

What Makes A Great Coach?

One of the main tasks of Athletic Director Brady Blade is to build up Einstein's coaching staff. Here, in edited excerpts of a recent interview, Blade talks about important qualities of coaching and challenges for Einstein.



I've found that the best teachers many times make the best coaches. Because they're organized. I can't stress that enough. Most teachers by nature bring a certain degree of organization to the job. Then you take that same organization skill and pass it over to the field.

I always tell coaches that the athletic fields are an extension of the classroom. You need to plan an athletic season like you would a course that you teach. The problem with the young coaches is, and where they're 100 percent wrong is, you go out there and

start playing baseball. You start practicing softball. You have to grab them and say wait, wait, wait. I taught a course for new coaches for about 15 years, and the first thing I said to them was the first few weeks, 60 percent of your time is going to be involved in paperwork. It's changed in that it's on computers, but it's still there.

Coaching is hard, especially with the demands that are put on the teachers. I would say the coaches are underpaid and overworked. They do it for a lot of reasons. Sports played an integral part with family memories of playing ball, playing in college, loved to watch it, maybe they were on the outskirts of the team, maybe they were just a sub on the team or a manager. But they just loved the sport. Hardly anybody does it for the money.

One of the first great coaches I encountered was at Wheaton High School when I was playing football. His name was Wayne Boor. He was an assistant football coach. Everybody loved to play for him because he was a no-nonsense kind of guy. I think we had some wild kids back in the 60s who weren't going to listen, you know. I might have been one of them. I didn't necessarily respect coaches unless they proved to me – so in that sense maybe I was a little like these guys today. We knew he made the decisions on who played and who didn't play. We knew he knew the sport. It goes back to the classroom. Does the teacher understand what they're teaching? Do they have knowledge of the subject matter? Do they have rules that apply to everybody? Are they fair in how they do it? This person was all that and because of that, he was a role model to us. We and all the

kids that came in contact with him would go through the wall for him.

When it comes to the coaching here, you have three situations. The ones that know and have been here a long time and have been successful. They can take care of themselves. A percentage, not a huge percentage, but some who need to be re-educated on some things that they need to do. That's my job. Then you have the third group which is the turnover rate, where these coaches leave. Einstein is no different than anywhere else. The percentage is not any worse than it is other places. My job is to try to find good young teachers. The point is, we need somebody in the building here.

How did we find Jay Andrews, our new boys lacrosse coach? I've seen him around. And you find out, he did something with lacrosse. And he's in the building. Teaches social studies. So, I've got him in the hall, and say hey, do you want to be part of the athletic program? You want to be better known, you want to give back to the school? You want to be part of something bigger than just in a classroom? He said, well, I'll think about it. He bit on it and off we went. Things seem to be going well.

This is a major problem in Montgomery County – at Einstein, at every school in Montgomery County, where you have nobody for the job. Nobody from the outside. Nobody from the inside. You have to go out there and see, try to cultivate somebody, put them in the position and then kind of hope that they'll develop into it. ADs have this problem all the time. That's why Montgomery County allows what they call emergency coaches. They're not

teachers. The athletic handbook has a whole three pages on all the things they need to go through. I would say 40-some percent of your coaches in Montgomery County are not teachers.

It reflects many things. No. 1, you can't get the teachers to do it. I would say in the last six, seven years, the demands on teachers have been turned up so high that a lot of them say, wait a minute, I'm 25 years old. I'm working my tail off as a teacher; the accountability and demands are just incredible. Now, I'm supposed to go out from 3 to 5:30 p.m. or so, and that's just on the field, that's not counting the other stuff. And the nights that I'm getting home at 9:30 and 10 p.m., and I'm getting paid X. No, no, no. It's amazing we have the ones we do! However, once you get in the groove, and get a lot of the work done initially, it's just like a classroom teacher. Joan Rackey has been coaching some of these sports for many years. She has a natural feel for what needs to be done. She's a veteran coach and she knows. Because she's that way, she's able to balance an incredible schedule.