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BOOK REVIEW

The Ethics of Sports Coaching

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The Ethics of Sports Coaching

Coaching sports involves individuals with various backgrounds, experiences, education, and personalities stepping into leadership roles that require them to make not only on-field or on-court decisions, but also engage in a myriad of potential moral and ethical decisions. The premise underlying *The Ethics of Sports Coaching* is that education and resources for coaching have largely been performance-based, focusing mainly on the technical aspects of coaching. However, coaching is fundamentally grounded in human interaction and relationships. Some attention has been paid, particularly in the sport psychology literature, to the motivational, leadership, communication, and relationship aspects of coaching. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the process of sports coaching and the moral and ethical issues and decisions that coaches will face during their coaching careers. With the recent developments concerning the lack of ethical conduct by coaches and administrators in the scandal at Penn State University in the United States and the many other examples highlighted at times in the media, the need for a resource that discusses these issues and examines the practice of sports coaching through a moral and ethical lens is poignant.

The Ethics of Sports Coaching, edited by Alun R. Hardman and Carwyn Jones, brings together an impressive group of international perspectives on the nature of coaching and the ethical and philosophical issues and implications underlying the practice of coaching. The purpose of the book is to challenge the predominant view that the focus of coaching literature, discussion, and education be aimed at performance and competition outcomes. The editors and contributing scholars argue that the process of coaching should be a main focus, with particular attention devoted to understanding the moral and ethical implications of coaching decisions and the impact this has on the coach-athlete relationship and the role and practices of sports coaches.

The Ethics of Sports Coaching critically analyzes the practice of coaching by discussing key ethical issues that follow a logical progression through four central themes. Each chapter and theme builds upon what has been discussed in previous sections. Part I, *The Nature of Coaching*, sets up the rest of the book by discussing the purpose of coaching and the misguided use of codes of conduct as rules to abide by for fear of getting caught rather than promoting and valuing the spirit of sport, achievement, and competition.

Journal of Coaching Education

Part II, *The Character of the Coach*, directs attention to the interaction of the personalities, philosophies, values, roles, and behaviors of the coach. This section covers topics including becoming a good (i.e., morally virtuous) coach in the face of the many complexities inherent in coaching, an investigation of objectivity and subjectivity in coaching as it particularly concerns judgment about moral issues and the impact of coaching philosophy, and an argument that coaches and administrators have a moral responsibility to promote the morality of sport and serve as models for this morality.

Part III, *Coaching Specific Populations*, focuses on moral and ethical issues related to three specific areas: youth sport, males coaching female athletes, and Paralympic sports. The youth sport discussion centers around the ideas that youth sport coaches are obligated to act in the best interest of the athletes, promote their autonomous growth and development in and outside of sport, and support the development of intrinsic motivation (i.e., a focus on achievement and accomplishment relative to oneself) rather than extrinsic motivation (i.e., a focus on achieving compared to others). The discussion of gender focuses on potentially unethical situations that have or can arise when adult males coach young female athletes with particular focus on the impact of the power differential in those relationships. The essay on Paralympic sports emphasizes that the unique issues, factors, and characteristics of this population need to be taken into consideration when coaching these athletes rather than simply modifying coaching principles and practices used for coaching 'able-bodied' athletes.

Finally, Part IV, *Coaching in Context: Contemporary Ethical Issues*, focuses on specific contexts in which ethical and moral issues are currently significant including youth talent identification, performance enhancement, coaching dangerous sports, and expatriate coaching.

The Ethics of Sports Coaching is framed as an essential first examination of the ethics of coaching intended for students, researchers, and practitioners. The editors and contributing authors are all internationally recognized scholars, researchers, faculty, and practitioners with backgrounds in areas such as coaching, education, sport, philosophy, and ethics. Thus, the book is a collection of theoretical essays and arguments aimed at changing the focus of the discussion of sports coaching. As such, at times it is laden with jargon and rhetoric found in the academic realm of these disciplines. Thus, the book is limited in scope as it is not written for the average reader or general coaching population. However, it seems an excellent resource for scholars and graduate-level students in coaching, sports ethics/philosophy, sports management, and sport psychology, as well as those individuals poised to set coaching standards, guidelines, and climates for ethical coaching practice.

The book presents a compelling argument to reframe the discussion of coaching to focus more intently and critically on the moral and ethical issues inherent in the practice of sports coaching. It would serve as a valuable resource to begin a discussion on the moral and ethical underpinnings of sports coaching, provide a basis for future research in this area, and aid in the development of quality coaching education programs.