

Regardless of where you are coaching today, you have the opportunity to influence lives. Although winning is much more enjoyable than losing, focus on building champions first, and your career will be full of success.

UNCONDITIONAL COACHING

By Todd Howey

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UNCONDITIONAL COACHING

BUILD CHAMPIONS,
WINNING CHAMPIONSHIPS NOT REQUIRED



TODD HOWEY

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5. DECISIONS

In coaching, there is no final destination. Every year you set goals for yourself and your team, and after you achieve them or perhaps fall short of reaching them, what do you do? You set new goals for yourself, and your team and you begin the process all over again. A cycle that never ends.

As coaches, you should get wiser each year, but the kids you coach really do not.

You could be on your 20th year as a coach and you are still going to see kids make the same dumb mistakes repeatedly, year after year.

You get smarter, therefore you should learn to coach smarter and develop an expectation of what is going to happen when kids or a team act or react in a certain way, because it is going to happen.

Coaches are the ones that need to be learning and developing each year. Do not expect the kids to figure it out if coaches cannot.

Enjoy what you do because the money is not that great. Laugh at yourself, appreciate each other, and lean on each other. That makes the journey so much more fun, and the tough seasons seem so much shorter.

I can remember the time when I made the decision to get out of coaching because I was burnt out and the coach in me had died. I simply had nothing left to give and I would have rather chopped wood for a living then remain in coaching.

I was drained, emotionally, mentally, and physically and the fun was gone. I had left a pitcher in a championship game one hitter too many and the hitter CRANKED a 3-run homer over the right field fence that might as well have landed right between my eyes.

I started out of the dugout twice to pull him but changed my mind before I got to the top step. Next pitch, 3-run homer! We lost not only the game, but also our one shot at making the NCAA play-offs after years of trying to get the program to that point.

I no longer had it in me to give it another go, that pitching decision, or lack of a decision, put a period on my career as a coach. I was ready to get out and I have not missed coaching for a second, and I thank God for that.

Some of my decisions not to pull a pitcher out of a game worked, some ended up 400 feet from home plate. It goes with the territory, and you must be prepared to handle it.

As I look back at my career, I wish I had enjoyed the simple reasons of why I got into coaching to begin with more.

I did not become a coach to win a National Championship; I became a coach to influence kids and serve as a positive role model the best I could.

Hell yes, I wanted to win, but ultimately it goes back to winning a kid's heart and soul for something bigger than themselves.

Coaching should be fun, and a coach's office needs to be a place where you can relax, talk about your game, laugh with each other, and more importantly, laugh at yourself.

Even though I loved the relationships I had developed over the years with my players and staff, I personally was burnt out and needed a change. I had a good job at a great University, but I knew that I was not capable of bringing my players and my coaching staff to their full potential when I was not truly enjoying what I did.

I loved my job at times, I hated my job at times, but most of the time I was just tired of it. I concluded that new leadership was needed because I could no longer give my employer a full day's work, *emotionally, physically, or mentally*, for a full day's pay.

I have no doubt that if I had missed coaching, I could have gotten back in. Fortunately for me, I never missed it for a second. We all make decisions in life; they only have to make sense to you, and nobody else.

If you as a coach or your coaching staff are not having any fun, then you can rest assured that your team is not either.

You are going to win some, you are going to lose some, so never lose sight of your reason "why." Share in the victories and in the defeats, both on and off the field, because that is what coaching is all about.

LET ME REPEAT:

“Coaches are the ones that need to be learning and developing each year. Do not expect the kids to figure it out if coaches cannot.”

ASK & ANSWER YOURSELF

- 1. Even though you are dealing with the same issues each year you coach, are you handling them better than you did the year before?*
- 2. Do you enjoy what you do? If so, what makes it fun?*
- 3. How is the environment in the coaches' office??*

FOLLOW THROUGH

This week, take 5 minutes to walk around your school and ask yourself if you are doing what you really want to do in life. Write about that conversation below.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Never promise a kid playing time.

Do promise a kid an opportunity to earn playing time, then follow through on that promise.

14. UNDERTOW

Sometimes you just gotta get away, away from the kids, the parents, the pressure and even your co-workers.

I often look forward to the times when I can turn off my cell phone, shut down my emails, work my way through a box of cigars and just do a whole lot of nothing.

If you are not careful in this profession we are in, you can very easily get caught up watching life from the sidelines and not ever getting into the game.

When you watch life from a distance, you are basically walking through a day of work, a practice or a game without emotion, passion, or urgency.

I know at many times, life in general can become like that; Wake up, go to work, mix in a cup of coffee, go home, eat a bite, watch the 10:00 news, go to bed, wake up the next day and do it all over again. Where is the "life" in that?

There is a line in one of my favorite movies, *Shawshank Redemption*, where the lead character makes a comment that he only had two choices left in his life, *"Get busy living, or get busy dying."* He chose to get busy living.

I want to encourage you all to take a few minutes, hours, days, whatever, over the next few weeks to re-establish your goals and dreams for yourself.

We are all working towards something, and it is healthy to take a deep breath on occasion, throw some cold water on our face, and remember why we are doing what we are doing and where we want to be in 5, 10, 15 years.

Think about that, and if you need to take some steps to get yourself back on track, then take some time to do that.

I will never forget when I was about 9 years old my dad took me to Galveston Island for a weekend vacation. I was excited to get in the water, so I hurriedly got down to my trunks and ran into the Gulf. My dad screamed out at me, *"Watch the undertow!"*

I waved acknowledgement and dove in. After about 5 minutes of jumping through waves, I turned to look for our site on the beach and it was nowhere to be found. I literally thought my parents had left me for the sharks to feed on!

Without even realizing it, the undertow dragged me down the beach almost a half mile from where I originally started.

That is what watching life from the sidelines will do to you. Life has a powerful undertow that can drag you far away from where you really want to be.

You will look up one day and discover that you are miles away from where you really wanted to be in life. You will scratch your head and think "how did I get so far away from where I want to be and do?"

Without realizing it, you drifted away from your goals and dreams. You can't see it, feel it, or hear it, but the undertow is there, so take steps to fight against it. We all have things we still want to accomplish and places we still want to go so do not lose sight of that.

Take some time over the next few weeks to re-focus, re- energize, recommit to your goals and dreams, and remember what my dad told me, "*Watch the undertow!*"

LET ME REPEAT:

“We are all working towards something, and it is healthy to take a deep breath on occasion, throw some cold water on our face and remember why we are doing what we are doing, and where we want to be in 5, 10, 15 years.”

ASK & ANSWER YOURSELF

- 1. Are you where you thought you would be in your career?*
- 2. Do you regularly “get away” from your job?*
- 3. Where do you want to be in 5, 10 or 15 years?*

FOLLOW THROUGH

This week, explain to your team how dangerous undertow can be. Share how you may have drifted at times. Write about it below.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

49. CUTS

We called it D-day, and nobody looked forward to it. Twice a week for 2 weeks during spring training, cuts were made.

It was cold and direct and there was nothing confusing about it. The entire minor league organization, from A-ball to AAA-ball dressed in one giant clubhouse and on D-day all was quiet out of respect for the fallen.

When you arrived at the clubhouse on D-day, you walked straight to your locker and hoped that your gear was still in it.

If your locker had been cleaned out, that meant “thanks but no thanks,” you were released, cut, let go, axed, sent packing, etc.

After experiencing the overwhelming humiliation of walking up to an empty locker with all of your teammates standing around pretending to feel bad for your misfortune, you then had to walk the “blue mile” to the manager’s office to collect your gear and your plane ticket home.

It was tough, but quick. The hotel that all the players stayed in for camp was roughly two miles from the complex.

Every morning we would get up, choke down a little chow and then walk to camp for training. On D-day, that two-mile walk seemed like a 100-mile trek uphill with a 50-pound backpack stuffed full of fear hanging off your shoulders.

There was an unwritten law that you did not speak or make eye contact with any players that had just gotten released. It was the “baseball way,” and by no means did you want to get the baseball gods mad at you on D-day.

I can remember seeing players, some I knew well and others I did not know at all, making that long, painful two mile walk back to the hotel with all their dreams and goals stuffed in their bag.

Some would be crying, others ready to fight, but all had no clue what they were going to do next. A lucky few got picked up by other teams while others went back to school, most of them just went back to uncertainty.

People’s lives were being changed dramatically and that was no small matter.

I received my walking papers after a game one night in Florida. I remember to this very day what it felt like.

In a matter of a few seconds, my manager, holding an ice cold can of Budweiser in one hand and a cigarette in the other, looked at me through bloodshot eyes and said, “*Howey, we’ve made some changes, and you’re one of ‘em, sorry.*”

That was it, dreams gone, life changed. I walked back in the clubhouse and all eyes were on me. Nobody said a word to me, I simply cleaned out my locker and left, never playing baseball again.

When I coached in college, I had to make cuts because I only had so many spots and I hated it. Very similar to high school and junior high athletics, cuts are something you must do to optimize coaching and playing performance.

I usually just post a list of names on my office door, if your name was on it, then you stayed, if not, then you left. Some players requested a meeting, and I would oblige, but most just went on their way. It is rejection, and nobody wants that, and it always takes time to process.

I did not mind meeting with them because I knew what it felt like to get cut so visiting with them was the least I could do.

Try-outs and cuts are just another day in the business of athletics, but just remember that cutting kids from anything should not be taken lightly. It was tough on me as a 26-year-old minor leaguer; I can only imagine how tough it is on a teenager.

LET ME REPEAT:

“Try-outs and cuts are just another day in the business of athletics, but just remember that cutting kids from anything should not be taken lightly. It was tough on me as a 26-year-old minor leaguer; I can only imagine how tough it is on a teenager.”

ASK & ANSWER YOURSELF

- 1. Are your criteria for cuts crystal clear and known in advance by players and parents?*
- 2. Have you ever been cut from anything? What was learned?*
- 3. Have you cut players that made the team the following year?*

FOLLOW THROUGH

This week, talk about rejection and the best way to handle it. Write a story below you can share with others when you were cut or rejected and how you handled it.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Todd Allen Howey
Dog named Cash

ATHLETICS

Played baseball/football, Spring Woods
High School, Houston, Tx. Class 1982

Played baseball at Texas Tech University 1983-1985

Drafted by Philadelphia Phillies in 1985.

Curveball drove me into coaching

EDUCATION

B.S. from Howard Payne University, Brownwood, Texas

M.E. from Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA)

COACHING EXPERIENCE

One-year coaching everything at Early High School,
Early, Texas 1989-1990

Head Baseball Coach. Howard Payne University,
Brownwood, Texas 1990-1995

Head Baseball Coach. West Texas A&M University,
Canyon, Texas 1995 - 2000

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Athletic Director, Canyon ISD, Canyon, Texas 2000 – 2007

Executive Director of Athletics, Midland ISD,
Midland, Texas 2007 – 2014

Senior Executive Director of Athletics, SAISD,
San Antonio, Texas 2014 – 2022

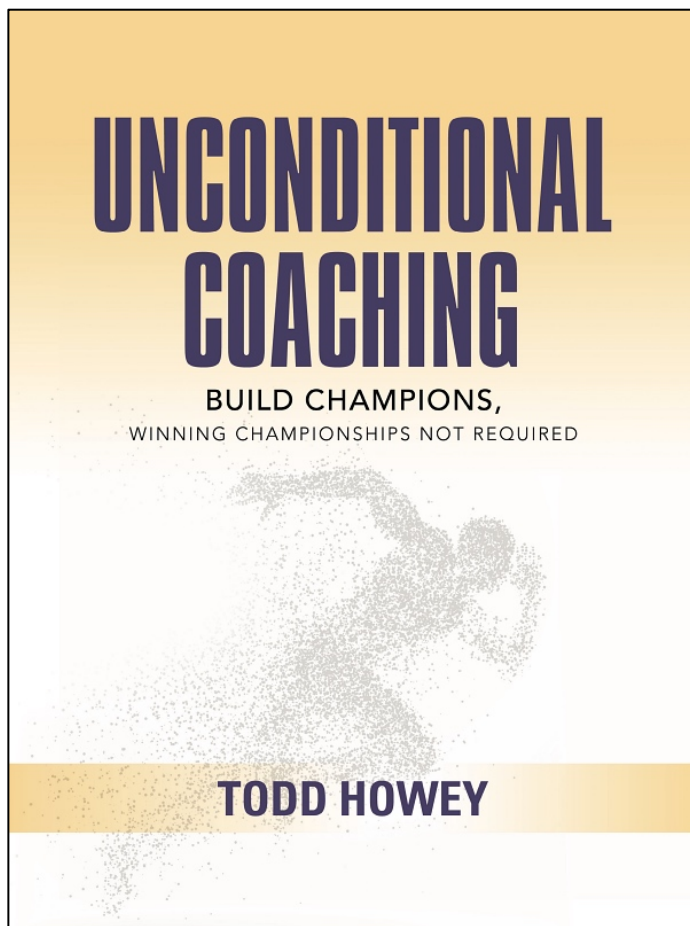
Other books written by Todd Howey:

Winning Created

Be A S.P.U.D.

5 Things Coaches Want Parents to Know

I would love your feedback - *thowey63@gmail.com*



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