Preparing the Next Generation: Practical Tips for Mentoring Student Coaches During Internship

Melissa A. Murray  
University of Southern Mississippi

Rebecca Zakrajsek  
Indiana State University

Kristen D. Dieffenbach  
West Virginia University

Abstract

Schempp, McCullick and Mason (2006) suggested gaining hands-on experience is the key element of coach development and the process of becoming a professional expert in the field. Cushion, Armour, and Jones (2003) also recommend the opportunity to observe more experienced coaches as a key experience in novice coach’s development. At the collegiate level in the U.S., a model similar to scholastic teacher training is the foundation for academic-based coaching education programs that seek to combine classroom-based education with experiential learning. In these programs student coaches are generally required to participate in field internship experiences in order to develop a strong art- and science-based approach to coaching. This internship experience is one of great importance, especially since expert coaches have identified having a quality mentor relationship early in their career as essential to their development as a coach (Nash & Sproule, 2009).

Given the central position senior coaches have with regard to the development of student coaches within the academically structured internship, preparing the senior coach for their role in developing the student coach is crucial. This poster presents several practical tips for the senior coach working with the student coaches, each of which is in line with the National Standards for Sport Coaches (NASPE, 2006). Three phases of the internship are discussed: a) building rapport, b) working with the student coach, and (c) transition. The authors outline several strategies to help senior coaches build rapport with student coaches, such as a one-on-one meetings and being as specific as possible about what to expect from the internship experience. The second phase, working with the student coach, should be the most educational for the student. The authors suggest senior coaches begin this phase with very concrete instructions for the student. As the internship progresses, the senior coach can become more abstract in educational strategies, including hypothetical thinking. He/she might ask the student coach what to change in multiple scenarios. Finally, the authors encourage the senior coach to aid the student coach in the transition out of the internship by providing opportunities for reflection and evaluation.