

Guidelines For Handling 10 Common Coaching Situations

From US Youth Soccer

What follows is a series of guidelines for handling 10 common situations that occur in coaching. Research conducted with players shows that if they have coaches who follow the guidelines listed below, the players generally:

1. enjoy playing more
2. like their teammates more
3. rate their coaches as more knowledgeable
4. feel their coaches are better teachers
5. have a greater desire to play for their coaches in the future

You may agree or disagree with the guidelines. However, it is what the experts (the players) say about successful coaches.

1) How to be more positive:

- a. Give a lot of positive feedback
- b. Have realistic expectations
- c. Give positive feedback for desirable behavior as soon as it occurs
- d. Praise effort as much as you do results

2) How to react to mistakes:

- a. Give encouragement immediately after a mistake
- b. If the player knows how to correct the mistake encouragement alone is sufficient
- c. When appropriate, give corrective instruction after a mistake, but always do so in an encouraging and positive way
- d. Don't punish when things go wrong
- e. Don't give corrective instruction in a hostile or punitive way

3) How to maintain order and discipline:

- a. Maintain order by establishing clearly what is expected
- b. Involve players in formulating behavioral guidelines and work to build team unity in achieving them
- c. Strive to achieve a balance between allowing freedom and maintaining enough structure
- d. Emphasize that during a match **all** members of the team are part of the game

4) How to deal with team rule violations:

- a. Allow the player to explain his/her actions (to coach and teammates)
- b. Be consistent and impartial
- c. Don't express anger and a punitive attitude towards the athlete
- d. Don't lecture or embarrass the player
- e. Focus on the fact that a team policy has been broken, placing the responsibility on the player not you
- f. Discuss why certain rules are necessary and how violation of these rules hurts the team
- g. Focus on following through on the agreed upon consequences of a violation
- h. Don't use physical measures to punish (e.g.: running laps, doing pushups) as they become disliked and avoided. If a penalty is necessary it is better to restrict involvement in something, which is valued (e.g.: have the player sit off to the side).



5) How to get positive things to happen:

- a. Set a good example of desired behavior
- b. Encourage effort, don't demand results all the time
- c. In giving encouragement, be selective so that it is meaningful
- d. Never give "encouragement" in a sarcastic or degrading manner
- e. Encourage players to be supportive of each other. Reward them when they do so.

6) How to create a good learning atmosphere:

- a. Set a good example of desired behavior
- b. Encourage effort, don't demand results all the time
- c. In giving encouragement, be selective so that it is meaningful
- d. Never give "encouragement" in a sarcastic or degrading manner
- e. Encourage players to be supportive of each other. Reward them when they do so.

7) How to affirm your players:

- a. Set realistic goals
- b. Always give instructions positively
- c. When giving instructions, be clear and concise
- d. Show players the correct technique (by demonstrations)
- e. Be patient and don't expect or demand more than maximum effort
- f. Acknowledge and reward effort and progress

8) How to communicate effectively:

- a. Ask yourself what your actions have communicated
- b. Encourage players to express their concerns to you
- c. Be sensitive to individual needs
- d. Communicate at the time when the player is most receptive

9) How to gain respect:

- a. Establish your role as a competent and willing teacher
- b. Be a fair and considerate leader
- c. Set a good example
- d. Don't demand respect ... earn it
- a. Show all players that you care about them as individuals
- b. Don't let players leave a training session or match feeling as if they are worthless or overt losers
- c. Help players separate their personal value from their performance on a given day when they do so.

10) How to counteract parental pressures:

- a. Communicate to your players that the important thing is that they enjoy playing and develop their skills, not that they must win or be a "star"
- b. Communicate to parents that by placing excessive pressure on children, they can detract from the potential that soccer can have for enjoyment and personal growth
- c. Have a meeting with parents before the season to discuss these matters



