



Working Together Successfully: A Guide for Head Coaches and Assistant Coaches by Greg Troy & Larry Shofe

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Gregg Troy:

The reality of working with other people is probably one of the single most important things you do as a head coach. “You’re only as good as the people you work with.” I know that’s an old saying, but it’s really important, and if you surround yourself with good people, they’ll help you out even when you’re not doing a good job. Larry is going to tell you his role in our program as an assistant coach, but I think I need to tell you before he does, that it’s not a situation where we run two different programs from two different pools. Everyone in our program swims together. Right now Larry and I share 40 plus athletes. I say “share” because we come in together, we’re on deck at the same time together and we are both pretty strong personalities and a lot different. I think that you’ll find that we stay away from “I” as much as possible. We use the word “we” when we talk about the program. I think it’s important because everyone is in the program together. We share the direction it goes, we share the responsibility, and we share the results. Larry has been with me 8 years and I think it’s probably been the most productive 8 years for our club.

Larry Shofe:

I want to give you a little background on where I came from and how I came to Bolles. I grew up in California and was very fortunate to become a pretty good swimmer. I was coached by Larry Groover from Pleasant Hill, Pete Cotino and Dick Jochums. Growing up as an athlete, I began to get an interest in coaching. I started off at Cal as an architecture major and ended up changing. The people I swam for through the years were good coaches, but they all had different coaching styles and I tried to formulate in my own head what a good coach should do. I was an assistant with Larry Groover before Pleasant Hill and Concord were merged, and then I worked with Nort at Cal for two years as the Men's Assistant. I worked with him at Concord. What helped me most during these early years was I never let a moment go by that I didn't ask Larry and Nort questions. My goal at age 22 was to be a head coach the rest of my life. As I go through my talk, I'll tell you how those things changed.

Gregg and I had been cross-town rivals for six years, when Gregg approached me about a full-time position that had opened at Bolles. Before deciding, Gregg and I went out to dinner for 3-4 hours and sat and talked about philosophy, direction of the program, where he saw my role as coach at that time with one facility, and through that conversation, the job became more appealing and I submitted my resume. A few weeks later, I met with the Administration. The support, philosophy and commitment was something I wanted to get involved in. Although Gregg and my personalities were different, I felt that the mesh of those personalities would be beneficial for all the swimmers in the program. Over the years, I've seen a lot of assistant coaches who try to be like the head coach, to coach like the head coach, to have the personality like the head coach. That's good sometimes, but I also feel that you need to be your own coach and I've pretty much lived by that.

Location was a major influence in my decision. I want to make sure that I like the area I live in because if I can be happy with where I live, I'm going to be happy at the job, if it's the right job. At the point that I decided to pursue going to Bolles, I had gone through a coaching transition of being a head country club coach for 6 years, to an assistant at both Concord and Pleasant Hill, to a head college coach, to a head club coach, to a head high school coach and back to an assistant coach. The commitment level at the school at that time wasn't at the level I wanted it to be or foresaw it to be and I needed to make a change, but I didn't want to leave Jacksonville. I had to look at the role of an assistant coach and decided that this is something I wanted to do and started working with Gregg. Based on that background, over the years, I formulated what I thought would be some qualities and characteristics of a good assistant coach.

I think the first attribute of an assistant coach is unselfishness. We've got some very good assistant coaches in the program who do outstanding jobs and it's too bad that all coaches can't get all the recognition for things that have happened. You need to define what your role is as Assistant Coach. If you're starting out in a program, define what needs to be done and what your role in that needs to be.

In order to do that, you need to understand what your goals are. Eight years ago, I switched from knowing where I wanted to go as Head Coach to switching to a program that I was going to be a part of. My goals changed and I needed to establish what my short range goals and my long range goals are in coaching. In establishing my short range goals, my number one concern was my family and finances was my first consideration.

Number two in choosing a job, Assistant or Head Coach, college or club, is where do you see yourself immediately: in a club situation or in a college situation? Do you see yourself being a head coach or an assistant coach? One of my concerns was type of organization — parent run, non-parent run, advisory board. However, there aren't too many opportunities like ours where you're pretty much running the show and calling all the shots.

Another consideration is job security. I know any time we take a job anywhere we'd like to be there a while. I never envisioned myself staying at one place for a long time, but always felt I needed to give any job 5 years, to give it a chance. You need to give yourself a chance and be patient and see how the job develops.

Long range goals mean where you would like to see yourself in the future. For me, being in an organization where we have good athletes all throughout the program. My role and swimming background shaped my vision. I looked at the 12 and 13 year old athletes at Bolles and was concerned that if I were in the program, because of the limited pool space at Bolles, I probably never would have swum at Bolles because we were limited in team size because of the one pool. I might not have had the opportunity to swim, so I felt that I could bring that to the program.

Once again, your family must be considered in your long range personal goals. I was very fortunate to be married to a young lady who could work pretty much anywhere in the United States in the job that she had. She has been very supportive and that eased the job evaluation process.

The other consideration is your long range professional goals. You have to identify your desired responsibilities. How do you want to contribute to the program? First of all, you need to know your strengths and weaknesses. Taking that into account the first thing an assistant coach should do when coming into a program is identify, in discussion with the head coach, what areas of the program could be stronger. When I started at Bolles, we had, I believe, 30 athletes in the water and we had some very good athletes at the National level. At the same time we had some athletes who didn't have A times in the program. I felt, at that time, that that's where I could make a difference. I can get with the athletes who Gregg didn't have time to get with. He was able to get with all athletes, but we were able to give a lot more attention to the athletes in the pool.

I've always felt that no matter what group we're in, my role as Assistant Coach is to get to the athletes who don't require a lot of attention, but who need the attention. We readjusted our Varsity schedule and I became a Junior High coach and coached the 7th, 8th and 9th graders. I looked at the history of how many athletes were in the water and it wasn't a real large amount. I said all I needed was 45 minutes, so Gregg took the Varsity program and did dry-land; I took the 45 minutes and set up a Junior High program. We did a lot of stroke drills, did things that were fun and didn't do anything more than 25 yards. We had 60 athletes that first year. It was probably one of my happiest moments at Bolles when I first started that I was able to contribute because a lot of those athletes continued on swimming in the program and I felt that I had made an improvement immediately in the program.

Once you've helped in an area, you need to look at other areas. The head coach in a program is very involved in the day-to-day running and it's important that you initiate things and ideas, and that you pick out things you think can help the program. It's appropriate that you keep the head coach

apprised of everything that happens whether he's on the deck, off the deck, or out-of-town.

Another contribution you can make as an assistant coach is to relieve the head coach of the least desirable tasks –things that may frustrate your co-worker, things that he would rather not spend time on. Through the years, I think I've taken things that have been a headache for Gregg and enabled him to put more time into workout planning and working out with the top-level athletes. Most of the time, this is paper-work; these are things that need to be done and the head coach has to have the trust in the assistant to know that he's going to do this paper-work right.

In summary, your job as Assistant Coach is to develop new programs and expand on existing ones. I think we've done a very good job over the years of doing that in the program.

When looking at an assistant coaching position that may be available, you need to evaluate whether it'll satisfy your needs and your goals. Gregg mentioned his other talk that when he started out, he really didn't coach much for pay. He did it for the love of the sport. Head Coach Nort Thornton left Foothill Community College and took a twelve thousand dollar a year pay cut to take Cal-Berkeley for a different challenge. I coached at Cal for free for 2 years. Coach Thornton was able to give me a job at Concord Swim Club, so my first start in coaching wasn't for money, either and the head coaching positions that I had didn't pay a lot of money, either. So you need to look at what it's going to take to satisfy your needs. The trade-off for working with somebody like Nort when I first started out was that I gained a lot of

knowledge and I gained a great recommendation early. I also was exposed to some top-level international and national athletes.

You've got to look at the position. How much responsibility will you have? You could come in as an assistant coach and the head coach might do everything and you might get dissatisfied. You need to look at what you will be doing. Among the questions you can ask yourself are: Will I assist with the head coach or will I be able to start my own group? These are things that Gregg and I spent 3 to 4 hours talking about before I decided to pursue the job at Bolles.

Back to financial, again, when you're evaluating a position. Will you make a base salary? Is there room for growth? Are there additional ways to make money by adding additional programs? Length of contract? Do you have a stable job? And my most important one, again, is location. Can you live there, can your family live in that location? Can your kids go to school in that location?

Among the qualities that I've always felt essential for a successful assistant coach, the most important is your relationship with the head coach. Bar none, that's your most important. If you are going to go into a program and you think you are just going to run your own program you're wrong! One of the deciding things for me, when I talked to Gregg and made the decision to go from Head Coach to Assistant Coach, was our philosophies were a lot alike. I understood what he expected and he understood where I was coming from.

The other is gaining trust and respect from the person you work with. I knew that Gregg had some good assistant coaches over the years, but a lot of them had moved on to other jobs and I could really tell by talking to him that night that it would take a few years to gain his trust and respect as a person on his staff because I was the competition in town and from that standpoint, I felt that I didn't want to come into the program and seem like I wanted the head coaching job. It took me two years to initiate the programs, to work with the lower level athletes and to show Gregg that I was genuinely concerned. To do that, you need to take on responsibility that's been given to you by the head coach. Any time he's given me anything to do, I try to do it and I've tried to do it correctly and on time. Probably one of the most important things as an assistant coach is when you've got things that you have to do, you need to do them correctly and do them the way the head coach wants.

Another distinctive trait of a successful assistant coach is a willingness to put in the same hours as the head coach. Be willing to work. We're in a fortunate situation in that we work in the day time in the office together, and we spend time talking about ideas, about direction. We go to lunch almost every day. We talk about ideas we're going to implement in practice and bounce things off each other. And we talk about the direction of the program. But ultimately, Gregg Troy is going to make the decisions. There are a lot of times I'll tell him things that he won't agree with and there are a lot of times we talk about things that I won't agree with, but I think the two of us come up with something pretty good, with him having the final say. As an assistant coach, you need to understand that.

It takes time to understand each other's personality. My personality is different from Gregg's, but we've found out over the years that we are similar in a lot of ways. You need to understand the people you work with and understand their ups and downs and be able to work with that.

A good rule to follow is never disagree in front of your athletes on deck, in the resting room, or in the weight room. If you are going to disagree, and I think it is healthy to disagree, it needs to be done in the confines of the office. We have disagreements and we try to air those out in the coaches' meetings.

It's very helpful to have the same working knowledge of all the strokes. Gregg and I sat down and talked about stroke technique, so before we worked on deck, we talked about how the strokes are swum, how we're going to present the strokes. The first year or so, I pretty much stood back. I knew how he'd run the program, but I wanted to make sure that I understood the direction the program was going.

However, be your own coach. Take your own coaching style into the program. You were hired because of your coaching style. You weren't hired to be like somebody else. Either the Board of Directors, the President, the Head Coach who has hired you, has seen you or gotten recommendations on the type of coach you are. Don't change your coaching style. You've been hired to coach the style that you have.

Over the years at Bolles, we've gone from Gregg and I both working with the older kids to a multitude of assistant coaches. I am not one who gets into titles. I'm the same as everybody else from my position down. We've got four below us who could be head coaches anywhere. My role is to be a liaison between Gregg and the other coaches. I know that the other coaches probably can speak about something a little more freely with me and I decide

what Gregg should and shouldn't know. I try to head off any problems at my level before Gregg has to deal with them and with the coaches.

Communication, consequently, is a big thing. Gregg and I talk about a lot of things during the day time and I try to fill other coaches in, as well as he does. We make sure that the staff is fully aware of and understands the direction we'd like the program to go in. We have good coaches and they're pretty strong-headed about the way they'd like to do things, but in an organization like ours, we all need to be going in the same direction from the bottom all the way to the top. I feel that part of my job is making sure those other coaches do that. Gregg does that a lot, also.

Motivating the other coaches is another responsibility I've assumed. We've got coaches who have looked at other jobs and would like to leave and take head coaching jobs or assistant coaching jobs other places. I've tried to motivate them as to why they should stay in our program, how we can benefit them and how they can benefit us. The bottom line is keeping the lines of communication open. When you have a swim club that's between 250 and 300 athletes, it's very important that the lines of communication between all the coaches are pretty good.

As far as administrative responsibilities are concerned, I like this part of my work. I take pride in what I do and get frustrated if I make a mistake. It is important that these tasks be done on time and done correctly. The things that I feel are important administratively from an assistant coach's standpoint are:

(1) Meet entries. We have an escrow account for all of our athletes. Each coach is responsible for figuring out how much they owe for each meet. It was one thing that both Greg and I did initially but as our club has gotten bigger staying up with how much people owed for meets was a monumental task.

(2) Transportation. As our club has gotten bigger, transporting athletes to meets has become monumental also. We have the luxury of going by charter bus to most places, but we have vans and coordinating all that is a considerable task. I don't believe that's something that should be on the head coach's desk.

(3) Hotel reservations.

(4) Others. Assistants do motivational time lists and go through results and figure out proofs from the Region meet, etc.. These are all time consuming tasks that are crucial to the success of the program and as your team gets bigger and as you take on coaching roles, these are significant and it is paramount that they be done right.

In all the foregoing areas, if you are going to take on those responsibilities, before you finalize anything, you always run it by the head coach. Nothing would be more frustrating than to book into a hotel or get a van that isn't suitable for the event that you are going to.

Let's discuss deck responsibilities and working with a big group vs a small group. The assistant coach should work from the bottom of the big group up, from your least talented athletes in the program up. You can make a big difference there. Motivate people in practice at all levels no matter which athlete it is and constantly give reminders of stroke corrections. One thing that is essential in coaching is to try to speak with each athlete at every practice. In our situation, when there are two of us on deck, the athletes are talking with both of us in some manner during the practice. As an assistant coach, talking, giving corrections and motivating athletes, don't be afraid to say things to the top-level athletes, to give corrections to those athletes, to the very top athlete. Don't be intimidated by the type of athlete they are. It helps the athlete gain respect and trust in the coach.

All the things I mentioned above apply to your own group or the smaller group. The most significant concept at any level in the program is team. It's not my group versus their group or us against them. Every swimmer in the program is important and you should all be headed in the same direction.

It shouldn't always be the head coach's job to deal with the parent problems. He shouldn't always be the one who has to call the shots, to make the decisions. It's more positive to become active with your parents and to allow people to watch practice as long as they don't get in the way. You're better off being in a pro-active situation where you're initiating a conversation with a parent as opposed to them calling to make an appointment with you about a problem.

I'm very fortunate in our school situation. When I started at Bolles, I was the Assistant Athletic Director and head of the Physical Education Department. That was an asset because I got to know a lot of the administrators and teachers. Although it was neither required nor expected, I

volunteered to teach several classes to keep in touch with the students at the upper level, to get involved, and to lead by example. That helped me in the long run to “pay my dues” early on in earning respect at Bolles.

In conclusion, working together successfully takes time. We are successful because:

(1) Through talking, we found we both had the same training philosophy; we both believe in going in the same direction;

(2) having mutual respect for each other;

(3) having the same work ethic;

(4) understanding each other's personality;

(5) having common goals;

(6) supporting each other in always.

One of the things we do is “good cop, bad cop,” or “good guy, bad guy.” If Gregg is helping an athlete see the direction that he or she needs to go in and it’s not what the athlete really wants to hear, I will back that up in the “good guy” way. You need to know the athlete you can do it with. It’s not everybody you need to do that with. I always point out to the athlete that the only reason Gregg’s like that is that he really cares about you, he cares about your future, and if he didn’t care about it, he wouldn’t be talking to you. And I care about it because I want to be sure the athlete understands the direction we need to go in.

A successful program is as good as the people who work for you as long as there ‘s good direction from the top. I and the other coaches are very fortunate to work with Gregg because we have great direction from the top.

Gregg Troy:

I think that you should understand that your assistant coaches have goals and you have to give them opportunities to achieve those goals. Those goals can be as varied as what those coaches’ personalities are. You need to know what those are when you’re working with them and you need to give them opportunities to succeed and move forward. I tell each of our coaches when I hire them that if they’re looking for another job, all they need to do is let me know right away and I’ll do everything I can to help them get the job.

You need to allow them to work. The biggest mistake I see head coaches make is they hire assistant coaches and don’t let them work. The three guys running practice this weekend — we have two National A Team members and two National B Team members in the water AND we’ve got some great,

outstanding age-groupers in the water right down to some B kids at the high school level — and there are three guys running what is normally four practices and they're short-handed and running around in two pools like crazy people and I didn't write them practices. I just told them what their parameters were and what direction we were going. I hired them to do a job. I'm confident they can do the job. If I wasn't, I should never have hired them.

I think sharing is a real key. You've got to share philosophies, you've got to share ideas and what direction you want to go, and you've got to make your assistants a real part of the program. I made a mistake a few years ago. When Paul Silva, an outstanding assistant coach, came to work for me, he guaranteed me 2 years. I was pretty good about giving people responsibility; I was sure I hired the right person because I'd done my research. Paul Silva walked in the morning of my wedding day. I gave him the pool keys and said, "They're yours for a week. I'll see you when I get back." Paul worked with Dave Bell, a coaching friend who offered to cover practice while I was on my honeymoon as a wedding present, while I was away. We had a great summer season that year. Later, in the middle of a Jacksonville summer, I asked Paul to run down to the local McDonald's for iced teas. He used my car, I paid for the iced teas and never thought too much about it. After practice that day, Paul said to me that he came here to coach, not to be a "go-for". It gave me a good perspective because I didn't mean it that way. I'd just as soon gone myself, so we talked that out. His view was that I wasn't making him an important part of the program.

I don't ask the assistant coach to do anything I don't want to do. I think it's a major mistake if you ask your assistants to always reel in the lane ropes. If we're reeling in the lane ropes, we all work the lane ropes. By the same token, if I ask them to pull in the lane ropes because some kid is working on

something, I expect to get it done. I'm real clear with them up front about what the responsibilities are. I tell them in no uncertain terms what they're supposed to do in a real nice way. I think we help the young coaches to be better coaches and they've helped our program be better.

Some of the things we look for in assistants and what I look for when I'm hiring people: The number one thing I look for is loyalty. I tell every person when I hire them that at any point I find out that they're not loyal to me and to the program, they're looking for another job. I think that you have to make that clear. If you don't, you've started on the wrong foot with them.

Then look for dependability. I want people who are dependable, who are going to be there when you ask them to be there, and who are going to get things done on time.

I want people who have a caring attitude. If they're not caring, not interested in the athlete, and not interested in the program, they're not going to work well in the program. They're not going to project the image in the community that I want our club to project. They're not going to project the image to the parents I want our club to project and they're going to be a problem for me and they're going to be a problem for the club.

Look for people who have a willingness to learn. I want to see coaches who come in with a "what can I learn?" attitude. I don't want them to be afraid to offer advice. I hired them to do a job. They're going to run practice and we're not going to tell them what to do. I want people who are looking for ways to

be better coaches. I've been doing this for a long time and I'm not very good at it. I'm looking for ways to get better all the time. I expect them to be looking as much as I am. I'm not worried about knowledge — well, maybe I am, but if they're willing to learn and they have those other characteristics, they're going to be great swim coaches.

Where do you look for these people? I'm not a real big believer in sending out national ads. You get a whole lot of resumes, but you can't tell much from a piece of paper. When I've hired for the program, the first place I look is locally, someone within the state who I've seen the job that they do, how they respond to people and I see the product they're putting out. Those people have more to add to your program and we've hired people from the community who knew nothing about swimming. I hired a guy who was a softball coach and he was one of the best age-group coaches I ever had. If you have to conduct a search, you need to spend some time and really get to know the people who you're going to work with. You may even want to make a trip and talk to friends in the area.

If you're really looking for great assistant coaches, you need to look no further than your former athletes because if you can convince an ex-athlete to come in and work for you, they already know the program, they know what you want, and if it's one who swam for you any amount of time, they're real loyal people.

I've been asked how we got so many good assistant coaches. I don't know. I have some great people to work with, but I'll be real honest with them and I'll do anything I can to help them. We try to tie them into the program as much as possible. I don't want them living on a shoestring unless they absolutely

have to. By the same token, I want them to understand that they're going to work for what they get.

Before Larry came to work for me, I convinced the school that I needed another full-time person because it was more than I could handle at the time. I didn't like coaching 150 kids by myself very much. You can go insane running two practices at once for five hours and making all the decisions by yourself. Having someone whom you respect and someone who does the job and you let them work, who can make value judgments on rest, on what individuals are doing that are really positive and having someone to bounce things off make coaching easier.

Having people I can depend on allows us to divide and multiply. Let me give you an example of how we divide and multiply. This summer, in our morning practice, we had 65 swimmers with Jr. National standards and above, spread out in a 50M and a 25Y pool with three of us working with them. We're working on a 1 to 20 coach to swimmer ratio. We don't divide it up like he takes 20, I take 20 and someone else takes 20, not the same 20. They're not in little groups.

I personally think our sport has gone in the wrong direction. We're so focused on this little small group, we think we're doing such a great job for them. We're inbreeding them and we're hurting ourselves. Larry might take 20 distance freestylers, I might take 20 butterflyers and someone else might have 20 breaststrokers, so the kids are constantly moved from group to group. Instead of having one set of coach's eyes watching what they're doing and looking for mistakes, we have three sets of coaches' eyes looking for mistakes. Instead of racing the same faces every day, they're racing different

people every day. Instead of getting input from one person, they're getting input from three different people. If that input ever conflicts, we emphasize to the kids that a lot of it is terminology and they should come back and ask us about it.

Part of being the head coach is someone has to call the shots once in a while. We may disagree on it and we'll sit down and talk about it and that's my job. When we share people and there are three of us working the deck of the pool, for example, my responsibility was to start with the best athletes in the group and work down. I try to make contact time with them and really work with them. Larry's job was to start in the middle and work in which ever way we felt was more important. The responsibility of the other coach was to start with the kid that was a little bit weaker athlete and make sure to make contact with him. What we ended up with over the course of the practice — there were no set numbers, no set formula, for doing this — is that I talk to 20, he talks to 20, and someone else talks to 20, and we usually overlap.

What we find is the kids in the middle are really getting a lot of attention and the kid in the end doesn't feel left out. The biggest mistake I see people do, and this is why they have problems working together, is the assistant wants to take the best athletes in the program, give them direction and help them even more. That athlete has been helped for years. The person who needs help is the person who's been missed. As the head coach, I try to go down and pick up that other end of the program.

The following are responses to questions addressed to Gregg Troy:

Our whole stress is to put the swimmers in the best situation they can be on the team, so everyone's goal is to move to the next level. That's the key goal — getting the athlete ready to move to the next level of performance, caring what the individual does, teaching them the basics of swimming, and always trying to help him improve.

I don't give them a whole lot of set parameters. I help each coach with his schedule. I do a master schedule for the whole team. Each group doesn't have its own schedule. I'll sit down with each level or Head Age-Group Coach. I'll give him some direction as to what meets I think would be best because due to crowded conditions and facilities, it's a lot better if everyone's schedule meshes. It makes training parameters a little bit easier.

We don't have any set form of evaluation. Just individual talk — one-on-one. Larry and I are pretty much on a one-to-one, day-to-day basis type thing. With the others, I sit down and real honestly tell them what their strengths and weakness are. It's a real hard thing to do. I don't think you help them if you candy coat it. You have to sit down and say what is wrong and where we're going in the wrong direction. I really encourage all the coaches to give me suggestions. If they don't give me suggestions, it becomes impossible for me to evaluate the performance of my people because I'm so close to them.

The junior level coach may be your best evaluator of your senior level group performance because he's looking at them, maybe he's even seen them train before. He gets them when you're not there, so he really sees what they are like when they have a chance to "run wild" a little bit. You hope they don't do that. That's one of our program goals. There's nothing that upsets me more

than to leave a group with an assistant coach and have them not do what they were asked to do. I think it's a very disrespectful thing and shows how poorly motivated they are because they aren't training because they want to train, they train because someone makes them train and that's the wrong reason.

We may rotate those groups the whole time. As I gave in my example, we had, basically, 20 at the Sr. National level. I took those 20 as the number one priority. I did the individual talks with the whole group and then I took those 20 for the rest of the year and made it a point to individually talk with them. I'll ask the other coaches for opinions and I want their feedback, but I probably give them a little less chance to make decisions. If we go to a meet and swim poorly, I am responsible, not them.

I did miss one thing, though. If you're the head coach, the worst thing you can do is not stand behind your assistant. I would much rather have people make bad decisions than make no decision because they're afraid to make one. And if they make a bad decision once or twice and I've got to stand up to parents, I'm not going to tell the parents that it was a bad decision. I'm going to let those parents know that I think it was a good decision; I'm glad they made it. For a coaching decision, never second guess what they do, at least not publicly. We've had some pretty good yelling matches privately.

I make it a point to walk to the other pool and just walk through and watch practice. I go to all our age-group meets even though, quite frankly, I don't want to, but I do so. I walk around, talk to parents and try to head off problems. I make a point to tell the coaches the things I see in practice. I constantly disseminate information to them in an informal manner, such as

when we go to lunch together. Maybe I'm just obsessive, but swimming is not a part-time job. If you are really interested in doing it, you've got to spend a lot of time thinking about it. So we spend a lot of time thinking about it. We might go shoot a game of pool and the pool is just a distraction long enough so you can still talk about what you're going to do training wise and make suggestions. I ask for the same suggestions from them.

I like to give the assistants new experiences and opportunities. I really try to put them in situations where they have to make decisions. I think it makes them better coaches. I've been fortunate; I was never anyone's assistant coach. I came out of college, ended up in Fort Meyers and made a whole lot of mistakes on my own. I think I learned from those mistakes more than anything else, so I put our coaches in situations where they'd make mistakes and they make mistakes and they try not to make the same ones again.

I try to get my coaches to clinics. I don't come to the world clinic lots of times — I do try to come periodically — but I would prefer to send an assistant coach.

We don't have formal coaches meetings. I figure everyone's too busy. We just can't find time to all sit down together. I ask them to give me input and I give them input. I make it a point to talk. I talk to every one of our coaches every day, even if it's only walking out for 5 minutes. The last thing I do every evening, and we've got groups in both pools, is walk around, check with each one of them and ask if they have any problems or any suggestions or anything they see. We have a staff meeting at the beginning of every season and we try to have a staff meeting at the end of every season, where everyone takes their spouse or significant other, have dinner, and kind of recap where

we're at. Nothing formal. It might be something we need to do more of now and that's something we have to evaluate because we've gotten so big.