



National Association for
Sport and Physical Education

an association of the American Alliance for Health,
Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

NASPE Sets the Standard

POSITION STATEMENT

A Coach's Code of Conduct

Introduction

Coaches exert a profound impact on our youths; therefore, society sets high expectations for them. As such, whether coaches are compensated or work solely as volunteers, they are responsible for executing coaching as a professional.

The coach-athlete relationship provides an opportunity to maximize the athlete's development physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. Such influence can be positive or negative, depending on how well the coach follows accepted guidelines and expectations. At a minimum, the coach's role should incorporate knowledge and awareness of the competencies found within the following eight domains from *Quality Coaches, Quality Sports: National Standards for Sport Coaches* (NASPE, 2006):

1. Philosophy and Ethics
2. Safety and Injury Prevention
3. Physical Conditioning
4. Growth and Development
5. Teaching and Communication
6. Sport Skills and Tactics
7. Organization and Administration
8. Evaluation

If we are to continue to enhance the cultural perceptions of coaching, we must strive to develop and master the standards that the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has set forth. NASPE intends for the *National Standards for Sport Coaches* to provide direction for administrators, coaches, athletes and the community regarding the skills and knowledge that coaches should possess before coaching in various sport organizations, leagues and governing bodies.

In this statement, which revises and replaces NASPE's 2001 Position Statement *Coaches Code of Conduct*, NASPE's Sport Steering Committee establishes the following **Code of Conduct** to which coaches at all levels should hold themselves accountable. Under this Code of Conduct, coaches are expected to:

A Coach's Code of Conduct (cont.)

- Have the knowledge and preparation to lead their teams within the parameters outlined in the *National Standards for Sport Coaches* (NASPE, 2006).
- Take responsibility for athletes' well-being and development.
- Accept the reality that they serve as role models; as such, their actions must live up to their words.
- Provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for athletes during practice, as well as competition.
- Exemplify ethical behaviors, including honesty, integrity, fair play and sportsmanship. These are life-long lessons that take precedence over any emphasis on winning.
- Maintain a professional demeanor in their relationships with athletes, officials, colleagues, administrators and the community.
- Coaches recognize the power and influence of their position with respect to athletes. Therefore, coaches are careful to avoid and refrain from exhibiting behaviors that could develop into interpersonal relationships, or even create the perception of intimacy – or the desire for intimacy – with athletes.
- Coaches refrain from direct physical contact with players (i.e., pats on the buttocks) that could be construed as sexual in nature. Work toward the best interests of their athletes by understanding issues of confidentiality and avoiding situations that could create conflicts of interest or could exploit any athlete.
- Commit themselves to their athletes' academic achievement.
- Discourage the use of performance-enhancing substances and dietary supplements. Coaches also should encourage athletes, in conjunction with their families, to seek the advice of qualified medical professional regarding performance-enhancing substances.
- Prohibit the use of alcohol, tobacco and any illegal or recreational drug.
- Be knowledgeable about nutrition, hydration, safe and healthy weight loss or gain, and healthy eating behaviors. When a situation exceeds a coach's scope of knowledge, he or she should refer the athlete to an appropriate medical professional for the most current and accurate information.
- Practice safe training and conditioning techniques that are current.
- Exhibit sound injury- and risk-management practices.

- Demonstrate an understanding of their athletes' growth and developmental stages.
- Encourage athletes to adopt a physically active lifestyle.
- Place athletes' needs and interests before their own.
- Remember that competition should be healthy and enjoyable.

References

American Sport Education Program. (1994). *Sportparent*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics.

Côté, Jean. 2004. Education through sport participation: a developmental perspective. European launch of the European Year of Education Through Sport (EYES), Dublin, Ireland.

Côté, Jean, and John Hay. 2002. Children's involvement in sport: a developmental perspective, in: J. M. Silva & D. E. Stevens (Ed.S) *Psychological foundations of sport* (pp. 484–502). Boston, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon.

Dougherty, IV, N., Ed. (2002). *Principles of safety in physical education and sport*. Reston, Va.: NASPE/AAHPERD.

Kirk, D. 2005. Physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation: The importance of early learning experiences. *European Physical Education Review* 11, 239-255.

Martens, Rainer. (2004). *Successful coaching* (3rd ed.). Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics.

National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (2006). *Quality coaches, quality sports: National standards for sport coaches* (2nd ed.). Reston, Va.: Author.

Stankovich, C. E., & Kays, T. M. (2002). *The parent's playbook*. Columbus, Ohio: Champion Athletic Consulting.

Women's Sports Foundation. (1999). *Sports in the lives of urban girls: A resource manual for girls' sports in urban centers*. East Meadow, N.Y.: Author.

Position Statement Revision Authors

Linda Lyman, University of the Pacific
Marty Ewing, Michigan State University
Nan Martino, Einstein High School (MD)

Original Position Statement Authors

Randy Crist, Eastern Kentucky University
Rebecca Mowrey, Millersville University
Valerie Wayda, Central Arkansas University

Suggested Citation

National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (2001). *A Coach's code of conduct* [Position statement]. Reston, VA: Author.