

Brent Goulet

Ability, talent and the will to win

For a long time, Brent Goulet was the "highest-ranking" American soccer coach. He was the head coach at SV Elversberg in the German Regionalliga (Third Division). Born in North Dakota, Brent played at Warner Pacific College, where he earned NSCAA All-America honors. After graduation, he played with Portland and Seattle before moving to England and AFC Bournemouth. In 1987 he began a three-year stint with the U.S. National Team. In 1990, he moved to Germany and played with a few clubs before an injury ended his playing career while at SV Elversberg. He became the assistant coach at SV Elversberg in 1998 and was promoted to head coach in 2004. Now he is attending the Sporthochschule Cologne, where he is pursuing his DFB professional coaching license.

When did you decide to become a soccer coach?

I decided when I broke my leg in November 2000, and my playing career was over. I was offered the assistant coaching position at Elversberg (Third Division).

What are the most important ingredients for a successful team?

I would say ability, talent and the will to win – attitude.

When building a team, what is the first thing you look for?

It is important to find the best players available who have some leadership ability.

Who were your coaching mentors? What was the best advice you have received from them (or anyone) in regards to coaching?

Bernie Fagan, Clive Charles, Harry Redknapp and Wolfgang Jerat. The best advice would be: "Players want to lead and be led; find that balance as a leader!"

How do you define a championship team? What are the most important aspects of a championship team?

Ask Phil Jackson or Pat Riley!

Do players come with motivation, or is that something a coach can teach?

Players had better come with motivation or they will never highly achieve and reach their potential.

What are three adjectives that best describe (in your mind) the perfect coach?

To be able to transfer knowledge to the players, who then in turn put it into practice because they can grasp it. And a great desire to see (help) their players succeed!

Does a coach need a philosophy to be successful? What is your philosophy? Has it changed over time?

Every coach has a philosophy. My philosophy is to give my very best as God has enabled me, and to trust Him with the results. No, it hasn't changed yet!

Is it important for a coach to be liked by players?

I believe so. However, in addition to being liked, there also must be respect, and the coach must have believability.

Looking back on your career, which event(s) gave you the most satisfaction?

To still be standing here in a soccer nation such as Germany after having overcome so much adversity is the most satisfying thing. (Editor's note: Goulet was released from his first head coaching job in 2008.)

Is a coach born with leadership skills, or can they be learned?

I believe that God-given abilities do develop and mature; however, I also believe the best leaders are truly gifted from God. If it is His will for you to be an effective coach, He will equip you to be such, and you will

succeed. As you know, not all coaches are effective leaders.

Can a coach create a competitor, or is that something a player brings to a team?

Back to motivation: Why even try to play at a high level if you can't compete? It is a contradiction to me. At the same time, I do believe that you can make (help) a player become a better competitor.

Can teams really learn from losing?

They'd better be able to, or they'll keep losing.

Is there a formula for success? Are there any shortcuts to success?

A formula? I believe that you can program performance. If you'll be a champion every year, that is in God's hands. Surround yourself with winners with great desire to see others succeed.

What is more important, game preparation or in-game adjustments?

They go hand-in-hand. A game is strategic, and you must be able to adjust throughout the game to either keep the advantage you have over your opponent as a result of preparation or to gain it from your opponent by strategic maneuvering.

How important is discipline on a soccer team?

Extremely important! Winning takes a team effort, and each person must have the discipline to fulfill their specific role in order to achieve victory. In many respects, much of the game boils down to the discipline. If everyone is up front trying to score in the penalty box, who is defending? Or vice versa?

How does a coach win respect from players?

Natural authority, competence, believability and righteousness.

How important is goal-setting? Team goals? Coaching goals? Win-loss goals?

Very important! No measurement means aimlessness. A team with less talent that ends up with a record of 8-12 may have had a more rewarding season than the "top" talented team with a record of 16-4! It is important to be able to keep striving, to better yourself with the right perspective.

What was the biggest mistake you have made in your coaching career?

Which one? I'd say the ones I did not learn from the first time.

How would you describe yourself as a coach?

A caring coach – a coach who cares for the well-being of the people around him.

Have you changed as a coach during your career?

Yes. I'd like to think that I now make better decisions based on knowledge I have attained over the years.

What advice would you give to coaches just starting?

I would tell them to be themselves and understand how a player thinks. Find that balance, and don't take yourself too seriously. The world does not revolve around you!

How has the game changed during your career?

I believe it has gotten faster and more technical, for one thing. And it's also more scientific, without a doubt!

How did you get involved in soccer?

Playing every chance I got on the playground. Then, one day, Jimmy Kessler asked me to come to his practice with a "real team" (on grass, too), Tacoma United, with Bill Allison. He was a father to me, bless his soul. And I did make the team!