BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by Cliffy Gayle and Darlene Kluka
Barry University

There continues to be disconcerting information about a crisis in youth sport in the United States as we enter into the second decade of the 21st century. Stories on the internet and in newspapers focus on coaches fighting at youth games, parents being accused of beating each other after ice hockey practices, involved parents making their children run home behind the car because of a lack-luster performance in a game, police being called to a game because a coach had threatened another coach before the game, telling him he was going to take him out in the woods and beat him, and coaches who understanding the negative impact they have on young players.

Further, the 2005 Youth Sports National Report Card presented a clear snapshot for Americans concerned about youth sports. The report card was created to assess youth sports nationwide in the following areas:

- Child-centered philosophy
- Coaching
- Health & Safety
- Officiating
- Parental Behavior & Involvement

The results of the report card indicated that youth sport in the United States was at risk in the above-stated areas.

To attempt to reverse this, the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education (NCACE) was established to facilitate coaching competence within all levels of amateur sport by overseeing and evaluating the quality of coaching education programs. In addition, NCACE endorses comprehensive standards for sport practitioners, including: volunteer, interscholastic, collegiate, and elite coaches. Through accreditation, NCACE provides leadership and guidance to coaching education providers, sport administrators, and the public regarding the knowledge, values, and skills of effective coaches (NCACE, 2009).

Recently, an easy-to-read book, 101 Youth Coaching Tips, was published in an attempt to bridge the gap between the decision to coach and the functioning of a coach of youth sport. Coaching youth sport has historically been seen as a voluntary endeavor, where parents often coach their own children. Youth sport and voluntarism is a big deal because parents value the effort and time a volunteer takes to help their kids perform at their best. Author Frey has found innovative ways to identify and develop athletes who could respond to intense training and competition while still achieving excellence. He has been serving as a volunteer coach for over 20 years since volunteering as a volleyball coach for his daughter’s youth team. He has learned and developed many different strategies to assist a volunteer coach in skill development for coaches.
The book is divided into several areas for the novice coach: (1) before you begin; (2) you volunteered, now what?; (3) practice, practice, practice; (4) game on; (5) building a team; (6) parents; (7) sportsmanship; and (8) administrivia. The author has also made a case for recognizing the issues of coaching one’s own child and growth and development patterns. Frey has also provided advice on how to properly create a team.

This book is divided into several sections. Initially, the author describes the first step in deciding to be a coach. He further provides a story-like approach to why and how he became a coach. Another section deals with the importance of team formation and team function. Still another places emphasis on game day preparation and happenings. Through these sections, the author provides a multiplicity of tips on how to efficiently develop a youth team. The author of this book has successfully woven each section’s tips into the total tapestry for initial development of coaches and youth athletes. A thoughtful section involving sportsmanship is placed near the end of the book, while a coaching philosophy is placed in the book’s appendix. Since there continues to be disconcerting information about a crisis in youth sport in the United States as we enter into the second decade of the 21st century, it would have been prudent for the author to have presented coaching philosophy and sportsmanship at the front of the book to emphasize the importance of these two areas in youth sport.

The book is written in a very elementary style, simple and straight-forward, using first and second person scenarios as well as numerous colloquialisms so as to resonate with volunteer coaches, some of whom who may have English as a second or third language. Each of the 100 tips is highlighted with a “catchy” heading. The following are examples: #32 – play games “make the drills: game-like”; #62 – things to try at practice to build “team”; and #48 – catch them doing something right.

The tips, although easy to understand, may oversimplify the connectedness to the overall scope and specific responsibilities of a novice coach. Additionally, the progression and flow of the tips appear not to be in sequence throughout the book. This could cause novice coaches who are reading the book and planning programs with practice sessions to see details rather than the bigger picture. The addition of a section at the beginning of the book that includes simple, yet effective, theoretical framework from which the tips spawn would have provided the reader with a firm base from which to build. Despite this missing link, the book can be used to facilitate discussions between coaches, athletes and parents, using reflection and dialogue relative to each tip’s topic.

The author has presented interesting tips for the novice coach to bring insightful thinking to the forefront when planning for youth sport. The book’s layout is quite simple, yet very reader-friendly. In addition to the usual table of contents and authors note, the book contains many sub-topic areas as described above. The back of the book has information on the author’s philosophy of coaching as well as his objectives, but we feel that web resources at the end of each tip rather than at the end of the appendix, would have provided coaches with concise added benefits. This book, however, is still good value for the money.