

Coaching authorization course a timely topic

Written by Mark Dukes

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Larry Lutz of Kirkwood Community College usually appears once a year on The Gym Class to talk about coaching authorization and certification procedures.

But his spot last week entailed a little more relevance than usual.

Lutz's interview was timely because of the then-breaking scandal at Penn State, in which a former assistant football coach had been accused of 40 counts of sexual abuse against young boys. It has become a tangled mess of a situation in State College, leading to the firing of Penn State legendary coach Joe Paterno, the university president and athletic director, and disciplinary action against a current assistant coach who allegedly witnessed one of the assaults.

Lutz was not on the air to talk about Penn State, but yet his expertise became very useful to the conversation.

Lutz, an Iowa football player in the 1970s, is the program director of the coaching authorization program. People interested in coaching take 55 contact hours of courses to become certified as someone who can coach athletes from elementary school through 12th grade.

It's not all X's and O's by any means.

The courses include:

- Theory & Ethics
- Youth Physical & Mental Development
- Human Body Function for Coaches

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- Prevention & Care of Athletic Injuries

“One of the prime reasons we have this is to have coaches get some kind of training to do things that are successful,” Lutz said. “Two things we emphasize are coaches doing things that don’t cause harm to athletes and ethics.”

Lutz said his seminars, conducted by many present and former area coaches, involve real-life situations. He said the Penn State situation certainly will be incorporated into the program.

Background checks and fingerprinting of coaching candidates also take place at the state and national level, Lutz said.

“We try to include a lot of scenarios and situations that will get the people talking and thinking,” Lutz said. “Coaching now goes beyond coaching. There are a lot of responsibilities that the coaches have.”

Of course, you can offer all the classes you want and make all the background checks that you will and that still will not prevent some individual from straying and corrupting young people. But at least the Kirkwood program, and others like it, addresses important issues that coaches may encounter.

(Mark Dukes is former sports editor of the Cedar Rapid Gazette. He is co-host of The Gym Class radio show weekdays from 3-4 p.m. on KGYM-AM 1600.)