



# *"Always Learning" Lessons from Coaching*

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# Always Learning - Lessons from Coaching

## **Always Learning - Lessons in Coaching....from Coaches**

In our busy coaching lives it is altogether too easy to carry on regardless and not take some time now and again to reflect and evaluate.

Coaches are lauded for instilling in their athletes/players the importance of consistent evaluation. However we ourselves can become victims of "busyness" and neglect our own personal development. This can be fatal - in essence we can only give what we have got with regard to coaching. Without reflection and evaluation we could be victims of coaching the same way year after year and yet wonder why we are not achieving better results.

We can make this easy on ourselves - why not take food for thought from others in the same boat as ourselves?? If we see that there are some coaches out there who are consistently high-achievers then it's only smart to model their excellence. The common thread between all these coaches is their tendency to stop, think and evaluate. This short book is a collection of the learnings of coaches who have chosen to take a few minutes out to learn what their experiences of late have thought them.....some interesting insights await. Enjoy!!



# Always Learning - Lessons from Coaching

When I first started coaching, I read all the right things. Istvan Balyi, Yuri Verkoshanksy, Mel Siff – you name it, I had either read it, or had it on my “to read” list. And you know what – some athletes just don’t care if you’re smart. The question is, can you get them results? Or if they’re really elite, why should they change what they’ve done in the past? After all, they’ve already had success. Coaching is like any relationship, it’s a give-and-take process. Sure, there are some coaches out there that can rule with an iron fist, yell and scream at their athletes, and do things 100% their way. If certain coaches do it 100% their way and have success, good for them. But as a former athlete myself, that approach doesn’t really jive with me. I prefer to balance what an athlete wants with what I know they need. This is highly dependent on the age and skill level of the athlete you’re working with. If you’ve got a young kid who has never trained with anyone before, chances are they’re willing to do whatever you ask of them. On the other hand if you’re working with an elite athlete that’s playing at the highest level of their sport, you’re probably going to have to make a few concessions along the way. But this is the essence of a relationship. Both people in that relationship have wants and needs, and the goal is to balance these so that each of the people in the relationship is fulfilled and having their needs met.

*Mike Robertson - Robertson Training Systems*

Whether it's preparing to compete for a championship or coaching the very basics to a 10-year-old boy or girl, I think the attitude and energy you bring to training sets the tone. You have to be up for it. The more positive and enthusiastic you are, the more enjoyable and productive the session is likely to be. Players pick up on that.

*Jamesie O'Connor - RTE TV Analyst*

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You have a responsibility to your players to be their mentor. If your culture is established and you know exactly what you want, give parents/players a transparent view of it before they commit to your program. If you do have flexibility, allow them to choose why they play the game, and always reinforce with them why things are done the way they are. It will make them feel important and hopefully avoid misunderstandings/miscommunication, which are two cancers of youth sports.

*Bryan McDermand*

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Realise that you don't know anything yet, and commit to learning more about your craft than you think would ever be necessary. Seek out professionals in related fields. Read nonfiction and watch documentaries. Become the hardest working student you know. Then, when it comes time to coach your athletes, try not to give them the information that you have learned. Instead, build a trusting and loving relationship with them and figure out a way where they come up with the right answers and approach on their own.

*Ben Bergeron* [www.builtbybergeron.com](http://www.builtbybergeron.com)

You can repeat cues until you are blue in the face but if the athlete or trainee doesn't perform the movement the way you're intending them to you're not coaching you're just talking. Same goes for the softer side of coaching such as behaviour or nutrition: it's not about what you say it's about what they hear, and even further, do.

The more you can internalise that and focus on the outcomes, the better coach you're going to be.

*Dave Dellanave; The Movement Minneapolis*





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I have found that coaches who are not able to admit that there may be another way are less effective in the long run. While a specific method may work great for one athlete or even many athletes, it is not the best answer for everyone. If there was one way to train an athlete, there would be no need for coaches.

The beautiful artistry of coaching is that every athlete is different and there is not one answer. There is not even just one answer for each individual athlete. What worked once may not work again as circumstances change. Be willing to continue learning. Research, experiment, be creative, and admit when you just don't know.

*Jen Mathe; One10 Performance and Nutrition*

Success doesn't come from pie-in-the-sky thinking. It's the result of consciously doing something each day that will add to your overall excellence.

*Nick Saban; Head Coach Football; University of Alabama*



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Have a clear goal – that is the destination. Then understand the need for constant mid course correction. The path from the start to achieving the goal is not linear. Have a plan, but be willing to modify that plan to achieve the goal. The Apollo moon rockets that reached the moon were off course 98% of the time, but they constantly self-corrected to complete their mission. Take a step back and see the big picture.

*Vern Gambetta*

As a coach, even when you're making mistakes, you're learning. If you monitor everything you gain an understanding of what works well very quickly, and an understanding of how tweaking things can lead to better performances

*Robert Denmead: Running Coach*

If I look back honestly I think I got things right in terms of focus on the right stuff but without knowing they were right until we saw the improvements in performance! I now know that what makes the difference is the ability to be clear on where you want to get to .. and focusing on the things that will make the difference.

*Gary Keegan; Irish Institute of Sport*

Redefine the word "success" - a lot of teams are successful at the end of the year whether they win a national title or not.

*Amanda Cromwell - UCLA Bruins Women's Coach*

Get a good mentor and continuing to learn and educate myself

*Greg Muller - [www.leadthepack.net](http://www.leadthepack.net)*

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If the person has the right attitude, almost everything else can be achieved - because it's not more resources that are needed, it's more resourcefulness.

Ronan Kennedy; [www.ronankennedy.ie](http://www.ronankennedy.ie)



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I think the best thing I've learned is that the more actual science, cool protocols, great gadgets and everything else you learn about, it has to be matched with the same amount of learning about management, culture, working with players, motivation and cueing science and more. The true essence of this game is getting players to do stuff that deep down they don't probably want to do. I also think a big lesson I've learned is that you can't know it all. Building a great team around me with physios, nutritionists and more has helped my systems a tonne.

*David Hare* [www.functionaltraining.ie](http://www.functionaltraining.ie)

Getting an athlete in front of you and actually coaching them. Dealing then with different athletes and realising that all athletes are different and can be coached in different ways

*Colm Smith; London GAA*



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I have come to the conclusion that in order to consistently improve we must continue to learn and adapt as coaches. Up skilling is necessary to maintain progress and to challenge ourselves and those we coach.

*Gary Jameson; Head S&C Wicklow GAA*

Probably consulting athletes more on what they need as opposed to always being in total control

*Brendan Connor; Head S&C; Cricket Ireland*

Allowing individuals aged 17-21 time to mature both physically and psychologically

*James Purdue*

Do less things better

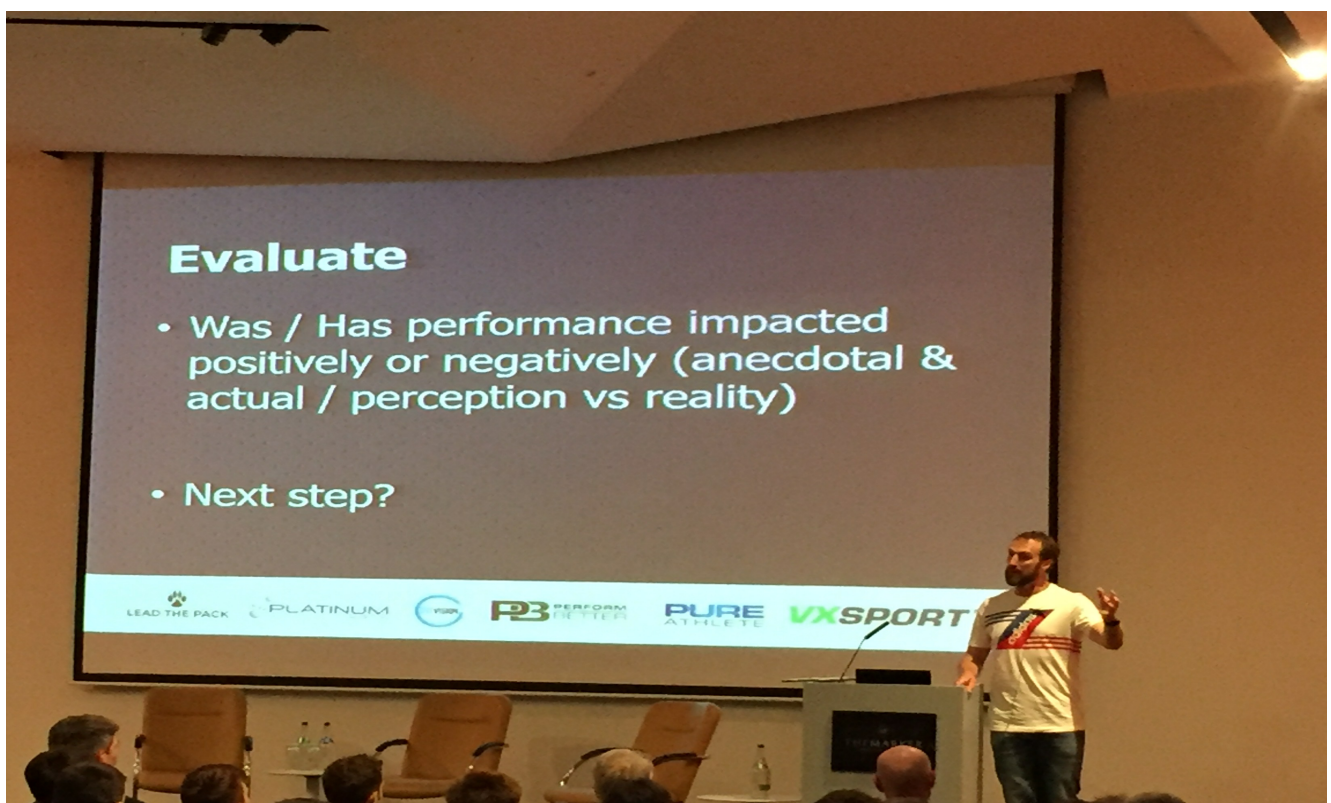
*Jamie Tout; Head S&C New Zealand Women's Rugby; Performance Director, VX Sport*



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The importance of sports science in the game is huge and with the help of professional people like yourself has made my life as a coach understand the various aspects of this area that can effect players. Never think you know it all and always learn from your mistakes is important as a coach. I believe that you can learn far more from other codes than just focusing on what we do within the GAA circle. Looking at what is best practice in other codes helps you as a coach and introducing these techniques into your training has helped and improved my teams. As a coach you strive to see improvement in your team, then you look to improve your results as a team and finally you crave for the ultimate prize or success at the final hurdle and WIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! My ambition as a coach is to explain to my teams the mistakes that I made as a player and how I failed to reach the highest level because I didn't believe in the three components that get you success. Commitment Attitude and Discipline.

*Anthony Monaghan; Meath U14 Football Coach*





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Trying to make training suitable for all members of the team so that starters, bench players, squad players, and the manager are happy that they have done the right training themselves, but also what you feel is the right training for them e.g. some players are lazy and say they are doing too much when I feel they should be doing more, some want to keep doing more runs/shooting/passing etc when they should be less. Then you are also trying to make the sessions appropriate to the culture of the club and how the manager wants them to train while also keeping in mind the physiological effects of that. Basically getting everyone head right and happy with their preparation while also from a sport science perspective getting their body right also

*Kevin Tattan; Head S&C/Sports Science; Cork City FC*



# Always Learning - Lessons from Coaching

Simplicity in programming

*Des Earls; Wicklow Senior Football S&C Coach*

Observing other coaches in the sport and the learning how they operate. Learning equally from their successes and failings.

*Paul Doody*

Teaching learning as a skill to Athletes and debunking the Learning "Styles" peddled by VARK etc.

Ed Niland; West Highland College.

The importance of providing feedback during sessions and also reflecting after a session, the pro's and cons. Finally ensuring that the language used is clear and accessible to all participants

*Michael Ahern, Coaching Officer, Dunshaughlin GAA*

Talk less, listen more.

Denis O'Shea; Meath Minor Football Coach 2015

Creating a positive learning environment and getting to know your players strengths and weaknesses

*Jason Carey; Director of Football; Peamount United*

Learn from your mistakes. Don't shy away

*Joel Marshall; Sports Scientists; Wellington Lions RFC*



# Always Learning - Lessons from Coaching

Boys need to be allowed to climb trees!

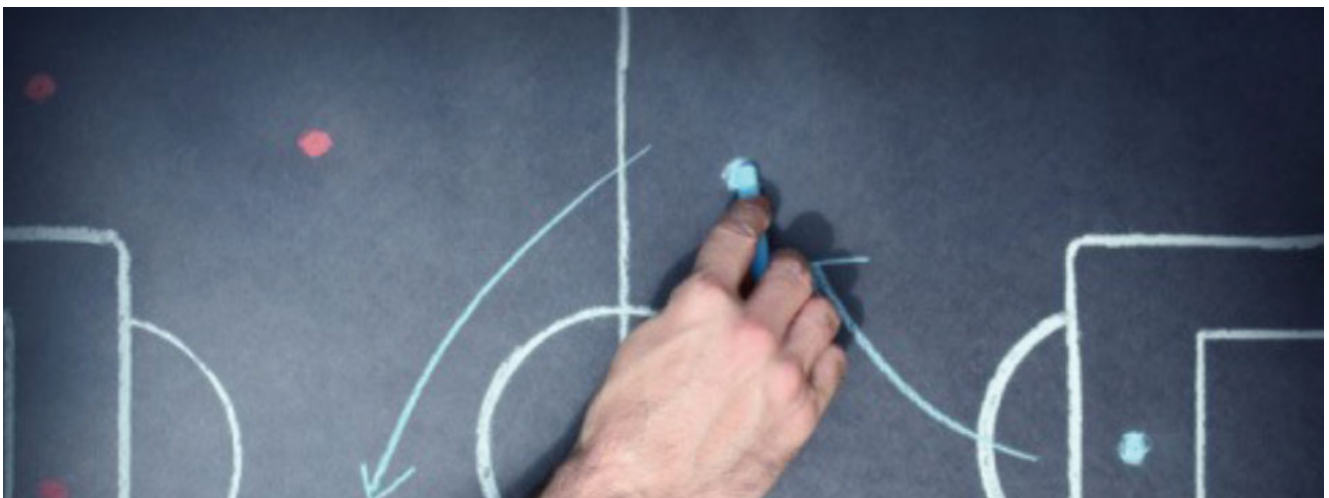
It may not be a tree you want them to climb and it may not get them anywhere at that point but stopping them may slow there overall progress.

*Oliver Rogers; Director of Sport; Rossall School UK*

While the drills, games, session plans are all important components of any training program whats forgotten is the connection as coach with your athlete/player or team. Player's have all different personalities and abilities but if you are unable to see your player's as people and understand them well then i think you will not get the improvement in individual / team performance that you desire. One approach that will work for one player may not necessarily work for another.

As a coach we can obsess about the training detail instead of having a more holistic view which i think is essential to maximising a players potential. Not a new concept no doubt but just something which i am keen to remind myself and other coach's in the pursuit of excellence!!

*Paudie Kissane; [www.pkperformance.ie](http://www.pkperformance.ie)*



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