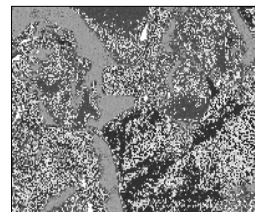


Great Coaching – Great Coaches: How to Be the Best of the Best.

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Whilst all great coaches are unique and very special individuals, there are some common factors – some common championship coaching characteristics that they all share:

1. A commitment to **continuous improvement**.
2. A **belief** that anything is possible.
3. An understanding of where your sport has been (**history of the sport**), where it is now and most importantly a **vision** for where it is going.
4. The **confidence** to be yourself – to be **unique**.
5. The **energy** to work hard **consistently**.
6. The strength and courage to **not compromise**.
7. Outstanding **communication** abilities.
8. An understanding of **who you are**, what you value and what motivates you.
9. A **passion** for winning – a **desire** to be the best.
10. The capacity to **persevere** and **persist** and continue to fight hard no matter what obstacles you face.



1. A commitment to continuous improvement

Success is a moving target: winning this year is no guarantee of success next year. Great coaches continue to pursue excellence and relentlessly chase personal and professional improvement. They understand that the time to make the most significant and effective changes to their coaching is when they are successful – i.e. they reject the notion that winning means they have all the answers. They may be number one but they think, act and strive to win like they are number two. They are allergic to complacency and they reject routine, habit and sameness. They know that they must **accelerate their learning** and their rate of change to win and to stay ahead of their competition. They are not afraid to ask hard questions of themselves or to invite honest, hard, direct and uncompromising criticism from colleagues and competitors. They know that if they are not honest with themselves and if they fail to strive to identify and overcome their weaknesses, their competitors will find them and exploit them at the next competition.

2. A belief that anything is possible

Belief has to come before excellence is possible. Great coaches believe in themselves and back themselves. They understand that belief is the foundation of success. They possess a belief which is able to withstand negatives and setbacks and obstacles and failures.

The belief that drives a great coach is like the flow of a great river – it is unstoppable and it sweeps aside all resistance in its path. **Real progress is only possible when fuelled by real belief.** Great coaches have a sense of self belief that says to their competition “I am here to win – and to beat me you will need to be at your best”. Their belief gives them confidence. Their belief provides them with composure. Their belief keeps them calm in the face of any competitive storm. Their belief gives them clarity. And the only thing greater than their self belief is the belief they have in their athletes.

3. An understanding of where your sport has been (history of the sport), where it is now and most importantly a vision for where it is going

Great coaches are students of their sport. They have insight and understanding about the physical, mental, technical, tactical, strategic and cultural aspects of their sport that is second to none. But more importantly they have a clear vision for where the sport is going and strive every day to get there first. They do not follow. **They lead the direction of the sport through their creativity, their innovations and their intuition.** They lead – and force their opposition to follow – to have to chase them. They set the standard and challenge everyone else to try and match it. They change the direction of their sport – they determine the future of their profession and they become the benchmark for future generations.

4. The confidence to be yourself – to be unique

The essence of greatness is uniqueness. It is uniqueness and daring to be different that sets the great coaches apart from the rest. It is their courage in being innovative, their courage in being creative and the capacity to be futurist in their thinking that helps them achieve special things – and importantly to achieve them before their competitors. Being the same – copying / replicating / duplicating: these things do not create greatness. Think of all the great people you know or know of. What makes them great? **Difference, individuality, uniqueness.** Great coaches do it their way. They learn from the great coaches of the past and the present only to improve on them in the future. They know that being the best means doing it differently. It means having the faith and courage in yourself to keep being different when everyone around you is telling you that difference is wrong.

5. The energy to work hard consistently

Greatness is not free. Excellence is not easy. World class coaches have an energy and an enthusiasm which is infectious. They are often the first ones to arrive at the training environment and the last to leave. Their attention to detail and level of understanding about the sport, the team, each individual player and staff member comes from spending more time working on being the best of the best. **They leave nothing to chance – they do not assume or presume – they just get on and do it day after day after day.** They inspire not with words, but with actions and the consistency and passion and professionalism they demonstrate in all that they do. They do not ask for respect: they earn it as a consequence of living the highest possible standards – consistently, when fatigued and under pressure, every day of their lives. They expect and insist on quality, detail and intensity in preparation and understand that success comes from ensuring training is consistently more challenging and demanding than any competition environment ever could be.

6. The strength and courage to not compromise on the important things

Compromise kills performance. It is a disease which rots the performance potential of athletes, teams and organisations from the inside. Great coaches know this – and know that the team who compromises the least over the season wins the premiership. All teams begin the season talking about attitude, professionalism, team work and standards. And most teams accept small compromises in their attitudes, professionalism, team work and standards before the ink is dry on their Season Trademark / Season Mission Statement documents. **Great coaches create systems, structures, processes and people who do not compromise on the things that matter.** They know that when it comes to winning and small things, that there are no small things. They are uncompromising when it comes to honesty and seek out athletes, coaches and staff who similarly embrace honesty as a core value.

7. Outstanding communication abilities

Coaching is communicating. And not just yelling and shouting or screaming instructions from the sidelines. Coaching is understanding – communication and all its subtleties. It's being able to sit quietly with a player, talk with them about what's important and change his / her life. It's about understanding how to communicate with individuals through understanding who they are, what they value and what motivates them. **It's about understanding how to communicate with Generation X, Generation Y, Generation I and every Generation because you take an interest in everything about every person you coach.** It's about listening. It's about teaching when you need to and learning more from the people you coach than they learn from you. Great coaches understand that the best communication is delivering the right message at the right time in the right way – and to do this means knowing when each person is ready to listen.

8. An understanding of who you are, what you value and what motivates you

To coach someone to achieve their best requires you to know as much as you can about them: who they are, what they value and what motivates them. And you can't coach anyone else unless you understand yourself, what you really value and what motivates you. Great coaching comes with great personal understanding. It comes from being able to be more honest with yourself than anyone ever has or ever could be. **Great coaches have a great sense of self – they know who they are and why they are coaching. They know their strengths and they understand their weaknesses and strategies for managing both.** They do not need to be loved or popular or win friends or be invited to parties. They do not need the approval of other people to make them happy – their happiness comes from creating a winning environment and from the satisfaction of knowing their coaching was the difference between winning and losing.

9. A passion for winning – a desire to be the best

A lot is written about balance. The great coaches have none. Balance is only for those who do not live excellence or who find the challenge of competition stressful and difficult. To the great coaches there is winning or there is nothing. Great coaches thrive in competition. They seek opportunities to test themselves against the best. They pursue opportunities to challenge themselves in the toughest and most demanding situations. **To them, the harder the competition, the greater the challenge and the more difficult the environment, the more they love the contest.** Nothing excites them more than the competitive environment: the Grand Final, the Olympic Games, the world titles— they live for the contest.

They do not experience competition anxiety – only impatience for the opportunity to test themselves again. They only play golf or jog or go to the gym or go to the movies to give themselves more time to think about coaching. They do not switch off – they are only coaching or sleeping and even then most of them will dream about coaching.

10. The capacity to persevere and persist and continue to fight hard no matter what obstacles you face

Great coaches are fighters. Their commitment, their desire, their passion and their self belief fuels their capacity to fight for what they believe in. They know that no one will make their life easy or their path to greatness simple. They revel in politics. **They thrive in conflict.** They enjoy passionate argument. They invite intelligent objection knowing that in professional coaching nothing provides the opportunity for growth like conflict. They know that nothing worth having comes easy and that real friendships and enduring relationships grow from adversity. They can say “no” – and in doing so provide opportunity for learning. They can say “no” and stand by their decisions in the face of overwhelming obstacles and political pressures.

Many coaches believe that being world class means another accreditation. Or another award. Or one more degree.

Some believe being the best of the best means having the best sports science, the most equipment, the best facilities and the most talented staff.

Others believe it is simply a matter of good luck, good timing and being able to buy the best athletes.

For the great ones, **coaching is who they are** – not what they do. It is their personality, their character, their ambition, their drive, their passion, their values and their soul. It is the air they breathe and it is every beat of their heart.

World class coaching: Do *you* have what it takes?