

Comparative evaluation of my coaching style and philosophy

Coaches are hired to ensure that players win the game. In the world of professional sports, coaches are responsible for training players and helping them improve their performance at an individual as well as team level. The players spend a significant amount of time in training with their coach, who serves as their guide and mentor in many aspects of professional and personal life which includes: physical / emotional well being, conduct (both on field and off field), group cohesion, performance analysis and game strategy.

A lot has been said and written about the relationship that exists between a coach and his protégée. The famous soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo refers to his coach Alex Ferguson as his football father. Such profound relationship between a coach and player has inspired behavioral scientists to analyze the effect of various coaching styles on: performance, interpersonal relationship, team cohesion and many other aspects of group dynamics that prevail in a professional sports environment (Yough & Anderman).

It should be noted that coaching style is not a property of the individual who is responsible for coaching, but their preferred approach to coaching (Brinton, Hill & Ward, 2017).. Coaches adopt a style which is best suited to the group of players under their tutelage. However, in most cases, coaches adhere to a fixed style of coaching irrespective to the group of players they are coaching (Huff, 2019).

Coaching styles create a certain social environment, the most common of these are ego climate and task climate. Athletes who are subjected to ego climate tend to develop an ego-orientation overtime, while those athletes who are subjected to task climate tend to develop task orientation (Bennett & Nelson, 2005).

Task climate is established when the focus is on self improvement. However, when the focus is on social comparison and interpersonal competition, then an ego-climate is established (Waldron & Krane, 2005; Newton & Duda, 1995). It is observed that task oriented athletes tend to display positive behavior such as determining competence on the basis of self-referenced standards. On the other hand, ego-oriented athletes show counter-productive behavior such as skipping practice and being judgmental (Waldron & Krane, 2005).

Sports coaching, as an interpersonal style, is broadly classified into two categories which are: autonomous supporting and controlling (Bartholomew, Ntoumani & Thogersen Ntoumani, 2010). It should be noted that in many studies, the term autonomus supporting style is denoted by the term democratic, and controlling style is denoted by the term authoritative.

Autonomous supporting or democratic coaches allow players to participate in decision making, and they also acknowledge the views and feelings of players (Huff, 2019).

Coaches who practice the controlling style of coaches have a profound impact on performance and psychological experiences of players (Huff, 2019). They set performance standards thereby creating an environment of pressure (Huff, 2019).

There is yet another form of widely used coaching style called laissez faire, where-in the coach is the silent observer of the team's activities. Coaches who adhere to this style are not actively involved in managing the training sessions. They allow athletes to train themselves and only organize occasional meetings in order to gauge the progress and set rudimentary goals (Chapman, 2015).

In addition to coaching style, sport coaches also adhere to a coaching philosophy. Essentially, it is the mix of coaching style and philosophy which gives a signature touch to the work of each and every coach (Weinberg & Gould, 2007).

Coaching philosophy is a set of values and beliefs which determines why an individual wants to or likes to coach. At the very core, coaching philosophy is a set of ideals to which the coach adheres very strongly. Every coach works with a coaching philosophy, even though they may not be concisely aware of the fact that they have a coaching philosophy (Hanson, 2015).

Sports coaching philosophy is based on an individual's values and beliefs, hence coaching philosophy evolves overtime. Typically, it takes several years of coaching experience for a coach to be able to define coaching philosophy (Hanson, n.d.).

Bo Hanson, a four-time Olympian and coaching consultant suggests a methodical approach to determining one's coaching philosophy. According to Hanson, the process of determining one's coaching philosophy starts with identifying one's core values, which can be something like: extreme love of the game or commitment to sportsmanship. Identifying your core values enables you to be clear about your priorities. The next step is to learn from your journey as an athlete as this gives you the perspective required to identify and solve problems which athletes typically face. The third step is to identify and be cognizant about your coaching style as this allows you to adapt your techniques in order to align them with specific coaching needs of each athlete. The final step is to state your sports coaching philosophy in one concise statement. This statement serves as an actionable framework of your coaching philosophy and it helps bring consistency in your behavior and coaching techniques (Hanson, n.d.).

Sport is the biggest passion of the contemporary times, and the coach is seen as a celebrated public figure to whom the success of one's favorite sports team is attributed. Hence, sports coaching has been a central plot of numerous popular culture books and films. As an aspiring coach, I find myself drawn to films that are based on the world of sports, because they help me to identify the traits, style and philosophy that I need to imbibe in order to further my ambition of becoming a football coach and learning the techniques of coaching from experienced soccer

coach. I believe that analyzing books and films related to sports coaching will help me achieve my ultimate goal which is to coach an EPL team.

Released in 2005, "Coach Carter" is a sports coaching based film featuring Samuel L. Jackson as the protagonist Ken Carter. In the movie, protagonist Ken Carter plays an autocratic coach who is very firm and immovable with respect to his decisions. He makes the team train according to what he thinks is best for them, and during a match he ensures that the team functions according to the strategy which he has chalked-out.

Although an autocratic coach, Carter strives to create a task-climate where he focuses on improvement of each individual as well as developing a strong team cohesion. By constantly emphasizing the importance of respecting team mates and opponents, he goes out of the way to ensure that his athletes do not develop ego-orientation.

Carter's coaching philosophy can be stated as winning by empowering every individual to perform at their best, both individually and as a team, and to ensure that every athlete succeeds in the game as well as in life.

In the movie, Carter's philosophy is revealed through scenes of training sessions where athletes are instructed to push their performance and develop better team coordination skills. Carter ensures that focus on winning does not compromise his critical value which is to ensure that every individual ought to succeed in game and in life. His commitment to his team's personal development comes to light when he decides to temporarily stop training sessions so his team members can have the opportunity to haul-up their academic performance.

The mix of autocratic coaching style and holistic development-focussed coaching philosophy makes Carter a revered and respected father figure for his team. Each athlete in the team has unwavering faith in Carter's intentions and actions. They trust him and abide by his principles because they are certain that their coach is committed to their betterment.

In Carter's coaching style and philosophy, I find several points which match closely with my own style and philosophy. However, there are many points on which Carter's style and philosophy does not confirm to that of mine.

I like to state my coaching philosophy as "winning by getting the best of my players through individual development and strong team cooperation as well as ensuring development of team members at both professional and personal level."

Point of similarity between my coaching philosophy and that of Ken Carter's are that In both coaching philosophies the focus is on winning the game through individual and team effort, and both philosophies emphasise on holistic development of an individual.

However, at a deeper level, my philosophy is much different from that of Carter's as it adheres to a different set of core values. This is primarily because my philosophy caters to the needs of a professional league environment; while Carter's philosophy caters to the needs of inter school tournaments.

In the world of professional league games, the concept of 'loyalty for your team' does not hold true in the traditional sense. This is because athletes have the freedom to play for a different team each season. In such an environment, it is important to provide professional and emotional fulfillment to each team player so that they feel a sense of prowess both as part of the team as well as an individual athlete.

Another underlying distinction between my coaching philosophy and that of Carter's is that I don't stress on exceptional code of conduct. I prefer to give some liberty in terms of interpersonal conduct, because I believe that professional athletes know how to manage themselves and giving them a guideline on this front severely undermines their self worth.

In terms of coaching style, I believe that adopting a mix of autocratic and democratic coaching style is the way to go. While autocracy gives you the power to impose practices and techniques, democracy allows you to get multiple perspectives for a particular problem which sometimes leads to a very creative solution. Being democratic with your team makes your athletes feel valued and allows them to open up with the coach at a personal level.

While some may advocate against a coach being personal with his team, I see some strategic advantages in this approach. In sports as well as in any other profession, personal stress and anxiety is the chief cause of inoptimal performance, and being personal with one's team mates gives a coach the ability to mentor each player at a personal level, thereby enabling them to cope with personal stress.

In addition to the strategic advantages listed above, my coaching style and philosophy will help me to: acquire and retain talent by creating an environment where individuals achieve professional and personal fulfillment, build strong interpersonal relationships among team members, coach and team's management, imbibe a healthy competitive fervor by giving athletes the opportunity to participate in strategy formation and game planning. This also helps in keeping motivation levels high, thereby increasing the chances of winning

Achieving the above goals are crucial to the development and progress of the team, as they ensure that the team has talented, highly motivated and coordinated squad of athletes to ensure great performance season after season.

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