



THE ANATOMY OF A WINNING COACH – PART I



By Keith Madison
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Since I have spent most of my adult life as a coach, I am from the school of thought that we should teach young players that winning is important. Yet, there are many different ways to win. Of course, we can win by scoring more runs than the other team. We all enjoy winning in this way! We can also win by teaching our players to work hard to reach realistic goals, exude class and sportsmanship and treat teammates, coaches and umpires with respect. We can teach them that winning on the playing field starts with having "winning" practices leading up to the game and giving your best in every situation.

You are a winner as a coach if you focus on seven specific areas of responsibilities. Below are the first three.

1. **Possess knowledge.** You don't have to know everything about the game, but if you have chosen to coach a team, each player deserves to have a coach who tries to increase his knowledge of the game. A good place to begin is by reading books and watching DVDs on how to be an effective coach and using the free online Little League [Coach Resource Center](#). You should attend coaching clinics or watch a "professional" high school or college coach run a practice. You will earn respect from your players and the other volunteers helping you if you continue to increase your knowledge of the game. Knowledge is power.
2. **Care.** John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, was the first person I ever heard say, "Players don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Pick different times to talk to each player individually. Make it a habit to ask different players to show up at practice 15 or 20 minutes early each practice for some "one-on-one" time fielding grounders, hitting, catching fly balls or working on a specific aspect of their game that may need some extra work. This time will let the player know that you care about him as both a player and as a person. Also, it will help the team. Some players respond better in an individual setting as opposed to a group setting. You will get to know each player in an entirely different way by spending just a little extra time with him or her. You could be a "difference maker" in the life of several young men or women on your team. Knowledge is extremely important, but caring is even more important.
3. **Lead.** Players look to the coach as the ultimate leader. If a leader emerges among the team, that is a bonus. But, never forget, coaches are the real leaders. The players' attitude, language, body language, effort, execution and the way they carry themselves is a reflection of the leader/coach of the team. If you ever hear a negative statement from a coach such as, "I can't believe how poorly these guys played today," you can rest assured that the coach, in most cases, did not prepare his team during practice. Our teams and the players on our teams will never be perfect, but they can grow and develop both skill and character with positive leadership from the coach.

Keith Madison has more wins than any other Manager in the 106 years of the University of Kentucky baseball program. Since becoming the Wildcats' Manager in 1979, Mr. Madison has guided his team to 713 victories - the second-highest mark among active coaches in the Southeastern Conference. Four of his teams have broken the school record for wins in a season; while 83 of his players have gone on to play professional baseball, with 14 having played in the major leagues.

Part Two of Coach Madison’s approach to becoming a “Winning Coach,” including the final four areas of responsibility, will be published in the October’s edition of the *Coach’s Box*.

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