

League of Fans'

Sports Manifesto

**Sports World Needs More
Humanistic Coaches**

Report III in a Series of XI

July 27, 2011

By Ken Reed
Sports Policy Director

League of Fans
Washington, D.C.

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Humanistic Coaches**

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***League of Fans is a Sports Reform Project Founded by Ralph Nader to
Encourage Civic Responsibility in Sports Industry & Culture***

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Barbaric Coaching Styles Are the Rule, Not the Exception, In Sports Today

“He treats us all the same – like dogs.”

--Henry Jordan, former All-Pro defensive tackle for the Green Bay Packers, on Vince Lombardi

Vince Lombardi’s coaching style and the impact it’s had on sports in America -- from the professional to the youth level -- is arguably the worst thing that’s happened to sports in this country.

Unfortunately, Lombardi’s kick-in-the-butt coaching style (autocratic, controlling, screaming, swearing, degrading, etc.) has become the model for team sport coaches in this country.

Yes, there were coaches that used the autocratic coaching style long before Lombardi stalked the Green Bay Packers sideline, but Lombardi stands out as *the* coaching icon in American sports. “Ya wanna win? Then ya gotta coach like Lombardi did.”

Undoubtedly, Lombardi was a successful football coach in terms of wins and losses, including winning the first two Super Bowls. His Green Bay Packers teams are legendary. But were his methods the best way to treat human beings? To develop people physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually? To make athletes the best players *and* people they can be -- in the short-term and long-term? To promote independent thinking –inside and outside of sports?

There are many Lombardi disciples and a lot of them have won championships. Bobby Knight of Indiana basketball fame is the first one that comes to mind. But there have also been a lot of successful coaches that have used more humane coaching approaches. For example, Don Shula (who was known to talk about “coaching from the heart”), Bill Walsh, John Gagliardi (the winningest coach in college football history), and more recently, Tony Dungy in football. In basketball, there’s John Wooden, Dean Smith, and today, Brad Stevens, who miraculously took tiny Butler to back-to-back men’s Final Fours with a humanistic, people-centered approach to coaching.

The coach has a tremendous influence on an athlete’s sports experience – at any level. The leadership style a coach chooses to employ is a major factor in whether that experience will be positive or negative, satisfying or frustrating, fulfilling or miserable.

Over the years, three major objectives for sports have been put forth: 1) Enhance the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of the athlete; 2) Win; and 3) Have fun. Let’s call it the sports triad.

The question that needs to be addressed is, “Can you develop the athlete in a holistic manner, treat him or her with dignity and respect, have fun *and* still win?”

The Importance of Winning ... and Money

Make no mistake, winning is important at every level, including youth sports. Even in little leagues that don't formally keep score, the kids know which team won the game. Often the first question that grandparents ask their grandchildren following a sports event is, "Did you win?"

Sports are competitive tests. Thus, winning is an objective. The challenge is to keep winning in perspective.

There has been some debate over the years about whether or not Vince Lombardi actually said, "Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." Whether he said it or not, his actions strongly suggested the quote represented the spirit of his coaching ethics.

A win-at-all-costs (WAAC) mentality places values like fairness, justice and ethics in a secondary role. The WAAC approach is to control and use individual athletes as a means toward winning ball games – the psycho-social ramifications for the athletes as human beings is but a secondary consideration.

It's not just the professional level where the WAAC mentality proliferates. With the increasing commercialization and professionalization of athletics from the college level down, the emphasis on winning over other objectives has steadily increased as well. Coaches at the lowest levels on up tend to emulate the coaching styles and behaviors of coaches at the professional level. The sports triad discussed earlier is heavily out of balance in favor of winning – to the point where the WAAC approach to sport dominates at all levels today.

This mindset shifts the emphasis in sports from the youth and high school athlete as developing human being to instrument for production of a winning team. With the proliferation of club teams in youth sports, the emphasis on winning has become even greater because club sports organizations are competing for young athletes in the marketplace. A big part of the marketing pitch used by these clubs is built around winning: "Sign up for our club. Our teams have won X league championships, Y state championships, and Z national championships." Unfortunately, that's the XYZ approach to youth sports in too many instances today.

As we move up the sports food chain and get to the big-time Division I level of college sports, and ultimately professional sports, winning-at-all-costs (WAAC) even takes a back seat to making money, the profit-at-all-costs (PAAC) ethic.

In 21st century big-time college sports -- primarily football and men's basketball -- not only are goals such as education, character building, and ethical development secondary to winning, winning becomes secondary to making money!

For example, in the "we'll do anything to make a buck" philosophy of college sports today, some colleges and universities have adopted the strategy of making money by

losing and “giving” wins to bigger schools.

For example, smaller Division I programs (let’s say NW State Agricultural College) will go on the road to play bigger Division I schools (let’s go with Big Time State U.) strictly for a payday of several hundred thousand dollars. The smaller Division I team goes out on the field and takes a flogging, say 69-7, but the smaller school’s athletic director gets to pocket a nice check from Big Time State U.

How perverted is that regularly-occurring scenario for institutions of higher education?

The Two Basic Coaching Styles

What is the best coaching style given the three objectives that comprise the sports triad -- holistic development of the athletes, winning, and fun?

Before we attempt to answer that question, a quick review of the two basic coaching styles is in order. It’s important to note that most coaches don’t completely fall in one camp or the other. There are many hybrids of the two basic coaching styles: Autocratic (Authoritarian) and Democratic (Humanistic). However, the vast majority of sports coaches today, most notably team sports coaches, fall on the autocratic/authoritarian side of the ledger.

Autocratic/Authoritarian coaches have a strong need to control others; they primarily see people as a means to an end. They believe players need to be motivated externally with the lure of rewards, or threats of punishment (despite multiple leadership studies that show threats of punishment decrease internal motivation).

Most coaches subscribe to the autocratic leadership style. It is the type most generally seen by the public as successful and most often emulated by beginning coaches – who if they believe nothing else about coaching believe you must show up at the first practice with a clipboard, whistle and ready to scream. It is also called the Command Style or “do as I say” approach to coaching.

Autocratic leadership is manipulative in nature and builds robots more than it does independent thinkers. Authoritarians discourage initiative. This type of leader, also labeled a Theory X leader by psychologist McGregor (1960), believes players will naturally avoid practice, must be coerced, threatened with punishment, prefer to be constantly directed, and will tend to avoid responsibility. Theory X coaches believe athletes must be forced to complete tasks. They motivate by pressure and fear.

The Theory X style of coaching leadership bears many similarities with the Scientific Management movement in the business world popularized by Frederick Taylor in the early years of the 20th century. Scientific Management is based on pessimistic assumptions about the nature of man, such that he is lazy, and only driven by incentives. Scientific Management principles were quickly adopted by production-oriented

businesses.

Coaches who employ this style are characterized by a belief in strong discipline, rigidity of rules, and an impersonal attitude towards their athletes. The autocratic coach usually has a high need to control others and the coaching position satisfies that need.

Autocratic coaches make every attempt to rule the athlete's every move, from practice and games to their private lives, including what they eat and when they sleep. Power is a given; compliance and obedience are expected. Coaches of this type are quick to recognize mistakes and distribute punishments.

As a society, we've come to accept that effective coaches must be autocratic drill sergeants. Think of the sports movies you've seen. Aren't most of the coaches portrayed in these movies Vince Lombardi types? Hollywood has bought into the "coach as drill sergeant" style and fed it back to us. So have sportswriters and broadcasters.

While Theory X coaches tend to see people as merely instruments in the production process, humanistic coaches (Theory Y) are people-oriented, prefer collaborative decision-making and believe team performance is strongly related to the satisfaction levels of their players, the sense of internal bonding present within the team, and how much fun the players are having. They believe people are internally motivated when treated humanely and with dignity. Theory Y coaches focus on encouragement and positive motivation tactics. They believe human beings seek out fun, are curious and naturally want to actualize themselves.

Theory Y leadership stems from the Human Relations School of Organizational Management, which argues that productivity is related to job satisfaction. Theory Y leaders believe that work groups, or teams, that are characterized by a more democratic and humanistic atmosphere will have higher levels of internal motivation, satisfaction and morale, and as a result, more commitment to the organization or team, and greater productivity than those groups directed by authoritarian leaders/coaches.

Theory Y leaders tend to use a consultative approach. In dealing with team problems, Theory Y coaches typically make decisions through team meetings rather than unilaterally. This contrasts to the Theory X coach's decision-making style of being unilateral, autocratic, and arbitrary.

The German philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe expressed a Theory Y-like philosophy when he said, "If you treat a man as he would be and could be, he will become what he would and could be. If you treat him as he is, he will remain what he is."

Another way of looking at coaching styles is to examine the Pygmalion Effect. Basically, the Pygmalion Effect states that once an expectation is set, positive or negative, people will act in certain ways that are consistent with that expectation, causing the expectation to come true.

According to ancient legend, Pygmalion was a prince of Cyprus who created an ivory statue of his ideal mate. The result of his work was a beautiful sculpted woman that Pygmalion named Galatea. Pygmalion carried on his life believing that he was destined to spend his life with Galatea and began praying to Venus to bring her to life. Venus granted his prayer.

Today, the Pygmalion Effect, from a leadership perspective, means that the expectations you direct towards a person, or group such as a team, will likely come true.

J. Sterling Livingston, in an article entitled “Pygmalion in Management,” in the September/October 1988 Harvard Business Review, said, “The way managers treat their subordinates is subtly influenced by what they expect of them.”

For coaches, this means that players who receive a lot of praise and communication from a coach, and a sense that the coach believes in them, will tend to aspire and ascend to higher levels of performance. In contrast, players who receive less praise, less communication, and more criticism are likely to feel underappreciated and performance levels will drop.

Negativity and demeaning behavior by a coach can result in lower self-esteem and distorted negative self-images on the part of players. But the reverse of that -- high expectations, positive reinforcement, open communication, etc. -- will result in boosts in self-confidence and self-image, along with improved capabilities and performance from players.

“More often than he realizes, the manager [or coach] is Pygmalion,” according to Livingston.

The Theory Y Coach in Action

Maybe the best model for the Theory Y coaching style is John Gagliardi. Gagliardi is the football coach at Div. III Saint John’s University in Minnesota. He is the winningest coach in college football history (yes, ahead of Penn State’s Joe Paterno) with a lifetime record of 478-129-11. In 2003 he won his fourth national championship, to go along with 26 conference titles. And he’s the anti-Lombardi.

Gagliardi has no film sessions after Monday, no playbooks, no blocking sleds, no tackling leading up to games, and no wind sprints. Nobody gets cut. There’s no yelling and screaming at players. Gagliardi doesn’t use a whistle. Practices are limited to 90 minutes. Gagliardi says his practices will not have any resemblance to a boot camp. He has no rules except the Golden Rule. Gagliardi’s quarterbacks call the vast majority of the team’s plays. If he does send in a play he calls it a “suggestion” and the quarterback is free to disregard it. His players love coming to practice and his graduation record is nearly perfect. Because of the limited physical contact in practice, Gagliardi’s teams

have fewer injuries and less soreness. As a result, Gagliardi believes his players play with more intensity on Saturdays.

“My whole years I’ve never had goals, just great expectations,” Gagliardi says.

A perfect quote from a Theory Y coach who understands the Pygmalion Effect.

Gagliardi is a big believer in having fun with his team. He feels having a sense of humor is a key trait for a coach.

“I don’t think I could have lasted without a sense of humor,” says Gagliardi. “Let’s put it this way, there would have been no hope for me to have lasted without humor. Football is made for humor. You have to have a grin now and then on the gridiron. This isn’t life and death.”

On the team’s senior speech night a few years back, one senior, linebacker Brandon Novak, described the experience of four years playing for John Gagliardi this way: “Live it up underclassmen, because it goes by fast. It goes by fast, but it’ll be the best four years of your life. And once you’ve played your last game, you’ll look back and say, ‘This is the greatest place on earth to play football.’”

Joe Ehrmann is a former NFL All-Pro football player for the Baltimore Colts. With the Colts he won on the football field, entertained fans, and helped make a lot of money for the team’s owner.

Today, he’s doing more important work: coaching and mentoring young men. He’s also an author and motivational speaker. In recent years, he was also a football coach at Gilman High School in Maryland. While his Gilman teams were highly successful on the scoreboard (consistently finishing in the top 10 in the Maryland state high school rankings, including a couple undefeated seasons), Ehrmann stressed a different set of success measures with his players. In Jeffrey Marx’s excellent book, *Season of Life*, Ehrmann is quoted as saying:

It’s gonna come down to this: What kind of father were you? What kind of husband were you? What kind of coach or teammate were you? What kind of son were you? What kind of brother were you? What kind of friend were you?

Success comes in terms of relationships. Success is measured by the impact you make on other people’s lives.

And I think the second criterion is that all of us ought to have some kind of cause, some kind of purpose in our lives that’s bigger than our own individual hopes, dreams, wants and desires. Life’s about relationships and having a cause bigger than yourself. Simple as that.

Ehrmann also stressed measuring yourself against the best *you* can be, not comparing yourself to others.

God gives each person X amount of talent. The question isn't really how many talents you've been given. That's the sovereignty of God. The real question is what you do with the ones you have. Some of us get paralyzed when we feel we don't have 'as much as' or [aren't] 'as good as' someone else. But the person we really want to honor is the one who maximizes whatever it is he has.

Frosty Westering is another Theory Y coaching legend. He's the all-time National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) wins leader in college football, with most of those wins coming at Pacific Lutheran. Westering focuses on "put-ups" rather than "put-downs" when coaching his players. He built his coaching philosophy around one theme: "Be the coach you would've wanted to play for."

In his high school and college playing career, he played for traditional, autocratic type coaches. He didn't enjoy playing under coaches with this leadership style and vowed that he would find another method if he ever became a coach.

"I always said I wanted to coach the way I would've wanted my sons or daughters to be coached," said Westering.

Sports Illustrated, in their 2000 college football preview issue called Westering's program "The Nicest Team in Football."

One of Pacific Lutheran's opponents said of Westering's teams, "When they knock you on your butt, they help you up. They're the classiest team I've played against."

Like Ehrmann, he avoids the win-at-all-costs trap by stressing to his players to compete against their "best selves," not their opponents.

"The real measure of me is not what I can do in comparison to others but what I can do in comparison to my own best self," says Westering.

One of Westering's players, Steve Ridgway, originally accepted an athletic scholarship from the University of Colorado after turning down Notre Dame. He quickly realized that Colorado's Division I program wasn't for him. He transferred to Pacific Lutheran University to play for Westering:

"Frosty Westering showed me how to play the game the right way, what athletics really was all about: that it was bigger than just stepping on the field, making tackles, interceptions, winning games," said Ridgway. "In the time that I was at PLU, Frosty gave me a faith to build my life on, he gave me a hope for the future and a sense that love never fails."

Contrast that style to the famous Type X coach Bobby Knight, talking to one of his players here, as quoted from John Feinstein's *A Season on the Brink*:

You know what you are Daryl [Thomas]? You are the worst f----- pussy I've ever seen play basketball at this school. The absolute worst pussy ever. You have more god----

ability than 95 percent of the players we've had here but you are a pussy from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. An absolute f----- pussy. That's my assessment of you after three years.

How's that for inspiring leadership?

"Sports when it's done right, is so beautiful," says Jim Thompson, the founder of a growing national non-profit called Positive Coaching Alliance. "And when it's not, it's so ugly."

Looking at Coaching Styles From a Sports Triad Perspective

What type of boss do you prefer to work for? What type of coach would you want to play for? What type of coach do you want leading your child?

Those are the types of questions we should be asking ourselves in order to help answer which coaching style is best.

What about winning you say? Well, Gagliardi, Westering and Ehrmann are all big winners on the scoreboard.

Yes, but those examples are at the high school and small college levels, you say. Can Theory Y coaches win in big-time sports?

As mentioned earlier, winning coaches at the big-time level like John Wooden, Dean Smith, Tony Dungy, Don Shula, Bill Walsh, and Sean Payton -- whose New Orleans Saints won the Super Bowl following the 2009-10 season -- all would be considered more on the Theory Y side of the ledger -- if not classified as pure Theory Y coaches.

While these coaches might not be Theory Y coaches to the extent of Gagliardi, Westering and Ehrmann, they are much closer to Theory Y than the vast majority of big-time college and pro coaches in America today. Call them a hybrid of Theory Y and X, or Theory Z. Theory Z leaders and coaches incorporate pieces of Theory Y and Theory X in their coaching styles. An increase in the number of Theory Z coaches -- in addition to growth in the number of Theory Y coaches -- would be an important step forward for our society.

Shula co-authored a book called *Coaching From the Heart: How to Inspire Greatness in Others*. John Wooden was selected as the greatest coach -- for any sport -- of all-time by *The Sporting News*. Wooden reached that level of success by treating players with dignity, rarely raising his voice and never swearing at his players. He won 10 national championships in 12 years at UCLA without resorting to a tyrannical Theory X coaching style.

Wooden believed that athletes are first motivated by the sport itself. His foundational objective was to sustain that original internal motivation, not falsely create it externally

by a reward/punishment system.

“I want the boys to want to come out to practice,” Wooden once said. “I want my players to feel the worst punishment I can give them is to deny them practice.”

A truly enlightened approach. Still, a huge percentage of us – sports participants and fans -- view Theory X poster boy Bobby Knight as what a basketball coach – or the coach of any sport for that matter -- needs to be in order to be successful.

Why Do We Tolerate Tyrannical Theory X Coaches?

“It’s time to do away with coaching by humiliation and fear. When college coaches choose to coach this way and win, then coaches at all levels feel they have to emulate this behavior. This results in an environment with an enormous rippling effect with harmful social consequences ... As parents and citizens, we must stop honoring this primitive and abusive behavior that is tolerated and perpetuated in the name of ‘winning.’”

--Bill Reichardt, former football player with the University of Iowa and the Green Bay Packers

The great author James Michener, who wrote *Sports in America*, said coaches in the United States get away with forms of discipline that simply wouldn’t be tolerated in any other activity.

Why are they tolerated in sports?

Despite the success of Gagliardi, Westering, Ehrmann, Wooden, Shula, Dungy, Stevens, and others, our society has been conditioned to think that autocratic coaches are better coaches; that they’re more effective motivators; that they’re better leaders; that they win more often.

All myths.

Here’s another myth: You may think that if you perform well, you’ll be happy. But research says you should flip that around. In other words, if you’re happy and having fun at work (or playing a sport), you’ll perform better. High levels of happiness and satisfaction predict higher performance. There’s also evidence that athletes who focus on having fun versus performing well are more relaxed, creative and “in the zone” more often. In short, they enjoy sports more and, as a bonus, play better.

But the continuing dominance of Theory X coaches is the result of a vicious cycle. Athletes are conditioned by autocratic coaches from Little League on. When they grow up and become coaches themselves, they model the behavior of the coaches they remember from their playing days. They also model the behavior of pro and big-time college coaches, most of whom are Theory X coaches.

“Coaches are psychologically frozen,” explains the Positive Coaching Alliance’s Thompson, talking about the limited models most beginning coaches rely on. “They tend to coach the way they were coached and by the professional coaches they see on TV.”

How well is the Theory X autocratic coaching model working in the big picture? What are the ramifications for athletes – especially young athletes – who have constantly been in the submissive role to coaches with autocratic, sometimes demeaning, coaching styles?

Here’s one telling fact: 70% of kids who play organized sports during their elementary school years drop out by the time they’re 13. A primary reason cited by these drop-outs is overbearing adults – coaches and parents – who take the fun out of sports.

Another outcome of the Theory X approach is that athletes under autocratic leadership styles often develop a dependence on authority figures and suffer from “group think,” which results in a lack of independent thinking and decision-making ability in the short-and-long-term. Athletes are conditioned by Theory X coaches - from youth leagues on -to be non-thinking conformists. Very rarely are athletes involved in the development of team rules, game strategy or decision-making of any kind -- even to a small degree -- under Theory X coaches. In football, quarterbacks rarely call their own plays anymore. In baseball, especially at the college, high school and youth levels, pitchers and catchers often rely on a coach in the dugout to call *every* pitch in a baseball game.

Given the fact they’ve been molded as conformists, conditioned not to think or act independently, is it any wonder that many athletes have such a hard time adjusting to life without sports when their college or professional careers end?

Too many of today’s athletes were expected to give up their independent thinking and decision-making to autocratic-type coaches as early as middle school. Through college, especially for athletes isolated in “team houses” in big-time Division I programs, decisions such as what to major in, what classes to take and when, what to eat, when to eat, whether or not to participate in any non-sports campus activities, etc., were often made for them by coaches. Typical day-to-day concerns for most students, like food and laundry, were handled on their behalf.

Athletes groomed under Theory X coaches become athletic robots, which is just what the manipulative Type X coach is looking for in order to meet his/her need to control the environment (make no mistake, Type X coaches come in both genders; one of the most prominent Type X coaches in the country is Pat Summit, the women’s basketball coach at Tennessee). The athlete under autocratic leadership has, in effect, ceded his/her responsibility for thinking and acting to the coach.

The lack of self-reliance in the team sports setting is evident when observing situations where a Type X coach is pulled away from the team, for whatever reason. In these cases, in which athletes have become totally dependent on the coach for guidance, chaos typically reigns. There is a leadership vacuum. The team tends to “go to pieces” if discipline is suddenly relaxed or the coach is absent.

Moreover, for athletes under Theory X leadership, intrinsic satisfaction and motivation eventually becomes a fleeting concept. As such, authoritarians resort to the use of gimmicks, such as stars on football helmets, for on-field performance, as well as for such things as getting athletes to eat properly, sleep properly, and be prompt for team meetings. The danger is that the athlete then becomes overly sensitive to the extrinsic reward. The issue becomes, when his/her sports career is over, and all these external motivational gimmicks are gone, where's the athlete's motivation going to come from if his/her internal motivation has been dampened by autocratic coaches from youth leagues on up?

Recommendations

As a society, we need to challenge – at all levels -- the conventional thinking that Theory X coaches are the gold standard in coaching; that in order to win, the Lombardi style of coaching (Theory X) – controlling, manipulating, dehumanizing – must be employed. As a society, it's time to demand that our coaches evolve from the archaic and barbaric autocratic style to a more humanistic and positive style of coaching. In particular, as a society, we must work to remove tyrannical coaches – those at the far end of the autocratic Theory X continuum – from the coaching circles, especially at the high school and youth levels.

1) Promote – and Require Wherever Possible – Theory Y-Type Coaching Education Programs

It seems clear that from a holistic perspective the overall needs of athletes – physical, psychological, emotional and social – are best met under the humanistic guidance of a Theory Y coach.

Theory Y coaches educate toward independence and the psycho-social development of the athlete. Athletes under Theory Y leadership have a better chance to become independent decision-makers after their playing days are over and the coach is no longer there to run their lives. And given the opportunity, history shows that Theory Y coaches can be just as successful, if not more so, when it comes to winning games and championships.

One of the most impactful things we can do for our sports culture is to focus on transitioning the dominant coaching style from Theory X to Theory Y at the youth and high school levels. By targeting the development of humanistic high school and youth coaches, we can impact the most people and influence young people to become Theory Y coaches when they reach adulthood.

Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) (www.positivecoach.org), led by Jim Thompson, is an excellent example of the type of coaching development program that needs to be utilized across the country. Thompson is the author of eight books on coaching and youth sports,

including *The Power of Double-Goal Coaching: Developing Winners in Sports and Life*.

PCA is a non-profit designed to “transform youth sports so sports can transform youth.” The organization fights the win-at-all-costs (WAAC) mentality that is pervasive in sports, including at the youth level. PCA promotes the development of the whole child through a “double-goal” coaching model that emphasizes a humanistic approach to developing athletes while still striving to win.

Thompson promotes a research-based coaching approach centered on the following concepts:

- The ELM Tree of Mastery where “E” stands for Effort, “L” stands for Learning and constant improvement, and “M” stands for learning to bounce back from mistakes.
- Filling the Emotional Tanks of players through encouragement and positive reinforcement so they can perform their best and enjoy their sport.
- The ROOTS of Honoring the Game: showing respect for the Rules, Opponents, Officials, Teammates and Self by the way you compete.

Thompson says his critics call him anti-competitive. He forcefully denies that claim.

“We’re not noncompetitive,” insists Thompson. “We like to win, too.”

But for the double-goal coach, “winning” means more than just the outcome on the scoreboard, hence the “double-goal” coach approach.

Thompson believes the Vince Lombardi coaching style will continue to be the primary coaching style in America unless we individually and collectively decide to stand up and stop it.

It certainly won’t be easy. Thompson alludes to the ingrained sports culture that humanistic coaches are up against in his book *Positive Coaching*:

I am always bemused by commentators who talk about so-and-so, a major college coach, who is so “tough” and shows it by yelling at his players. There’s nothing tough about getting negative when things don’t go your way. Any three-year-old throwing a temper tantrum is tough in that sense. A truly disciplined coach is one who can provide emotional support to a kid who just blew an “easy” play (easy from the sidelines) that cost a game. He can remain cool while analyzing the situation that contributed to the mistake. Then, at a future practice, he can introduce drills to help the player reduce the likelihood that the same mistake will be repeated. True mental toughness is exhibited by remaining positive in the face of adversity.

Isn’t that type of approach better for the individual, and the team, than the approach Bobby Knight used with Daryl Thomas above?

Remember the Pygmalion Effect: Athletes will act in ways that are consistent with the expectations a coach has of them -- as human beings and players – and the amount of positive reinforcement vs. criticism a coach gives them.

There are several other sports reformers in the country, in addition to Thompson and Positive Coaching Alliance, who emphasize coaching styles that address the development of the whole athlete, having fun, and winning.

Bob Bigelow is a former NBA basketball player turned passionate youth sports reformer whose goal is to take back youth sports from winning-obsessed coaches and parents and give them back to the kids. He's the author of *Just Let the Kids Play: How to Stop Other Adults from Ruining Your Child's Fun and Success in Youth Sports*.

Fred Engh is the founder and director of the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) (www.nays.org), one of the first organizations created to fight the WAAC mentality in youth sports. He's the author of *Why Johnny Hates Sports*.

Tom Farrey is an ESPN investigative reporter and the author of *Game On: How the Pressure to Win At All Costs Endangers Youth Sports and What Parents Can Do About It*. He is also the director of the Aspen Institute's Sports & Society program. He recently led the program's first roundtable, "Sport for All, Play for Life," a discussion about the sport activity trends of U.S. children.

Fortunately, there are great Theory Y coaches in our country at all levels of sports; coaches for whom the highest compliment is that they improved the lives of those who played for them. Unfortunately, Theory Y coaches are still in the minority.

However, with the help of sports reformers, and Theory Y-oriented parents and coaches, the number of Theory Y coaches in the United States will experience significant growth.

All coaches in this country should be strongly encouraged to take coaching education programs that promote and teach the Theory Y coaching style. Youth sports organizations should demand it. Coaches in our public schools should be required to complete Theory Y coaching education programs because the humanistic coaching style is more conducive to the overall educational mission.

As John Wooden was always fond of saying, in essence, coaches are teachers. Our society doesn't tolerate tyrannical teachers in the classroom. It's time we stop tolerating tyrannical coaches in coaching arenas.

2. Start a "Be the Coach You Would've Wanted to Play For" Campaign

When asked about the best coach they've ever played for, athletes usually tell stories about a Theory Y coach they had, one that was the exception to the Theory X pattern. They describe coaches that were fair, encouraging, gentle but firm, teachers of life lessons, and who cared about them as people, not just players that could help them win. They talk about coaches that had high expectations for them and helped them live up to those expectations. They talk about staying in touch with these coaches long after their playing days have ended.

When asked about the worst coach they played for, it's often a tyrannical Type X coach. Their only fond memory is that they managed to tolerate this coach. They share a badge of honor with teammates with whom they survived the boot camp experiences orchestrated by this coach. But that's about it.

Both Tara VanDerveer, the hall of fame women's basketball coach at Stanford University, and Frosty Westering, the tremendously successful football coach at Pacific Lutheran University have said that their goal upon entering coaching was to be the kind of coach they would have wanted to play for.

What a great concept and foundation for a coaching philosophy. An educational campaign needs to be built around that theme: "Be the Kind of Coach You Would've Wanted to Play For."

Let's call this approach the "Golden Rule" approach to sports coaching – treat others how you wish to be treated – in honor of John Gagliardi, whose only team rule was the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule coaching style will fall under the Theory Y umbrella.

If every current and future coach in America built their coaching philosophy and style around the question, "What kind of coach would I have wanted to play for?" the number of Theory Y coaches – at all levels -- would grow substantially in this country.

It's possible to change one's coaching style to a Golden Rule approach: Be the Kind of Coach You Would've Wanted to Play For. VanDerveer's coaching style has definitely evolved over the years. Growing up in Indiana, she followed Bobby Knight and in her early years as a coach utilized more of a Theory X coaching style. Through the years, however, she's evolved toward the Theory Y end of the continuum and while she would most accurately be described as a Theory Z coach today – a hybrid of Theory X and Theory Y, she's on the Theory Y side of the ledger at this point in her career.

Players and others who work with her describe her as demanding, tough, warm, engaging, congenial and compassionate. Through the years, while remaining demanding, she has become kinder, gentler, more patient and more flexible.

According to a feature story in *Stanford* magazine in 2010, the yin and yang for VanDerveer appears to be toughness and tenderness. She's tough as needed but those who know her best mention her tenderness first.

"You can't show both sides to everybody and be successful," says Jennifer Azzi, a star on

Stanford's first national championship team who also played for VanDerveer on the U.S. Olympic squad that won the 1996 gold medal. "She's very sensitive and caring and compassionate, but balances that with an on-off switch in order to be successful."

Jim Thompson, of the Positive Coaching Alliance, ended his book *Positive Coaching* with two challenges built around the theme of "Be the Coach You Would've Wanted to Play For."

First, make your goal to turn every one of your players into a coach so they can pass on to others what you are teaching them about life as well as sports. And finally, never lose sight of what it is you would have wanted in a coach when you were young, and do everything in your power to become the coach that you would have wanted to play for.

3. More Research in the Area of Coaching Styles

As a country, we need to have more research done specifically on coaching styles in sports. There is a large amount of research – quantitative and qualitative -- available on leadership styles in general, and business management styles in particular, but relatively little on coaching styles in the world of sports. Studies are needed that examine the impact of various coaching styles on individual and team performance, athletes' holistic development, levels of satisfaction and enjoyment among players, long-term success and happiness in life, even the impact on fan behavior. For example, do tyrannical authoritarian coaches stalking the sidelines incite fan violence at a greater rate than democratic humanistic coaches?

The League of Fans encourages researchers to consider a variety of research projects in the general area of coaching styles.

APPENDIX

*** Win-Loss-Tie Records of Coaches Mentioned in This Report**

<u>Coach</u>	<u>W-L-T Record</u>
Vince Lombardi	96-34-6
Bobby Knight	902-371
Frosty Westering	305-96-7
John Gagliardi	478-129-11
John Wooden	664-162
Dean Smith	879-254
Don Shula	328-156-6
Bill Walsh	92-59-1
Tara VanDerveer	793-195
Tony Dungy	139-69
Pat Summit	1,037-196
Brad Stevens	117-25

About the Author

Dr. Ken Reed is Sports Policy Director for the League of Fans. He is a long-time sports industry consultant, sports studies instructor, sports issues analyst, columnist and author.

Reed is a distance faculty member for the United States Sports Academy and occasionally teaches sports studies courses, including Contemporary Sports Issues, History of Sports, and Sports Sociology.

Reed has long been a strong advocate for quality physical education and sports programs for all students, not just elite athletes. He created the Center for the Advancement of Physical Education (CAPE) for PE4life, a non-profit organization dedicated to making quality daily physical education available to all students, K-12. As director and senior policy analyst for CAPE, he developed numerous position papers, white papers, issue backgrounders, and op-ed columns. He is the author of PE4life's "Blueprint for Change," an overview of the benefits of physical education as well as an action plan for getting our children moving in order to improve wellness, learning and behavior.

A "recovering sports marketer," Reed once was a sports marketing consultant before switching career directions and utilizing his marketing and communications skills in a social marketing role for a variety of sports, fitness and education causes. He has delivered numerous professional development seminars to educators on how physical education, sports, and other forms of physical activity can improve academic performance, decrease behavioral problems and enhance student wellness.

Reed also has served as an executive board member and faculty fellow for the National Institute for Sports Reform, as well as on the board of directors for Positive Coaching, a Denver-based non-profit whose mission is to promote positive attitudes and behaviors in youth sports. In addition, Reed has served as an advisory board member for Metropolitan State College of Denver's Sports Industry Operations program.

He has published a sports novel targeting girls, 10-14, called *Sara's Big Challenge*. The book's overarching theme is the importance of being true to yourself. He recently completed a book on Phil Lawler, the "father of the new physical education." It is due to be published by Human Kinetics in Fall 2011. In addition, he has been a regular sports issues columnist for several sports magazines.

Reed holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Denver, a master's degree from Colorado State University (concentration in athletic administration), and a doctorate in sport administration (emphasis sport policy) from the University of Northern Colorado. His doctoral dissertation was a sports policy case study and dealt with the unsavory aspects of the Major League Baseball expansion process. Reed lettered in baseball and basketball at the University of Denver and has worn many hats in the world of sports, including coach, sports official, scout, manager, and sports talk show host.