

Recruiting and Retaining Women Coaches

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I have put this document together with input from a number of successful women coaches (Linda Lanker, Carmyn James and Kathleen Raske). It is to provide advice to current coaches and athletes with ideas on how to help recruit and retain women coaches.

Recruiting Women Coaches

Current Coaches must:

A. Identify

1. Current coaches need to approach our current athletes and let them know about the opportunities to coach at all levels. On a big scale this can be done at a conference geared towards athletes to provide them with coaching opportunities as well as opportunities in sport where the number of female participants are underrepresented.
2. Current coaches are to encourage, foster and build value for the coaching profession for our female athletes that have expressed an interest in coaching.
3. Approach women coaching at the Junior College and Collegiate level and ask these women to help encourage their athletes to coach in our clubs and schools.
4. Promoting track and field to our younger athletes in order to continue to have a pool to select future coaches from.
5. Ask mothers of school and club athletes to be involved and learn coaching skills.
6. Reach out to former female athletes and provide them with the opportunity to learn coaching skills.

B. Provide Opportunities to Coach

1. Teach potential coaches how to get their foot in the door and educate them on the coaching pathway to their desired position.
2. Let potential coaches know that there are more opportunities for young women at the Junior high and high school level as teachers and coaches across the country.
3. Encourage injured athletes to help out at a camp, clinic or have them work with other coaches or assist you.

C. Provide Advice and Support

1. Help potential coaches find places to coach (within a club or at a school).
2. Help potential coaches discover coaching scholarships or grants.
3. Encourage coaches to attend coaching seminars in order to get their certification.
4. Encourage coaches to apply for coaching jobs. Interview experience is valuable and with more of it they will land a job.
5. Continue to support coaches even after they are actively coaching in order to help them clear the various hurdles they will face.
6. Assist with Mentorship:

- a. Find new coaches a mentor (maybe yourself).
- b. Establish a mentoring program. Below are the mentoring standards of a program already established.
 1. Humility First, Arrogance breeds intimidation. You cannot mentor effectively if you are unapproachable.
 2. Patience, your athletes and surrounding coaches watch you. A calm and encouraging temperament makes you more effective as a coach/mentor.
 3. Strong Role Model, how we conduct ourselves on and off the track, with strong moral character and a healthy lifestyle.
 4. Build relationships, spending time and connecting, helping future coaches connect with others who are leaders and possible coworkers in the sport. Those being mentored know you care for them.
 5. Earns respect, this is a by-product if those things above are followed.

Retaining Women Coaches

Women leave coaching for the reasons listed below. We hope our advice can help you remain a coach.

1. Family/Life-Work Balance
2. Coaching burnout: the demand of the job (it never ends)
3. Salary inequities; gender inequities; resource inequities
4. Less opportunities than men (men can coach both men and women/in the US women are almost always limited to coaching women sports)
5. Parents of athletes pushing them out; unhappy with decisions/style of head coach
6. Athletic Director or supervisor is non-supportive
7. Caring for an aging parent

Personal and Professional Advice to New Coaches and Current Coaches

1. Build a support system that helps you stay in the sport/profession. It can be a supportive spouse or partner as well as others mentioned below.
2. Have mentors (need mentors who will be supportive/go-to resources).
3. Learn how to manage work life balance
 - a. Make decisions that allow you to manage coaching and raising a family. (not applying for National Teams, not coaching beyond main coaching commitment)
 - b. If you have children definitely speak to someone who has been there and ask them for advice. Don't miss your child's activities. Know that it is ok not to attend every meet and practice, do trade-offs with other coaches and assistant coaches, look into changing your practice time that works better with your children's schedules.
 - c. Live close to where you coach. That way you will live close to your children's school and home. This makes it easier to stop by for a school play or game as well as get home soon after practice.

4. Self-Care - Must take the time to rest and regenerate daily/weekly/monthly. As important as it is for us to take care of our athletes, take care of our children and take care of our parents, it is equally important for us to take care of ourselves. And, sometimes when things get super busy we forget about that. Our self-care is on the bottom of the totem pole. Make time to eat well, get plenty of sleep, exercise and take care of our minds and bodies, like perhaps having a monthly massage. The things we remind our athletes to do during the time that they are not at practice (i.e., the other 20-22 hours of their day) are the same things that we must do as well for ourselves.
5. Let go of your ego, learn to work with others. Learn how to work with other coaches and share athletes with them. (share training camps, meets, practices)
6. Contract negotiations (possibly include: finding employment for spouse/partner; childcare on campus; children able to travel with team; flexible schedule).
7. Join Associations/Organizations (women's groups for support/prof. development)
8. Find allies such as other coaches; whether they coach the same sport or another sport, coaches can help coaches handle any situation. Other staff; supervisors and Athletic Director can also lend advice or a sounding board.