

What is Your Coaching Style?

There is a variety of coaching styles that can be seen today in sports. The question is which is the best and which works for your specific team. Here are some of the coaching styles in sports. A coach is usually a combination of these types. Choose the type of coaching styles that match your style of coaching the game of softball.

1. The teaching coach. This coach studies the game by reading, going to clinics, watching older coaches who have been successful, having discussions with those older coaches and “picking their brain”. They continue to learn year after year and never think they know everything about the game. They are always looking for something new to use with their team, always carefully watching other teams to learn new tips on what to do or not to do with their team. These coaches will scout their opponents to learn that team’s tendencies, strengths and weaknesses. They are committed to improving their team every practice and every game. Every possible situation that could occur during a game will be practiced before and throughout the season.

These coaches will teach their team everything that they have learned. They explain to their players how to do every skill and why, they explain the strategy of the game and why. They teach their players to think on their own using the knowledge they have given them about the game. They get their point across to the players in a definite but positive manner. This coach can correct a player in a way that every player would respect. They are demanding and expect things be done in a specific way but can obtain what they want without yelling at the players. They have a way of talking to an individual player or the team that gets their point across to everyone without embarrassing anyone. They are firm but fair.

2. The non-teaching coach. This coach believes that kids are born knowing how to play the game and do the skills needed to be successful. They teach the players nothing about the strategy of the game. They do not help the players learn the skills nor do they give them any tips on how to be better. They use no strategy when coaching third base, the players in the batters box do what they want to do. They won’t help position the defense according to the current hitter, inning, score of the game or number of outs. They won’t teach the pitchers and catchers how to pitch, catch or call a game. They will never scout an opponent. The players basically are on their own during the game and make their own decisions.

3. The encouraging coach. This coach knows how to effectively teach each one of their players from the best player on down the entire list of players on their team. They can read each player's faces, moods and body language. They know how to positively affect that player with their actions and words. They say things like-"that is good but let's try it this way, "you can do it", "you are strong and have the power to do this", "have no doubts", "stay mentally tough" and so on. Even though those comments might not be exactly true, those words can stay with a player and build a player's self-confidence. Their words will have that player believing that they can accomplish a skill and be successful. They know how to bring the best out of each of their players. They teach their players how to focus, how to be mentally strong and to never ever give up during a game, on a teammate and on themselves. This coach molds a player for life.

4. The yeller/bully type coach. This coach thinks that yelling at the players will motivate them. Nothing is ever done correctly in this coach's eyes and they believe that yelling and embarrassing a player will improve that player. They believe it will make them tougher and a better player. This coach may also embarrass the player or insult the player by saying things like-"you are weak", "useless", "a sissy", "dumb", "an embarrassment to the team", "worthless" and other comments. They will not only say this about their skill but will also say things when the player is injured. There are different types of injuries and all should be attended to and assessed. Injuries like small bumps, bruises and scrapes will always happen in sports and the players should be fine to continue after checking them. Any player with injuries that involve any joint, head, neck, chest or have received a more serious blow should be thoroughly evaluated before going back in to play. This type coach has been known to even brush these more serious injuries off and say things like-"don't be a baby", "you're a sissy", "get in there, you are letting the team down" and more.

5. The organized coach. These coaches are organized and have organized practices and the entire year planned out on a timeline before it even starts. This coach will have a checklist of what they want the players to learn during the fall season, the winter practices and throughout the whole regular season. This coach will know by this timeline how well the team is prepared for anything that happens during the regular season. This coach will adapt very well to various situations that arise on and off the field from the beginning of the year until the end. They have every practice written on a note card or piece of paper and they have the ability to adjust that plan whenever it needs to be during the year or during a practice. There is no lag time during a practice so the players feel confident in the ability of their coach. Lag time leads to boredom and a lack of focus.

6. The wing it coach. This coach doesn't like plans or being organized. They will go into practice and decide what to do drill by drill. They may teach something or may not. Their practices will have no theme and may seem jumbled leading to a lot of down time where nothing is being accomplished. There will be no timeline for the entire year, which would show the coach what the team should have learned at any given time during the year.

7. The player's coach. They are fair to every player on the team from the best player as well as every player after that. They know that every player has worth and can add to the team in some way. They treat the best players and the rest of the players the same way and realize the positive effect of team unity. They work on team unity the entire year to keep everyone on the same page and working as one.

8. The I can deal with the parents coach. Some coaches have a positive rapport with the parents of their players. They talk to the parents about the program and what they expect from them. They make sure that the parents understand their philosophy and how the team will be handled through the year. They keep the relationship with the parents a positive one but also one where the parents understand that the coach runs the team not the parent. The coach makes sure that they know that every aspect of the game is the coaches job not the parents including disagreeing with an umpire. They welcome every parent to come to the games and to travel to the games but there is a definite line between them that neither the coach nor the parent crosses.

9. The I don't deal with parents coach. This coach has nothing to do with the parents at all. They won't talk to them nor help them with travel plans.

10. The let's party with the parents coach. Still other coaches will be friends with the parents. This coach hangs out with the parents after the games or on road trips.

11. The I understand players do not have the same skill coach. This coach understands how to get the best out of their players by coaching to the skill of each individual player and making each practice for them harder each day. They understand the better players have to be challenged to improve but also understand that the weaker players need to improve also. The way they hit the balls to the players will reflect their skill level. This coach is careful not to be obvious in doing so.

12. The smack it as hard as I can coach-This coach doesn't realize that the players have different skill levels. During infield practice for example,

this coach will hit the ball as hard as possible to every player whether they can handle it or not. The player may get hit by the ball or have the ball whiz by them. Some will catch the ball and make the play but some will not. So some will learn and some will not.

13. The never challenge a player coach-this coach has a hard time hitting to any player. Instead of seeking help to learn how to hit effectively or find someone who can, they insist on doing it their way. The result is weak grounders, wild grounders and flies, short flies, etc. It also results in a lot of time wasted with players standing around while the coach tries to hit to the right person

14. The let's be friends coach. This coach tries to be a buddy to the players instead of the head of the organization. They may not discipline the players if needed so the players basically will run the team.

15. The insecure coach. This coach wants the team to like them and doesn't want to rock the player's boat too much. They basically ask the players if they want to do something. For example, "OK team, how about infield practice now?" "OK team, how about doing some hitting now?"

16. The waste a lot of time coach. This coach wastes practice time by doing things slowly and not incorporated a couple of drills in one. For example, this coach will hit infield by going player like 3B and waits until the 1B catches it and returns it to the C to hit the next ball. That is a huge waste of time and very boring to the players. Boredom leads to a lack of focus that leads to not learning much. Instead, get more players involved in the play. Example, hit to 3B who throws to 1B, while she is throwing another ball is hit to the SS who throws to 2B. Go back and forth between the two for around 15 touches each. Four players are now involved along with 2 more as shaggers and the catcher.

17. The I know all I need to know about this game coach-These coaches don't think they need to learn any more about the game than what they already know. They stop going to clinics, reading coaching books, etc. Some of these coaches think that coaching another sport like baseball even at a lower level equates to coaching softball or that coaching boys equates to coaching girls. Sometimes this can work but a lot of times it doesn't. There are some differences in the game or some differences between coaching boys and girls. For instance, boys are stronger in the upper body than girls. Yet some male pitching coaches do not take that into consideration. They do not teach the girls to use their legs and many times the girls will develop arm problems. How many times have teams lost a game because this type coach doesn't like the short game and prefers to have the players go for the

homerun? Especially when a fast runner is on third with a good bunter at the plate. And with that situation and the team is one run down in the later innings.

Think about each one of these styles and decide which ones are the same as your style. If 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 are part of your coaching, please consider changing to the other numbers.

The success of the team starts on practice day #1 and continues through the last day of the season. Those coaches who stop trying to learn more each year and who do not teach their players the skills and strategies of the game, shouldn't get upset when their team loses. It is their job to be prepared to the best of their ability and prepare their teams to be successful. Teams that are Nationally ranked and win a lot of games year after year, do so because of a lot of hard work not only by the coach but in practices by the players. The coach is the leader who shows the players the way to be successful.