



Coaching conve

Coaches are turning to the NYSCA Coaching Forum in ever-growing numbers these days to share insights and seek advice with one another, all with the common goal of doing everything they can to help ensure rewarding experiences for their young players.

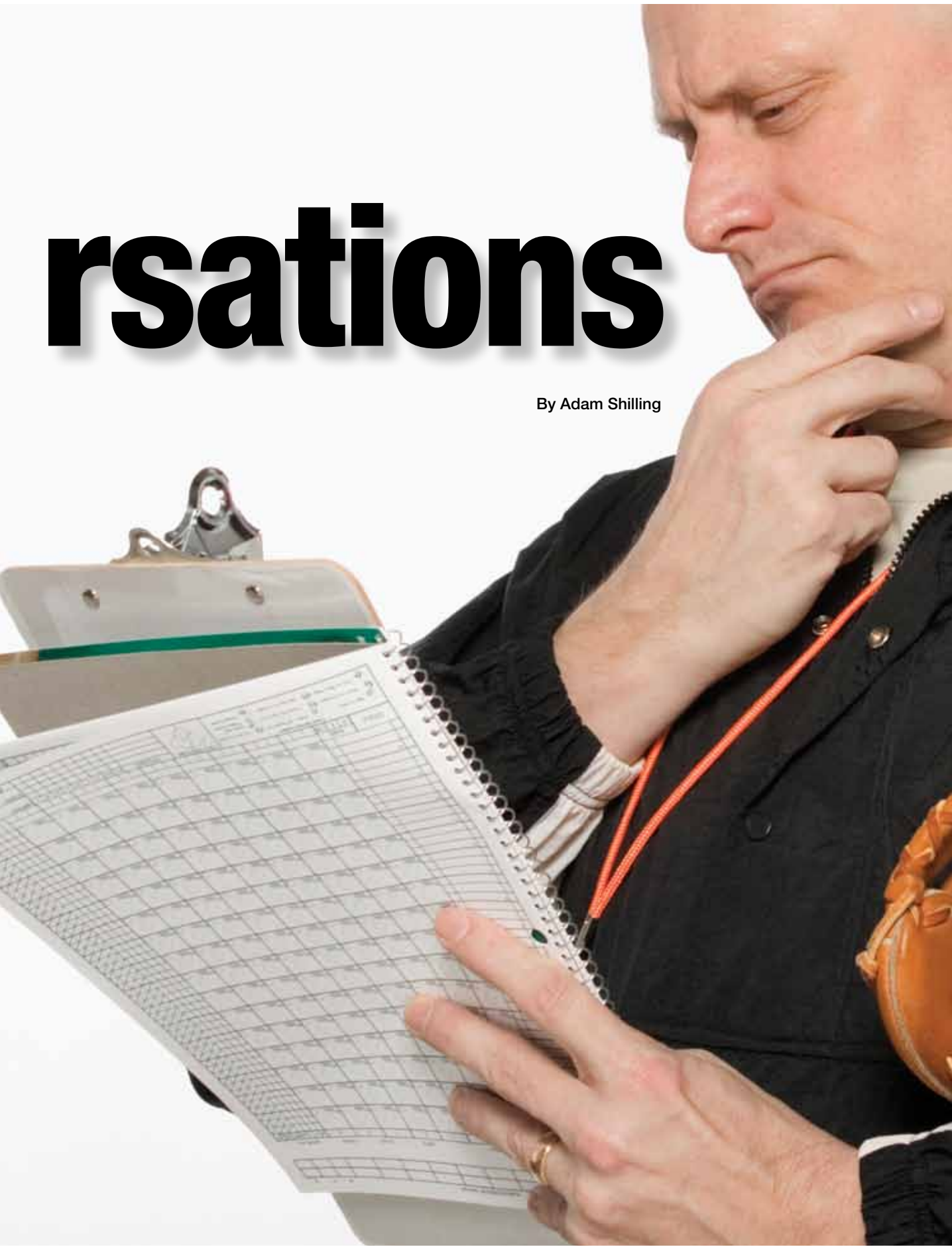
When it comes to preparing volunteer youth sports coaches for the season ahead, the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) certainly covers all the bases.

Informative training clinics, educational literature and access to virtual skills and drills are just some of the resources that National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA) member coaches can tap into.

But no matter how many hours volunteer coaches spend preparing for their role it's inevitable that they will be thrown a curveball at some point during the season that leaves them scratching their heads. To avoid striking out when an unexpected situation presents itself, NAYS provides NYSCA member coaches with access to the NYSCA Coaching Forum.

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By Adam Shilling



The Forum has become a virtual meeting place where an ever-growing number of NYSCA members are sharing information and proven solutions to common problems, as well as seeking feedback and advice from fellow volunteer youth sports coaches worldwide that have encountered similar issues during their seasons.



COVERING ALL THE BASES

A foundational belief of NAYS is that the lives of youngsters can be positively impacted by participation in sports and physical activities if the adults involved have proper training and information.

But that doesn't mean that training and education stops once the season begins.

Coaches can further prepare for their job by networking with peers at any point in the season via the NYSCA Coaching Forum.

"The coaching forum assists coaches in making adjustments or getting development tips on any sport where there are some questionable doubts," said James Scott, an NYSCA coach for the

Springfield Baptist Church Football Association in Georgia. "I've been coaching for over 15 years and my first clinic and certification was through NYSCA. Since then, I constantly log on to the forum to get coaching tips and viewpoints on issues in youth sports."

Launched in early 2009, the Forum has been providing a platform for NYSCA coaches all around the world to communicate and share experiences and insights.

The Forum is broken down into seven topic areas: General Coaching, Baseball, Football, Soccer, Basketball, Other Sports and Military Youth Sports.

Coaches can respond to ongoing conversations at any time, or start a topic of their own. With a membership base of more than 150,000, the NYSCA network is comprised of a vast array of individuals of varying levels of expertise in youth sports. With a group this large, chances are someone else has already had to deal with a problem that a coach may be facing, and has a solution to share.

"There are such a variety of coaches out there," said Ernest Meshach, an NYSCA youth baseball coach from Elgin, N.C. "Some don't know much about the inner workings of the game, but want to work with the kids in a positive activity. Some know the game inside-out, but maybe don't have the best teaching

skills. Some coach their own children because they enjoy the game and want to make sure their child learns properly. Some coach without having a child on the team, because that's what they enjoy doing."

According to Meshach, it is this diversity that makes a tool like the NYSCA Coaching Forum so useful.

"No matter how long anyone's been 'in the game' and at what levels they've played and/or coached, there are always new things that can be learned from others," he said.

Like any online forum, the NYSCA Coaching Forum allows individuals to engage one another in a semi-anonymous setting. This allows for coaches to seek the opinion and input from unbiased individuals, which can provide the perfect type of perspective needed to solve a particular problem.

"It gives us a chance to see how others are doing things and shows us that there are many different ways to achieve the same objective," said Patrick O'Connor, an NYSCA girls fast-pitch coach from Springfield, Mont. "The point of any forum is to make the entire group a more knowledgeable, more prepared group. Now, we don't expect any forum to turn Joe Youth Team Manager into Joe Torre overnight – but he can at least have the ability to pull information from those who have gone before him to make better decisions for his team."

SUPPORT SYSTEM


Between overzealous parents and ultra-competitive opposing coaches, being a youth sports coach can sometimes be a lonely job.

When frustrated about parents or coaches who may not be on the same page, coaches can turn to the Forum as an outlet to vent frustrations in an appropriate manner. Simply learning that other coaches have encountered similar issues or obstacles – and that there are methods to handling them – can help to maintain perspective during a long season.

"It's great to see the questions and also the feedback of what other coaches are doing nationally," said Bill Mitchell, an NYSCA baseball coach from East Brookfield, Mass. "My goal is always to keep an open mind to new ideas. The support system for youth sports is great and everyone loves to help, especially when you have questions and need answers to difficult scenarios."

NYSCA has members in all 50 states and on various U.S. military bases around the world. With such a large membership base, it is often easy for NYSCA members to forget that they belong to an organization full of like-minded individuals who share a common goal.

The Forum bridges that gap by providing a meeting place for NYSCA coaches from all around the world to communicate and assist each other – all for the benefit of their young players.

"It has become painfully obvious how much different kids and the world around them are in each generation; such as how things were when I started playing ball, compared to how things were when my oldest son started playing ball, compared again to how things are now that my youngest son is starting to play ball," Meshach said. "Being able to network with others makes things easier to figure out, rather than through trial and error on my own." 

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