

Coach's Manual



Introduction

Coaches, more than anyone, affect the experience of the youth players that we serve. Good coaching includes developing character and providing guidance for the players as well as the efficient teaching of fundamentals and team play. Players look to their coach as a role model, you never know when a child is watching, so always set a good example when at the fields. Coaches should treat the least talented player as you would the star of the team. Your job is to help build a love for the game in each player.

Successful Coaching Philosophies

1. **Prioritize Practice Time:** Know how much time you have for practice and have a plan for your time. Include a warm up, fundamental skills, plays, and a discussion of the good things you saw in practice. (Look at our Sample practice plan.) Write down your practice plan, this way you have something to reference to keep you on track. You can also give this to an assistant if you cannot be there.
2. **Limit Players Standing Around:** Keeping the kids moving will limit the need for discipline. Get parents to help with drills so player get more reps.
3. **Fundamentals, Not Calisthenics:** Most of the conditioning that kids need at this age can be achieved while working on skills. There should be no need to dedicate a chunk of practice purely to running.
4. **Don't Recreate the Wheel:** Research offensive and defensive schemes that have already been done. Find one system and master it. Put a spin on it once you have it down.
5. **Limit Your Playbook:** Stress getting proficient at a core group of plays, typically 5-8 base plays is enough, with a few formation changes. "I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times." – Bruce Lee
6. **Positive Correction:** Praise is more effective than criticism. The only criticism you give to a player should be constructive. This way you are showing them how to get better without destroying their confidence. If they lose confidence they will lose the love of the game. Make sure you say something positive about each player on your team at every game and practice. Sometimes it may be hard to find specific things to say about each player. Even if it is warming up really well, or playing even though they were tired – find something to praise.

Pre-Season Organization

1. **Call Your Team Parents:** We always ask that your first contact with parents should be a phone call. This way you can make sure you get in touch with each parents, and you will find out quickly if any contact information has changed. (If you find that a number you are given is no longer in service, please let the Sports Coordinator know so we can find you a new number.) Set aside 30 minutes within a week of the coach's meeting to sit down and call each parent. Your conversation should be short: Introduce yourself, let them know about camp day and your practice schedule, and answer any questions they may have.
2. **Coach's Meeting:** We have a meeting with all coaches to go over Y rules and expectations. If you have assistant coaches you should have a pre season meeting with them as well so that everyone knows their role before the season starts.
3. **Secure Practice Time:** Whether you want to talk to parents first, or you already have practice set, please let the YMCA know when and where you will be practicing during the season. This way we will know who to contact if any cancellations need to be made. 3-4 year olds practice 30 minutes each week. 5+ year olds get one hour long practice per week.
4. **Team Meeting and Parent Letter:** You will be given time during camp day to have a team meeting, you can do so before, during or after your scheduled camp time. Create a Parent Letter (examples can be found on the Coach's Corner Page) and email it to the parents/guardians prior to the meeting. That way parents/guardians can be prepared with any questions for you and can save a little time. Also have printouts available in case they didn't check their email (if you need a place to print, email them to sports@cheyennemca.org and the Y will print them for you.)
5. **Create Your Playbook:** Determine what plays you want to run throughout the season and write them down. Make a copy for your assistant coach. You can make copies for your team as well if you decide to.

Practice Organization

Practice organization will determine if your team uses their full potential or not. Have a plan (examples can be found on the Coach's Corner Page). Successful youth coaches spend most of their time on fundamental technique and scheme execution. Conditioning should happen within drills, not as its own segment of practice. Put your players in situations where they are having fun while learning and they will get all the conditioning they need. If you have a player who is particularly struggling, get an assistant (or parent) to work with them away from the group. This way the rest of the team won't lose focus and each child still gets the help they need.

Fit and Freeze

This should be a major part of your practices, it is the best way for your players to learn and understand what they need to do. Players tend to be very tentative until they feel comfortable with their assignment. Walk your players through the play. Call out the count (shift, down, ready, set, go, snap). 1- Players take their first step and freeze, check that they are in the proper position. 2 - Players take the second step and freeze, check again. Continue until the play is complete. Next bring it up to walking through the play, jogging, and finally full speed.

Components of a Good Practice:

1. Warm-Up
2. Individual fundamentals
3. Water breaks
4. Individual offense and defense
5. Team offense and defense.

Managing Parents

Parents can be your greatest ally or your greatest pain. If you communicate well most parents will be allies. If parents know they can talk to you about any issues and you keep the lines of communication open, most problems should be easily resolved.

Here are some recommendations that help minimize parent issues.

1. Conduct a pre-season meeting and explain your coaching philosophy, technique, and remind them that they are in a non-competitive league and every player will play at least half of each game.
2. Compose a parent letter with your coaching philosophy, discipline strategy, and equipment requirements.
3. Start and end practices on time and ask the same of them. We all have things in our lives other than football to take care of.
4. Ask for help in counting plays to make sure each player gets equal time.
5. At the end of practice, after you make your closing statements, remind your players to thank their parents for the opportunity to play.

Team Meeting

A pre-season meeting is essential to establish communication, set expectations, and give parents confidence in you as a coach. Both parents and the player should be at this meeting if possible, this way you won't have to repeat yourself another time.

1. Introduction: Let them know your experience with coaching. If you have none, tell them about the research you have done and make sure they know you are dedicated to your team and their player.
2. Y Philosophy - Double Goal Coaching: "Coaching for Winning and Life Lessons" - Strive to win and work to prepare your team to play at their highest level while at the same time teach life lessons (teamwork, dedication, sportsmanship, coming back from mistakes, etc.) to your players.
 - a. Honor the Game: ROOTS - Rules - Opponent - Official - Teammates - Self
 - b. Redefine Winning: Give maximum effort, continue to learn and improve, and deal with mistakes.

- c. **Filling the Emotional Tank:** Players with full emotional tanks have more fun and perform better. Use a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative words and actions to keep tanks full.
3. **Communication:** Discuss how you plan to communicate and how often so that parents don't feel like they are in the dark. Also, make sure you have the most up to date contact information and any alternate phone numbers you may need.
4. **Expectations:** This goes for both players and parents. Let them know when you expect them to show up for practices and games. Go over conduct with parents and let them know that if they get out of hand they may be asked to leave the game.
5. **Equipment:** Let parents know what they are required to provide (athletic shorts or pants, athletic shoes, mouth guard). They will not be allowed to play if they do not have their mouth guard.
6. **Volunteers:** Let them know where you will need help. Introduce any assistant coaches you may have. Set up a snack schedule for the season.

Coaching Guidelines

1. Coaches do not make YMCA policy, they carry it out.
2. If the head coach is unable to attend practice they are responsible for making sure a competent assistant is able to run practice and has a practice plan.
3. **Sidelines:** Coaches are responsible for the conduct of themselves, their assistants, their players, and their spectators. If anyone is acting out of hand, referees will talk to the head coach to disarm the situation.
4. Refrain from the use of tobacco on playing or practice fields. All of the locations that we play are drug free zones.
5. Accept decisions of the official and know they are calling the game to the best of their ability.
6. Do not criticize the opposing team, its players, coaches, or fans. If you have a serious concern, bring it to the sports coordinator or field supervisor.
7. Together with game officials, be jointly responsible for the conduct and control of the team, fans, and spectators. Any fan who becomes a nuisance and is out of control shall be asked to leave.