Sport Social Work Journal Special Issue Part 2: Letters from Coaches

Coaches offer critical insights into the realities of working in sport in today's complex landscape. Their truths are shaped by evolving expectations, heightened scrutiny, institutional pressures, and deeply relational work with athletes. Coaching today exists in the space between athlete and system, care and performance, authority and connection. Yet coaches lived experiences are often misunderstood, oversimplified, or excluded from conversations about sport reform, well-being, and justice. This special issue invites current and former coaches to write personal letters to share their lived experiences of coaching in a complex world.

We understand storytelling as a powerful practice for challenging inequity and advancing justice in sport. Coaches' stories can explain the relational labor of coaching, including the emotional, ethical, and interpersonal work that occurs between coach and athlete, while also revealing how broader systems shape what coaching can and cannot be. We consider that letters from coaches can challenge dominant narratives about success, leadership, and control, and help organizations and others learn how to listen with care to those navigating responsibility, power, and vulnerability in contemporary sport contexts.

Submissions should center authentic coaching voices and reflect on the complexities of coaching relationships in today's sport environments. We especially welcome pieces that offer insight into how sport professionals, particularly those in social work, mental health, education, athletic support roles, and leadership/management, can better support coaches by fostering environments that offer care, accountability, and equity.

We invite submissions in the form of personal letters, narrative essays, or reflective pieces from current and former coaches. Submissions may explore, but are not limited to, the following topics:

Topics of Interest *(including but are not limited to)*:

- Coping with coaching-related stress, burnout, moral injury, or career-ending transitions.
- Being seen, heard, or ignored, within coaching roles, institutions, and support systems.
- Racial stereotypes, racism, and racialized expectations of coaches in sport.

• Navigating gender identity, sexism, misogyny, and gendered leadership norms in coaching.

• Class, precarity, and access: hidden labor, unpaid work, and economic inequities in coaching careers.

• Disability, chronic illness, and ableism within coaching roles and athletic institutions.

• Coaching within systems of power: resistance, advocacy, and pushing back against injustice.

• Joy, purpose, connection, and belonging in coaching and relational sport work

• Advice to future sport professionals and institutions: what we wish they understood about coaching.

How to Submit

Manuscript files (Microsoft Word format only) should be submitted electronically via SSWJ Portal. You can access the portal below.

CLICK HERE TO ACCESS SUBMISSION PORTAL

Each manuscript must be typewritten, double-spaced throughout, and use the "Times New Roman" font (size 12). It should also utilize one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides. The preferred page length is 1,500-2,000 words.

Each submission must state that the manuscript has not been simultaneously submitted for publication and/or published elsewhere.

Recency: Use recent information, preferably within the past 10 years. Helps ensure recommendations reflect current sport/mental-health knowledge.

Actionable recommendations: End with 2–4 recommendations or lessons for practice

No unsupported diagnosis: Coaches should avoid diagnosing athletes or making unsupported clinical claims

To ensure anonymity, the name of the author must be deleted from the manuscript's text and file properties. The submitting author must upload a separate file with a title page that includes the author's name and affiliation.