

Longmont Y

"Kids First, Winning Second"

Coaching Guidelines

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Before the first practice:

1. Call all of the kids and parents on your roster and introduce yourself as soon as possible. Remind them of the first practice. They may not know what day or time the practice is. Tell the parents you would like to have a short meeting (less than 20 minutes). Try to do it just before the first practice.
2. At the meeting, pass out schedules and any other handouts. This is a good time to find a team parent who can help with phone calls and organizing team functions. A team parent should have a copy of the team roster and parents' home and work numbers. The team parent should help make calls if practice is cancelled to remind participants of when pictures are scheduled. The team parent should take leadership in coordinating and delegating responsibilities for team functions such as a team party, thank you cards, and acknowledgments for coaches, etc.
3. Let your parents know your expectations of them and find out what they expect from you. If the expectations are unrealistic, now is the time to address them. Get a list of parents' names and work numbers and emergency contact names and numbers.
4. Indicate how important practice time is. It can be negative for a child and the team when a player arrives at a game without the necessary information and preparation to be a successful member of the team. Let's not set the children up for failure.
5. Arrange for a parent who will be at every practice to help with drills, lavatory duty or gym supervision.
6. If you need an assistant or a backup, now is the time to find them.

First Practice:

1. LEARN EVERYONE'S NAME....FAST (using name tags if necessary).
2. The number one reason kids drop out of programs is because they do not feel connected to the team. It is your job to create team unity and encourage new friendships from the start. Make sure the kids who know each other are separated and mixed with kids they do not know.
3. They will be excited at the beginning of practice. It is okay to start warming up and do some light running before you talk with them.
4. Be organized. Have your practice planned out in detail. Go over the practice plan with your assistants before the practice.
5. Make sure every child present is on your roster. If not, then they are not on your team. Please call the Sports Director as soon as possible if there are problems. Friends and neighbors may not participate in practices or games. Only the Sports Director may add a player to your roster.
6. Do not forget to spend time warming up and stretching. Remember, we are trying to develop good fitness habits now, rather than later.
7. Remember your objectives. Participating in sports helps to increase the self-esteem of the players and develop character in youth. When you explain a drill or make a statement to a player, think of it as a self-esteem drill or a character development statement.

Before the Game:

1. Before the first game, arrive early.
2. Decide who is playing in each quarter/inning beforehand, be prepared to make adjustments.
3. Determine any necessary volunteers, and fill out proper line up sheets if applicable.
4. The performance of most players will increase if competition pressures can be reduced. A brief pre-game talk gives you the opportunity to put the importance of the game in its proper perspective. Remind the players of the skills they have been practicing and have them to concentrate on performing these skills rather than worrying about what their opponents will do. Emphasizing the need to think and play as a team and not to criticize teammates. Above all, stress the importance of behaving properly at all times, not arguing with officials and having fun.

During the Game:

1. Relax and enjoy, remember we are having fun, to be a good coach you do not always have to give advice. It is okay to spend some time smiling and being supportive.
2. Be enthusiastic and compliment players on good performances. Remember, everyone on your team deserves encouragement, not only the best players.
3. Substitute players allowing everybody to play at least half of the game regardless of the score.
4. Make sure no player plays the entire game.
5. When players come out of the game, first try to say something positive about their performance, and then give them ideas and suggestions for improvements.
6. Do not focus on what a player is doing wrong, focus on what you would like them to do right.
7. Make sure children not participating in the game are supervised. This is a good task for an assistant coach or team parent. Remind them that they can learn a lot by watching their teammates.

At Half Time:

1. Calmly review what went well and what could have been better in the first half, and then discuss the improvements that players should make in the second half.
2. Avoid focusing on players mistakes or blowing their mistakes out of proportion. This is just a friendly game being conducted by your neighborhood YMCA.
3. Be optimistic, encouraging and keep your decisions simple.
4. Avoid sarcastic or negative comments about members of your team, the other team or officials.
5. Water, Water, Water!!

After the Game:

1. Always congratulate the other team and thank them for their participation.
2. Talk to your team about the positive things that happened during the game, regardless of the result of the game.
3. Now is not the time to discuss problems with opposing coaches or officials. They do not work for you. Their employer is the League Director to which all problems should be directed.
4. Team circle discussion about the game. The discussion can focus on the following questions:
 - Did everyone have a good time today?
 - What went well for the team today?
 - Did we have a good attitude toward the other team?
 - Did we have a good attitude toward the officials?
 - What can we do better next time?
 - What do we need to work on in practice?
 - In what ways were we caring, honest, respectful and responsible?
5. Help us clear the playing area of people connected with your team so the next game may get underway or the staff can clean up.

Suggestions for player problems:

1. If you are having any type of problems with a player, it is your job to communicate the problem to the parents(s) immediately. Most of your problems are solved just by making the parents aware. Adopt a philosophy of stopping small problems before they become large problems.
2. If you discipline a player in practice (i.e. having them sit by the side for 5 minutes) always indicate what behavior was unacceptable and what behavior is more appropriate.
3. If behavior problems become frequent, ask a parent if they would please attend the whole practice/game, so that they can deal with the problem and you can then focus on the other players.
4. If your efforts with the parent seem to be ineffective, notify your Sports Director for further support.

Cancellations/Weather:

1. In case of inclement weather or wet field conditions, please call the Y cancellation Line at 720-652-4736 for the most current conditions.
2. The first rainout will be made up regardless of when it occurs. Coaches will be notified of subsequent rainout makeup dates.
3. Weather can be full of unpredictability i.e., wind, rain, lightening. If during a game there is severe weather please continue with CAUTION. We are more concerned with safety of all participants than completing a game. Discuss concerns with other coaches/umpires or site supervisor. It is not our policy to cancel games because of excess heat or a little rain or cold weather. Please call the game cancellation line if you are unsure.
4. Lightning – No games will be played when there are visible lightening strikes within three miles of the field.

5. Rain or Snow – Games can be delayed or cancelled as a result of rain. Games will be delayed or canceled until they can be safely resumed.
6. High Winds – Safety, comfort and ability to play will govern these situations.
7. Parents are encouraged to make individual decisions for their own child when outdoor weather elements become a concern, as to whether or not to attend any particular game if the game is not officially cancelled.

Extra Reminders:

1. Remember, if the school you use for practices/games is closed due to the weather, your practice/game is cancelled.
2. If you must cancel practice call your team members or parents and please inform the front desk at the YMCA as soon as possible so we can answer any questions.
3. Administrative questions or comments are handled by the Sports Director. As you might expect, game days are quite hectic. Try to contact the Sports Director on a non-game day if it is possible.

WORKING WITH THE PARENTS

Coaching a youth league team is exciting and rewarding. But from time to time you may experience difficulty with parents. Some may want their children to play more, or they might question some of your judgments as a coach. This is normal, so don't feel that you are alone if this happens. Here are a few thoughts to remember when working with parents.

1. Build relationships with your parents. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children who are involved. Encourage parents to communicate with you. It is always best to get concerns out in the open.
2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease.
3. No coach can please everyone. Do not try. Give the parents a response to their concerns but do not feel like you need to give a lengthy justification for every decision you make.
4. Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the players and the team.
5. Resist unfair pressure. You are the coach, and it is your responsibility to make the final decision.
6. Most important, be fair. If you treat all players equally, you will gain their respect.
7. Handle any confrontations one-to-one, and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Do not argue with a parent. Listen to their viewpoint and thank them for it, then give them your response. Remember you do not work for them; you work for the Sports Director. If they have an issue that you cannot resolve, refer them to the League Director.
8. Ask parents not to criticize their (or other) children during a practice or game. Do not let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
9. Do not blame the players for their parent's actions, if negative. Try to maintain a fair attitude.

Always remember that you are working with all types of children and parents with different backgrounds and ideas. One of your main challenges as a coach is to work with these differences in a positive manner so that the team's season will be an exciting and enjoyable experience for all.

WORKING WITH OFFICIALS

Youth Sports Officials are usually parents, other coaches, and high school or college students. Some of these people are volunteers who learn how to officiate through practical experience. Coaches should try to be sympathetic rather than critical of the official's role. If you see that mistakes are being made, try not to embarrass the official by pointing out errors in front of everyone. A better approach is to wait until half time or until the game is over thank the person for officiating the game, and then express your observations. Most officials want to improve and appreciate constructive criticism given in a positive and respectful manner. Should an official not want to speak with you, please respect their wishes and direct your comments to the Sports Director.

PARENTS ORIENTATION OUTLINE

Welcome 3-5 minutes

1. Welcome- introduce yourself and tell them a little bit about yourself, then ask them to introduce themselves.
2. Thanks to everyone for coming – emphasize that parental support will be a key to the child's success.

Philosophy 5-8 minutes

1. Share the "everybody plays, everybody wins philosophy". Address the importance of participation and the things the parents can do to help de-emphasize winning.
2. Explain the key concepts of character development, fun and fitness. Talk to them about your coaching style.
3. Emphasize family involvement.
4. Emphasize respect for participants, coaches, and officials and things the parents can do to support this.

Expectations 5-8 minutes

1. Tell them what team members should wear and what equipment they should bring
2. Review practice time and locations. Emphasize that practice time is limited, scheduling is tight and the importance of being on time.
3. Provide information about goal setting with parents and children (relate it to self improvement and family involvement)
4. Discuss the opportunities for volunteer help (assistant coach, values coach, timekeeper, team parent)
5. Get names and phone contacts for emergencies
6. Re-emphasize that parents must drop-off and pick-up participants on time.

Questions and Answers 3-5 minutes