

174

COACHES PERCEPTION
OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO CROWD CONTROL

by

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B. S., The University of Kansas, 1965

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1978

Approved by:


Major Professor

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Spectator behavior is becoming a more serious problem in interscholastic sporting events each year. Verbal abuse toward officials and players is evident to anyone who cares to attend a contest. The television audience during the 1976 National Football League play-off game between Dallas and Minnesota observed an official being struck on the head by a thrown liquor bottle and forced to leave his responsibility for the remainder of the game. One needs only to attend an athletic contest between the two arch rivals of our state to see the depths of vulgarity and abuse to which athletes, coaches, and officials are being subjected.

The increased exposure to violent and abusive behavior at the professional and college levels of athletics is now effecting the crowd behavior at the high school level.

October 10, 1975 at a 3A high school football game the officials are attacked with one requiring medical attention (4:1).

October 17, 1975 at a 1A high school football game the officials are attacked with injuries occurring (4:2).

October 29, 1975 at a 2A high school football game a fan attacks the officials (3:5).

November 8, 1975 2A high school football game a coach objects to an official ruling and kicks the ball, a fight erupts with the game being canceled (3:1).

January 15, 1976 4A high school basketball game is terminated because both coaches objected to officiating (5:7).

January 21, 1976 5A high school basketball game terminated because a coach after being assessed three technical fouls would not leave the gymnasium (5:7).

These are instances that actually occurred in Kansas high school sponsored athletic contests and they are not isolated to any one classification of school. In the period dating from August 12, 1977 to April 12, 1978 the Kansas State High School Activities Association dealt with thirty-six sportsmanship problems concerning players, coaches, and fans brought to their attention by member schools in the association.

These instances of unruly behavior indicate a growing lack of sportsmanship at sporting events and if action isn't taken to improve the situation our sporting events could be in danger of becoming spectatorless with crowds not being allowed to attend the contests. The Kansas State High School Activities Association believes the coach is the most important agent in crowd control (2:42). The investigator believes the coach places little priority on the matter of crowd control.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study will investigate what the coaches perceive their responsibility to be in crowd control. A paired-comparison instrument developed by Walter Kroll of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst will be utilized to evaluate what importance coaches themselves place on their responsibility toward crowd control.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Subjects for the study are the head coaches of the four final qualifying football teams in the classifications: 5A, 4A, 3A, 2A, 1A, and eightman of the 1977 Kansas State High School Activities Association sponsored football playoffs. The statement: "The coach should encourage spectators to display conduct of respect and hospitality toward opponents and officials and to recognize good play and sportsmanship", will be compared to eleven other statements considered appropriate to the sportsmanship domain to determine its relative importance.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Kansas State High School Activities Association is under the management of its Executive Board and is given express powers to: have general control over all activities and contests between high schools which are members of this Association (2:13). The Association is very concerned about crowd control at athletic contests between its member schools and takes the following position:

The conduct of the coach is the single most important factor in crowd control. He is a professional educator and must control himself under stress in order to set the proper example for the immature students on his team, student body and the heterogeneous combination of spectators in the stands. It is not enough to be a gentleman only when there is no pressure. He is usually the stabilizing influence in an emotionally-charged situation, and he must assume this important responsibility. Also, he must recognize that the future of high school athletics is more important than winning or losing the game (2:42).

Clifford B. Fagen of the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations states:

The time has come to enforce rigidly the unsportsmanlike conduct penalties for crowds and coaches . . . Far too many competent officials are hanging up the whistle rather than take the abuse from coaches and fans. Trying to run an athletic contest without officials is an impossibility and yet will be the situation in the not too distant future if steps are not taken immediately (2:43).

The Kansas State High School Activities Association Code of Ethics for Athletic coaches and officials contains the following statement: "I will uphold and abide by all rules of the Kansas State High School Activities Association and the National Federation" (6:114). There is a definite position statement on the problem of crowd control with the National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations, and the Kansas State High School Activities Association. The Kansas State High School Activities Association Code of Ethics for Athletic coaches and officials adheres to the policy of abiding by the rules and regulations of the Kansas State High School Activities Association, but crowd control problems continue to increase. It appears that the administrative agencies believe that the coaches are the main agent in controlling the action of spectators. It is the investigators belief that in the sportsmanship domain the coach places little priority on his responsibility toward influencing spectator behavior.

There is little information available concerning the psychological dimensions of sportsmanship. Most individuals associated with athletics profess familiarity with the concept of sportsmanship -- at least on an emotional or feeling level -- and are not overly concerned about the absence of a more precise definition (7:233).

Walter Kroll states:

One acceptable strategy for beginning the task of defining the psychological dimensions of sportsmanship involves the use of psychological-scaling theory. One begins with a set of statements judged to be relevant to the sportsmanship domain and determines whether the set of statements can be scaled successfully. If the items can be scaled successfully, then they can be viewed as comprising different aspects of the psychological domain and as possessing discriminative power (7:233).

Kroll's instrument will be used for the purpose of investigating the priority coaches give to their responsibility toward crowd control.

In the study by Kroll a set of statements put forth as a Code of Ethics for coaches by the Alliance of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women were analyzed by Thurstone's paired-comparison psychological-scaling technique in order to depict, in quantified terms, how the statements were perceived by university physical education majors who were preparing to become teachers and coaches. The study results revealed that the subjects considered their responsibility toward crowd control the least important in their list of priorities. Ethical conduct on the part of the coach was seen as primarily limited to coach-athlete relationships.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

Twenty-six statements set forth as a Code of Ethics for coaches from the Alliance of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women Handbook of Policies and Operating Procedures were considered to constitute a legitimate sampling of one portion of the sportsmanship domain (7:232). The statements were given to ten coaches and ten athletes who were asked to comment on the clarity of each statement and to rate each on a five-point scale ranging from relatively unimportant to very important (7:234). Statements rated relatively unimportant by seven or more of the twenty raters were eliminated. Twelve statements remained and were reworded where necessary to reduce ambiguity, to minimize repetition of similar concepts, and to obtain uniform style (7:234).

The paired-comparison scaling technique compares each statement with every other statement, with the subject instructed to indicate which of the paired statements is deemed more important (7:234). The Ross (8) procedure, which provides for maximum possible spacing between the appearance of the same statement and insures that each statement appears first and second the same number of times was employed to optimize the order of pair presentations. Thurstone's Case V Model (9) was employed for scale development.

The paired-comparison method produces a psychological scale with interval measurement scale properties (9), and thus provides more information about the scale items than does simple rank order analysis. Kendall μ statistics and associated chi-squared values will be used to determine significant agreement among raters on each scale (7:232).

The instrument will be administered by mail to the head coaches of the four final football teams in the following school classifications: 5A, 4A, 3A, 2A, 1A, and eight-man of the Kansas State High School Activities Association sponsored football play-offs for 1977.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The subjects of this study perceived item three (welfare of the injured player) as the most important aspect of ethical conduct for coaches with item nine (setting a good example) being in second place. The subjects in Kroll's study also rated item three as the most important. The next five items 1, 4, 5, 6, and 12 were closely scaled and dealt primarily with the relationship of the coach and the athlete. Items 2, 8, and 10 were deemed least important aspects of the coaches responsibility with (conduct of spectators) and (scheduling of practices and games) numbering the least in importance. The subjects in Kroll's study also deemed (conduct of spectators) as the least important aspect of the coaches responsibility. It cannot be concluded that this sample of subjects deems these aspects unimportant, since a paired-comparison study establishes only relative relationships between scale items. It is clear that coaches in the present sample did not place high priority on the ethical behavior of the coach in dealing either with spectators or officials.

As stated previously the investigator believes that coaches place little importance on their responsibility toward crowd control and the results of this study would appear to coincide with this belief. Coaches seem to feel

it important to deal ethically with their athletes but relations with officials is a different matter although setting a good example was the second ranking item of importance in the scale.

Coaches that place little concern on their responsibility toward spectator control and their relations with officials are a cause for concern to those individuals responsible for organizing and conducting athletic contests. There is a need on the part of the Kansas State High School Activities Association, Colleges, and local school administrators to agree upon ethical conduct for coaches and to seek a means for transmitting the ideals to those presently involved in coaching and those preparing to enter the field of coaching.

RESULTS OF THE RETURNED QUESTIONNAIRES

ITEM	SCALE VALUE	RANK
3 Welfare of injured	10.2	1
9 Set good example	8.2	2
5 Emphasize fair play	7.6	3
12 Treat with respect	6.4	4
1 Teach spirit of rules	6.3	5
4 Compliment players	5.9	6
6 Adhere to standards	5.3	7
7 Present at practices	4.6	8
11 Accept victory/defeat	3.5	9
10 Compliment officials	2.6	10
2 Schedule appropriate practices/games	2.5	T11
8 Conduct of spectators	2.5	T11

Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate a need for the Kansas State High School Activities Association to bring to the coaches attention the associations position on this subject. The conduct of the coach is the single most important factor in crowd control. The coach is a professional educator and must control himself under stress in order to set the proper example for the immature students on his team, student body and the heterogeneous combination of spectators in the stands. It is not enough to be a gentleman only when there is no pressure. He is usually the stabilizing influence in an emotionally charged situation, and he must assume this important responsibility. Also he must recognize that the future of high school athletics is more important than winning or losing the game (2:42). This position needs to be emphasized not only to the persons presently involved in coaching but to the college students who anticipate coaching upon graduation.

The Kansas State High School Activities Association can accomplish this at their rules meetings conducted for the coaches and officials. The colleges can help with the situation by providing proper emphasis in the athletic training classes. The high school administrators need to be informed of the seriousness of the situation and must be

prepared to inform their coaches of the associations position on the subject, and back the association in developing responsible sportsmanship habits for their schools. The local school administration can also be a primary factor in informing the public of the importance of proper crowd control at all sporting events.

For further study the instrument could be administered to coaches in other sports to investigate a relationship in coaching attitudes in the sportsmanship domain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express thanks to Mr. Raymond A. Wauthier, Major Instructor, for his time and guidance in this project.

The author also wishes to express thanks to my wife, Elaine, for her understanding and moral support throughout the duration of this period of study.

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The twelve statements appearing on the scale were as follows:

1. The coach should teach players to play within the spirit of the game and the letter of the rules.
2. The coach should provide for the welfare of the players by scheduling an appropriate number of practice and league games.
3. The coach should provide for the welfare of the players by using good judgment before playing injured, fatigued, or emotionally upset players.
4. The coach should compliment players honestly and avoid exploiting them for self-glory.
5. The coach should emphasize the ideals of sportsmanship and fair play in all competitive situations.
6. The coach should maintain an uncompromising adherence to standards, rules, eligibility, conduct, etiquette, and attendance requirements.
7. The coach should be present at all practices and competitions. Avoid letting other appointments interfere with scheduled team time.
8. The coach should encourage spectators to display conduct of respect and hospitality toward opponents and officials and to recognize good play and sportsmanship.
9. The coach should have pride in being a good example of a coach in appearance, conduct, language, and sportsmanship, and teach the players the importance of these standards.
10. The coach should express appreciation to the officials for their contribution and appropriately address officials regarding rule interpretations or officiating techniques.
11. The coach should exhibit and develop in one's players the ability to accept defeat or victory without undue emotionalism.
12. The athlete should treat all players, officials, and coaches with respect and courtesy.

APPENDIX

Please indicate which of the following paired statement is deemed more important by placing an (X) on the appropriate line.

- _____ The coach should teach players to play within the spirit of the game and the letter of the rules.
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Spectator behavior is becoming a more serious problem in interscholastic sporting events each year. In the period dating from August 12, 1977 to April 12, 1978 the Kansas State High School Activities Association dealt with thirty - six sportsmanship problems concerning players, coaches, and fans brought to their attention by member schools in the association.

The Kansas State High School Activities Association takes the following position: The conduct of the coach is the single most important factor in crowd control. The purpose of this study was to determine what coaches perceive their responsibility to be in crowd control.

A paired - comparison scaling technique developed by Walter Kroll, consisting of twelve statements put forth as a code of ethics for coaches in the sportsmanship domain by the Alliance of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women was administered to the twenty four football coaches in the 1977 Kansas State High School Football Playoffs. The statement: "The coach should encourage spectators to display conduct of respect and hospitality toward opponents and officials and to recognize good play and sportsmanship" was compared to eleven other statements considered appropriate to the sportsmanship domain to determine its relative importance.

The study revealed that item 3(welfare of the injured) was the most important aspect of ethical conduct for

coaches with item 9 (setting a good example) being scaled second. The next five items: 1, 4, 5, 6, and 12 dealing primarily with the relationship of the coach and athlete were closely scaled. Items 2, 8, and 10 were deemed least important aspects of the coaches responsibility with conduct of spectators and scheduling of games and practices scaling the least important.

Coaches seem to feel it important to deal ethically with their athletes but relations with officials is a different matter although setting a good example was the second ranking item of importance in the scale. Coaches that place little concern on their responsibility toward spectator control and their relations with officials are a cause for concern to those individuals responsible for organizing and conducting athletic contests.

The results of this study indicate a need for the Kansas State High School Activities Association to bring to the coaches attention the associations position on the subject. This can be accomplished at their rules meetings conducted for the coaches and officials. The colleges can help with the situation by providing proper emphasis in the athletic training classes. The high school administrators need to be informed of the seriousness of the situation and must be prepared to inform their coaches of the associations position on the subject, and back the association in developing responsible sportsmanship habits for their schools. The local administration can also be a factor in informing the public of the importance of crowd control at athletic events.