



THE COACH

The role of the archery coach is very often misunderstood. This chapter is aimed at helping coaches and archers alike understand the various roles a coach plays and the skills and knowledge one would expect to find in a successful coach. Understanding technical performance is only a part of successful coaching. Having clearly defined coaching philosophies to provide direction and commitment are vital. Extensive knowledge of biomechanics, anatomy, psychology and physiology, together with the traits of honesty, patience, persistence and optimism, are also essential factors in being a successful archery coach.



THE COACH



1_The Role of the Coach

The archer has the ability, while the coach provides the knowledge and skills to develop this ability. There should be a genuine desire by the coach to assist the development and enhancement of the archer's skills to enable the archer to reach full potential. This is a team effort and there is an interdependent relationship, which requires mutual respect to be successful.

The role of the coach is sometimes confused due to the stereo-types of coaches in the media. Frequently, they are portrayed as being tough, ruthless, dictatorial and even mercenary, without question.

Even though this type of coaching has certain advantages which may be appropriate in some team instances, it is rarely suited to an individual sport such as archery.



2_Traits of a Good Coach

Too often, we will see the appointment of a successful archer as a coach and, even though they have an in-depth knowledge of their sport, they may not have the necessary skills to coach. Coaching has become very much a science and an art. Besides requiring an intimate technical knowledge, a coach will have to have many more traits to become successful. These traits include:

Excellent people and communication skills. They must be able to relate very well to people in general and have a very good knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses.

A solid grounding in biomechanics, anatomy and physiology, specifically in relation to archery.

Clearly defined coaching philosophies to provide direction and commitment not only to themselves, but to communicate and impart them to their archers.

A sound understanding of sports psychology to enable them to understand the archer's competitive mindset, which can vary greatly depending on whether it's a winning or losing situation.

Experience of failure as through failure we learn. One Japanese taxi company looks to employ drivers with a history of an accident, the reasoning being that with their accident experience, they most likely will have a greater chance of avoiding future accidents. Therefore, we all need to experience both good and bad to be able to grow, and a coach is no different.

The ability to coach at all levels, from beginners to the elite archers. Coaches have to be able to fully comprehend the whole range of skills and human emotions experienced at all levels. Furthermore, coaching lower levels will keep them in touch with the basic building blocks of archery to enable diagnoses of any flaws in form or technique. As with engineering, one has to fully understand the basic underlying principles for total comprehension of the process of completing the project to perfection.

Patience, persistence and optimism in the face of difficulty. They must be someone who uses disappointment as a positive learning experience, and views it simply as a short-lived obstacle to be learned from and utilized for the improvement of the archer.

An interest in the archer as a friend and mentor, and a person who considers the archer as a person, rather than a goal-achieving, inanimate object.

Honesty. Integrity and sincerity produce credibility. A coach must be worthy of the archer's confidence. In other words he must be principled, trustworthy and honorable.

Credibility. No coach is all-knowing and nor do they have the answers to every question asked by the archer. If the coach can not answer the archer's question immediately, he should admit it, find the required information, and get back to the archer with the answer. This follow-up is imperative if the coach is to maintain credibility.

Leadership Ability. What it comes down to is to how well the coach



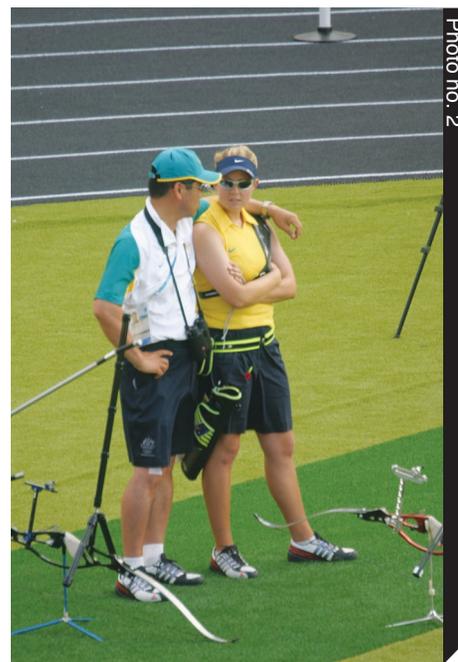
understands his archers. He needs to know the best way to approach each individual and how to provide inspiration, motivation and develop a competitive spirit.

“What is Leadership?” - “It is the ability to direct people, but more importantly, to have those people so directed, accept it”. (Lombardi 1967)

It is with the knowledge of human nature and behavior that a coach can lead, motivate, inspire, and instill pride, dedication and total commitment. He must be able to manage archers in such a manner that will allow them to reach their full potential. It is therefore essential to know the archer well and to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the archer under the various competitive situations.

Emotional and body language control.

The coach must control his emotions so that the excitement and/or fear of winning, failing, or various other stressful situations is not visible to the archer, as it will put additional pressure on the archer to perform. This is also referred to as controlling the paralinguistic information in the spoken word. This pertains to such things as the tone of the voice, rate of utterance, the inflection of the voice, the pitch, loudness and facial expressions. All these can reflect the frame of mind of the coach and, in turn, affect the archer's performance.



Sound judgment. The coach must be a creative, open-minded person, and show skill in accurately appraising the different situations that can arise during competition or training. He must be able to identify and handle reactions by different archers to similar circumstances. Furthermore, a very good knowledge of what makes each individual “tick” and the ability to understand the other person's feelings, needs and interests, are essential ingredients of a successful coach. The coach must know when and how to provide encouragement and positive and realistic reinforcement to the greatest advantage of the archer. A sound relationship between archer and coach is vital to ensure that his judgment and reading of the situation is trusted and respected.

Good diagnostic skills enabling the coach to quickly analyze any flaws in form, be it physical or mental, are required. For this, a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the biomechanics, anatomy, psychology, physiology and techniques employed for the particular sport, is required.

Any feedback to the archer should be immediate and accurate to enable it to be of maximum benefit and effectiveness. Even though a coach must have an open mind and have the courage to try new approaches, he must not experiment to try and fix problems. He must have the full knowledge of the process to correct specific technical problems, without having to resort to trial and error methods. This would only serve to undermine the respect for the coach by the individual archer.

Sound sport-specific knowledge. The coach, besides possessing all the other skills, must have an in-depth technical knowledge of the specific sport being coached. He must have first-rate knowledge of the science of human performance pertaining to that sport. Understanding technical performance



under the extreme stress of top level competition will be further assisted if the coach has personally performed and participated in the sport at national or international levels. In the case of archery, they must have a sound knowledge of equipment, as archery is an equipment sport. They must know what equipment best suits the individual archer and how to tune and get the best performance from each piece of equipment. For this

reason, a full and sound understanding of the biomechanics and the physical and mental specific aspects of the sport are essential factors to successful coaching.

A true passion for coaching. This will only further enhance the ability of any coach.

In conclusion, the role and attributes of a successful coach are numerous and the word omnipotent comes easily to mind. To undertake the coaching of an archer, or archers, is a serious commitment, and therefore should not be taken lightly. The coach, assisting talented individuals by providing their technical knowledge and coaching philosophies, will develop and cultivate the innate ability of the individual, not only into a successful archer but a successful person.