



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

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Top 20 tips for successful coaching



Time and time again we hear athletes comment on the impact their coaches have had on them as athletes and people. No other role within sport can influence as greatly as that of a coach on an athlete.

Understanding this influence is vital to the coach.

The question is: how will you be remembered as a coach by your athletes?

The following tips provide some direction for coaches to increase their chance of having the greatest impact possible on their junior athletes.

Are you really ready?

You may think you are ready to coach but are you really ready to coach?

Coaching is so much more than just turning up and letting your athletes run around for an hour. As a coach you must be ready to deliver training sessions and game days that reflect the needs of the athletes. If you're not asking yourself "What is the best thing I can do for my athletes?" then maybe you're not ready to coach at the moment.

Coaching teams in the heat of competition can be very emotional and a good coach needs to be able to control their emotions. Are you "cool" under pressure? This is a vital skill and can be developed. Remember as a coach you are "a leader" and people look to you as a role model.

Know yourself as a coach

- Ask yourself "Why am I coaching?"
- Understanding your personal coaching philosophy is important. This understanding will allow you to be consistent in the way you deliver your coaching.
- Are you a coach who wants to develop the skills of young people and ensure they enjoy participating in sport?
- Or are you more the "I want to win" type of coach?

Both thoughts are fine, although the type of team you should coach may differ. If you are an "I want to win" type coach then maybe the under 8s aren't for you!

Know your athletes

Ask your athletes:

- "Why are you playing this sport?"
- "What do you want to achieve this season?"

You will probably be surprised by the answers so make sure you listen carefully.

It is essential that you feel comfortable in addressing the needs and goals of the team.

If they are a group of athletes wanting to socialise with their friends and enjoy themselves but you are a win at all costs type of coach then you are in for a very long season.

Become accredited

Becoming an accredited coach will provide you with the skills and the confidence to enjoy the season and make a significant positive impact on your athletes. Access the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) that is in place to support the education and development of coaches. Contact your State Sporting Association (SSA) for information regarding sport-specific courses.

Maintain your accreditation and update your knowledge

Coaching is an ever-changing beast. It is essential that you continue to update your knowledge by maintaining your accreditation and attending regular training courses that will assist your coaching development. There are also many good quality resources available online through the Australian Sports Commission and your SSA.

Be familiar with your sport's Codes of Behaviour

Your specific sport should have developed Codes of Behaviour for its coaches. These provide a set of guidelines that when followed will provide a safe and positive environment for athletes to participate in. If your sport doesn't have Codes of Behaviour, then visit www.dsr.wa.gov.au for a generic set.

Be well versed in your responsibilities in and on child protection

There is nothing more important than the safety of our children.

In Western Australia it is legislated for through the Children and Community Services Act 2004.

Please refer to Booklet 26 The Law and Sport for more details.

More information about safe environments for children and young people can be found at www.dsr.wa.gov.au/safe-clubs-4-kids

Involve your parents

It is essential to involve parents from the outset to increase the chance that they will provide assistance throughout the season. This assistance could come in the form of help during your coaching sessions and game day or simply as support of your positive philosophies.

From the very outset:

- Encourage any help and support they are willing to provide
- Call a meeting to explain your coaching philosophy and expectations for the season
- Encourage parents to support this philosophy and expectations
- Encourage them to positively encourage their children
- Demonstrate that you are prepared to listen to their concerns and issues
- Highlight that the development of their child is a team effort.

Be as patient as a saint

Whether you are coaching the under 8s or the under 21s all coaches require the patience of a saint. Guiding a group of athletes through the development of skills is at the best of times challenging. However, it can also be very rewarding.

If you feel your patience wearing thin, just stop, take a breath, rethink the situation and then either continue or try another tack. Remain cool.

If this is an ongoing issue for you, find an experienced coach that can provide you with a few more tips.

Respect players, officials, coaches and spectators

The successful delivery of sport is a group effort. Coaches are very public role models and they must always be seen to be respectful in their conduct with players, spectators, officials and other coaches.

Failing to plan is planning to fail

Even the most experienced coach needs to plan. Planning increases the chance that the session will run smoothly and effectively and it also increases the chance that sessions will be sequential throughout the season.

Maximum participation

If athletes are going to improve then they have to practice – a lot.

Introducing practices and activities that involve small groups and lots of equipment assists in helping athletes develop skills and strategies more quickly. Time spent waiting in long lines is time wasted.

Keep on improving!

Improving as a coach is more than just attending courses and becoming accredited. Self-evaluation is an essential skill. Following coaching sessions ask yourself:

- What were some of the good things I did during the session?
- What are some things I can improve on?
- What did my athletes achieve?

The answers to these questions will guide you to make adjustments to your coaching.

Also, look to be mentored by another experienced coach. Asking more experienced coaches to watch your sessions and provide feedback is a very powerful way to continue your improvement.

Be inclusive

If you have ever coached you know that the difference in skill levels within your team can be significant. An inclusive coach is one that adapts and modifies activities and games to ensure that the greatest opportunity is given for all athletes to participate regardless of their age, gender, disability, skill level or ethnic background.

Set boundaries

One of the greatest fears we find with beginning coaches is the concern that they won't be able to 'control' their athletes in an environment without walls. One of the ways to overcome this is to ensure you set boundaries for your athletes to work within.

Where appropriate, use field or court markings or coaching markers to indicate the area you would like athletes to complete the activities within. Just doing this simple task will make your coaching sessions so much easier to control.

Observe and demonstrate more

Coaches love to talk. However, there is usually a lot of time when they need to stand back, let their athletes practice and just observe what is going on.

What should you be observing?

- Look for ways to increase participation within the group
- Are there any faults with the activity or technique as indicated by the struggle of athletes?
- Is one particular athlete struggling that needs your help?
- Are athletes following the instructions you gave them or do you need to repeat the explanation?

There are also times when athletes need to focus on their practice in peace and quiet.

- Remember that over 60 per cent of any message comes from body language. Make your actions match your words and where possible show things rather than explaining them.

When you are ready to explain a drill, skill or tactic, try to demonstrate it rather than just talk it through. It will usually be faster to do and there is much better chance your athletes will understand what is required

- Keep the coaching points to a minimum. Athletes usually only remember one to three points so after that you are wasting your breath
- And while you are at it, remember to listen. Athletes can provide a huge amount of information on how effective your coaching is.

Provide feedback in a sandwich

Feedback is an excellent way to learn and develop and there are ways to deliver your feedback so it is more effective for your athletes.

When providing feedback to your athletes, use the 'sandwich' approach.

Layer the corrective feedback with a positive comment either side. For example, "That is great body position, make sure you extend your arm after you have shot, keep up the effort".

The athlete now has useful information and they feel good about their efforts.

Understand the risk?

It is essential that a coach provides a safe environment for their athletes to train and compete in.

At the beginning of the session, check the area you will be training in. Look for anything that may cause an injury (e.g. rocks, glass, unprotected goal posts, fences etc.).

Also, ensure that the drills/games you deliver are safe.

Ensure protective equipment is used (shin guards, mouthguards etc.).

During the session, keep the area clear of loose equipment that players may trip on.

Know your first aid or know someone who does.

At the very least, ensure there is a basic first aid (including ice) available at all training sessions and games.

Know you are doing a great service

Sometimes coaching can be hard. There may be times when you just want to walk away because things aren't happening the way you want them to.

Hold on and remember that despite it all, if you have followed the above steps, you are making a significant, positive, long-term impact on your athletes.

In the end, when you reflect on the season, the good times will far outweigh the bad.

Resources

There are many resources developed for coaches at the club level.

Consider doing an accredited coaching course.

Visit

www.ausport.gov.au/participating/coachofficial

www.dsr.wa.gov.au/coaching

Other resources

This resource is part of a series which provides assistance to Western Australian sport and recreation clubs and organisations to become better managed, more sustainable and to provide good quality services to members and participants.

Other resources in the series include:

1. Starting a new club
2. Planning for your club – the future is in your hands
3. Taking the lead! A guide for club presidents
4. The club secretary – the key to efficiency
5. Show me the money – a guide for the club treasurer
6. Effective club meetings – a guide for the chairperson
7. Making meetings effective – a short guide
8. Delegation – help for the overworked committee member
9. Problem solving – a guide for clubs
10. Promoting your club
11. Seeking and servicing a sponsor
12. Establishing your club rules
13. Risky business – a club guide to risk management
14. Clubs' guide to volunteer management
15. Member protection for clubs
16. How to be an inclusive club
17. Passport into schools – linking sports with schools
18. Youth sport – junior sport policy
19. Long-term involvement – junior sport policy
20. Physical growth and maturation – junior sport policy
21. Sport pathways – junior sport policy
22. Forming links – junior sport policy
23. People making it happen – junior sport policy
24. Quality coaching – junior sport policy
25. Making sport safe – junior sport policy
26. The law and sport – junior sport policy
27. Top 20 tips for officials
28. Top 20 tips for successful coaching

You will find the full series of the booklets on Sport and Recreation (WA)'s website:

www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubs