

The Greatest Assistant Coaching Article Ever Written

***(i.e. because we think it's the only one): 50 of the best Tips on how to be
a World Class Assistant Coach.***

**BY LINDSAY GAZE, MICHAEL FOLEY, DAVE CLAXTON, CRAIG TILEY, SCOTT
JOHNSON, BILL SWEETENHAM, ANDREW FRIEND, KEITH DAVIES, AND
WAYNE GOLDSMITH**

Foreword:

Leading international Rugby Coach, Head Coach of USA Rugby (and former Wallabies Assistant coach) Scott Johnson and I were exchanging emails about coaching. Scott said, "You read a lot about coaching and plenty about being a head coach, but where is there something written about being a great assistant coach".

I accepted the challenge, contacted some coaching friends and colleagues and this is what we came up with.

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Communicate – communicate – communicate.

Don't be afraid to be in conflict with the head coach, (in the appropriate forum), if the issue you believe in can help grow the program and improve performance.

Have an open mind to change, no comfort zones, no complacency and accept no compromise.

Have an outstanding knowledge of the sport and be prepared to share that knowledge.

Share the same philosophy as the head coach and together develop, enhance and grow that philosophy.

Be prepared to assume the head coaching position in case of non attendance of the head coach but convey the same message with the same intent as if the head coach was still present.

Collaborate with the head coach on a partnership basis in the development of the team strategies and individual player development.

Accept and understand that no coach of any sport competing at the highest level can manage all tasks without specialist assistance in a number of elements and as such encourage the expression of the views, ideas, beliefs and contributions of players, coaches and staff.

Be prepared to accept and welcome the contribution made by other additional assistant coaches within your team structure and do not assume that your role is superior in importance.

While financial rewards are important, be more committed to the progress and performance of individuals and the team rather than be dollar-driven.

Be aware that if the club management decides to fire the head coach and you might be an unfortunate victim of the decision, you should still support the head coach.

If offered a head coaching position with another organisation, do not seek or accept such a position without first consulting with your current head coach (and club management).

Strive to learn more about coaching, your sport and your role, recognising that no matter how much you might know there will always be more to learn.

Meet with the Head Coach regularly (daily) to make sure you are always on the same page.

Clearly define and understand your role, your responsibilities, accountabilities and limits.

Discuss, argue, relate, disagree on anything and everything with the head coach but develop a relationship where you can challenge each other to find the common ground, new ideas and move forward.

Attack everything you do with a united front. If you can, the effect on the players will be double pronged and more effective. Players will be more likely to develop confidence in the overall coaching team's methods and philosophy if they see consistency.

Develop a vocabulary and culture of key similarities that all coaches in the team use consistently to reinforce your methods and so that players understand and respect that a strong professional relationship exists in the coaching

group. Players will then feel comfortable in approaching any of the coaching team for the answers to their problems.

Resolve conflicts quickly and appropriately. Don't leave the coaching environment with issues unresolved and conflicts left hanging.

Never ever try to become the head coach of the organization that you currently work for.

Because you are an assistant under one particular head coach, it doesn't mean you have an excuse to stop learning from any appropriate source. You probably got where you are by communicating and learning from hundreds of sources; never lose that basic instinct, the passion and desire to learn.

Be a good listener/observer to players but only report what is relevant and necessary to the Head Coach.

Be the best prepared Assistant Coach in skills development.

Be friendly with players in social gatherings but retain an appropriate professional distance – and know where the limits are.

Support the Head Coach in public at all times regardless of the pressure or media scrutiny of the situation.

Do not allow club administration or sporting bureaucracies to compromise you and to destabilize the head coach.

Have excellent working relations with all support staff.

Have good synergy with all players, in particular the younger athletes and emerging stars.

Have a strong interest and knowledge of player's outside interests, family/education, etc.

Keep up with the latest technology in computing, communications, sports science and sports analysis.

Develop outstanding recruiting skills – help the head coach sustain the competitiveness of the team.

Have an excellent current knowledge of all opponents' individual and team strategies to allow you to have intelligent, informed input to your own team game plans.

Don't offer "passive" support – be active in your support of decisions and philosophies.

Maintain unquestionable trustworthiness – trust is the cornerstone of any great relationship.

Dress professionally and appropriately at all times.

Publically and privately be positive and always put the organisation first - no public or private personal player or coach criticism.

Manage and administrate as if it's your own money.

Pay great attention to detail: the head coach has a strategic overview of all team issues – you are the person he / she relies on for detail.

Develop sport-specific skills and knowledge that are world class and even beyond global standards.

Maintain in depth knowledge of medical & strength & conditioning profiles of each player, to assist in player development, training planning, strategy development and tactical plays.

Be innovative and creative: help create the future.

Develop strengths where the programme or Head Coach has weaknesses.

Write workouts and training sessions every day for yourself and offer them to the Head Coach for comment, feedback, learning, growth and development.

Develop a programme that is superior in every way possible and help to incorporate policies and protocols of the Head Coach and programme.

Don't be an Assistant Coach for any longer than 4 years maximum – learn, grow and take on the challenges and opportunities of leadership on your own.

Offer appropriate positive comments to the Head Coach if he / she does something very well – head coaches are human too yet rarely receive positive praise from anyone.

Do more listening than speaking.

Be the eyes and ears for the head coach and alert him / her to potential issues before they develop.

Recognise the times that the head coach is under pressure and look to take some of his / her workload.

Live the team values – don't just talk about them - and set an example for the players to follow. ■