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[Why Not Teacher-Coach?...](#)

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In my March 31 post, "Education is Forever," I stated that significant academic achievement by members of an intercollegiate athletics team would not occur unless the coach made it a high priority and talked with team members on a daily basis about its importance. Regardless of what anyone else in the athletics department may say about it or the availability of a strong academic support program, if the coach doesn't set the tone, academic accomplishment is unlikely to happen.

On May 18 my colleague, Connee Zotos, in her blog post, "Identification and Development of Student-Athlete Leaders," talked about how crucial it is for coaches "to understand that leadership training is a process that requires consistent effort and a high place on his or her priority list." The coach must set the tone.

Shortly after reading Dr. Zotos' piece, I read one of Michael Josephson's recent commentaries which recalled for me the proceedings of the 1999 Arizona Sport Summit; a meeting of about 50 people in leadership positions in amateur athletics. The group was assembled to address ethical and sportsmanship issues in youth, scholastic and collegiate sports programs. At the time I was serving as

chair of the NCAA Committee on Sportsmanship and Ethical Conduct and was asked to be a participant. Out of the three day meeting came the Arizona Sports Summit Accord: Pursuing Victory with Honor. Early in the Summit proceedings the legendary John Wooden, arguably one of the greatest coaches of all time in any sport, stated, "A coach is, first and foremost, a teacher." As Josephson said recently about that moment, "this anchor concept greatly influenced our Pursuing Victory With Honor sportsmanship campaign and spawned the term "teacher-coach." The concept of teacher-coach is at the core of what Dr Zotos and I were writing about in our opinion pieces; specifically that a coach should be a teacher first, one who is an educator and builder of character and, then, a coach.

Throughout the NCAA Manual, the association refers to "student-athletes" in an attempt to put emphasis on the academic responsibilities of each person competing in intercollegiate athletics. Why not do the same for coaches in the manual? Article 2.2 in the NCAA Constitution is "The Principle of Student-Athlete Well-Being." Under that Article 2.2.4, Student-Athlete/Coach Relationship states, "It is the responsibility of each member institution to establish and maintain an environment that fosters a positive relationship between the student-athlete and coach." Why not state it as, "...positive relationship between the student-athlete and teacher-coach? I remember when the NCAA began exclusively using the term, "student-athlete," there was some initial reluctance but now the term appears to be nearly universally accepted. I believe if every place in the NCAA manual where "coach" is used the term, "teacher-coach" was substituted; it would eventually have a positive impact on the NCAA membership.

As the salaries of coaches continue to skyrocket and the pressure to win championships becomes greater, it is important that athletics administrators take a stand on this issue. Winning may be important but we must demand that this be accomplished by coaches who are educators and developers of character and who establish this as of equal importance. This has to be a point of emphasis by chancellors, presidents and athletics directors when hiring new coaches or we are guilty of exploiting the student-athletes for their athletic ability only. Using the term "teacher-coach" in the NCAA Manual is a small step but we need to start somewhere. Simply raising the awareness level in the minds of the people in hiring coaches would be helpful. In the original Arizona Accord, Principle Nine was as follows: The highest administrative officer of organizations that offer sports programs must maintain ultimate responsibility for the quality and integrity of those programs. Such officers must assure that education and character- development responsibilities are not compromised to achieve sports performance goals and that the academic, emotional, physical and moral well-being of athletes is always placed above desires and pressures to win.

Two of the strategies developed at the Summit for implementation of this principle were:

1. The highest administrative officer should require that athletic administrators and/or program directors report annually on the role the athletic program has played in advancing the education and character-building goals of the organization.
2. The highest administrative officer should establish clear goals and standards of accountability with regard to the education and character-building goals of the organization.

Why not teacher-coach? Our student-athletes deserve a teacher-coach and if we do not do so, we have failed them.

[Click here](#) if you are interested in seeing the Arizona Accord original document and strategies to

accomplish it's goals.

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