

### **Get Certified! Editor's Note: This article was written by Barb Johnson**

- Discuss professional development and the reasons why certification for coaches is critically important to the interscholastic mission.
- The NFHS has developed its Coach Education program, with one of the goals being to certify coaches because these individuals are key people in the lives of high school students.
- Educating students about the purpose of interscholastic athletics, life skills and healthy lifestyles, among other topics, will help them prepare for high school and beyond.
- The NFHS Coach Education Program purposely uses the terminology "teacher/coach" in the Fundamentals of Coaching course to stress the continuation of teaching and learning in sport, and the concept of a coach as first and foremost being a teacher.
- Can we really afford to put coaches into situations for which they are not adequately prepared?
- When a school hires a coach with the AIC credential, this individual will have received education in student-centered, age-appropriate coaching; first responder and injury-related scenarios; and training to teach skills and tactics of sport.

### **The WHY and HOW of Coach Education by Bruce Brown, CMAA**

- We approach the coaching of kids from an educational viewpoint rather than looking at it from another perspective.
- Hairdressers and real estate agents are required to have more training and certification than we do as coaches, and we know that our clientele is at least equally as valuable and varied as theirs.
- No school district can afford to assume that everyone knows his/her responsibilities and behavioral boundaries.
- Comment from veteran football coach: "I didn't think I'd gain much from this course. But, I gotta tell you, after completing the course, I found myself reenergized by reminding myself as to WHY I got into this business to begin with. The class really got me to refocus upon WHY we do what we do, and HOW we should be teaching our kids."
- Both new and experienced coaches benefit from this education, but the ultimate winners are the students. The students in our schools deserve to have coaches who understand the WHY and HOW.

### **A QUALITY ATHLETIC PROGRAM BEGINS WITH QUALITY COACHES – Ted D'Alessio**

- High school athletics must promote education based programs that reinforce the values that are taught in the classroom – commitment, dedication, hard work cooperation to name a few.
- If teachers are considered to be the central figure in the classroom, it would only seem logical to identify the coach as the central figure within our athletic arenas.
- Today, more than ever before, Athletic Directors must produce a quality athletic program within an ever tightening budget. In these days of downsizing, accountability and increased parental involvement a quality coach has become our program's most valuable commodity.
- It would seem logical therefore, that Athletic Director's provide their coaches with the opportunity to maintain appropriate, relevant and ongoing sports training.
- Athletic Directors need to take a leadership role by encouraging their coaches to enroll in the NFHS program. I believe that our students will ultimately be the beneficiaries if they are coached by properly trained individuals.
- By developing a quality coaching staff we are taking an important step in ensuring that our students will have a rewarding, enjoyable and enriching athletic experience

### **Why Require Coaches to be Certified? Tim Flannery**

For the Health and Safety of the students who participate

- A coach's primary role is to make sure the students who participate are safe from potential harm and are cared for properly in the event of an injury. In addition, coaches are supposed to model the positive behaviors that will teach young people valuable lessons that can be used later in life.

For the school district

- Schools are judged by the quality of their academic, athletic and fine/performing arts programs. A school's reputation can hang in the balance if any one of these programs is called into question. Is your team(s) an example of a program that wins with dignity and loses with class?

Preserve education-based athletics in our schools

- Athletics has been a part of our schools since the mid-1800's. The United States is only major country that offers interscholastic sports as an extracurricular activity to over 7.5 million students who participate annually. One of the main reasons we offer these programs is the educational benefits students can derive from their participation.

Stay current in the ever-changing profession of interscholastic coaching

- Whether it is education, law, medicine or any profession, isn't it important to stay current with best practices, new policies, and dealing with new issues? If coaching is ever going to rise to the level of a profession, coaches need to be current in teaching methods, minimizing risks, communicating and motivating, administering their team or program and teaching students to be the best they can be in sports and in life.

Key #1 Coaches must demonstrate professionalism in their actions

Key #2 Consistently communicate and enforce all rules and policies to students and parents

Key #3 Demonstrate expertise in your sport

Key # 4 Support the school and athletic department philosophy and be a team member in the athletic Department

There are many things interscholastic coaches should know and be able to do before they have contact with students and throughout their coaching career. NFHS Certification is a major step toward:

- ensuring that the health and safety of our students is first and foremost in the minds of our coaches.
- allowing our school districts to say with certainty in a court of law that the coach was provided the proper initial and ongoing training necessary to perform the duties expected of an interscholastic coach.
- preserving interscholastic sport in our schools as an extension of the classroom where student participants learn important lessons of living a positive, healthy and productive life.
- Providing the coach a credential that signifies completion of content covering critical aspects that coaches should know.

#### **Coach Education Article Bruce Brown**

- As such, it would only seem logical that athletic directors “*coach their coaches*” so that all the affirmative potential of interscholastic athletics becomes an expected by-product of a student’s athletic experience.
- Encouraging coaches to join professional organizations and to earn their national certification through the NFHS Coaching Education program is a fundamental step for athletic directors to promote in providing education-based athletic programs.
- The role of promoting and providing ongoing professional development opportunities for their coaching staff has now been added to the ever-expanding duties of the athletic director.
- Better-trained coaches will decrease their school district’s exposure to lawsuits that are often caused by coaches not knowing or not doing the right things at the right time.
- The role of the athletic administrator in the promotion of ongoing professional development of his/her staff is critical. Better educated teacher/coaches will not only reduce the problems an athletic administrator may have to handle but more importantly, enhance the interscholastic athletic experience of the students.
- As such, encouraging and providing continuing professional development of coaching staff members allows the athletic administrator to become, truly, a “*coach of coaches*”!
- State standards across the country for the professional training and continuing education of classroom teachers continue to be raised to meet heightened academic expectations. School districts *also* have an obligation to provide coaches (especially those who have no formal coach training) those opportunities that present information on what a coach should know and be able to do.

#### **Staff Development for Your Coaching Staff Kevin Simmerman**

- We have all heard about school activities “being the other half of education”, but there are not too many schools that will invest in the proper development of coaches.
- We know, as athletic administrators, it is very important to have quality coaches on our staff. The impact that our coaches have on our youth can have ramifications for years to come. Some of the most memorable moments from my high school days revolve around the sporting activities in which I was involved.
- As athletic administrators, we understand the importance of providing our coaches with the opportunity to receive appropriate training. It is really important to do all we can do to properly educate our coaches.

The Coaches Certification Program is designed to deliver the highest-quality professional development online at an affordable cost. This certification will:

- Help coaches minimize the inherent risks faced by participating students
- Help coaches to develop a sense of personal and professional accomplishment
- Recognize coaches nationally
- Improve the sport experience and performance of participating students
- Enable coaches to increase liability insurance coverage through the NFHS Coaches Association

## **For Real! Professional Development for Athletic Coaches Now Available**

### **Bill Utsey, SCAAA**

Why should you consider having your coaches take any of these courses or seek NFHS certification? What can your coaches possibly get from engaging in a regular professional development program over a period of time through the NFHS coaches education program?

- Part of why you should promote and initiate such a program in your schools is the basic precept that interscholastic sports are first and foremost an educational endeavor.
- School athletic directors are now leading programs that are in conflict with club sports throughout the state and nation. The conflict is one of core values, beliefs, and in the pedagogy and philosophies of their coaches. Because of this growing change in the youth athletic landscape, it has become more important than ever for school administrators to be made aware of the main differences in our educationally based athletic programs and those of club sports. The differences: interscholastic sports began as an educational endeavor and still has as its main core mission the teaching of life sustaining skills and enlightening values—teamwork, discipline, personal leadership, the hard work ethic, the value of preparation, etc. Unlike club sports, we in interscholastic sports see our main objectives of our athletic program as an extension of school classrooms and an integral part of the mission and purposes of our schools. Indeed, we are... **“Educational Athletics!”**
- As the leader of your schools’ total educational program you have a legal obligation to provide your employees and, in this case coaches, with professional development opportunities. Your coaches have **fourteen** legal duties they are obligated to fulfill within their coaching endeavors. Enabling coaches to become quintessential professionals demands their constant participation in learning the why’s and how’s of their coaching duties.
- The NFHS has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars into developing a first class professional development program that has been endorsed by AASA (American Association of School Administrators), NSBA (National School Boards Association), NMSA (National Middle School Association), and the NIAAA (National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association). With a relatively low cost (from \$20 to \$75 per course), the NFHS Learning Center offers a wide variety of instructional courses and seminars that a cutting-edge school administrator can access for his/her coaches’ professional development opportunities.

Other reasons for initiating a structured professional development program for your coaches include, but are not limited to:

- Keeping the main focus of coaching on ALL of your student-athletes. Only 3% of our student-athletes go on to play sports at the collegiate level, coaches must focus on the other 97% with life building skills and experiences. NFHS Learning Center courses do this and more. The Fundamentals of Coaching course will provide coaches with the basics of educational athletics. Not only are the “How’s” and “Why’s” discussed, the core values we all believe in are promoted throughout.
- Meeting the need to change the public perception of a coach. Through these courses, coaches not only build their resumes, they can also attain coaching certification. If you are looking to make a lasting impact in your school’s learning environment and perhaps enhance your standing in the eyes of your community’s educational participants—parents and school board members—you can do so by getting the Coaches Education program started in your schools.
- Raising the expectations of your coaches especially in view of liability issues. Although no one can avoid every instance of inappropriate actions of coaches that may lead to litigation, continued education and learning opportunities can certainly make your coaches more informed and more attuned to proper professional standards in all areas of coaching.
- Adding value to your athletic program and, at the same time, doing good for your students. When you consider adding anything to your schools’ programs, whether it is the latest technology or a change in policies, you should always ask these two questions: Is it good for kids? Will it add value to our programs? There is a quote we like to use all the time when speaking to teachers and coaches alike, “Kids won’t care unless they know you care.” Coach education courses from the NFHS Learning Center will enhance this time-honored teaching principle within your coaches. When your student-athletes know your coaches care about them, they will be knocking the doors down to be in their programs and, most of all, your parents will support you and your coaches wholeheartedly.

## **Bruce Brown NIAAA Article**

### **Why did you decide to train coaches?**

- First, I've always considered myself a teacher; in all of my athletic coaching positions, the processes and lessons learned through the sport were always paramount to any championships or contests won.
- Second, when I made the decision to move into athletic administration, my general philosophy was to maintain the same progressive approach to leadership as I had established throughout my coaching career. I wanted to create and work in an environment that was constantly looking to enhance the experience for both the participants as well as the coaches. The professional development of our coaches was a value that I shared with our school board, building administration and our coaching staff. It was a logical and appropriate progression for all of us within our school district.

### **What are some of the positive outcomes of teaching the course?**

- The "Fundamentals of Coaching" course has created numerous learning opportunities since we've introduced it to coaches. Most importantly, it has provided us with a common core of principles and dialogue with coaches. The terminology, concepts and critical steps that are emphasized in the first two units of the course provide a platform for school administrators and coaches to re-vision what the mission in interscholastic athletics is truly about.
- Additionally, it has provided each school district a tool by which they can respond to its communities when the question is asked, *"What are you doing to help ensure our coaches have appropriate training?"*
- Although no training process is infallible, the expectations among parents and school communities today are very clear about school districts doing all they can to support training and proper certification opportunities for their employees. Coach education is no longer a "strongly encouraged" requisite of staff members, but rather an expectation. "Fundamentals of Coaching" provides an education based, data-driven training tool that addresses the broad scope of interscholastic coaching.
- The other positive result has been the collective realignment of core objectives in the interscholastic environment.

### **How do you foresee the future for interscholastic coaches?**

- If we draw the parallel between teacher-coaches and other professions, the expectation of continuous improvement and professional development is pretty much a no-brainer. More specifically, as we draw that same parallel between teacher-coaches and classroom teachers, the theory is even more appropriate. The expectations and qualification process for athletic teacher-coaches shouldn't be any different from those of academic instructors.
- In many cases, the actual contact time our teacher-coaches have with students is two to three times greater than the classroom instructor. Why shouldn't there be appropriate standards for interscholastic coaches?
- Some may argue that with the difficulty many schools have in finding qualified athletic coaches, additional training and certification expectations may "drive good people away" from entering the ranks of coaching. There is current research, which would counter this philosophy and actually indicate that heightened qualifications and training standards not only assist with the recruitment of quality coaches, but tends to increase coaching longevity. The basis for this simply has to do with coaches who vest themselves with their training and the increased support for those taking such training.
- As the immortal Woody Hayes once said, "People don't care what you know; they want to know that you care." The interscholastic athletics community can send a message to the populations we serve by underscoring the importance of professional development and training for coaches. The days of assuming that former athletes or "good-hearted souls" will be good coaches for our young people have been left in the archives of salt tablets during exercise and rubber suits for weight loss!
- The landscape for our parents and school-aged athletes is often times a kaleidoscope of options. What we do as the school community to validate our teacher-coaches and support the continuous improvement of our staff members may be the single most important effort we make in the next few years to clearly re-establish the purpose and objective of educational athletic programming!

### **What will the impact be on students?**

- One of the buzz-phrases in today's educational culture is the development of *"life-long learners."* What better way to reinforce and model such learning than promoting the same from our teacher-coaches?
- Not only will the quality and depth of instruction received by our student-athletes be enhanced, but the true focus of interscholastic athletes (impacting ALL participants and not just an "elite" group of athletes) will be better integrated throughout our schools and communities. IAA

### **Tim Flannery – Reasons for Certification**

#### NFHS Certified Coaches:

1. Use the sport experience as a teaching tool for students who participate.
2. Put the student first and the athlete second. Making decisions that are in the best interest of the student's overall development, both now and the future and not making decisions that may jeopardize their future.
3. Create an environment of learning where students can learn such things as;
  - a. Respect for authority, opponents, and teammates
  - b. Accepting responsibility for their actions
  - c. The value of hard work
  - d. Delayed gratification
  - e. Appropriate acceptance of victory and defeat
  - f. The value of a healthy lifestyle
  - g. Being a good sport and good citizen
4. Minimize the risk of participation.
  - a. Properly inspect athletic facilities
  - b. Properly inspect equipment
  - c. Do not allow injured students to participate
  - d. Encourage proper nutrition and hydration
  - e. Understand a step-wise return to play strategy
  - f. Properly condition students for the sport and to minimize the risk of injury
5. Know how to respond to athletic injuries.
6. Communicate effectively with students, parents, officials, and the administration.
7. View parents as partners in the educational development of the student.
  - a. Communicate with parents before, during and after the season
  - b. Solicit the assistance of parents when necessary
8. Care about the students outside of the athletic experience; in school, socially, and in other parts of their life.
9. Place the educational outcomes of interscholastic sport before winning.
10. Get trained for the students, their school, and themselves.

### **Bruce Brown Review of NIAAA Coaching Education Survey (Summary/Conclusions)**

- In the last 7 years, there has been a significant shift towards requiring coach education and training to minimize the risks associated with interscholastic sport.
- In 1998, 37 states had some type of coaching education requirement. Today, 46 states require some level of coach education. In addition, more states are increasing their requirements to include education in the signs and symptoms of concussion and the prevention of heat illness.
- More states require coaching education of all coaches whether they are certified or not. Many states have recently raised the bar including Arizona, Rhode Island, Ohio, Texas, North Carolina, North Dakota by requiring all coaches, or at least all new coaches, to have training in how to coach at the interscholastic level.
- As school districts around the country continue to assess and evaluate their academic, athletic and arts priorities, each branch of the school structure seeks alignment with their respective educational objectives. If the mission, vision and purpose of the school is the promotion of learning, certainly those charged with supporting these objectives, including the interscholastic teacher-coach, need to demonstrate the appropriate training for meeting such standards.
- Overall, the news is good that schools value coach education and are budgeting professional development dollars to help pay the cost. School leaders are encouraging growth opportunities and training for teacher-coaches to accentuate the significance of lessons learned through participation in interscholastic athletics.