

# Mentoring

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Have you ever wondered why and how individuals 'improve their lot' in life? More often than not it is because they have a role model, friend, adviser or mentor. This critical role in life has now been officially mirrored in sport, and in sports coaching in particular.

Mentoring can provide huge personal satisfaction to the individual who can point an aspiring coach in the right direction. Essentially, a mentor coach will have a number of valuable insights and experiences of a particular sport and some personal qualities that will aid the coach they are mentoring. These include:

- a sharing attitude and a willingness to discuss ideas and philosophies
- trustworthiness and loyalty
- current technical and tactical knowledge of the sport
- an ability to build a relationship with the mentored coach and to focus on the coaching process, rather than the athletes or results
- an ability to assist the coach by providing a positive and challenging environment
- good communication skills, including the ability to provide constructive criticism and to listen and question
- an ability to commit to the time involved, including attendance at recording meetings
- the ability to deal with different personality types.

Mentoring is a 'life' experience. Those individuals who are successful in life have more than likely been guided by a mentor who has the qualities listed above.

The mentor's first role is to create an environment that is conducive to, and challenging for, learning. They must determine what philosophy each has and

what goals are identified. It is critical that the mentor observe the coach in action, focusing on the coaching process - group management, experiential learning by athletes, questioning and listening. The feedback provided by a mentor can be provided formally or informally.

Why should an experienced coach become involved in mentoring? Essentially, to promote the sport of their choice; to help a volunteer coach who does not possess the same level of knowledge; to build a personal relationship; to indirectly improve the performance of the athletes and, as a product of that improved performance, to provide enjoyment for the participants.

The large majority of experienced coaches shy away from being a mentor coach. Why? Often it is because they do not want to share what they believe is the 'secret move' or 'play'. It is because they are afraid of sharing their coaching experiences as it may aid an opposition coach. It is because they are not good at listening to different points of view. It is because they are threatened that another coach may have a good idea. These are very narrow-minded excuses for avoiding entering a mentoring relationship.

The Australian Sports Commission provides many resources through the National Sports Information Centre to aid sports and individual mentor coaches in raising the standard of coaching. If you look at the successful coaches in sport you can guarantee one thing - each of them had a mentor to guide them along the developmental pathway. If an experienced coach wanted to improve their sport, and leave a legacy, then they should become a mentor coach!

(Taken from Australian Sports Commission:

[http://www.ausport.gov.au/sportscoachmag/program\\_management2/mentoring](http://www.ausport.gov.au/sportscoachmag/program_management2/mentoring)

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