

Playing is not Coaching

Why so many sporting greats struggle as coaches

Our Elbows squad mate, Danny Simmons, was appointed Thailand national bowls coach earlier this year, 2019, his breakthrough into the world of international coaching. Prior to the appointment he had been head coach at a club here in Melbourne.

At the conclusion of the recent Asia Pacific bowls championships, his charges did so well to be eligible to compete in 7 of the 8 event formats at the 2020 world bowls championships, a feat well above what was expected, even hoped for by the Thai officials.

How so, this amazing result.

Well I would like to paraphrase a series of articles I have read recently from an international coaches forum with reference to the skills and quality of the person who coaches rather than the old fashioned way of looking to former internationals.

Danny fits into so much of what I cite from the forum papers.

In international level sport, or top level sport (AFL/ NRL football in my country), success is the top criterion for judging coaches with the product (win) being valued more than process (performance).

The practice of hiring former greats abounds in all sports.

Playing though is not coaching. Yet we see too often the assumption that a professional or international background is the sole criterion for becoming a successful coach.

The international coaches forum found this is not the case.

No evidence exists that a person can only coach at the highest level, if they have performed there. What was found is that playing experience does

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contribute the coach skills related to the specifics of technique and tactics. And even an ease of socializing with younger peers.

However, these experiences only give a partial view of coaching without the full role of coaching. What is missing is all other aspects to make coaching work: personal and structured training, motivating, counselling, planning, organizing, team factors, evaluating as examples well beyond the technical and tactical.

What this international forum heard and agreed was that there is no justification in fast tracking former name players with (compulsory) accreditation; coaches who made a career of coaching were maximizing their time acquiring those skills to coach elite, while the very players used the same time to play.

The forum cited one of their best examples as Jose Mourinho, Manchester, United football coach, played second division soccer in Portugal. But, he studied sports science, was a P.E. teacher, player scout, youth team coach, assistant coach before a gig as a head coach for clubs in Italy, Portugal, Italy and Spain. Then he reached the ultimate, M.U. All those years he acquired knowledge, experience in the field of coaching.

The coaches forum overview was that coaches who did not have careers as players were able to develop the skills peculiar to coaching in ways players don't have time to engage in, while they as players pursued performance success.

Danny is one such coach in the mould of the International forum. Well done mate, all we in Elbows and now the pBus squad, are justly proud of you.

Lachlan Tighe, 2019