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## **Course helps coaches teach character**

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# LINDENWOOD

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## Course helps coaches teach character

By RICK GORZYNSKI

A star quarterback was about to set a state record. His coach made a “deal” with the opposing coach to guarantee the record was broken. But when the star quarterback found out about his coach’s prearranged “deal,” he respectfully turned down the chance to have his name associated with the record.

Sport by itself can neither build personality traits nor tear them down. It all comes down to the coach and what is taught. Thankfully, the quarterback in this true story had more character than his coach.

Few professionally prepared coaches get into trouble because of the lack of knowledge regarding the skills of a sport. Rather, they get into trouble because of mistakes resulting from a lack of character or good judgment.

Lindenwood University has developed a unique course to teach coaches how to teach values to their athletic teams. Thanks to a generous grant from Rick Sullivan and McBride and Son, Lindenwood is working with school districts throughout the metropolitan area to spread this curriculum. Lindenwood is committed to putting values back into the classroom with a course called Coaching With Character. The first of several sections began June 6.

Unfortunately, a lack of character and moral behavior exists in all facets of our society today. As a result, some educators and parents are now recommending that values be taught in our schools again. They see that desirable attitudes such as manners, citizenship, integrity, sportsmanship, leadership, discipline, morality, respect, honesty and commitment have been ignored too long. Lindenwood’s course helps restore these attitudes.

A child is not born with character. He or she must be taught right from wrong. It is the responsibility of a coach to teach values. No one will ever be able to put a pricetag on the value of the work a good coach does in preparing youngsters to become productive citizens.

We are convinced that Coaching With Character can make a difference in the lives of thousands of young athletes and their coaches. Character builds good citizens, which in turn lays the foundation of our democracy. We will assess the impact of the Coaching With Character curriculum to try and measure the positive impact.

Statistics show that over 95 percent of all physical education majors will coach a sport during their time as a teacher. Can you guess how many of those are trained—or even take a course—in Coaching With Character? The average physical education teacher takes many classes in theories and methods of coaching a particular sport, but does not receive the proper training in the most important area—how to teach values and character.

The course is not about X’s and O’s. It is about lively discussions of a coach’s responsibility to his athletes, as well as relationships with parents, administrators and booster clubs; how to teach values to a team; the use of drugs in athletics; the common traits of successful coaches and how to build a winning team.

Lindenwood University has a strong commitment to making a difference in education and the community. We

will do our part in preparing graduates and coaches to be their very best. It is our hope that this course will be a starting point for the restoration of sportsmanship, character and values—on and off the field.

Rick Gorzynski is a longtime head football coach at Hazelwood East High and Lindenwood University. He now serves as Lindenwood's director of coaching with character. He can be reached at 636-949-4133.

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