

Calm in the Crease

*Coaching Goalies Without Losing Your Mind
or Destroying Theirs*

Arvak Marshall

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First Printing 2025

ISBN: 979-8-2698-5825-8

Published by Arvak Marshall

Cover design by Bonnie Bright

Interior design by Arvak Marshall

Printed in the United States of America by Amazon KDP

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Dedication

Dedicated to the lacrosse community—
may we keep learning together,
on and off the field.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my wife, Amy, for sacrificing our spring seasons over the last twenty-four years so I could coach high school, rec, and club teams—often all at once. Not to mention summers and fall. I love you. None of this would be possible without your support.

I would not be the person I am today without my family, who bring joy, chaos, laughter, and adventure to my life.

- Caden—my son, whom I accidentally hit in the face with a lacrosse ball while playing catch when he was five. That moment gave us endless ways to connect beyond sports and has made me a better dad.
- Ryken—my second son, who stopped playing goalie to take on something even scarier—pole vaulting. Your courage amazes me.
- Malene—my favorite (and only) daughter. You’re already a better coach now as a high school junior than I was when I started coaching.

To my mother—for your unwavering love, patience, and belief in me. Everything I’ve accomplished began with your guidance and your example. Thank you for giving me the courage to follow my passions and the strength to see them through. It really is a *Wonderful World*.

Thank you to **Elyse Finnelle** and **Sean Finnelle** for their powerful contributions to this book. Their chapters—“*Game Day*” and “*The Goalie Parent Journey*”—add depth, honesty, and heart. Their words capture both sides of the goalie experience and reflect the spirit and purpose of this book.

I also want to thank my friend, the anonymous goalie who wrote “*Thoughts from a Backup Goalie*.” I watched her grow through challenges that tested both her heart and her mindset. Her story captures the truth of what so many goalies experience, but few are willing to share. I’m proud of her courage and grateful she allowed her voice to be part of this book.

Finally, to the hundreds of goalies I’ve had the privilege to work with over the past thirty years—you’ve taught me as much as I’ve taught you, and for that, I am grateful.

INTRODUCTION

Every goalie has potential—too few have guidance.

This book exists to change that.

Sports have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. As a baby, I tagged along to my parents' high school sports games and then to their co-ed softball games at Cedar Lane Park when they graduated. Some of my earliest memories are of my father coaching baseball at Bushy Park Elementary School, basketball in the St. Louis Catholic Church gym, and football at Rockburn Park. My coaches in baseball, hockey, basketball, lacrosse, and wrestling left a lasting impact. Some inspired me, while others' words, even decades later, remain unforgettable, though not for positive reasons.

Coaches leave memories that outlast seasons, trophies, and scoreboards. That's the influence of a coach. According to the Aspen Institute's State of Play's 2022 report, youth sports parents trust their child's coach more than national, state, and community leaders, as well as their child's school, teachers, and peers, to develop life skills, foster a sense of belonging, create safe playing environments, help youth manage off-the-field stressors, and earn the child a college scholarship.

Coaches matter, often more than we realize.

No pressure, right?

John Wooden reminds us, "It's what you learn after you know it all that separates the great coaches from the average ones."

Socrates put it another way—"All I know is that I know nothing."

Both remind us that the best coaches, players, and parents are those who never stop questioning, learning, and growing.

This book comes from decades spent coaching, training goalies, observing lacrosse coaches and parents, and, most importantly, listening to goalies.

Their feedback about how coaches, parents, and teammates interact with them has left me at times encouraged, at other times confused, frustrated, saddened, or even shocked. These emotions are what drive me to share their experiences, highlight the challenges goalies face, and offer concrete steps so that coaches, parents, and players can create an environment where goalies are supported, valued, and given the chance to thrive.

In the chapters ahead, you'll explore how to:

Coach the whole goalie—mind, body, and heart.

Build confidence and communication that create trust.

Create environments where goalies feel valued, connected, and prepared.

Sharpen technique while strengthening resilience and the mental game.

Even experienced coaches, parents, and goalies must continue to learn and grow. I certainly acknowledge that I do not have all the answers, and you may question some of the ideas presented.

The famous philosopher Socrates stated, "I know you won't believe me, but the highest form of human excellence is to question oneself and others." Socrates also reminds you that, "It is better to change an opinion than persist in a wrong one."

Joking aside, you'll find quotes from great philosophers and coaches, not just to inspire, but to challenge us to think.

Socrates is one of my favorites because his words—“I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think”—are the reason I ask so many questions throughout this book.

Coaches, from those just starting their lacrosse coaching journey to those with decades of experience, face challenges in managing practice time effectively, integrating goalies into practices, and navigating the complex world of sports parents.

This book addresses these challenges with practical advice, drills, and strategies gained from coaching, playing, and learning through my many mistakes.

Goalies often lack a consistent coach and mentor to guide them during practices and must, at times, become their own coach.

This book is for you.

Ask questions and seek out answers that will make you a great goalie and coach. Share what you learn with your coaches. If you go to five different coaches, you may get five different answers to your question, with each coach thinking their way is the best way. If a coach can't answer why one way is better than another or the differences between styles, study to find the answer on your own. This pursuit of answers will serve you well in lacrosse and life.

Let the questions be the curriculum.

—Socrates.

Parents, you too may be challenged by what you read. Some questions, stories, and thoughts raised may shock you, while others may encourage or calm you. However, they will all provide you with insight into your child's unique experience as a goalie.

If you are a field player, you'll see the game through a different lens—understanding what your goalie experiences and how much teamwork and communication shape every play. You'll learn how small actions and words can build trust, calm, and confidence within the defense. This book will also help you apply the same focus, awareness, and composure goalies use in the crease to your own position, making you a stronger player.

Whether you are a goalie, player, parent, or coach, I hope that this book helps you better understand and appreciate the goalie position and its impact on the team. We all do our best with what we know and who we are at the time. The goal is never to stay the same. It is to grow into better coaches, parents, players, goalies, and ultimately, better people.

Wherever you stand—inside the crease, beside it, or watching from the sideline—may this book help you discover calm in the chaos, clarity in the moment, and confidence that lasts.

Chapter 1

WHAT I WISH YOU KNEW

Nature gave us one tongue but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak ourselves.
—Seneca

Before we discuss how to train goalies, it's important to listen to those who experience it every day—the goalies themselves. In this section, goalies of all skill levels, from third graders to college graduates, share in their own words and perspectives what they wish their coaches, parents, and teammates understood about being a goalie.

Their experiences offer a unique lens through which to improve our interactions—and ultimately enhance their performance and enjoyment of the game. Let their words guide us toward a more supportive and effective approach to their development.

As you read, I hope that it will begin to challenge how you view, train, parent, support, and celebrate them. Each number represents a real goalie—someone you may be coaching, driving to practice, or playing alongside.

What I Wish My Coaches Knew

1. I need to know what I can do better.
2. Sometimes I just can't see the ball, or I freeze up, and I don't know how to fix it.
3. I wish my coaches knew that I can't save everything and that getting mad at a little mistake causes me to make more mistakes and ruins my confidence.
4. Each goalie has their strengths... use them!
5. I don't want to be put into shooting drills when there's no defense, and that doesn't mean I don't like playing goalie.
6. I wish my coaches knew how to give goalies confidence. I wish they understood goalies' mentality and how it is different from that of field players. I also wish that they knew how mentally challenging it is to be left in the dark and not given honest answers about practice, games, or playing time. I also wish they knew that we want to have a warm-up, and it is NOT FUN to hop right into practice with ZERO warm-up. I wish coaches knew how beneficial filming goalies can be and how much it can help us see what to work on. I also wish coaches knew that if they stat practices, goalies deserve to see the stats.
7. Ask what we would like to work on.
8. The mental challenges faced.
9. It is a lot more complex than you think. The littlest things could mean the most, the difference between saving a ball on your stick head or in the pocket. Mentality is everything. Goalies need faster shots to warm up.
10. Confidence plays a crucial role as a goalie. It is a position where all eyes are on you as a save is made or a goal is scored. Teammate support and feeling connected to the team are vastly important. This is often overlooked in the younger years. Also, when there are two goalies, encourage support

between the two, as well as the team.

11. I wish our coaches knew that we aren't just shooting dummies used to have shots just ripped at us. I wish we had more drills meant for goalkeepers, like pressured clears instead of doing 1v1 drills for the majority of practice.

12. I wish that my coaches knew that being a goalie is 90% a mind game and 10% a physical game. As goalies, we have one job—to create opportunities for the offensive side of the game. Yes, we have to be physically in shape and have the muscle memory and training to save the ball, but our minds have to actually be 100% intact, believing in ourselves and trusting our instincts that we know how to play the position. Coaches will often focus on a goalie's stats to determine how good they really are, when realistically, this is a team sport that requires every person on the field and the sideline to do their job. If one person does not do their job, somebody else has to pick up their slack. I wish coaches would understand that relying on stats is not the way to uplift a goalie and encourage them, because then goalies will just hyper-fixate on a number when, in reality, it should come down to "How many opportunities did they create for my offensive unit to capitalize?" Open lines of communication are the biggest part when it comes to this. Being open and transparent with your goalies will help to calm them down and encourage them to believe in their ability to play this sport and make an impact.

13. The mental part of being a goalie. Sometimes letting goals in can cause goalies to get in their heads, and they need to find a way to reset.

14. How difficult it is. The pressure. We are NOT leaders for defense. Everyone else should be watching the field, not just goalies.

15. It's a really hard game to play, and if coaches know nothing about the position, it makes it even harder.

16. I wish that my coaches knew how special this position is. It is a lot harder than it seems. It's important to understand that all goalies are different and there is not one specific way to play. As a goalie, take what you learn growing up and make your own style.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Coaches

- What feedback most surprised you?
- Which ones were the most challenging to read?

For Goalies

- Would you add anything to this list that you wish your coaches knew?

What I Wish My Parents Knew

1. There are some days when it's ok to be hard on a goalie... but there are also days when we just need positive encouragement so that we can breathe after a hard game. Be our cheerleaders... let our coaches be our coach.

2. Don't critique the games on the car ride home! Encourage training and a healthy mindset always!

3. I wish that my parents knew that our position just requires patience. Not every game is going to be good; there will be bad games and there will be games that are mediocre. Not every ball is going to be

saved. Encouraging your goalie after each game and practice will really help them succeed. Parents see our position and the sport in a different light since they are not on the field. Their opinions matter because they may be able to see something you, your coaches, and teammates may have overlooked. Parents, control your tone when talking about how your goalie can improve. This will help them to improve and also want to get better. Not forcing your opinion onto them, but also finding that balance of pushing your goalie out of their comfort zone will help them as well.

4. I wish they knew that all goalies have off days, and it takes time to fix things. It's not an instant fix. Being off your game could be mental, too, and not just physical. Changing things is not always good.
5. I wish my parents knew all the mental challenges we face.
6. Being a goalie is all mental. It is a mentally draining position that takes a strong personality in order to adapt. Everyone has bad games, and goals will always be scored, but having fun and learning little by little every day, that's what matters.
7. I wish my parents understood how mentally challenging the position can be. It's difficult when they don't understand why you have a bad practice or a bad game.
8. The effort required to be a goalie, along with the amount of work involved, including hand-eye coordination, is necessary for the position.
9. I wish my parents knew that sometimes goalies have off-days, and every day isn't going to be their best.
10. You know. (My daughter wrote this one)
11. I don't need to have advice shouted at me from the sidelines. If I do something 'wrong' in a game, I probably know about it.
12. It is hard not to get it into our heads.
13. That there are some shots we are not expected to save, and even if you believe maybe we could've had a certain shot, understanding that being a lacrosse goalie is extremely hard.
14. The pressure they put on us sometimes, and how that can impact our game.
15. I wish my parents knew that if I have a bad game, bashing me about it is worse than trying to go a more positive route. Goalies need more positive structure than negativity. Belittling them makes it worse.
16. Pep talks do not help, and they just stress me out more.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Parents

- What feedback most surprised you?
- Which ones were the most challenging to read?

For Goalies

- Would you add anything to this list that you wish your parents knew?

What I Wish My Teammates Knew

1. I can't just try harder sometimes.
2. That it's hard, it hurts, and you have to be a little crazy, but it's fun.
3. I wish my teammates understood that when a goalie hops into extra work, they want to get better, too. We don't just want to have 8-meter rips for 20 minutes. I wish they would understand that it doesn't always help us and that we want to work on things, too.
4. Although we are named the "quarterback" of the team and have always been told that "goalies see all," our job is to dial in on the ball and stop it from going into the net. Your job is to play defense, and if you're not doing your job correctly, it's not my job to correct you because it takes my focus away from the thing most important to my position, the ball.
5. We can see the field, so it's for their benefit when telling people to do stuff on defense.
6. If they hit me in the face and I save the ball because I don't have to move, it's not an "amazing save."
7. There is more to a goalie than just saving the ball. A goalie will be there to help with a defensive breakdown if a girl is right on the crease or when you're down and need to come out to get the ball back.
8. Their fakes help a lot, so it gives a better idea of the variety of shots and movement.
9. It is hard to communicate sometimes.
10. It's a lot more mentally challenging than they think.
11. I wish my teammates knew the pressure that many goalies feel whenever they play. I feel like I need to be the best because one goal can change the game.
12. I wish that my teammates would understand that our position feeds off each other. Each player on a team has a role, whether you're on the sidelines or on the field; everyone contributes during both the game and practice. During practice, ripping shots for fun or if you are wide open with so much space and hitting us and then laughing after does not make anyone better. Really, it just makes us goalies mad and not want to be there anymore. When this happens, nobody gets better because your shooter isn't placing the ball, and your goalie is really just in pain. We are all here at practice and games to make each other better. Small words of encouragement go a long way to help snap a person's mindset out of something negative into something positive. On the defensive side, having a strong sense of trust between our unit is what is going to make us thrive during a play. Our unit creates opportunities for our offensive unit, and if our offensive unit is not capitalizing, then we as a defensive unit need to step up and create even more opportunities and pick up their slack, but that only comes if everyone is on the same page, because if not, then we lose the game.
13. Field players need to understand that when they don't do their job... It's even more difficult to do mine. Imagine being a defender and having to deal with four offenders all by yourself... that's what you do to goalies when you leave us wide open. Please don't take offense when goalies try to direct you on the field... we have a better view than you and we just want to help... we are a team! Instead of calling goalies "crazy"... call us brave! We're not crazy for wanting to play the position... we love what we do, and we chose it for a reason.
14. More encouragement and support from the players leads to better performance. Both goalies contribute to the development of the team and should be supported equally by the players.

15. Sometimes I wish our teammates would understand that it doesn't feel great to be hit by the ball, so if our coaches say, "this is where you should shoot from," please listen because the closer you get to us and the harder you shoot, the more it hurts.

16. We are the last line of defense, so it is not necessarily all our fault if we lose. The ball had to get through all the field players before it got through the goalie.

17. I wish my teammates would give me grace and respect for the goalies on the team. I wish my teammates understood how hard the position is and what goes into it, more than standing in a cage and saving the ball.

18. It's harder than they think it is. There's more to it than just sitting there and getting hit with a ball.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Players

- What feedback most surprised you?
- Which ones were the most challenging to read?

For Goalies

- Would you add anything to this list that you wish your teammates knew?

Other Feedback From Goalies

1. Learn how to juggle.

2. I wish everyone knew that every goalie is different. When it comes down to it, if you are making the save, it does not matter how you get there. Every goalie makes a save differently, and THAT IS OKAY.

3. Support is the most important thing, and trust from the team.

4. It's more than just a physical game. The mental aspect is harder than the physical.

5. It takes a lot of mental toughness and mental power to become a goalie and progress to where your goals are when you are younger and older. Determination is the biggest thing, as well as not letting things affect you. Separate your emotions from the way that you play. When you play, that's all your mind should be thinking about. Don't think about how to save the ball because that will make you not save it.

6. Playing goalie is an absolutely amazing position that requires intense focus, a strong personality, and a strong mental game, but it is also demanding, challenging, and extremely unrewarding at times. In my opinion, the most important part of being a goalie is learning from every scored shot, every practice rep, and every mental rep that we are thrown into.

7. Coaches put goalies in competition with each other so much that they must focus on making saves in practice and not actually improving to the point where I sometimes felt the need to count stats and compare myself with the other goalie, and I would end up playing worse.

8. Always be there and help reset a goalie, especially if they are not having the brightest day.

9. I wish people knew that it is really hard to be a goalie and not get in your head all the time.

10. There's no better feeling than when you hear cheering after a save or another player (or parent on

the sideline) go WHOOOA after a great save or clear! Make sure you point out to your goalie that it's not their fault if you lose a game. Being a goalie requires more mental stamina than any other position on the field. We feel every goal that players make on us... but we must learn to get past it so that we can reset every time.

Chapter 2 THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON

Repetition is the key to real learning.

—Jack Canfield

Reread Chapter 1. Just kidding—but if you're not already thinking a little differently about your goalies, go back and reread it. Each time I read through the comments, they challenge me in new ways.

The most important lesson is about listening to your goalies. A few themes repeat across coaches, parents, and teammates:

- The importance of preparation and training.
- Respect for the position.
- The importance of communication.
- The role and responsibilities of a goalie.
- Training the mental game.
- The role confidence plays in achieving success.
- Providing support and encouragement.

Each of these themes will be addressed in detail throughout—but it was important to hear from goalies first.

Chapter 3

GEAR UP AND GET IN THE GOAL

Only a goalie can appreciate what a goalie goes through.

—Jacques Plante

If you are a coach who has never been a goalie or never experienced a shooting drill or shooting shuttle, I encourage you to, at least once, gear up and get in the goal. Every coach, parent, and player should get into the goal at least once to experience the courage it takes to let someone shoot a lacrosse ball at them.

You could make it a normal start to each season and call it “Goalie Appreciation Night” or “Goalie Appreciation Practice.” Make the entire practice shooting drills and shooting shuttles, with every coach, parent, and player getting a turn to be in the goal. You must get hit at least three times before you are allowed to get out of the goal—for instance, once in the inner thigh, once in the knee, and once on the arm (add one off the shin or foot if you want the full experience).

Be sure to film this, because I guarantee it would go viral with all the noises, squeals, flinches, and running away that would take place. Can you imagine...

Parents, if you find yourself becoming too critical or getting frustrated that your child is not making saves, gear up, get in the goal, and let them shoot on you.

Walking a mile in someone else’s shoes isn’t as much about the walk or the shoes; it’s to be able to think like they think, feel what they feel, and understand why they are who and where they are. Every step is about empathy.

—Toni Sorenson

As you imagine the thought of gearing up and getting into the goal, is your heart racing?

Coaches, what do you think your goalie’s reaction would be if you showed up to the next practice and played goalie? Your players may not, or may, enjoy the opportunity to hit you with a few shots—but the instant connection you would make with your goalies could be culture-changing.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Coaches

- Have I ever truly experienced what it feels like to stand in the goal and face live shots?
- How would putting myself in my goalie’s shoes change the way I coach and support them?
- What team culture shifts could happen if players saw me step into the goal?

For Goalies

- How would it feel if my coaches or teammates geared up and stepped into my position for a day?
- Do I openly share with others how challenging my position can be, or do I keep it inside?
- What would it mean to me if my team held a “goalie appreciation” night?

For Parents

- Have I ever imagined what it feels like to have a ball fired at me from close range?

- How might that perspective change the way I react to my child's saves—or misses?
- Would stepping into the goal myself change the way I support my child?

For Players

- Do I understand how hard it is to stand in goal during practice or games?
- What would I learn if I had to put on the pads and face shots myself?
- How can I show more appreciation for the courage my goalie displays daily?

Chapter 4

WHY DO YOU COACH?

I coach to help athletes and coaches enjoy their journey through sports and life, so they will live with purpose, lead with integrity, and love others.

This is the reason why I coach. This is MY WHY.

Before we dive into the “how” of coaching goalies, it’s important to start with why you coach. It’s a question worth reflecting on—because your answer shapes everything you do. Think about it—nobody forced you to do this... well, maybe you were voluntold. Most of us, however, choose to coach. Maybe you love the game. Maybe you want to give back. Maybe your child asked—or your spouse volunteered you. Your why could even be as big as wanting to see lives changed through sports.

If all I ever do is teach you about the game of lacrosse, I have failed you as a coach.

If you’ve been coaching for a while and haven’t given much thought to your purpose lately, take a moment. Ask yourself some tough questions.

- What’s it really like to be coached by you?
- Would you want your own child to have you as a coach?
- Do your players know what you value?
- What words would they use to describe you?
- What does a successful season look like to you?
- What are the three most important lessons you want your players to take away from the season?

The answers to these questions are incredibly valuable. They give you direction—they provide a framework for your decisions. They help you stay focused when things get chaotic. They remind you why you’re out there, on the field, giving your time and energy. Knowing your why isn’t just about you—it’s about the impact you have on your players, their parents, and your fellow coaches. It’s about shaping young lives, teaching values, and fostering a love for the game.

Understanding a Coaching Purpose Statement

A coaching purpose statement helps you refine your core beliefs. It serves as a guiding principle for your coaching style—and helps you stay focused on what you want to achieve with your athletes.

Steps to Create Your Coaching Purpose Statement

The process is simple, and its impact can be significant, even lasting for generations. Reflect on why you coach, identify your values, identify your gifts, write your statement, and live it out.

1. Reflect on Your Why

Consider why you coach. What motivates you? Think about the impact you want to have on your athletes.

2. Identify Your Values

Each coach operates with a unique set of values that guide their behaviors, decisions, and actions in daily life. These core values are important—they serve as guardrails, keep you on track, and lead you in the right direction. Look at the abbreviated list (yes, this is abbreviated) and circle the values that will best help you leave the legacy you desire. No more than three or four core values should be emphasized.

Authenticity • Achievement • Adventure • Authority
Balance • Beauty • Boldness • Challenge
Commitment • Competency • Contribution • Curiosity
Community • Compassion • Concern • Courage
Creativity • Dedicated • Determined • Durable
Empathy • Enthusiastic • Excellent • Faith
Family • Fairness • Freedom • Friendship
Fun • Generosity • Genuineness • Grace
Happiness • Harmony • Health • Honesty
Hope • Humor • Influence • Integrity
Innovation • Joyfulness • Journey • Justice
Kindness • Knowledge • Leadership • Learning
Love • Loyalty • Merciful • Neighborly
Noble • Nurturing • Objective • Openness
Optimistic • Organization • Original • Peace
Performance • Perseverance • Poise • Recognition
Respectfulness • Relationships • Responsibility • Security
Serenity • Serving • Spirituality • Stability
Success • Teamwork • Togetherness • Trust
Truth • Understanding • Unity • Victory
Virtuous • Wholeness • Wisdom

3. Identify your gifting

What verbs listed below best describe how you most successfully interact with people?

Act • Coach • Construct • Create • Demonstrate
Develop • Educate • Empower • Encourage • Guide
Help • Identify • Initiate • Inspire • Lead
Love • Manage • Mentor • Model • Motivate
Plan • Prepare • Produce • Recognize • Relate
Serve • Study • Support • Teach • Tell

4. Write Your Statement

Getting your ideas out of your head and onto paper is important. This can be challenging, especially if you haven't taken the time to reflect on why you coach. Your first draft doesn't need to be perfect.

Consider the following suggestions to help you write an effective purpose statement.

Be you—this is your personal statement. Write something in your own words that you will use as a filter for how to run your team or program.

Be brief—write a single sentence that contains twenty-five words or fewer, making it easy to memorize.

Be intentional—what relationships matter to you the most—parents, players, coaches? What is the outcome you desire to see? Be precise with your words.

Be structured—think verb, target, outcome. The verb describes how you most successfully interact with people according to your gifting. The target is the set of relationships you hope to impact. The outcome is what you are after and should incorporate your highest core values.

I coach to help (verb) athletes and coaches (target) enjoy their journey through sports and life, so they will live with purpose, lead with integrity, and love others. (outcome which incorporates core values)

Combine your reflections, values, and gifts into a concise statement.

Examples

I coach to educate players in the skills needed to play lacrosse.

I coach to inspire young athletes to develop their skills, foster a love for the game, and work together as a team.

I coach to model authenticity, joy, and hope.

I coach to help players build character, resilience, and a sense of community through sports.

I coach to empower youth to achieve their personal best, both on and off the field.

I coach to produce winners on and off the field.

Finalizing Your Statement

Once you draft your statement, revisit it regularly. Adjust it as you gain experience—and as your coaching philosophy develops. This statement will help you stay focused on your purpose and inspire your athletes.

5. Share it and live it out

Once you have your coaching purpose statement, share it with everyone—your staff, the players, and their parents. Be mindful that when you share, people will notice if your actions match your words. If you mess up, it's a chance to teach a valuable lesson. Sports provide opportunities to teach life lessons, but only if we seize them. Remember, there is a heart behind every number on the jersey.

A coach will impact more people in one year than the average person will in an entire lifetime.

—Billy Graham

PAUSE & PONDER

For Goalies

- Why do you play goalie, and what do you enjoy most about the position?

- How do you want your coaches and teammates to describe your presence in the goal?
- If you could write your own purpose statement for playing goalie, what would it be?

For Parents

- What values do you hope your child learns through the sport?
- If your child looked back years from now, what impact would you want sports—and you—to have had on their life?
- Could you write your own purpose statement as a parent in one sentence?

For Players

- Why do you play lacrosse, and what do you love most about it?
- What values guide how you show up as a teammate?
- How do you want your coaches and teammates to describe you?

Chapter 5 WHO YOU COACH

Goalies are unique...just like everyone else.

Some say goalies are crazy, but that is not true. It takes a brave person to step into the crease and have people shoot a ball at you, sometimes upwards of 100 mph, and their sole job is to stop the ball by any means. After they get hit with one of those shots, it takes an even braver person to keep playing.

It may seem crazy for us to even think about getting into the goal, but goalies are just built differently. Calling them crazy downplays their bravery—and if we really think about it, might even make them question themselves.

Every Goalie is Unique as a Player

There is no single “perfect” style for a goalie. Ten goalies will demonstrate ten different approaches, with each tailored to their unique physical attributes and strengths. Height, distance between feet, hip height, back position, and top thumb height all vary widely. So do the distance between hands, stick distance off the chest, stick angle, early or late ready stance, and the type of arc.

A technique that works for a tall, strong man might be entirely unsuitable for a smaller, younger player. Individual differences in age, size, and experience must be considered when determining the best playing style. There are great goalies who are 6'–2" and others who are 4'–2".

A Word to Former Goalies:

If you have played goalie before, please do not attempt to make a clone of yourself. The world already has one of you, and one of you is all we need. Because something worked for you does not mean it is the only way to play. Appreciate the uniqueness of each goalie and help them focus on developing their own approach.

Remember, they are constantly growing in all aspects—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As they grow, they are figuring out new ways their bodies move—sometimes a growth spurt can interfere with their normal style of play. Be patient with them as they grow and develop.

Every Goalie and Player is Unique as a Person

Players come from diverse backgrounds—each with unique experiences and perspectives. Some are dancers, while others excel in math or art; some enjoy reading or music. Their family structures vary, from broken homes to large families, and their financial situations differ greatly. Some have parents who were athletes, others do not. Some are the youngest, others the oldest in their families. Their interests range from camping and hiking to CrossFit and other sports.

Parental involvement also looks different. Some face intense pressure, while others have parents who enjoy watching their children play. Everyone learns differently; some need to hear it, some need to read it, some need to do it, some need to see it, and some need to do all of these.

This wide range of backgrounds and experiences highlights the individuality of each player. Ignoring this diversity limits our ability to connect with and inspire our players.

Do we need to know every detail about our players? Do we want to know every detail about our players? The simple answer is no, but it is essential to understand that not all our players will think, process, play, and learn like we do. This will challenge us to find different ways to teach and reach each one.

What They Bring

Every player brings with them experiences from every coach they've had before. Some arrive with a backpack full of extra weight, while others come without any baggage at all. As coaches, we either add to or lighten their load. We cannot control what they bring to the field, but we absolutely control how they leave.

May their backpacks—and ours—serve as a constant reminder of the impact we have on them. Strive to send them off the field better and lighter than when they arrived.

What Kind of “Smart” Are They? Multiple Intelligences

Teachers and educators are familiar with Howard Gardner, the world-renowned psychologist who developed the theory of multiple intelligences.

In his 1983 book, *Frames of Mind*, Howard Gardner argues that human intelligence is not a single, general ability but a collection of distinct and independent modalities. These include linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, existential, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligences.

The following are the nine types of intelligence:

1. Linguistic (Word-Smart)—People strong in this area are skilled with language—both spoken and written.

Examples: writers, lawyers, comedians, speakers.

2. Logical–Mathematical (Logic-Smart)—These individuals excel at reasoning, problem-solving, and working with numbers and patterns.

Examples: mathematicians, engineers, scientists.

3. Spatial (Picture-Smart)—These thinkers visualize in images and 3D space. They understand layouts, maps, and designs well.

Examples: architects, pilots, surgeons, designers.

4. Musical (Music-Smart)—Highly sensitive to rhythm, tone, melody, and sound.

Examples: musicians, composers, singers.

5. Bodily–Kinesthetic (Body-Smart)—They learn best through movement and hands-on activity.

Examples: athletes, dancers, actors, mechanics.

6. Interpersonal (People-Smart)—Strong social awareness; great at understanding and working with others.

Examples: teachers, therapists, counselors, leaders.

7. Intrapersonal (Self-Smart)—Deep self-awareness and reflection; they understand their thoughts,

motives, and emotions.

Examples: psychologists, philosophers, strategists.

8. Naturalistic (Nature-Smart)—Connect with nature, living systems, and the environment.

Examples: botanists, biologists, farmers, trail guides.

9. Existential (Life-Smart)—They explore deep questions about life, purpose, and meaning.

Examples: theologians, life coaches, spiritual guides.

Would we explain something the same way to a mathematician, psychologist, theologian, botanist, social worker, architect, writer, musician, and athlete—or would we adjust our approach so each one could best understand?

Coaches are teachers, and their classroom is the field.

As we get to know our players, we'll find their interests and strengths vary, and each will connect differently to the words and methods we use. Can we incorporate the various gifts our players have been given to enhance the overall team? Can we connect what they love outside of lacrosse to the game itself?

For example, one of my players, who had a great voice, often sang the national anthem before our home games. Can we ask our artists to design a themed t-shirt for our season?

We often talk about a player's "lacrosse IQ"—designing drills and scenarios to improve it. However, understanding the different ways our players are smart enables us to connect lessons on the field to the kinds of intelligence they exhibit off the field.

A Simple Example

Think about a fast break when a defender stays locked on their player, allowing the shooter to run to the goal and score without anyone stopping them.

The defender is hesitant to leave their player—worried their own player might get the ball and score instead. Maybe they do not trust that the other defenders will have their back. Could we use an example outside of lacrosse to help?

Consider the Monkey Jar Trap.

Hunters would take a jar with a wide bottom and a narrow opening and bury it in the ground so that the opening was just above the surface. Inside the jar, the hunter would place some fruit or nuts. The monkey reaches down into the narrow opening to grab the food, but when trying to pull it out, he finds his fist full of food won't fit through the small opening. Even as danger approaches, the monkey refuses to let go and stays trapped.

If we brought a clear jar to practice, players could see the concept in action. We could connect sliding on a fast break to almost every type of intelligence—logic, storytelling, nature, big-picture thinking, relationships, visualization, self-awareness, and even a physical demonstration.

A key takeaway is that it is okay to let things go to focus on something more important, and this applies beyond lacrosse.

Our players are more than just athletes, and by understanding multiple intelligences, we can better recognize and develop each player's unique strengths. Lacrosse is just one part of their identity. As the NCAA reminds us, "most college athletes will go pro in something other than sports when they graduate."

Why Are They the Way They Are? Parents.

As coaches, we not only coach our players but also need to be aware of the other team we can choose to work with or avoid—the parents. They can be our greatest allies or our biggest adversaries. It all depends on how we view the sideline—not the opposing team’s sideline, but the parents’ sideline.

No matter what culture we build with our team in practice, our players will head home with their parents after each game and practice. Just as we develop practice plans, do we also create a parent plan? Here, we will mainly focus on goalie parents, but we need to be mindful of the culture we build and nurture on both sidelines.

Goalie parents are unique; they love their children deeply and often feel each goal scored, sometimes too intensely. Some will defend their child and blame the defender who got beat, the defender who didn’t slide, the offense who kept turning the ball over, and yes—even the coach.

There are different types of parents we will encounter; some are highly involved in their child’s training, others watch from the sidelines without saying a word, single parents who find it hard to make it to games, divorced parents who have remarried, and even goalies raised by grandparents.

Parents sometimes yell instructions to their child during games and practices, but is this really helpful? For many goalies, it only adds stress—another voice in their ears when they’re already processing so much.

Goalies’ parents aren’t the only ones yelling instructions on the field. Do we set clear expectations for all parents on the sidelines? We can keep it simple with something like “Cheer for the team,” and that’s enough. Could there be a better approach?

Here you go, Dum Dum!

One of the best things to do at the start of the season, during your team meeting with parents and players, is to bring a bag of Dum Dum lollipops. They need to be Dum Dums and not Blow Pops or other off-brand options.

In addition to your usual team expectations, remind parents about sideline expectations—cheering, offering encouragement, and refraining from talking to the officials.

Ask for a parent volunteer who, at the start of each game, will hand out Dum Dums to all the parents as a fun reminder to keep sideline behavior positive—and avoid being a “Dum Dum.”

If anyone gets a little rowdy on the sideline, they can be handed another one. Your parents may need one after every quarter, timeout, or even after each goal. You may also need to be given one from time to time as a reminder. A Sam’s Club bag will usually last an entire season, although some parents may bring their own, as Dum Dums do not last as long as Blow Pops.

Watching someone with a lollipop in their mouth attempt to yell can be pretty funny. Sometimes there’s drool involved, and other times, we have no clue what they’re saying. This fun approach helps maintain a positive atmosphere, reduces unnecessary yelling, and makes the experience more enjoyable for everyone—including the officials.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Coaches

- How do you remind yourself that every goalie and player is unique?
- How can you lighten the “backpack” your players carry from previous experiences with coaches?
- What’s one new way you can celebrate and use your players’ off-field talents this season?

For Goalies

- What makes your style of play unique compared to other goalies?
- How do you remind yourself that being different isn’t wrong—it’s a strength?
- What strengths outside of lacrosse (music, art, academics, etc.) shape the way you play or think as a goalie?

For Parents

- Are you a Silent, Dum-Dum, or Blow-Pop parent?
- In what ways do you remind yourself that lacrosse is just one part of your child’s identity?
- How would your child describe your sideline presence—supportive, stressful, distracting, or encouraging?

For Players

- What makes your playing style different from your teammates’?
- How do your hobbies, interests, or strengths outside of lacrosse help you on the field?
- What do you want your teammates and coaches to appreciate about your uniqueness?

Chapter 6 WHAT YOU COACH

You either coach it or allow it.

The better question would be, what don't you coach?

It can become overwhelming when we consider all the aspects of the game—stick skills, shooting, dodging, draw, face-off, transition offense, motion offense, man-up offense, offensive plays, transition defense, settled defense, man-to-man defense, zone defense, man-down defense, ground balls, clearing, riding (and not to mention goalies)—these are some of the lacrosse skills we coach.

When we include warm-up, strength training, speed, quickness, agility, and conditioning, the physical skills necessary for playing lacrosse keep adding up. Some coaches excel at teaching all the fundamentals and even have more talented players, but they still struggle to get them to play as a team.

Why is that?

The secret to all victory lies in the organization of the non-obvious.
—Marcus Aurelius

The physical fundamental skills we teach form the foundation, but they aren't the entire structure. Think of it like building a house or a pyramid. A house needs a solid foundation—or it will collapse—but the foundation alone doesn't make the house. Similarly, a pyramid isn't complete if we stop at the first level.

Just as we develop strategies and drills to sharpen the physical skills, we can strengthen our teams and goalies by implementing strategies to coach and develop their mental skills. Coaching the mind is like adding walls, rooms, or layers onto a foundation.

Without a roof or capstone, the structures remain incomplete. When coaches also develop the hearts of their athletes, they create houses and pyramids built to last for generations.

Coaching the Mind

The chief task in life is simply this—to identify and separate matters so that I can say clearly to myself which are externals not under my control, and which have to do with the choices I actually control. Where then do I look for good and evil? Not to uncontrollable externals, but within myself to the choices that are my own...
—Epictetus

This quote can be summed up in one powerful idea—control the controllables. The core of coaching is about focusing on the parts of the game and life that we can directly influence.

We control our tone, words, and actions. We control our attitude, effort, integrity, thoughts, and beliefs. We control how we treat others, the food we eat, the information we consume, and the people we surround ourselves with.

Coaches, we do not need a degree in sports psychology to teach our players about the controllables. Still, we must be aware of and take advantage of the opportunities presented during practice. By

helping athletes focus on what they can control, we empower them to take responsibility for their performance and personal development.

Consider the individual player—not everyone is motivated by the same things.

- How do we teach our players to focus and handle their emotions when they make a mistake?
- Do we guide them in setting goals and the commitments required to reach them?
- How can we build confidence and team cohesion?
- Can we coach intensity?
- Do we teach our players how to be leaders—or do we tell them to be a leader?

Maybe you're the coach of a third-grade rec team, wondering how to squeeze everything into a one-hour practice. Consider what your team needs most—self-control and penalties, focus, teamwork, or basic skills like catching and throwing. Whatever their greatest need is, that's the place to start—and remember, it only takes one minute.

Mindful Minutes

Can we really make an impact in one minute? Consider this:

“I love having you on the team!”

I think we can all agree that seven words can make a significant impact. How about these:

You matter. I trust you. You are ready. I believe in you.

Mental health is a topic widely discussed in sports, yet it often gets overlooked due to limited practice time. If you had to choose, what's more valuable—two hundred shots or two minutes invested in developing your athlete's mind?

Even in the busiest schedule, we can weave in short, powerful activities that build confidence, focus, resilience, and connection. Here are some ideas that take less than two minutes.

Mindset & Confidence

Mindset Minute—share a short quote, story, or lesson

Confidence Corner—each athlete shares one success after practice

Highlight Reel Recall—think of a personal best moment before a drill

Positive Self-Talk Practice—rehearse simple mantras after a mistake. (“Next play”)

Focus, Calm & Reset

Silent Stretch—warm-up stretch in silence, focusing inward

Box Breathing Breaks—one minute of box breathing (4 breaths)

Red Light / Green Light Breath—stop, breathe, reset before next play

Reset Routine—practice reset routines after goals

One-Word Focus—players choose one word to guide practice

Mistake Recovery Reps—immediate reset after a turnover

Visualization Break—60 seconds of mental rehearsal (saves, shots, stops)

Visualization of Success—close eyes, imagine making the perfect rep

Resilience & Toughness

Two-Minutes of Toughness—discuss what mental toughness means

Bounce-Back Challenge—intentionally create tough scenarios and reset

Controlled Adversity—start drills down a goal, short-handed, or tired

Pressure Shot Drill—all eyes on one shooter/goalie

Team Connection & Communication

Gratitude Walk—reflection on three positive events from the past 24 hours

Effort Check-In—have players rate their daily effort (1–10)

Silent Drill—communicate without words during a play

Strands of Three—players get into groups of three and give one positive shoutout to another teammate in their trio

Core of Four—players get into groups of four and share one thing they did well in practice with their core

3-5 Minutes

Five Minutes of Focus—set a timer for a high-intensity drill or mental skill talk. We may need to set our timer for shorter periods and build up

Post-Practice Reflection—answer “What did we learn today?”

Three Wins—list three small victories at the end of practice

High School Weekly Themes

Team-building Tuesdays/Thursdays—dedicate time to activities that strengthen trust, communication, and connection between teammates

Mindful Mondays—start the week by focusing on one mental skill (e.g., confidence, motivation, mental imagery, focus, resilience, team cohesion, self-talk, mindfulness, goal setting, or emotional regulation)

Fun-Day Fridays—end the week with team-building games, challenges, or fun competitions that build chemistry while keeping things light

Service Saturdays—bring your team together off the field by serving the community, doing clean-ups, clinics, volunteering, or supporting those in need

There are many ways we can coach and develop our players’ minds and build our team. Remember, if we’re constantly yelling at officials or blaming others, it will be hard for our players to take lessons about emotional control seriously. Start small, keep it simple, and be mindful of your minutes.

Being mindful of how we use our time aligns perfectly with the principles of Stoic philosophy—focusing on what’s in our control and accepting with grace what lies beyond our control.

Philosophy may not seem like something we bring to the lacrosse field, but the challenges faced in sports often reflect the challenges faced in life—loss, setbacks, feeling overwhelmed, and facing fear.

Stoicism is an ancient Greek philosophy that focuses on personal ethics, virtues, and accepting things as they are in the present moment.

Oxford defines stoicism as “the endurance of pain or hardship without the display of feelings and without complaint.” Its purpose is to help us become more resilient, happier, virtuous, and wiser,

ultimately making us better people, parents, and coaches.

The early Stoic philosophers—Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Epictetus—have quotes scattered throughout this book. Their wisdom, woven throughout, offers a framework for managing the pressures of coaching. Imagine remaining calm and consistent—even when the game plan falls apart or a player struggles.

The Apostle Paul provides additional guidance:

whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think on these things.

—Apostle Paul

Fess up when you mess up and keep your chin up

Mistakes happen. How we react and respond is what matters. How do your players react after mistakes? Do they own up and stay positive? How quickly do they recognize their errors and say what they will do better on the next play?

For example:

- “I missed that slide. I’ll do better at seeing both.”
- “I was ball watching; I’ll do better keeping my head on a swivel.”

Acknowledge the mistake, own it, regroup, and then refocus on the next play—that’s a simple way to recover after failure.

If you’re not making mistakes, then you’re not doing anything. I’m positive that a doer makes mistakes.

—John Wooden

What does a defensive huddle look like after a goal? Are players blaming each other, pointing fingers—or does someone immediately fess up to their mistake? Goalies let the ball in, so they can also fess up.

Each goal scored gives the goalie and the defense a chance to review what went right, recognize what went wrong, fess up to mistakes, and discuss what they will do better on the next play, possession, shot, or save.

If you are afraid to fail, you will never do the things you are capable of doing.

—John Wooden

Do we practice defensive huddles after a goal to help players with their responses in a game? We can listen in and guide them on what a positive post-goal huddle should look like.

Coaches, do we fess up to our mistakes when they happen?

Our willingness to acknowledge our own errors sets the tone for how mistakes are viewed across the team. When we admit a misstep, it models humility, accountability, and growth—values we want our athletes to embrace—and it shapes how we define and address mistakes as coaches.

Types of Errors and Mistakes

Many coaches distinguish between effort error, which is within an athlete’s control, and skill error, which reflects coaching and development.

Effort error—A player does not give full energy, attention, or commitment. That’s on the athlete.

Skill error—A player doesn't yet have the technique or knowledge to execute correctly and consistently. That's on us as coaches; it highlights the need to teach, model, and further develop them.

Players own their effort; coaches own their development.

The distinction matters because it helps create accountability without blame. When athletes understand that mistakes are part of the learning process, but a lack of effort is a conscious choice, they become more resilient and willing to take risks. As coaches, we need to accept responsibility for teaching and reinforcing skills, and create an environment where players know they are supported in their growth.

We can forgive a skill error, but an effort error needs to be addressed.

Coaches, this is a tough question to reflect on:

Do we react to a skill error differently in practice versus a game, or do we see both as opportunities to teach?

Developing the Heart

You build a better team by building better people.

The adage, “people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care,” rings true in coaching. Coaches who genuinely care about the heart of their players create a culture of trust, respect, compassion, belief, and integrity. Players are willing to be pushed harder, knowing their coaches want to bring out the best in them.

A coach must never forget that he is a leader and not merely a person with authority.
—John Wooden

Coaches, we have a significant impact on the lives of our players beyond the game itself. We help influence and shape their identity, character, self-worth, values, significance, and purpose. John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, created his Pyramid of Success. The twenty-five life principles in his pyramid are not solely about basketball or sports but serve as a guide for becoming a better person.

When we coach the heart, we help athletes connect who they are with what they do. A player may forget the details of a drill or a play, but they won't forget how we treated them or the life lessons we modeled.

Every decision we make as coaches teaches our athletes something about life, even if we do not see the results right away. This is the butterfly effect—small actions that can ripple outward into significant results over time.

A good coach can change a game. A great coach can change a life.
—John Wooden

Coaching the heart means recognizing that every player brings their own struggles, fears, and hopes to the field. Some may doubt their abilities, while others may feel pressure from their parents; many also face challenges outside of sports.

A coach who takes the time to listen, encourage, and guide is giving players more than just athletic

instruction—they are providing a safe environment for them to grow as people. By developing both skill and character, we help create athletes who compete with integrity, resilience, and compassion—qualities that last far beyond the game.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Coaches

- When mistakes happen, how do you decide whether it's a skill error (your responsibility) or an effort error (the player's responsibility)?
- How intentional are you about building “mindful minutes” into practices?
- How do you coach the heart of your players and not just their lacrosse ability?

For Goalies

- Which controllables (effort, focus, attitude, confidence, etc.) are hardest for you to manage in the crease?
- Do you know the difference between a skill error and an effort error in your own play?
- How do you show leadership through your communication, even after mistakes?

For Parents

- How do you respond when your child makes a mistake during a game?
- What controllable aspects of your own sideline behavior could set a stronger example for your child?
- Do you apologize or “fess up” when you overreact or misstep as a parent?

For Players

- When you make a mistake, how quickly do you admit it and reset for the next play?
- After a goal is scored, how can you bring energy and encouragement to teammates?
- What's one mental skill (focus, resilience, confidence, self-talk, etc.) you want to improve this season?

Chapter 7 HOW YOU COACH

We coach how we were coached.

One of my favorite quotes, although I honestly have no idea where I first heard it, is “We coach how we were coached.” It’s a simple statement, but it carries a lot of truth, especially when we start to unpack it. The same idea applies to parenting—“We parent how we were parented.” This isn’t a universal law but a strong observation. When we look at why we do what we do, whether on the field or at home, it’s usually connected to something we learned from our parents, coaches, or other influential people in our lives.

“More is caught than taught” is another saying that rings true. How many times have our kids done something, and we wonder where they learned it—until we realize they learned it by watching or listening to us? If our children are just like us, our parents smile, knowing what’s to come.

So, how do you coach? Really think about it.

- What words do you use when coaching?
- What’s the tone of your voice?
- What’s the temperament you bring to the field?
- How quickly do you get frustrated?
- What are your expectations for your players?
- Can those answers be traced back to your former coaches, your parents, or other mentors?

Think about the coaches you had growing up. Did you have coaches who were positive, encouraging, knowledgeable, fair, consistent, and respectful to officials? Did they speak life into you and believe in you—even when you didn’t believe in yourself? If so, there’s a good chance you coach similarly.

You probably aim to create a positive environment, build up your players, and teach them not just sports skills but also valuable life lessons. You likely value sportsmanship and respect.

On the other hand, if you had coaches who were negative, demeaning, unfair, inconsistent, cursed out officials, or even dropped “F” bombs on the sideline during elementary school lacrosse games, you might coach a little differently.

You might be more prone to yelling, criticizing, focusing on the negative rather than the positive, and winning at all costs. Controlling your temper might be a struggle.

The unexamined life is not worth living.
—Socrates

This isn’t about judging anyone; it’s about understanding the powerful influence our past experiences have on our present actions. It’s about recognizing patterns and making conscious choices about how we coach.

We all have experiences that shape us, both positively and negatively. We learn by observing, listening, and doing. Our coaching styles often reflect the coaches who influenced us—it’s like a coaching echo, reverberating through the years.

Maybe you had a coach who was incredibly demeaning, and you swore you’d never treat your players

that way. Or maybe you had a coach who was supportive and encouraging, and you want to emulate their style. If you are like me, you have experienced a bit of both types of coaches.

The key is awareness. Once we recognize the influences that shaped our coaching style, we can choose how we want to coach. We can decide which parts of our past to embrace and which to leave behind. Our coaching will then echo forward—not just to our players, but to their future teams, families, and communities.

To be a better coach, you have to be a better you.

—Joe Ehrmann

Here are some practical steps you can take that also help in creating your coaching purpose statement:

Reflect on your past—Take time to really think about your experiences as an athlete. Who were your coaches? What were their strengths and weaknesses? How did they make you feel? What lessons did you learn from them?

Identify your coaching values—What matters most to you as a coach? What kind of environment do you want to establish for your players? What are your goals for them, both on and off the field?

Observe other coaches—Watch other coaches in action. What do you admire about their coaching style? What do you dislike? What lessons can you learn from them?

Seek feedback—Ask your players, assistant coaches, and even parents for feedback on your coaching style. Be open to constructive criticism. At the end of each high school season, I would ask my players to give anonymous feedback on all the coaches. I wanted to understand what we did well and where we could improve as coaches.

Continuously learn and grow—Read books, attend clinics, and seek mentors who can help you refine your coaching skills to become the coach you aspire to be.

By understanding the influences that have shaped your coaching style, you can become a more effective and impactful coach.

PAUSE & PONDER

For Coaches

- When you reflect on your own playing days, what coaching behaviors do you find yourself repeating—positive or negative?
- What words, tone, and temperament do you bring most often to practice or games?
- Which parts of your coaching style come from your mentors, and which are conscious choices you've made to be different?

For Goalies

- What influence do you want to leave behind for the next goalie who watches you?
- If your teammates mirrored your energy and words, what kind of team culture would that create?
- What coaching or leadership influence from your past do you want to emulate?

For Parents

- How do your own parents' words, tone, or temperament show up in the way you support your child during sports?

- How do you model respect for coaches, officials, and opponents in your actions and words?
- When you think about your own sports experiences, what kind of sideline support do you wish you'd had? How can you give that to your child now?

For Players

- If your teammates learn more from what you do than what you say, what lessons are they learning?
- What influences from coaches or parents do you want to carry forward, and which do you want to leave behind?
- How do you want your teammates to describe your influence at the end of the season?