaches at all levels of sports. Professional accreditation is a process of verifying that a program is of sufficient quality to ensure that those completing such preparation will engage in safe and appropriate practices.

A program that has obtained national accreditation is highly viewed by a university as a necessity for academic success and marketability. Acquiring a nationally accredited coaching education program benefits both the university and the students. It enables the university to advertise this program's availability, thus increasing the university's marketability in attracting incoming students. Students enrolled in the program will be provided learning experiences that enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, and values associated with effective coaching. Once completed, graduates will have a better understanding of how a coach's actions and behaviors affect the family, school or organization, community, and the total growth and development of an athlete as a person.

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The coaching education program at Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA was recently awarded national accreditation by NCACE. The 18-credit program consists of five required three-credit courses and one elective. The required courses provide factual information as well as training in risk management, sport physiology and kinesiology, psychology and sociology of sport, and general coaching principles. However, it is important for students to apply their knowledge and skills of coaching in real-life situations. This capstone experience (fifth required course), Internship in Coaching Education, is designed to provide students with a semester of practical coaching field experience under the supervision of a school or community professional. The students work with an actual sport team for a minimum of 70 hours. This course ties together the entire learning experience in coaching education.

The first step in developing the internship experience is to create an approval form for the students and the personnel at the site of the internship to sign. Table 1 shows an example of such an approval form. Note that the student is legally protected by never assuming complete responsibility for the sport team.

Table 1: Approval Form

FIELD EXPERIENCE APPROVAL FORM

FIELD SUPERVISOR'S NAME _____ TEL. # _____

SCHOOL _____ SPORT _____

DATE SEASON STARTS _____ DATE SEASONS ENDS _____

PRACTICE TIME _____

PRACTICE LOCATION _____

I understand that this student will only serve as an assistant with my team and will be under my total supervision at all times. I further understand that the student at no time will be fully responsible for any coaching responsibilities of my team.

Field Supervisor's Signature

Principal's Signature

Student's Signature

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Please Return to:
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The second step is for the professor or the supervisor to clearly outline the requirements of the internship. A checklist serves as an effective and efficient tool for documenting and verifying the requirements as well as evaluating the students' progress. Table 2 is an example of what could be included in this checklist. Most of the responsibilities associated with an assistant coach have been included in the checklist.

The 1995 edition of the National Standards for Athletic Coaches was the main reference for selecting the items in this checklist. The author also utilized personal experiences as a former coach and feedback received from other coaches and athletic directors while teaching this course to develop a complete checklist. The national standards include nine domains and 37 standards. The domains are as follows: injuries: prevention, care and management (standards 1-8), risk management (standards 9-12), growth, development and learning (standards 13-17), training, conditioning and nutrition (standards 18-21), social/psychological aspects of coaching (standards 22-29), skills, tactics and strategies (standards 30-33), teaching and administration (standards 34-35), and professional preparation and development (standards 36-37). The majority of the items in the checklist are encompassed within domains 5-8; however checklist items 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 14 are related to domains 1-4.

The checklist is also divided into two sections: priority activities and supplemental activities. Students must complete all 12 of the priority activities regardless of the level (elementary, middle, or high school) and four of the six supplemental activities. The priority activities are items which usually embrace the entire internship experience and correlate with all coaching levels, versus the supplemental activities which do not correlate with all age groups.

The student should write a brief summary for each item attained in the checklist (both priority activities and supplemental activities). This serves as an additional method of assessment and/or verification of its completion.

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Table 2: Checklist

FIELD EXPERIENCE CHECK LIST

Student & Phone Number & E-Mail _____

Cooperating School(s) & Phone Number _____

Field Supervisor(s) _____

Field Supervisor's Phone Number & E-Mail _____

Sport _____

Dates of Experience _____

Dr. Smith to Student: With your field supervisor, plan your time so that you can complete the following activities. Ask him or her to do you, and us, the favor of certifying completion of each activity by initialing that activity on the blank provided.

PART A. - PRIORITY ACTIVITIES: Participate as fully and realistically as possible in ALL of the following activities in Part A. Provide a typed statement or verification for each item obtained.

- _____ 1. Observe two other coaches conducting a practice/clinic. Observe styles. Compare and contrast their philosophy and styles with your own.
- _____ 2. Perform routine duties with your field supervisor. For example: Seasonal and daily practice plans and goals - organization, practice evaluation, personnel management, game evaluation, player selection, equipment fit, worn properly, inventory and ordering, record keeping, filming, etc.
- _____ 3. Attend a coaching meeting or team meeting.
- _____ 4. Examine written athletic policies of the school (include hand-outs). Note such things as: academic eligibility, athletic physical policy, medical insurance, liability, discipline policies, attendance requirements, school's philosophy on drug misuse, drug testing, etc.
- _____ 5. Observe and participate in the emergency care program. State the process of how injuries and prevented, recognized, treated, and evaluated.

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- _____ 6. Interview the school athletic director to learn about his or her duties and responsibilities. Explore if possible, the financial aspects of interscholastic athletics. What is the total budget? Which sports are self-supporting? How are coaches hired and evaluated? How are games scheduled? Who hires the officials?
- _____ 7. Assist in planning practices taking into account individual differences, enhancement of physical, social, and emotional growth of athletes, and maintaining and modifying playing and environmental conditions for safety.
- _____ 8. Participate in designing tactics and strategies during practice and contests.
- _____ 9. Prepare and teach a practice segment, taking into account individual differences. OR Assume complete responsibility for practice organization for at least one day.
- _____ 10. Assist in the preparation for a home contest. Prepare starting line-up.
- _____ 11. Ride the team bus to an away contest. Assist in planning and supervising of equipment, departure from other school, and following-up after the contest.
- _____ 12. Interview the coach or athletic director about rules regarding college recruitment of high school athletes.

PART B. SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES: Participate as fully and realistically as possible in at least FOUR of the following activities in Part B. Provide a typed statement or verification for each item obtained.

- _____ 13. After a home contest, help the head coach notify media of all stats/results.
- _____ 14. Interview the school doctor, nurse, or athletic trainer to learn about the school practices such as medical records, treatment, supplies, liability, and school policies related to athletics (include hand-outs).
- _____ 15. Interview the guidance counselor or director to learn about services for athletes.
- _____ 16. Greet the officials. Ask them the procedures for becoming an official.
- _____ 17. Greet the visiting team's coach. Discuss record, playoffs, problems, etc.

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_____ 18. Attend a parent-coaches meeting, booster club meeting, another type of parent-school meeting, or a school board meeting.

I _____ have successfully completed the requirements for the internship.

Student's Signature

Field Supervisor's Signature

The third step is to determine classroom session assignments which are in addition to the checklist duties. The professor meets with the interns once a week for approximately one hour to facilitate the process. Students are required to develop five conditioning drills, a skill analysis for one sport skill that includes three drills, a well-planned practice, and a statistic sheet; to teach a 15 – 20 minute lesson breaking down a basic techniques or tactic; and to develop a scouting report. Each task provides the students with the opportunity to practice and integrate the assignment within the field experience. For example, interns teach the 15 - 20 minute lesson to their peers prior to teaching the athletes in the field. These classroom sessions are extremely valuable in allowing the interns to share their field experiences.

The fourth requirement for the internship is a daily log. The students should keep a record of the following items: date and & time of practice; what they did at the practice; problems that may have occurred (i.e., discipline, motivation, injuries, drugs, nutrition, ethical conduct, communication, etc.); the best and/or worst things that happened; what they agreed/disagreed with; what surprised them; what they did not know or understand; what was not expected; what was forgotten; and, if there was a contest, state the results and what they did during the contest. Requiring this journal allows the student and professor to periodically examine the various tasks involved in coaching.

The last step is the evaluation of each intern. The interns are required to: turn in a three-ring notebook that includes the checklist initialed by the supervisor; a brief summary of each item completed on the checklist; the daily log; the six assignments; an evaluation of their field supervisor; and a one - three page evaluation of the entire experience stating what they have learned about coaching, coaches, athletes, and school athletics. The field supervisor also evaluates each intern. Table 3 shows an example of the evaluation rubric that the field supervisor may use to evaluate the intern.

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Table 3: Intern Evaluation

COACHING INTERNSHIP STUDENT EVALUATION

FIELD SUPERVISOR'S NAME _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER _____

SCHOOL _____

SPORT _____

STUDENT'S NAME _____

Thank you for working with the above named Kutztown University student on the Coaching Internship. Your evaluation of the student is important. Please complete this evaluation and mail it to Dr. Smith by May 4th, 2008. THANK YOU!

Please rate the student on each of the items below on a 1-5 scale as shown. Please be candid with you comments.

- 5 = Outstanding - Would want now as an assistant coach
- 4 = Above Average - Will become a valuable assistant coach
- 3 = Average - May become a valuable assistant coach
- 2 = Below Average - Needs lots of work for me to want as an assistant coach
- 1 = Poor - Would not want as an assistant coach

Please circle the number that comes closest to your evaluation of the student in regards to each characteristic:

1. Prompt / On time	1	2	3	4	5
2. Prepared	1	2	3	4	5
3. Followed through on responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
4. Communication skills with adults	1	2	3	4	5
5. Communication skills with athletes	1	2	3	4	5
6. Professionalism	1	2	3	4	5
7. Knowledge of sport	1	2	3	4	5
8. Treats players with respect	1	2	3	4	5

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9. Performs duties enthusiastically	1	2	3	4	5
10. Uses initiative in problem solving	1	2	3	4	5
11. Stresses the fundamentals of the sport	1	2	3	4	5
12. Shows determination and dedication	1	2	3	4	5
13. Organized	1	2	3	4	5
14. Clear explanations and demonstrations	1	2	3	4	5
15. Analyzes and corrects techniques clearly	1	2	3	4	5
16. Ability to motivate players	1	2	3	4	5
17. Knowledge of training and conditioning	1	2	3	4	5
18. Able to discipline when necessary	1	2	3	4	5
19. Consistent and decisive in actions	1	2	3	4	5
20. Overall...	1	2	3	4	5

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:[illegible]

Please mail this evaluation form to: Dr. Judith L. Smith, Department of Human Kinetics,
Keystone Hall #205, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530 Thank you.

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These characteristics or qualities were developed by the author through personal coaching and teaching experiences, and revised through the assistance of coaches and athletic directors at the various internship sites.

The value of internships in the NCACE Accredited Coaching Education Program is clear. Coaches who are educated through these internships are better prepared and less apt to risk the welfare of the athlete, the coaching program, the school systems, the families involved, and themselves. Indeed, participants at all levels benefit from the organizational, technical, and teaching skills developed through the internship. In addition, the university has the added benefit of being the recipient of the accolades that result from the high quality of its graduates.

References

National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (1995). National Standards for Athletic Coaches. Reston, VA.

National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (2006). National Standards for Sport Coaches. Reston, VA.

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