

"Discuss the importance of General Coaching Principles and how they assist the instructor in the Management and Organisation of classes. In your essay include a coverage of: the Role of the Instructor, the Acquisition of Skill, Class Safety and How Muscles Work. Explore how these areas complement each other and how they assist in more effective teaching and presentation of the art of Kung Fu."

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BAC FU DO KUNG FU

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To begin this essay we must first ask ourselves "Who is the Coach?".

The coach is the person in charge of the instruction, motivation and partial performance of athlete/s or sporting participants under his charge.

It is assumed that he has this position through greater experience, capability and ability to instruct than either the athlete or his immediate peers.

Expectations of the coach are placed on him through the sporting participants under his charge. Under his charge athletes expect to increase their levels of skill in a particular sport or train at the maximum of their ability, the coach is expected to not only pass on his experience but, using his knowledge of the sport tailor instructions to a particular athletes abilities and disabilities.

From these expectations we can draw on four general requirements (or principles) of coaching:

- the coaches knowledge of the sport must be comprehensive in all areas, including tactics, rules and the movements of each player;
- the coach must have a knowledge of effective teaching techniques to pass on his knowledge;
- the coach must be aware, at least partially, of the physiology of his sport in order to train athletes in the requirements of the sport, which major muscle groups are used, what are the most common injuries and how can they be avoided, what exercises should be used to train athletes and so on; and
- the coach must take a responsible attitude towards the health and safety of his athletes, this could include knowledge of first aid procedures, having safe training facilities, effectively supervising juniors.

The coaches role in all this is complex but it is also simple. He must be the instructor and task setter for the team or individual and achieve his role in such a way as the person or teams skill increases.

But how?

From the four requirements mentioned before we can cover four important areas of coaching. The Role of the Instructor, the Acquisition of Skill, Class Safety and How Muscles Work.

The role of the instructor is a multifaceted one, it comes down very heavily on personal as well as professional qualifications.

Firstly if the coach is to instruct he must communicate. Communication is a two way process between the coach and the athlete, which requires well developed skills in transmitting and receiving information. Being a good listener is an essential coaching skill.

The communications process can be broken down to three basic ideas:

- the message conveyed must be simple, clear and concise, verbal communication is not always the best or appropriate;
- feedback between athlete and coach is important in order that the athletes performance can be monitored most effectively. This feed back can use a range of media, video for example; and
- in order for a message to be taken by a receptive athlete and used to better performance it must be heard, thus the message should be balanced, encouraging, credible and sensitive to the needs or attitudes of the athlete.

Secondly the coach must be an effective exponent of his sport. It is not required that the coach be a champion full contact Kung Fu exponent himself however he must have a thorough knowledge of the rules, techniques and tactics of the sport. This, in my opinion, is the primary reason why they are coach and this knowledge gives them the ability to determine the most effective coaching curriculum and make the decisive decisions to obtain both short and long term goals.

This knowledge is not static but it should be built upon over time reading, attending seminars, watching people play and listening to people's comments.

Finally a coach must have the attitude, drive and determination to instruct. A spirited vital approach to coaching is important in obtaining a positive response from athletes, though obviously this should be stable and not swing with the emotional nature of play.

An achievement oriented outlook combining effective planning with realistic and methodical goal setting is often the best recipe for success.

The coach should also ensure that his personal behaviour is such as to maintain the athletes respect. The athletes must be confident of the coaches integrity, sincerity and importance he places on the athlete, one of best ways to keep athletes trust is

through example so if a coach expects athletes to be fit then he should try to keep fit himself, if he expects them to be punctual then he should be punctual himself and so on.

The acquisition of skill is a complex area often with very wide interpretations. The interpretation I will be using here is the activity involved in moving the body, or some body parts, in order to achieve some specific pre-determined goal.

Without going into a great deal of detail concerning principles of learning there are three stages in the production of skilled movement:

- perception or determining what is happening;
- decision making or determining what needs to be done; and
- movement execution or producing the required action.

My style of Kung Fu (Bac Fu Do) like all genuine styles of martial arts consists mostly of open skills. That is skills which, although benefiting from repeated practise, cannot be made perfect through repeated practice as the potential number, type and speed of moves an opponent can practice on you are extremely variable.

The exception to this is the learning of martial art forms which follow the same pattern and are not intended to vary.

The sport is taught by first demonstrating what the general aims of Bac Fu Do are, for example if possible avoid a direct knife blow and then control the elbow or the knife hand. Then a demonstration is given in which those aims are put into effect, for example a forward thrust with a dummy knife and the instructor dodges the knife and then proceeds to control the elbow, then move to a more advanced technique (for example a disarm or stunning blow).

Initial demonstrations are kept very simple and students are given plenty of practice with that one technique before they move to a similar technique, for example dodging a straight thrust with a baton or an upward thrust with a knife.

After the student has been put through a number of situations he could experience in a knife attack, he is then encouraged to start linking techniques through practising a variety of those attacks in the one situation or a random attack.

After that has been accomplished he can then practise similar techniques on other weapons or with bare hands.

After this stage, which can often take years, the movement becomes fairly autonomous.

Factors I find most important in an individual's skill acquisition are the motivation of the individual, their ability to translate the practise of what they are doing into a real situation. In addition making sure the individual is given good clear examples and varying the type of various training the individual does to keep it interesting while still ensuring that they are consistently studying similar techniques to be applied later to a variety of situations, is also important.

Class safety has always been a necessary part of successful coaching, however in these days of heavy litigation it is not only necessary for maintaining the health and optimum performance of your students but also to prevent you as coach ending up on the wrong side of a law suit.

To be effective in the area of basic sports safety the coach must be familiar with:

- injury prevention;
- types and usage of safety equipment;
- injury management;
- fluid replacement; and
- potentially dangerous exercises.

The most important factor in injury prevention is effective warm up exercises, including stretches, before exercising to prepare the body for activity. After activity cool down exercises should be used to return the body to its usual functioning metabolism level.

In the case of Bac Fu Do we do a half hour exercise routine with light jogging and upper body exercises followed by upper and lower body stretches.

The other major factor in preventing injuries is a safety. This means a safe, level and firm exercise area, free of possible obstructions (or in the case of obstructions necessary to play, such as a goal area, well padded) and with any spectators kept at a reasonable level away from Kung Fu practitioners.

It also means the effective use of safety equipment such as shin guards,

mouthguards, helmets etc. In Bac Fu Do we train in a large empty well lit community hall and gloves and mouthguards are necessary if sparring, leg greaves are also encouraged to be worn.

If injury does occur the coach should be ready to deal with it. He should know techniques such as RICE, or Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation, to be used in the case of minor soft tissue damage. He should also have a first aid certificate to be able to deal with a variety of situations, from heart failure to broken limbs to ensure the students situation can be kept as positive as possible until the arrival of qualified ambulance officers (if they are necessary).

In Bac Fu Do a coaching certificate (including a first aid certificate) is a prerequisite to achieving red sash, or instructor, level.

Fluid replacement is very important in sports where the athlete can be exercising vigorously for a long period of time. If the athlete considers fluid loss a risk he must have a good drink before hand and if necessary small drinks at intervals throughout the exercise. In the Bac Fu Do training area we have access to an ablutions block and a drinking fountain just outside the training area.

Potentially dangerous exercises can always be a problem in classes, especially when a variety of exercises are performed and there is no fixed exercise instructor. This problem is best circumnavigated through ensuring everyone knows the same exercises and any class with a lot of beginners in it are talked through the exercises, for example:

"...straighten your left leg and keep your right leg bent, now bend over your left leg trying to put your hand on your ankle and your elbow on your shins, this stretches the hamstring on the back of your legs...only do this as far as is comfortable..." etc.

Given that any instructors in our class are of the red sash level or higher and thus possess coaching qualifications dangerous exercises are usually not a problem. However in order to have the safest and most effective exercises the coaches at Bac Fu Do ensure that their exercises are recommended as safe in such manuals as "Exercise Danger" by Wellness Australia.

There are other factors to class safety as well, such as knowledge of diet and the effects of alcohol/drug abuse. However I would consider the above areas the core required knowledge for effective class safety.

Muscles are the drivers of movement in our body. All movement is made by muscles pulling on bone, muscles are attached to bones by strong tissues called

tendons.

When producing movement a muscle can act in several ways. It can be the contracting or pulling force to produce the action, it can also act in opposite movement to the pulling muscle relaxing to allow the prime moving muscle.

There are some movement where the prime moving muscle is also helped by contraction in other opposing muscles to assist its action. A muscle can also act as a fixer to stabilise a bone or body segment enabling the prime mover to act more efficiently.

Muscles are stimulated by electrical impulse sent to motor neurones, this stimulates the individual muscle fibres to contract. The muscles overall are able to vary the tension they develop through three processes internal to the muscle involving variations to motor units stimulated.

Apart from these stimuli there are two other important processes assisting the force with which a muscle can contract. Firstly length before stimulation, for example if a muscle is stretched to 120% of its resting length it can produce greater tension than if it was shortened below its resting length. This is due to the contribution of an elastic component in the connective tissues covering the muscle.

This is one of the factors that make stretching very important before starting forceful actions. In our half hour stretching routines in Bac Fu Do we ensure that the main prime mover muscles used in practice, such as the triceps and biceps, thigh and calf muscles and section of the lower back are stretched and warmed up before we begin practise.

The second important process is known as the force-velocity relationship. This says that greater force can be produced as the speed at which a muscle contracts is decreased. The less the contraction time the more powerful the movement.

This speed power trade off is also present in the type of muscle fibre you have. A lot of heavy weights based or heavy repetition exercise will increase your muscle mass by increasing the 'slow twitch' muscles and also shortening muscles. From this we get some athletic features like very short calf muscles in cyclists and very heavy biceps and triceps development in weight lifters.

Bac Fu Do does not encourage excessive weights based or repetition exercises as it considers speed much more essential than power. Power is stressed through technique not exercise, and power is not the most important factor in delivering an effective technique. Given that we are dealing with a human opponent with many

physical weak spots the most important need is to deliver the technique to the appropriate place, effective technique will get you to the opponent, dodge his technique and deliver your own rather than relying on bulk to get you through.

Muscle bulk may be effective if you are a large man but not if you are a more lightly built individual or a woman.

The role of the coach, class safety, the acquisition of skill, class safety and how muscles work are all interlinked and will be applied simultaneously when you are an instructor in Bac Fu Do.

For example you may see an inexperienced student performing an dangerous technique on another beginner (say a helicopter throw in which pressure is applied to the back of the neck and an arm is pushed with the aim of flipping someone on their back). You counsel the student to try a simpler and less dangerous technique to clear his opponent out of the way.

In this commonplace occurrence you have seen a dangerous situation (class safety), know the way the muscles of the neck are constructed make this technique dangerous to perform (knowing how muscles work) and advise him to try another, safer technique more suited to his skill (acquisition of skill and role of the coach).

In answer to the question posed at the beginning of the essay, if you have mastered all of the above skills and principles, the coach is you!

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Classnotes taken at the time of the seminar.

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To whom it may concern:

Please find attached all the requisite materials needed to obtain my Level One Coaches certificate.

Enclosed is, as I was instructed by your representative Wal Missingham:

- 1,500 word essay on the subject requested;
- photocopy of a current first aid certificate;
- fully completed workbook (except for some sections inappropriate to my martial art); and
- filled out national coaching accreditation form by the head of my school, Sifu David Crook, and your instructor, Wal Missingham.

I do not think there is anything else I need to deliver to your organisation.

If you have any further tests I need to complete or there is anything further you require please do not hesitate to contact me on:

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Yours sincerely

Keith Walker