

## Getting the Best out of Your Coach

### Introduction

Coaches can help us to feel competent and confident in our abilities to reach our goals. The best coaches understand that when you feel valued and respected, you give more of yourself and perform at a higher level. They should be supportive, calm and help boost your confidence by providing you with adequate confidence enhancing feedback, especially leading up to a major representative game. Both cricket umpires and coaches need positive feedback and encouragement – we all appreciate support and constructive comments. This paper will provide some tips to help the cricket umpires and coaches create a better working relationship as they strive for improved performance and advancement.

### How can I help my coach help me?

The first step towards improvement is to recognise that there is room for improvement and then identify what the elements are. Then you need to look at the following areas before you go to your coach:

1. **Help your coach understand what works best for you and your performance** – do you like a lot or little involvement from your coach? When is the best time for your coach to get involved during a game? What workload do you want leading up to a game? When is the best time for you to train? When is the best time and way for you and your coach to communicate? What is it that you expect from your coach?
2. **Work on improving your own communication skills** – don't expect the coach to be able to read your mind! If you have an issue or problem then let him know. Respond to questions honestly and openly, ask plenty of questions yourself. Say what you mean and provide clear instructions to your coach of what you expect and how your coach can help you achieve certain goals.
3. **Take responsibility to do what is best for you and your performance** – it is unrealistic to expect your coach to do what is best for you if you are not already doing it too! No one is more responsible for your training, preparation and performance than you – if you fail in these areas, then the first person to look at is yourself. Your coach will only be as good as you let him be.
4. **Develop your capacity to direct and control your own focus and actions** – your coach can provide you will a training program and support you in your endeavours but if you do not have the ability to keep focussing on your goals and act according to those goals, then the coaching will be ineffective.
5. **Draw upon fellow umpires or those who are closet to you if you need additional support** – if you need extra assistance from others, extra motivation, extra inspiration, and then ask for help. If the coach cannot provide you with something you need, search elsewhere – it's up to you.

Don't forget to enlist the support of family and clearly communicate your goals and training needs with them.

6. ***If all else fails, the best place to find a helping hand is at the end of your own arm*** – this again places the responsibility for your training, preparation and performance with you.

Performance is enhanced and improvements are made when coaches and umpires work together to create a positive environment and share responsibilities for improving ongoing communication. If you want to get the best out of yourself and your situation, it helps to solve problems in a mature, responsible way.

As cricket umpires, we have to remember that coaches are people too. Most of them, if not all, are trying to do their best but they are not mind readers. You can take some responsibility to communicate with your coach if you want things to improve. Consider meeting with your coach at a relaxed time to talk constructively about what you feel will help you improve. Tell him what makes you work best or most efficiently, what kind of communication you prefer, as well as what upsets you and diminishes your performance.

It is vital to communicate your training preferences to your coach so that you can optimise your chance of improving certain skills. Good coaches who are really interested in helping each umpire will accept and act on this information. Similarly, it is important to tell the coach your preferences during a game – you may prefer a few simple words of encouragement prior to going out, or be left alone. At the end of a day's play you may want a full appraisal of your performance or nothing until the game is over – whatever it is, let the coach know up front.

## Conclusion

Your umpiring coach has a responsibility to get the best performance out of you and the only way that he can do that is to get to know you and your preferences. If the coach is not succeeding, then the responsibility is with you to communicate openly, constructively and positively with him to improve the relationship and outcome.

Respectful communication is two way. It is not easy to communicate openly and constructively especially in conflict situations, however, if you can do this then at least there is a chance of positive change, without it things will stay the same.

My challenge is for all the CA coaches and umpires to meet individually with each other in their States and discuss their coaching, training, preparation and communication preferences and hopefully greater improvements and goals can be achieved in the season ahead.