

## **Coaching Philosophy**

**by Jim Young**

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Having a sound philosophy is key to developing the mental edge and becoming a successful coach. Every coach has a philosophy, whether he knows it or not. This philosophy should be built around leadership, motivation, flexibility, goal setting, visualization, and personal responsibility.

Let us first look at forming a philosophy. The number-one principle is to be your own person. Individuals often look at successful people and try to copy them. Doing this is a mistake. You should study their good traits but then work the traits that you can use into your personal style. An individual builds his philosophy by trial and error. Keep the good and drop the bad.

A coach also needs to expose himself to many different situations and individuals. Coaching clinics, discussions, and looking to other fields can all help a coach absorb new ideas and information. Over the years, I obtained many of my ideas from the business world, the field of psychology, Eastern philosophy, self-help courses, and other areas unrelated to football.

Personal thinking time alone is key to improving all aspects of coaching. We tend to become involved with many things that pull us in different directions and do not allow time for thinking. Allow yourself some time alone to think and to develop new ideas for yourself and your program.

I developed a personal coaching philosophy that includes six key principles. My number-one personal philosophy is to be myself.

Second, I believe that you can achieve what you decide to emphasize. The key is deciding what is critical to your success. You cannot achieve an unlimited number of goals, so limit your program to the basic keys for its success. You will need a lot of study, meetings, discussion, and thinking time to get to identify few key elements of your program.

Third, I am responsible for the success of my program. I win or I lose, not someone else. If you as a coach feel that way and then transfer that belief to your players, your team will become a hard team to defeat. No one passes the buck, and everyone sees himself as personally responsible for the success or failure of the team. This is what you want in a

winning organization.

The next key is single mindedness and focusing on the mission. You must believe in what you are doing. This belief must be so strong in your mind that it has already become a reality to you and you will accept nothing less than your goal. You must then add the total effort (work) to put it into action. A great amount of work is required for any successful venture. Belief plus action equals success. I always felt that it is OK to burn your bridges, which is another way of saying that you and your team are totally committed to the mission. A coach must also keep his priorities in order if he is going to focus on the mission. If your mission is not your top priority, you will not accomplish it. The best way to accomplish your mission is to approach it with a desperate outlook, not a contented outlook. As individuals become successful, they tend to become contented. This attitude develops unless a coach makes an effort to keep it from happening. I always wanted my team to approach a game confidently but from the underdog position, if at all possible - confident that they could win but feeling that they must put everything on the line to defeat their opponent. That kind of team is hard to beat. The same attitude is important with a coaching staff. One year I told the coaching staff that we needed to coach as if our jobs were on the line that year, not as if we had three more years on our contracts.

The fifth key is to prepare. The team will respond. It was my responsibility to get myself ready for the season and for each game. I did not feel I could ask my team to make a total commitment if I did not do the same. I always set physical and mental goals to toughen myself for the upcoming season. I expected my players to report in top shape for the start of the season, so I made my own physical commitment to the football season. One year it was to run 78 straight days at 5:30 in the morning, and one year at West Point it was to participate in the Plebe March and Infantry Week. During the season I used visualization to prepare myself to call plays in the game. I put in many hours of thought as a personal commitment to my team and our success. Playing and coaching require the same dedication. I wanted us to have nothing left mentally, physically, or emotionally after a game. A coach who is totally into the game is able to pass this belief on to his team. I grew up in an environment where the head coach called the offensive plays, and I believe that this helps a coach be completely involved. I realize that calling the offensive plays is difficult because of all the demands placed today on a head coach. It goes back to keeping your priorities in order and deciding what is most important to you. Calling plays would still be a top priority for me.

The last personal key is to be positive a high percentage of the time. Good coaching is correcting mistakes and demanding execution, but a coach must not allow his coaching to be on the negative side. No one can be positive all the time, and there certainly is a need to correct mistakes. A coach must demand execution and may at times become angry. When you correct a mistake, however, always tell the player what he did wrong and how he can correct it. A coach must make the effort to be positive most of the time if he wants his team to develop into a functioning, winning unit.