

BEYOND X's and O's

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Preface

The textbook for this **NAYSI On-Line Course** for . . .

coaches at all levels, teachers at all levels, parents, youth leaders, recreation professionals, directors of youth programs, youth work professionals, community leaders

Introductory note . . . pay attention now . . . read on

Take the time and effort to read the preface that follows. Consider what is stated herein. If you are not willing to invest the time necessary to do this now and consider the ideas put forth here, then you may not profit by going any further. You should just back out of this effort right now. Do it when you can fit this into your schedule.

Good bye!

For those who are reading on . . .

You may feel that those were harsh words, but your attention is needed. There are some people and programs that are just not as good for the kids as they might be. Consider this . . .

If you cannot reach 'em, you cannot teach 'em.

We lose influence over our children when we cut them, ignore them, use them and abuse them. If you really want to do a better job leading children, your players and your program, then you must become somewhat of an expert in the field (and the court).

There is no need for televised sports to be your guiding light, your unofficial coaching education program. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. You can become somewhat of an expert when it comes to kids and sports. In fact, we believe that you should become somewhat of an expert, a registered "youth sport buff."

Preface

In recent years, through the persistent efforts of a handful of people, youth sport has begun to emerge as a form of sport set apart from the highly recognized

forms of sport like Revenue Sports, Intramural Sport, Instructional Sport, and Adult Leisure Sport. However, youth sport has yet reached the point where it is recognized by distinctive and commonly known characteristics.

The future of sport for children is highly uncertain in our view. Far too many people are opposed to organized sport for kids. They want youngsters to play and learn on their own, but they appear not to be doing this. This is ironic because we are in times when adults are taking more and more interest in sports, health and fitness. This represents just one of the ironies in youth sport. While adults are becoming more involved in sports, we seem to be making it more difficult for our children to become involved and stay involved. On the one hand we invite, if not prod them to get involved. Then we tell them: "You are not good enough. Practice on your own and try again next year." Once they are in, we are weeding them out by asking them to be better and better players at younger and younger ages.

There are a number of other ironies in this service area called youth sport. As you read the following examples, keep in mind that these are broad generalizations that do not apply to all programs but are far too obvious and commonplace to ignore.

The second point is that some coaches feel that they could step right into the higher levels of competition and do it as well if not better than those who are paid to coach. In fact, most non-trained coaches do not know enough about coaching and teaching, sport skills (particularly those minute details that make huge differences for players who are no longer beginners), safety, and children to be successful. They may know more about sports than the fans and the parents but not as much as do the better players. Some do not know that they do not know much less what they need to know. An important aspect of growth in all phases of our lives is recognizing what we do not know, and then figuring out how to acquire the knowledge.

A third point is that many coaches treat their players like seasoned, adult, major league players. They make no distinction between inexperienced children and well skilled, physically mature, elite athletes. The irony is that the kids are more like their untrained coaches than the highly selected athletes that coaches believe their players to be. The coaches and the parents, in their personal recreation and leisure pastimes, want to play. They will not sit long and wait. They would want to play right now, not later. Most kids are the same way, given the choice.

Another ironic point is that in the professional leagues, they replace the coaches and managers when the players and teams fail. In the youth leagues, it seems like we always blame the players and relegate them to the bench. Most of the players are as inexperienced and untrained as are their coaches. The same comment can be directed to most fans and the parents of the players.

Are we becoming too selective in our youth sport programming? If this is true, who will be left to play in the years ahead? These ironies suggest that every person brings their own goals and purposes to these youth games. Despite good intentions, the kids themselves receive inadequate consideration. This “coach the best and bench the rest” approach to youth programming is the opposite ideal held by those who have been professionally prepared in youth sport, recreation, leisure, and physical education. These youth sport advocates and community professionals seek, not victories and pro contracts but growth or improvement and lifetime participation. Give youngsters the skills they need to play well and the victories will take care of themselves.

Beyond X's And O's is a “success manual” for coaches - - coaches at all levels, teachers, directors, parents, community leaders and youth work professionals. This course is about how to conduct sports for kids. Throughout much of the book, there are underlying and sometimes obvious attacks on what is called Revenue Sports. It is the money sports system that receives incessant coverage through the print and broadcast media. The media has become the coach's coach and the “unofficial” model after which many of our parents, coaches and players pattern their behavior.

However, it is not our purpose or intent to eliminate or change the Revenue Sports Model. That will occur much more effectively from the inside as warranted. Rather, it is our purpose to show, from a comparative perspective, that the Revenue Sports Model is not a suitable model for the activities of most children. The purpose of Revenue Sports is to make a profit or gain other advantages. Youth sport is for kids.

It is through television, in particular, that our coaches are learning to work with kids in sport. What the leaders and the players learn through the media and its games can be most inappropriate, if not outright crude and obscene.

We can do three things to redesign youth sport for kids. We need desperately to adopt a general and popular philosophy about sports for kids. Revenue sport is a sink or swim model. In youth sport perhaps we could regard it as a time for kids to explore, learn and grow without serious consequences.

We can offer a variety of educational programs for our youth leaders to replace Revenue Sports. Until we do this, Revenue Sports and the media will remain the unofficial training program for youth sport leaders.

Last, many people feel that our youngsters are an important resource, and rightfully so. Therefore, it is suggested that youth leaders become specialists or experts in their involvement with the kids.

As you go through the process of selecting schools and colleges for your children to attend, you become somewhat of an expert. When you purchase a home, you should become somewhat of an expert in real estate and finance. When you go through a divorce, you had better become somewhat of an expert. If not, you may carry a lot of regrets with you for a long time. When you develop a new hobby, you will become somewhat of an expert.

Antique and car collectors tend to be real “buffs.” Many sports fans are real “trivia buffs.” All kinds of people, including kids, become buffs by reading, studying what is known, developing questions, and finding the answer to a lot of questions. It seems reasonable that youth sport leaders should become “youth sport buffs” considering the value of this non-disposable human resource.

There are no popularly recognized youth sport models at this time. Like our youngsters, they are in the process of becoming or emerging. When youth models develop, they will have some of the following characteristics:

- **100% participation or inclusive**
- **fun for the players**
- **learning basic skills or fundamentals**
- **safety**
- **balance**
- **developmental**

Given the state of youth sport today in some programs, it seems that the un-organized play of youth is far superior to the dis-organized programming of adults. This dis-organized leadership is characterized by elitism, exclusions, alarming if not abusive coaching methods, and a lot of standing around. In fact, many of us have seen more action at the fast food places after the games than during the games and practice sessions. In the un-organized play of kids, the kids do, in fact, get to play. These observations just reaffirm the need to adopt program philosophies for kids and then teach the adults how to conduct themselves in accordance with the philosophy of the program. For most of us, and for kids in particular, it is not so important whether they win or lose, but how much they get to play.

Youth sport advocates feel that sport has much to offer people in the way of fun, fitness and fundamentals. The bases for getting better and developing lifetime players is to keep sport an enjoyable learning experience for youngsters. In doing this, young players will improve and become lifetime players. This contributes to a well-balanced life. Life without sport is incomplete. By the same token, when sport is everything, the risk of disappointment and injury is high. When sport is an integral part of life, taken in moderation, then life itself becomes more fulfilling.

Readers should not be offended by the previous assertions. Hopefully, the accusations in this book do not apply to you and the people in your program.

However, do acknowledge them when they give you reason to pause or question what happens to your children in your program. Know what is happening and what should happen. It is a sign that you are on the way to becoming a “youth sport buff.”

You can start on the path to becoming a “youth sport buff” by reading ***Beyond X's and O's***.

Want to pass another milestone? Study ***Beyond X's and O's***, pass the test and become a member of the **International Registry of Coaches**.

Ready to take yet another step? Plan your youth sport activities based on what you have learned by reading and studying ***Beyond X's and O's***.

Now you are on your way to becoming a self directed learner with great potential to become fully functioning “youth sport buff.” Congratulations.

How about International Registry of Coaches

Before completing the course, take the NAYSI Course information to your supervisor. See if it qualifies for the three NEC's you can receive for completing the course. NEC's are used for educational advancement credits in many health, medical and educational organizations. The cost for obtaining NEC's is \$10 and you must provide your social security number in order to receive an official transcript.

Testing. When you have finished your studies, you may log-on for your test. Do not become upset if you do not pass it the first time, just reread the course, study and try again. It s **FREE!**

Those who successfully pass the NAYSI Course may chose to register with the **INTERNATIONAL REGISTRY OF COACHES**. This will place your name in the database for future verification that you have successfully passed the course.

Distant learning on-line is the most practicable way of preparing volunteer coaches for their new experience in these busy times. Even experienced coaches can take this course as a refresher. It has been prepared so that willing learners can study the course content in the comfort of their home and then take the test on-line.

A passing grade is 85% correct.

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Required registration information

Your ID Number or Social Security number

Name

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Zip code or postal code

Nation

Date of Birth

Telephone number

Fax number

E-mail address

Primary Sport(s)

Municipality coaching

Training record (list all training, course title, date, grade, pass/fail/other)

NEC FEE: \$10 (includes one copy of the transcript in writing upon request with your social security number, additional copies of the transcript are \$5 each)