

No 39 June 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Coaching Skills – 11 Characteristics of Great Coaches	2
By Frank Dick	
Technique – Drills to Improve Technique	4
From www.coxing.com	
Download the complete drills description from www.thecoxguide.com/Drillcard_Descriptions.pdf	
Successful Coaching – Pillars of Success	5
From http://functionalpathtraining.typepad.com/functional_path_training/2009/01/pillars-of-success.html	
Monitoring Training – Lessons From The Meatheads	6
From http://alancouzens.blogspot.com/2008/08/lessons-from-meatheads.html	
All articles available online at www.arcrsa.blogspot.com	

SOUTH AFRICA



ASSOCIATION OF ROWING COACHES, SOUTH AFRICA

COACHING SKILLS

11 CHARACTERISTICS OF GREAT COACHES

So what characteristics do the best coaches share?

1. Keep Vision and Values Front and Centre.

The coach is visionary and lives life by adhering to core values. He should have very real strength of character and commitment to personal integrity and honesty. Winning at any point should never come at the expense of values.

2. Think Deeply about and Pursue Holistic Education

The coach sees himself as preparing people not only for achievement in sport, but through sport for a life of personal fulfilment and for the enrichment of community.

3. Dedicated to Life-Long Personal Development and Professionalism

The coach tirelessly pursues personal education, formally and informally, both in the performance related sciences and in liberal arts. He sees the journey to coaching excellence as a never ending story; seen not only in terms of a chosen sport and coaching theory and practice, but in understanding how to successfully live a balanced and full life, while facing tougher and tougher challenges in the chosen field of endeavour.

4. Mentally Tough

The coach is focussed, determined, tenacious, hard – even ruthless- but never cruel. His resolve to overcome all obstacles and challenges in pursuit of the agreed goal is unshakeable. No matter how many setbacks, he has the resilience to keep coming back, to keep fighting. He always has heart for the fight. He persistently seeks for the advantage and no matter how small that is, he will seize it and maximise its value. He is devoted to passing these qualities on to everyone he influences as coach. That means driving them to go beyond what they think they are capable of, even when this means tears and pain.

5. Meticulous in Preparation

The coach takes the advice of Abraham Lincoln: "If I had eight hours to chop down a tree; I'd spend six of them sharpening the axe."

He is a master of strategic thinking and quality control, and is guardian of good order throughout the coaching process. He is thorough in briefing and preparing his athlete, team, coaching colleagues, management and performance services experts for the specifics of a given competition or campaign; he constantly seeks new and better ways of doing so. In this aspect of his role, he is thoroughly disciplined to system and method. His approach to preparation includes anticipation and coping with uncertainty.

6. Excellent Communication Skills

The coach makes the complex simple and ensures that what is heard, seen, understood and translated into action is exactly the intended response to his verbal, visual and kinaesthetic messages. He communicates as much through the emotions as the intellect, and leans as heavily on anecdote, metaphor and simile as on data and drawing board.

7. Relationship Management.

The coach exercises excellence in initialising social interaction and persistently applies best endeavours to ensure that relationships work effectively for the individuals concerned and for the collective purpose. This means taking time to understand each person in their sphere of influence; what they need from the relationship; what they bring to it; and how they can connect in learning, in performance, and in delivering the strength of interdependence. The coach is always visible, accessible, and approachable.

8. Decision Making

The coach has exceptional decision-making abilities. These range from decisions which determine the route to achieving long-term goals, to resolving situations under pressure and at speed, selecting the right course of action in a crisis. So he is very competent in making the judgement to change direction from an agreed game plan in order to seize the opportunity of success for the enterprise. He knows his most important decisions are selection of his team, from athlete to support staff. His operational network to facilitate this is part of such selection. He is well aware of his areas of strength and recruits people to make these even stronger. He is equally aware of his areas of weakness and

brings in those who will compensate for these. While challenging each person in the team to raise their game, he also expects to be challenged to raise his. He creates a culture where correct decisions are based on what needs to be heard, which may not always be what is wanted to be heard.

9. Self-Knowledge and Awareness

The coach knows himself. He never underestimates his leadership role, responsibilities and accountabilities, yet he may understate his leadership value. He is acutely aware of his limitations and measures himself persistently and more harshly than he measures others; 99% of his best he considers failure, even when in others he would see 51% of their best as a win. He is true to himself and naturally to those professional standards of excellence for which he is known. In being true to himself, he knows that, being human, he is imperfect and even fallible! Achievement, for him, is only in part reflected in performance and results in the competition arena. Rather, it is in what he did and how he did it in his leadership and coaching roles, and, in the longer term, in his legacy to those whose life he touches, to the sport, and to his community.

10. Belief, Faith and Trust

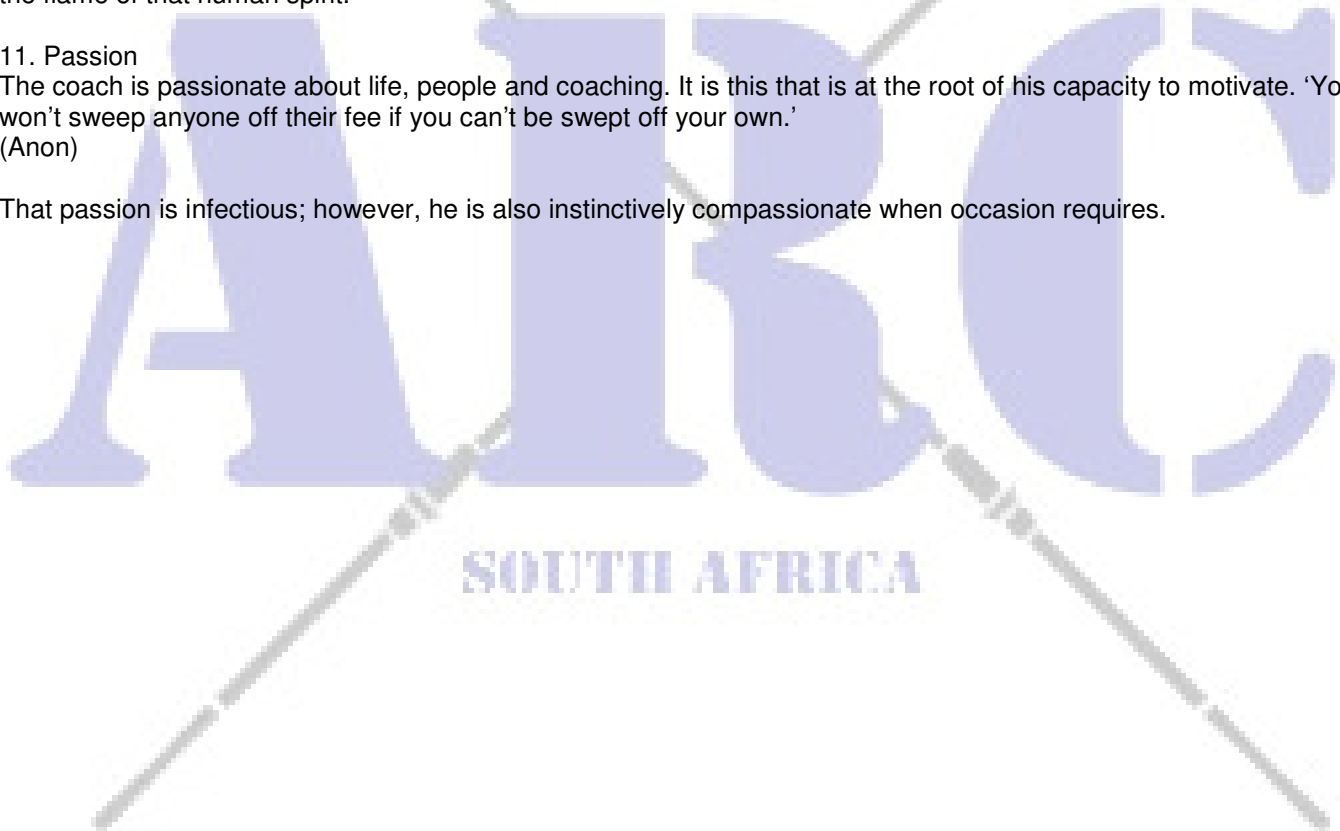
The coach radiates self-belief, belief in his people and belief that the agreed goals will be successfully achieved. Those around him respond to this by believing in themselves and in him more. A shared sense of personal value grows, fuelled by his passion, pride, patience, persistence and powers of persuasion. Yet he has personal humility and an inbuilt sense of belonging to a great scheme of things. He sees trust as pivotal in that scheme: his trust in others sharing the struggle to reach the goal, and their trust in him. It is a trust where each knows the other will do the right thing, and, whatever the outcome, all will learn to be even better in meeting challenges that will follow. He has great personal strength of spiritual faith according to his beliefs. And, finally, he has an unshakeable conviction that even in those ruthless arenas of life where facts and figures conspire to set limits to human performance, it is the intangible but irrepressible power of the human spirit to go beyond those limits, that is the winning difference. The great coach fans the flame of that human spirit.

11. Passion

The coach is passionate about life, people and coaching. It is this that is at the root of his capacity to motivate. 'You won't sweep anyone off their feet if you can't be swept off your own.'

(Anon)

That passion is infectious; however, he is also instinctively compassionate when occasion requires.





TECHNIQUE

DRILLS TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE

The Coxswains Drill Card

Problems →	Balance at the catch	Balance at the finish <i>RECOVERY</i>	Balance on the	Balance on the drive	Set rocks	Poor blade height	Late/early catch	Sky/hang at catch	Roll up problems	Slow initial drive	Weak finish	Late/early finish	Wash at finish	Slow hands away	Rush	Rate Too High	Stroke length off	Lean problem
Catch placement	☺		☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺					☺			☺
Catch sequence	☺		☺	☺			☺	☺	☺						☺			☺
Circular rowing	☺	☺	☺		☺	☺	☺	☺							☺			
Cut the cake		☺	☺		☺	☺	☺							☺	☺			
Drag & glide										☺		☺						
Exagg. layback		☺									☺	☺		☺	☺	☺	☺	☺
Exagg. slowness	☺		☺		☺	☺	☺	☺							☺			☺
Eyes closed	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺	☺				☺		☺	☺			☺
Feet untied		☺									☺	☺		☺				☺
Finish sequence		☺	☺		☺	☺					☺	☺		☺	☺			
Five stroke alt.	☺			☺	☺	☺	☺			☺				☺	☺		☺	
Freefall drill			☺				☺	☺			☺			☺	☺			
Gunwale high	☺	☺	☺		☺	☺		☺					☺					☺
Inside hand only	☺	☺			☺	☺	☺	☺						☺				☺
No blade height	☺				☺	☺	☺	☺						☺				☺
Outside hand only	☺	☺	☺		☺	☺	☺	☺			☺			☺	☺		☺	☺
Pairs joining in								☺						☺	☺			
Pause drill	☺	☺	☺	☺			☺	☺	☺					☺	☺			
Pause every catch	☺			☺			☺	☺						☺	☺			
Pick drill	☺	☺	☺	☺			☺	☺				☺		☺	☺			☺
Reduce feather	☺		☺		☺	☺	☺	☺					☺					
Row in air				☺						☺				☺				☺
Russian drill	☺		☺	☺		☺	☺	☺			☺	☺		☺	☺			
Scul it up							☺	☺			☺	☺		☺	☺			
Square blades	☺	☺	☺	☺		☺	☺	☺		☺			☺	☺				
Start. finish drill				☺										☺	☺			☺
Straight arms		☺		☺									☺	☺	☺			☺
Wide grip	☺	☺												☺	☺			☺
0 to 50% pressure		☺	☺	☺								☺		☺	☺			☺
1, 2, 3 set	☺	☺	☺	☺										☺	☺			☺
1, 2, 3 rowing	☺	☺	☺	☺										☺	☺			☺

☺ = Very Useful ☺ = Useful ☺ = Somewhat Useful

Mini-definitions of selected drills

- Catch placement** From various places on the recovery, place the blade into the water.
- Catch sequence** Row on the square or feather at first six inches, legs only, legs+arms, legs+ back, and then regular rowing.
- Circular rowing** Tap gunwales on the recovery after the oar handle passes the knees
- Cut the cake** At hands away, body angle, or 1/4 slide, pull the hands back to the body.
- Drag & glide** A pair drags their blades for ten strokes and then gunwales for 10.
- Finish sequence** The pick drill with a pause at every 1/4 slide
- Five stroke alternation** (pick drill in reverse) Every five strokes reduce the stroke length
- Freefall drill** Alternate 1/4 slide and full slide strokes.
- Pair joining in** Join in pairs until all 8 are rowing. Alternate the starting pair.
- Pick drill** Row at quick pick, swing pick, 1/4 slide, 1/2 slide, 3/4 slide, then full slide.
- Russian drill** Row all 8 at 1/4 slide with full pressure and a high stroke rate for 10 strokes. A four then gunwales the blades for 10 strokes. After rowing all 8 for 10 strokes, the other four gunwales the the blades for 10 more strokes. Repeat at swing pick, quick pick, swing pick, 1/4 slide, 1/2 slide, 3/4 slide, and then full slide.
- Scul it up** Reduce to 1/4 slide full pressure + increase the stroke rate as high as possible.

SUCCESSFUL COACHING

PILLARS OF SUCCESS

Pillars of Success

This is Seth Godin's post from January 22, 2009. I read his blog every day. His ideas and thoughts always seem to give a kick start to my day. His focus is marketing, but if you think about it coaching is marketing. We have to have a brand and present a clear message about our brand. The text in italics are my comments, the bold text are Seth Godin's words.

The five pillars of success

1. **See (really see) what's possible**

My experience shows that we often sell ourselves short because we lack the vision to see what is possible. We must have a clear vision of the result we want to achieve, not a foggy picture.

2. **Know specifically what you want to achieve**

Be able to state it in measurable terms so that you can see progress toward your goals. That allows you to measure how you achieved your goal and be able to repeat it. It also allows you to assess the reasons why if you did not achieve your goal. Eliminate those mistakes and get on the correct path.

3. **Make good decisions**

The decisions you make should be based on experience and advice from others who have traveled similar paths. Don't be lone ranger allow others to provide input, but remember the buck stops with you so you ultimately you have to make the decision.

4. **Understand the tactics to get things done and to change minds**

This is based on the ability to communicate. Remember communication has three dimensions, sending the message, listening to others message and sometime just being there.

5. **Earn the trust and respect of the people around you**

Actions speak louder than words in this regard. If you don't walk the walk and just talk the talk it is impossible to gain respect.

It sure seems like we spend all our time on #4.

MONITORING TRAINING

LESSONS FROM THE MEATHEADS



After last week's blog, that emphasized the magnitude of the time commitment necessary to reach the top of a sport like triathlon, I thought that it might be a good time to throw out a reminder that, while in the long term, all athletes who are successful in the triathlon world will wind up doing a lot of miles, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the goal of those miles is to make us more fit, not simply more tired. In a volume focused sport like triathlon, it is very easy to lose sight of this simple fact.

One of the things that distinguishes triathlon from other sports is the uncontrolled nature of the environment in which it takes place. This is both a positive and a negative. Being able to experience all kinds of environment; lakes, mountains, beaches, forests, in the context of a sport is one of the most enjoyable aspects of triathlon. In fact, one may argue that it is the aspect of triathlon that makes the immense volume that I alluded to last week tolerable. However, for the athlete who is not coming from a competitive sporting background, it can be very easy to confuse this 'touring the countryside' with athletic training. My buddy JD wrote a blog about this distinction a while back and it is a principle that I keep coming back to with my own training and with the athletes that I work with.

It is important as an athlete to remember that the only way that you are going to witness an improvement in your average race speeds is with a concomitant increase in your average training speeds.

This principle is something that is very easy to enact and monitor on a daily basis in a sport in which the environment is controlled: The lap pool of swimming, the track for running or, the velodrome for cycling. Perhaps the extreme example of control in a sport occurs in the training environment of our cousins on the other side of the force-velocity pond – the strength and power athletes.

We can learn a lot from the years and years of logbook entries from athletes in whom the training environment and protocol is absolutely and completely controlled. After all, the only way that we can make conclusions on the effectiveness of any training manipulation is if we completely control all of the extraneous variables. How often as triathletes will we:

- a) Increase our training miles while not paying attention to a drop in training speed
- b) Add speedwork to our weekly running plan and notice a drop in energy/speed for our other aerobic runs.

c) Add a myriad of swimming drills to our program without ever assessing if we are able to improve our stroke length while maintaining our stroke rate, or are our drills just making us look more 'pretty'.

Yes, as much as we make fun of the 'meatheads' in the gym, in the grand scheme of things, these folks are training much more intelligently and systematically than most triathletes (or triathlon coaches) could ever dream of.

I mean, do you ever hear the following conversation take place in the weight room:

Gymrat 1: So, what's on the schedule today?

Gymrat 2: Oh, I'm just going to bust out an easy 500 reps.

Gymrat 1: What weight?

Gymrat 2: Oh, I don't care. Today's just a long easy day.

Quality is ALWAYS part of the equation.

This is not to say that every session is *hard*. Those of you familiar with weight training, will know that the bulk of training typically takes place at 70-80% of 1 RM, only a moderate load. However, the load is always *fixed*.

On the flipside, I will often hear athletes say, "I don't get it coach. I've been doing the same amount of training as Johnny over there. I've been running my 40 miles a week, the same as him but he's running 3:30 off the bike. What gives?" Of course, the element that the athlete is missing is that Johnny is running his 40 miles at sub 7:30 pace, while my disillusioned buddy has to slow down to 8:30 pace to accommodate the same mileage.

In fact, the years and years of trial and error experimentation in a controlled setting has yielded a number of training principles on the response of the human body that carry across well to endurance training.

One of the foremost authorities in distilling and applying these principles in the world of strength and conditioning is the strength training guru, Charles Poliquin:



Here are a couple of Poliquin's principles that you may find particularly applicable to you as an endurance athlete:

1. The 'critical drop-off point'

The basic premise of the critical drop off point is that a coach should never increase the quantity of a given stimulus at the expense of quality. It is pointless to do sets in which the resistance is lowered so much that (a) sufficient tension is not put on the muscle to elicit performance gains, i.e, the load is below the training

threshold (b) the targeted muscle fibers are no longer being recruited/trained. These additional “garbage sets (miles)” would impede recovery by putting excessive strain on the nervous system, energy stores and neuro-endocrine response. The cumulative effect could be overtraining.

In practical terms, when pace or power is diminished by 5-7% from the goal, shut it down. This ties in well with Friel’s comments on decoupling, Coggan’s perspectives on the number of reps to perform) with Lydiards comments during interval training and (kicking it old school that if an athlete cannot return at the pace in which he went out that the distance is too great.

2. To prevent overtraining cut back first on volume rather than intensity.

The body is very well equipped to not overtrain by intensity – it will simply decrease the neural drive and not allow the body to undertake a load that is too heavy for its current reserves. It is not well equipped to deal with excessive volume. Therefore, when tired, it is better to decrease the volume until the athlete is able to equal or better his/her usual training load. This can be a hard thing for the addicted triathlete to do and provides good impetus to be proactive in recovery.

3. Vary load by only 10-12% within a given training session.

A typical scenario for the AG athlete: Jimmy goes out for a steady 6hr endurance ride @ 170-190 W. He’s not feeling great in the early stages so he decides to prolong his warm up and rides for 90 minutes at an AP of 155W. All of a sudden he meets up with his buddy, Fred who has an FTP about 20W higher than Jimmy and decides he could do with some company. He gets on Fred’s wheel and has to hold 200+W just to stay there. Fred makes a turn for the hills and Jimmy hangs on for dear life, ultimately doing 5x2 minute climbs at a little over his FTP of 240W with 5 min recovery between climbs.

All told, a session that had a desired range (after warm up) of 20W, winds up with a range of almost 100W! The problem with this is that there is not enough stimulus at any one training intensity to elicit a training effect. But, there is sufficient overall training stress to fatigue the athlete. Bottom line, know the purpose of the session and stick to that intensity band.

I really could go on all day about the lessons that we can learn from strength coaches and athletes but I have a 2hr aerobic ride at 170-190 Watts with my heart rate under 150bpm to do. ☺:-)

Train for fun & IMPROVEMENT.

AC