

**5 Pieces of Advice for New Athletic Directors**

*By Dr. David Hoch, CMAA*

*Last summer, after teaching one National Interscholastic Athletic Administrator Association Leadership Training Course, a new athletic director approached me and asked what advice I could offer someone just starting out in the profession. Here is what I told him.*

Perhaps because I had just finished teaching a course titled: "Dealing with Challenging Personalities," I quickly responded with the need of developing a system for dealing with misguided, problematic parents. After all, challenging parents are, without a doubt, the number one problem in high school athletics today. But it's not the only challenge.

Here are my top five pieces of advice for a new athletic director:

•**#1** **Learn to set priorities.** You can't possibly do everything that you would like or are expected to accomplish everyday. There simply isn't enough time. A good question to ask yourself is: What would happen if I move something to tomorrow's To Do List? Obviously, you can't neglect real emergencies or items that affect the safety of your athletes, but most things can be postponed.

• **#2** **Discover and develop a circle of friends consisting of fellow athletic directors who you can call upon for advice, support, and suggestions.** These individuals will truly understand the demands of your job and what problems you may be experiencing. Of course, you want to be available and willing to help them when they are in need of help. This can be as simple as providing an ear for them to vent and to listen to their problem.

**• #3** **Understand that you are human.** Even though you may be conscientious, work hard and persevere, not everyone will agree with your decisions. It isn't possible to please everyone--even if you do try your best to do so. This means that you have to develop a thick skin and be patient. As others may be attacking your efforts, you need to realize that you've done the best that you can and you'll be called upon to do it all over again the next day.

• **#4** **Continually try to learn more.** The responsibilities involved in athletic management are huge and, at times, overwhelming. There are always new developments, ideas, and techniques that need to be learned and practiced. Change is part of life and in athletics nothing remains constant, requiring a perpetual need for professional development.   
  
**• #5** **Try, as difficult as it may be, to develop some balance in life.** It is so easy to devote so many hours to the responsibilities of your position that your family gets shortchanged. This is good advice to give, even though I never have mastered it. While it may not always be quantity, you have to find a way to have some quality time with your family. It is ironic that we're in a business of trying to provide great opportunities for other children, but we sometime neglect our own. Always strive to improve that aspect.

*Just* five pieces of advice for a new athletic director? Surely there are more ideas and suggestions that other athletic directors could offer up--and feel free to do so at the end of this column. But let's turn the tables and ask a couple questions of today's rookie athletic administrators. For example, why the heck did you decide to become an athletic director? What were you thinking? Are you crazy?

Well, here are a couple answers. For one, athletic directors have a huge and amazing impact upon young people, making it an extremely rewarding profession. Stick with it because there is no job like it in the world! Oh, and try to get a handle on those misguided, problematic parents!