

Pyramid of Success

Coaches teach more than the game. They are leaders and role models that for some students and athletes, fill in the gaps. Legendary Coach John "Wizard of Westwood" Wooden, who was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame as both a player and coach, won ten NCAA national championships as UCLA men's basketball team's head coach (Perez, Van Horn, & Otten, 2014). Coach Wooden is widely published, and one of his most notable pieces of philosophy is the Pyramid of Success which serves as a model not only in sports and psychology but also in business and leadership.

Success according to Coach Wooden is "peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do your best to become the best you are capable of becoming" (Perez et al., 2014, p. 86). The "pyramid" is a visual and conceptual outline of the relationship of attitudes and values that can lead an athlete to personal and competitive success. Coach Wooden placed the qualities of industriousness, friendship, loyalty, cooperation, and enthusiasm on the first tier (foundation tier) (Perez et al., 2014). On the second tier are the qualities of self-control, alertness, initiative, and intentness (Perez et al., 2014). On the third tier are the qualities of condition, skill, and team spirit (Perez et al., 2014). Poise and confidence make up the fourth tier, and at the very top of the pyramid is the quality of competitive greatness (Perez et al., 2014). Furthermore, sports psychology research has supported this framework, but more research needs to be done to examine the relationships between the pyramid levels and "blocks" (the qualities per level).

Servant leadership, a leadership philosophy by Robert Greenleaf, embraces the ideal of leading from where you are (whatever position or station in life one is at) and leading from behind. The commentary by Stoll noted that Wooden's outstanding characteristic was that he "tried to first make a positive difference for his players as people and second, to improve his players as players of the game" (Stoll, 2014, p. 61). Coach Wooden viewed himself as a teacher first and coach second (Stoll, 2014). Stoll (2014) also noted the qualities of servant leadership that Coach Wooden exemplified: listening, empathy, healing, persuasion rather than positional authority, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (p. 62-63).

The impact of coaches go far beyond the boundaries of the game. Coaching and games provide an opportunity for one to lead, make a positive impression, and impart some life skills and experiences on impressionable and malleable minds. Coaching is both an honor and responsibility that may be rewarding after one's coaching career is finished.

References

Perez, D., Van Horn, S., & Otten, M. P. (2014). Coach John Wooden's pyramid of success: A comparison to the sport psychology literature. *International Journal Of Sports Science & Coaching*, 9(1), 85-110.

Stoll, S. (2014). John R. Wooden, Stephen R. Covey and servant leadership. *International Journal Of Sports Science & Coaching*, 9(1), 61-64.