

What is a competent coach? ▶



John Krulic

◀ **T**he Coaching Association of Canada believes that a competent coach is one who has the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitude to do the job effectively.

Good coaches must have a sound *knowledge* of coaching principles. They must understand the principles that apply to learning, training within a sport environment, and human development. They must understand the sport, its techniques, strategies, and tactics. And they need an understanding of athletes and their individual characteristics. This knowledge doesn't automatically come from participating in a sport for 20 years. Qualified coaches need to be trained to recognize and understand these important principles and to apply them on-the-field.

Many of the *skills* that good coaches apply can also be learned or refined. These include how to be a good leader, teacher, and administrator.

- **Leadership Skills.** Watching the game, you should be able to tell very quickly if the coach relates well and can manage the children effectively. Is the coach a good problem-solver? Can the coach motivate the group to work as a team? Does the coach recognize everyone's contribution and celebrate achievements? Does the coach set reasonable goals for the group in terms of age and ability? Is effort recognized as much as performance?
- **Teaching Sport Skills.** Because many elementary schools no longer provide children with a good grounding in sport skills, it is essential that the coach knows the fundamentals and is qualified to teach them to young children. A good coach helps players learn by explanation, demonstration, and practice. Does the coach communicate well with athletes? Does the coach crouch down to a child's eye level to give instructions? Is individual guidance provided even in a group setting? Are skills taught in a progressive manner and within a safe environment?
- **Organizational Skills.** A good coach does not have six children working like demons while the others do nothing. He or she moves easily from group to group, knowing what comes next. Is the coach well-organized? Are practices well-organized? Is there lots of opportunity for participation?

Coaches are figures of authority and role models. They should have the proper *attitude* toward sport that will instill values of sportsmanship and fair play. Does the coach put winning in perspective? Does the coach encourage children to respect the rules and to respect others?