

# The Difference Between Coaching and Programming

By: Peter Cummings, MHP, NNP

Coaching, which blends both art and science, is best defined as the ongoing-relationship between a coach and an athlete. Athletes strive to improve their performance to achieve specific goals, while coaches use their experience, knowledge, and resources to guide athletes toward those goals. This relationship is an ongoing process that cycles through Evaluation, Planning, Monitoring, Feedback, and Instruction, which together form the foundation of effective coaching.

## The Coaching Process

The words "relationship" and "process" are crucial in understanding coaching. Without an athlete, a coach isn't truly a coach. The existence of this relationship, where Evaluation, Planning, Monitoring, Feedback, and Instruction occur continuously, is what defines the coaching process. Coaching is not just about creating a program or plan; it involves personalizing that plan based on the athlete's progress and adjusting it as needed. Training rarely goes exactly as planned from start to finish, which is why adjustments, positive reinforcement, and ongoing instruction are necessary. Simply put, creating a plan alone is not coaching. In life, the plan often needs course correction.

## Structured Programs vs. Coaching

Structured training programs can benefit any rider who needs more discipline, but a plan is not coaching. Coaching is a comprehensive process that individualizes a program, ensuring the athlete reaches their optimal potential. Balancing training needs with life's demands can be challenging, and this is where an experienced coach can make a significant difference. A coach knows what "must be" accomplished to achieve

your goals and can adjust the program to stay within acceptable ranges, allowing you to manage other responsibilities while still progressing in your sport.

## My Approach to Coaching

With over thirty years as a fitness professional and coach, I have accumulated the experience, education, and knowledge necessary to help athletes achieve their goals. However, knowing these things alone isn't enough to be an effective coach. I have also developed and attained resources that allow me to conveniently interface with athletes. Through secure internet-based programming, training log systems, email, video and phone communication, I can complete the coaching process even when face-to-face contact isn't possible. The use of bike computers, heart rate monitors, and power meters further enables me to monitor workouts in detail. These tools have proven to be highly effective and convenient for both me and my athletes.

## Choosing the Right Support

If you're considering hiring a coach, look for the coaching process. If you're choosing a training plan or program, consider your available time, experience level, and current fitness. Most importantly, don't hesitate to talk to a coach to review your plan and see if it aligns with your goals. A coach must prioritize the athletes' goals as coaching success can only be defined by the results of the athlete. Consider this, fast coaches do not necessarily make fast athletes, but good coaches certainly make athletes faster.

At Plan2Peak, I go beyond just providing a training plan—I engage in an ongoing, dynamic coaching process that helps you reach your full potential. By continuously monitoring your progress and making necessary adjustments, I ensure that your training aligns with your goals and fits into your life.