

## Coachability

Being a great coach is only part of the equation when considering the coach-athlete relationship. The coach may be the best in the world but if the athlete is not receptive or the athlete is not coachable, then the coach-athlete relationship and dynamic is still lacking.

While research and studies exist on coaching and leadership in sports, the aspect of coachability (having a coachable personality) has been far less studied, and the traits and behaviors that make up a "coachable" personality are difficult to define although most coaches recognize some athletes to be more coachable than others.

Personality traits are inherent biological tendencies that predisposes a person to act and behave in certain ways (Favor, 2011). A set of behavior characteristics, the observable expression of personality traits (Favor, 2011), are what is described as "coachable". This set of behavior characteristics include (but not limited to): "work ethic, integrity, trust and respect for coaches, honesty, low frustration, handling pressure, emotional maturity, working with teammates, and being open to change" (Favor, 2011, p. 302). Coachability has been difficult to define. It is more than describing an athlete that is eager to learn, listens and takes direction well, and works hard.

The Five Factor Model (FFM) has been used to help describe personality by categorizing traits into five categories: "Extraversion; Conscientiousness; Openness to Experience; Agreeableness; and Neuroticism or Emotional Stability" (Favor, 2011, p. 302). As it relates to sports, Favor (2011) reported that studies have shown dynamics involving individuals and the team and teamwork as a whole. Agreeableness, (from the FFM) which describes positive relationships with others, is an important factor for team sports.

In Favor's (2011) study, 100 NCAA Divisions I and II head softball coaches were invited to participate in surveys rating female softball athletes' coachability with regards to Agreeableness (trust; morality; altruism; cooperation; modesty; and sympathy) and Emotional Stability (anger; anxiety; depression; self-consciousness; immoderation; vulnerability). Favor's (2011) study found that coaches ranked Agreeableness (especially cooperation) as a strong positive characteristic of coachability and that Emotional Stability was negatively correlated to coachability (i.e. high levels of anger, anxiety, etc.). Favor (2011) also noted that anger and immoderation were markers of athletes described as less coachable.

More studies need to be conducted in order to better understand coachability. It is plausible that females and males relate differently and exhibit different coachability characteristics. The type of activity may also factor into difficulties in coaching as some activities are more physically aggressive and combative. However understanding coachability will help coaches select athletes and build a strong and positive team dynamic. Also by defining elements of coachability, it will help coaches and athletes better relate to one another.

## References

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