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10 keys to unlock your coaching potential

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10 keys to unlocking your coaching potential

Over the last six months I've been inspired on a weekly basis by a gentleman who goes by the name Coach Z. Coach Z is a tennis coach who came to us highly recommended by a family friend. She told us Coach Z would not only teach our children tennis skills but life skills as well. So with three children who were moderately interested in tennis at best, I was somewhat hesitant to pay for weekly lessons. However, my wife and I decided to give Coach Z a call and set up our first lesson at our neighborhood courts.

Fast forward 6 months

My kids along with two of their friends are not the only ones who look forward to their weekly tennis lessons with Coach Z. On tennis days, I feel like a child anxiously awaiting recess, eager to watch Coach Z instruct our kids with a formula unlike any other. For me, witnessing him in action is a refreshing reminder that there ARE amazing role models for kids. In a time when there is so much pressure to win [...], Coach Z's emphasis is on teaching skills, building confidence, and crafting well-rounded citizens.

What makes him so special and how can we learn from his qualities?

1. From day 1, Coach Z keeps the kids at ease. He understands that each child is unique, and learns differently. He speaks in a calm, almost melodic tone, still demanding and receiving the respect he deserves.
2. Each lesson is peppered with skills and drills, as well as proper tennis etiquette on and off the court. Today he demonstrated the proper way to shake hands at the net. 'Gentlemen should always take off their hat while shaking hands with an opponent, especially when shaking hands with the opposite gender.'
3. Coach Z searches for connections with each child. Before, during, and after the lesson he chats with the kids about their interests other than tennis. Once he makes a connection, he won't forget it. My son recently told him he liked lacrosse. Coach Z was somewhat unfamiliar with the sport but asked my son many questions to help him better understand. Several weeks later, Coach Z showed up and asked my son if he watched the NCAA lacrosse final. Coach Z not only watched it, but shared some of the highlights.
4. With Coach Z, the well-being of our kids is always number 1. He preaches hydration, nutrition, sun protection, and overall safety each and every lesson. He not only tells them to hydrate, but also how to hydrate properly and how it effects the body. The tennis lesson will briefly become a science lesson. If it's cold he'll discuss the importance of layering and keeping an extra layer in your bag.
5. Coach Z makes sure each child is equipped with the proper gear. He would literally GIVE you a racket if you didn't have one or if your racket was damaged. He emphasizes the importance of proper footwear, hats and grips.
6. Coach Z calls conditioning a reward and makes it fun yet challenging!
7. Coach Z encourages reading and the importance of education. He often checks in with each child to see what he/she is currently reading. He'll also throw out random history, geography, and math lessons. My daughter enjoys when Coach Z goes off-topic, like the time he explained square roots and quizzed them throughout the lesson.

8. Coach Z respects each child whether a beginner or advanced. This is a HUGE reason why our kids LOVE tennis lessons.

9. Coach Z keeps tennis fun by providing a positive atmosphere, and an unlimited rolodex of drills and games. My oldest son said, 'Coach Z notices the smallest mistakes and always help us fix them. I like how he pays attention.'

10. Coach Z has an infectious, deep, hearty laugh to complement his sensational sense of humor.

I guess for me, Coach Z is remarkably inspiring because of the complete package he brings to each and every lesson. As a physical education teacher for more than 20 years, I'm always searching for ways to improve my craft. Having the honor of observing Coach Z has provided me with professional development I could not find at a conference, hear at a lecture, or read in articles and self-help literature. I am privileged and humbled by my opportunity to meet and observe this outstanding coach.

Oh, and by the way, along with everything mentioned above, my kids' skill level and knowledge of tennis has blossomed. Thanks Coach Z.