

Catholic Elementary School Coaching Guidelines

The Diocese of Covington



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St. Joseph Parish & School Booster Organization
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THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COACH

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The coach has the greatest responsibility as well as the greatest opportunity to guide and influence the student athlete. Catholic school coaches assume the role of teacher, mentor and minister to the athletes in their charge. A Catholic school coach's attitude and spirituality are critical to modeling good Catholic faith-based sportsmanship, both in word and deed. The careful selection of coaches is vital if the athletic program is to reflect the mission and philosophy of the school's interscholastic athletic program. Criteria for the selection of coaches must include:

- o The ability to model Catholic values
- o The ability to articulate and model the school's mission and philosophy and goals of the program
- o The ability to responsibly supervise and instruct the youth in his/her care
- o An understanding of the basics of the sport to be coached
- o The ability to develop the potential, confidence and skills of each athlete
- o The ability to separate winning from the important goals and values of the program

After a recommended careful screening and selection process, coaches are appointed by the athletic board/committee/director or by the athletic director with the approval of the pastor and/or the principal. Head coaches should be 21 years of age, and they all must submit all of the necessary documentation and training. Before coming into contact with any children, all paid and volunteer coaches must:

- o Review the 2007 Policies and Procedures for Addressing Sexual Misconduct manual
- o Complete and submit the 2007 Policies and Procedures for Addressing Adult Sexual Misconduct Acceptance Form
- o Complete and submit the volunteer application form used for background checks
- o Attend Virtus training
- o Read and sign the coach's code of conduct
- o Receive approval from the Virtus coordinator

Each school should conduct its own coach training program prior to the start of the sport season as a means of making sure each coach understands his/her responsibility as an extension of the school, the staff, and the religious tradition of the parish community. In addition, the school should make arrangements for coaches to attend a formal clinic or in-service in their particular sport. The benefits of sending coaches to a professional organization that focuses on appropriate teachings and principles of effectively leading youth sports programs are extremely significant. It is recommended that the coaches are certified by a national governing body or a national coaching program in the sport they coach. In addition, it is recommended that coaches receive training in first-aid, CPR, and on blood-borne pathogens.

COACH'S CODE OF ETHICS

The Coaches Council of the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has established the following Code of Conduct to which coaches at all levels are to be held accountable:

- o Have the knowledge and preparation to effectively lead your teams
- o Be responsible to ensure that the health, well-being and development of your athletes take precedence over the win/loss record
- o Accept that you serve as role models and there must be congruency between your actions and words
- o Provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for practices and competition
- o Exemplify honesty, integrity, fair play, and sportsmanship regardless of the impact that might have upon the outcome of the competition

- o Maintain a professional demeanor in your relationship with athletes, officials, colleagues, administrators and the public and treat them with respect and dignity
- o Be committed to the education of athletes and encourage academic achievement
- o Follow current safe training and conditioning techniques
- o Exhibit sound injury and risk management practices
- o Demonstrate an understanding of growth and development stages of your athletes
- o Place the athlete's needs and interests before your own
- o Remember that competition should be a healthy and enjoyable experience for all

COACH'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Coaching is not just about winning games. In fact, winning is a very small component to the job. Successful coaches help athletes master new skills, enjoy competition with others, and help young athletes feel good about themselves. Successful coaches are not only well versed in the techniques and skills of their sport. They also understand how to effectively teach those skills through age appropriate exercises and drills. Most importantly however, successful coaches go far beyond teaching athletic techniques by teaching and modeling skills needed for successful living in our society. Below is a list of major responsibilities and behaviors that all coaches should adhere to:

- o Act in Accordance with Catholic Character
Coaches are expected to model Catholic sportsmanship knowing that the school is judged more by the coach's sportsmanship than by their record. The coach must instill and guide the team members with a sense of fair play and model winning and losing in a respectful, courteous and gracious Catholic manner. Each team activity should begin and end with a prayer.
- o Model Superior Sportsmanship, Humility, and Graciousness, both in Victory and Defeat
Coaches should never instruct or encourage student athletes to violate either the spirit or the letter of the rules of the sport or of the league. It is unacceptable for coaches to "run up" the score on inferior opponents. Coaches are expected to substitute players when the opposing team is significantly behind. Coaches must show respect for game officials and opponents at all times; publicly shaking hands with the officials and the opposing coach before and after a game gives clear witness to this respect. All coaches must refrain from public protest that may lead to similar behavior from students, parents or other spectators.
- o Properly Supervise Student-Athletes
Rarely, if ever, should athletes be left unsupervised. In the event of a serious emergency, the coach should attempt to get another adult to supervise the team. If this is not possible, athletes may have to be left alone for a reasonable period of time, providing that the athletes have been instructed on what to do in the coach's absence. Clear expectations of behavior in emergency situations should be reviewed with the athletes. In addition, coaches must be physically and mentally present when supervising athletes. Being preoccupied, completing unrelated tasks, using cell phones, texting, or engaging in conversation with others does not allow adequate supervision.
- o Adhere to Professional Conduct
The coach is responsible for student conduct and behavior during practices and games. Under no circumstances should coaches tolerate words that demean other players (name-calling, taunting, etc). Likewise, any action that is physically dangerous, for example deliberately trying to injure an opponent during a game, is absolutely prohibited. Coaches must strive to be fair and unbiased in their relationships with student athletes and their parents. Coaches must also strive to faithfully and fairly adhere to the guidelines for "playing time" for each student athlete, giving each athlete an appropriate opportunity to participate. It is expected that coaches emphasize the development of self-confidence, self-discipline and sportsmanship, and that they make team participation a learning experience for all.

- o Possess Basic Knowledge in Skills, Tactics, and Strategies
It is to be expected that coaches are knowledgeable of the rules of the sport and techniques for teaching the fundamentals of the sport. They should use tactics and strategies that are appropriate for the age and skill levels of their athletes. Winning takes secondary importance to the athletic, social, and emotional development of all those involved. Coaches should teach the rules of the sport and develop each player's skills within the framework of a team concept.
- o Possess Basic Knowledge in Training, Nutrition, and Injury Prevention
Proper physical conditioning of the student athletes must be emphasized. All practices should begin with stretching and warm-up exercises and end with cool down activities. Water must be made available to all participants, and coaches should allow athletes to take as many water breaks as needed. Coaches should be cautious when allowing injured players to return to competition – consider clearance by a physician or certified trainer.
- o Comply with Established Policies, Philosophies, and Procedures
All coaches must adhere to and support the local interscholastic athletic mission and philosophy statements, as well as all local and league policies and guidelines. Coaches should attend various information meetings to become familiar with these prior to assuming coaching responsibilities. In addition, all coaches are expected to publicly support the pastor, school's administration, athletic director, and/or athletic committee.
- o Possess a Basic Understanding of Risk Management Procedures
Coaches are responsible for the safety and welfare of the team. Coaches must insure the proper use of the facilities where practices and games are held. Coaches practicing at parish/school facilities should understand the proper procedures for entering and securing the building. Coaches should be familiar with the School Emergency Plan and periodically rehearse the plan with the team. Coaches must carry with them pertinent information on every athlete in their care in case of an emergency. The emergency card should list obvious problems such as asthma, heart problems and diabetes. The card should also specify allergies, including bee stings and foods, as well as list of emergency phone numbers for each athlete. A FIRST AID Kit should be at all games and practices. However, coaches should never administer medication. Coaches must document all injuries by filling out an accident report and/or other necessary paperwork with the school office.
- o Possess Basic Athletic Administration Skills
Coaches should keep a written documentation of accidents and injuries and notify the parents and the school administration when these occur. While it may be impossible to document every injury and its source, an honest effort to document and notify parents and the school administration in a timely manner is important for the safety and well-being of the student athletes. Coaches should keep objective and factual written documentation of problems concerning student athletes' attitude and/or behavior. These records are important when discipline matters might lead to the suspension and/or expulsion of a student from the program. It is important for coaches to communicate the schedule of practices and games (or any cancellations or alterations to the schedule) in a timely manner. Coaches cannot assume that players will get an oral message home; written communication, including emails, is highly encouraged.
- o Understand Appropriate Disciplinary Procedures
Coaches must discipline inappropriate student behavior or disrespect. However, coaches should never resort to physical or verbal abuse or profanity. Every coach needs to understand the difference between punitive touching (physical discipline) and corrective touching (correcting an athlete's hold on a ball or bat); one is prohibited while the other is not. Coaches should also take caution in how and when they make physical contact with an athlete so that the action is never misinterpreted in a sexual manner.

Coaches are prohibited from the following:

- To use inappropriate, abusive or vile language, or to engage student athletes in inappropriate conversations unrelated to the sport
- To berate and harass officials, opposing coaches, or personnel from other schools
- To undermine the authority of the pastor, school administration, athletic director, and/or the athletic committee
- To deny adequate playing time to students who are cooperative in effort and attendance
- To give preferential treatment to the most gifted athletes
- To submit rosters that are not signed by the pastor and/or principal (or athletic director)
- To forfeit games without following local procedures
- To play students who are not on their regular school roster.
- To roster students on two school teams in the same sport unless it's driven by enrollment.
- To join more than one league without the approval of the athletic board/committee, athletic director or pastor and/or principal.

The Catholic school coach is one who understands that the physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and psychological development of their athletes takes precedence over winning. They are individuals of sound moral character who understand the true meaning of integrity. They are organized, disciplined, focused, and value-driven decision makers. The Catholic school coach seeks a solid understanding of sport science, sport management, risk management, nutrition, and sport specific techniques and tactics. The Catholic school coach always seeks to better him/herself by attending coaching conferences, reading books and professional journals, or exchanging ideas with peers and mentors. In addition, the Catholic school coach strives to develop communication skills and understand the psychology behind reinforcement, motivation, and how young people learn.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPORT & TEACHING THE SKILLS

There is no substitute for a superior understanding of the techniques, tactics, and rules of the sport you coach. Some believe that possessing this knowledge is less important for teaching beginning athletes than advanced ones. However, this assumption is false. In fact, teaching the fundamentals to a beginning athlete requires as much knowledge, if not more so, than coaching older, more experienced athletes. Having knowledge of the sport is only one component to the process. Being able to teach and communicate this knowledge to young players is perhaps the most important aspect of the job itself.

Ultimately, successful coaches are those who combine a solid understanding of their sport with an ability to teach these skills in a manner that is age appropriate and properly sequenced.

Does a person's playing career really factor into their ability to coach? The answer is no. Being a great player does not make one an accomplished coach. In fact, some of the best coaches were not necessarily the best players, as many former star athletes have difficulty actually teaching the ins and outs of the game and empathizing with failure.

Now that we have described what a Catholic school coach is, let's examine what a Catholic school coach IS NOT:

- The Win-at-all-Costs Coach: Coaches who adopt this style care more about their win-loss record and personal ego than the development of their athletes. They will use every tactic imaginable to give them a competitive edge, even if these tactics are unsportsmanlike and dishonest.
- The Me Coach: Coaches who adopt this philosophy are more focused on 'me' than 'we.' For example, they may say, "I need you to play flawless today," or "I need you to work hard for me

- today." In order to build a team concept, this coach should be saying, "We (or the team) need you to play flawless today," or "We need you to work hard for the good of the group today."
- **The Babysitter Coach:** Coaches who adopt this style make few decisions as possible. They do not hold their players accountable, nor do they set any standards for excellence. For these coaches, it is a 'throw out the ball and have a good time approach.' The Babysitter Coach provides minimal guidance and instruction and resolves disciplinary actions only when absolutely necessary. In addition, the Babysitter Coach cares more about being popular with his/her players than doing the job right.

COMMUNICATION

As previously discussed, **communication may be the most essential component to the coaching profession.** Simply stated, every single act of coaching requires communication skills. Coaches who fail often do so because of their inability to communicate, rather than their lack of sport specific knowledge or their in game decisions.

Coaches must be prepared to effectively communicate in countless situations. The following are some example situations where it is critical for coaches to communicate effectively:

- When a parent speaks to you about his/her child not playing enough
- When explaining to athletes how to perform a complex skill
- When speaking to your team after a tough loss or poor performance
- When speaking to an umpire/official who just made a call you feel was incorrect

There are three dimensions of communication. They are as follows:

1. Sending & Receiving
2. Verbal & Nonverbal
3. Content & Emotion

SENDING & RECEIVING

Communication includes not only sending messages, but also receiving them. Many coaches (and others who are in any type of leadership roles for that matter) only focus on the sending aspect of communication, rather than the receiving aspect. Coaches not only must be skillful at sending clear, understandable messages, but they also need to understand how to listen (not hear) what is being communicated in return. Here is an example of a coach with poor communication skills due to his inability to really listen to his athletes:

Coach: "Can you pitch today? You are definitely not throwing with your usual velocity."

Athlete: "Nothing hurts; but I think my arm is too fatigued to pitch today."

Coach: "Okay, I will put you at shortstop then."

In this example, the coach is only focused on the athlete's ability or inability to pitch. He does not listen to the athlete who is saying that his arm is fatigued. As a result, the coach makes the mistake of putting the athlete into a position like shortstop that places a significant amount of stress on the arm.

VERBAL & NONVERBAL

The majority of communication consists of nonverbal interactions, rather than verbal. In fact, it is estimated that 70% of communication is nonverbal. Hand gestures, posture, facial expressions, movements, and proximity when speaking are all examples of nonverbal communication. While people tend to have greater self control over their verbal communication than their nonverbal communication, it is often the nonverbal expressions and behaviors that dictate the receiver's interpretation and comprehension of the sender's intended message. Here is an example:

Parent: "Why did my son only play two quarters today?"

Coach: While packing up the equipment and not making eye contact "Nobody on the team played more than two quarters today. Your son played just as much as everyone else."

Coach's Intentions: To reassure the parent that his son is being treated fairly

Parents Interpretation: The coach is unapproachable and rude. I don't feel comfortable with my son playing for this coach anymore.

In this example, the coach had every intention of diffusing the situation and making it clear to the parent that everyone on the team is subjected to the same rules. This coach generally cares for the emotional well being of his players. However, because the coach displayed negative body language while speaking with this parent, the parent did not listen to the coach's message. As a result, the parent adopted a negative view of the coach and the situation.

CONTENT AND EMOTION

Content is the substance of the message; emotion is how you feel about it. Content is usually expressed verbally while emotion is usually expressed non-verbally. Pressure situations challenge coaches to be in control of both the content and the emotions they communicate. Coaches who deliver solid content with negative emotions are often misunderstood. Consider the following example:

Coach (shouting): "How many times do I have to tell you to follow through and keep your head centered? You can't throw strikes with that approach!"

Coach's Intentions: To give his athlete genuine feedback about an error in technique and to encourage him to remember the right technique in the future

Athlete's Interpretation: The coach thinks I stink. I am trying to do it right, but there are so many things to remember right now. The harder I try, the more mistakes I make. The more mistakes I make, the more he yells. I wish he would get off my back.

In this example, the coach has good intentions - to give specific and immediate feedback. However, the coach allowed his emotions to take control over his tone of voice. As a result, the athlete ignored the message entirely and focused on the tone instead.

LOSING RESPECT FROM ATHLETES

Often times, athletes do not receive the message because they are not paying attention. Certainly, having a short attention span is a major cause for this. However, many athletes consciously choose to tune out their coaches. While there are a variety of reasons as to why athletes intentionally ignore their coaches, it all boils down to an issue of respect, or lack thereof. According to the old adage, respect is something that is hard to gain but easy to lose. Nothing could be closer to the truth. Below are some examples of how coaches can quickly lose respect (and control) of their team:

- Coaches who do not show respect for their athletes will get little respect in return. Respect is a two way street - it must be earned by both parties. Many coaches lack credibility with their athletes because they demand respect, rather than seek to earn it.
- Coaches who are consistently negative and critical will cause many athletes to simply tune out or ignore them over time
- Coaches who continually evaluate their athletes, rather than instruct them, quickly lose respect. Athletes want quality feedback from someone who knows what they are talking about. When athletes are constantly judged but not instructed on how to make corrections, credibility is lost. A great example of this is the coach who yells from the bench, "Throw strikes!" or "catch the ball!" This message is highly destructive because it provides no useful information to the athlete.
- Coaches who show inconsistencies between their words and actions or who have different rules for some players as opposed to others will fail to gain the respect of their players. Examples include punishing the non-starter but not punishing the star on the team for the same offense, or telling the players not to yell at officials but personally doing this on a regular basis. Athletes see right through this behavior, and will eventually tune out.

- Coaches who refuse to show emotion, good or bad, can be very confusing to many athletes, especially young ones. While many successful coaches at the professional level rarely show much emotion, understand that they are working with seasoned athletes who are more emotionally secure than the average adolescent.
- Coaches who are not able to explain skills and techniques in a clear, concise, and age appropriate manner will be quickly disregarded. In this case, it is not that the athlete feels any ill will towards the coach; he/she simply cannot follow the coach's train of thought, and it becomes much easier to simply tune him/her out.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATING SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

Sports inherently evaluate participants through competition. With that being said, the primary role of the coach is not to evaluate, but rather to give specific instructions and feedback that will improve future performance. Athletes know when they played poorly. In other words, when an athlete is struggling to catch a ball, they don't need to be made aware of the fact that they dropped the ball. Those words do not help them. Either do the old clichés like "keep your eye on the ball." What athletes really need is specific and detailed feedback on how to alter their mental or physical approach.

The last season that the legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden roamed the hard court, two psychologists recorded all of his verbal communication with the team during practice. Nearly 75% of Wooden's messages gave specific instructions to athletes. His remaining messages were 12% requests to hustle, 7% praise, and 6% scolds. Another similar study found that little league baseball coaches who provided specific instructions were evaluated more positively by their players than were coaches who gave general encouragement. This was especially true for players with low self esteem. Ultimately, young players are incredibly thirsty for quality instruction. Your primary responsibility as a coach is to give that to them.

While there is a time and place for making evaluations, they should not dominate your communication with athletes. Evaluations should be saved for instructional sessions when you can put it into a constructive framework.

Finally, always evaluate the behavior, rather than the athlete. For example, never say, "What's wrong with you Jimmy?" It is much more effective to say, "That was the wrong decision Jimmy." The latter is a comment about Jimmy's behavior, which has no bearing on Jimmy as a person.

PSYCHOLOGY OF REINFORCEMENT: The purpose of reinforcement is to increase the likelihood that specific behaviors will be repeated. In contrast, a punishment decreases the likelihood that specific behaviors will be repeated. Effectively reinforcing behaviors while appropriately punishing other behaviors is a skill that is easy to understand yet hard to apply with athletes. After all, humans are far more complex than laboratory rats, where the principles of reinforcement and punishment were first developed. Before beginning to explore the principles of reinforcement more carefully, it is important to keep in mind the following:

- ❑ Reinforcements are relative, not absolute. What may be reinforcing to some may not be for others
- ❑ Reinforced behavior cannot always be consistently repeated if the athlete lacks the skills to do so
- ❑ Behavior modification is not a quick fix. It takes patience, persistence, and foresight. It is critical to be consistent with how you reinforce. Inconsistency leads to confusion and erratic responses to reinforcement

USING REWARDS

- What should I reward?
 - Reward the performance, not the outcome. Though this seems self explanatory, coaches often times lose perspective and think about winning (the outcome) more than about how the athletes are playing (the performance).
 - Reward athletes more for their effort than for their actual success. If athletes know that you will only reward them if they succeed, they may begin to develop a fear of failure. While some thrive on the fear of failure, this can cause anxiety with many others.
 - Reward the learning and performance of emotional and social skills as well as sport skills. This is a critical component to rewards that many coaches overlook. Be sure to reward your players for demonstrating self control, good judgment, responsibility, sportsmanship, and teamwork, just as you would reward the player for hitting the game winning homerun.
- How often should I reward?
 - Reward frequently when young players are first learning a new skill. Be careful here though, rewarding too frequently causes them to lose their value
- When should I reward?
 - Reward as soon as possible after correct behaviors are exhibited. Shouting "good job" immediately after a player executes a skill correctly reinforces the action, not a detailed debriefing an hour later. However, once certain skills have been mastered and athletes mature mentally, it is less critical to give immediate rewards, unless of course the athlete has poor self-confidence.
 - Reward athletes only when they have earned it. There is no need to praise athletes after a poor performance just so you can be Mr. Positive. Athletes see right through this. When players perform poorly, do not make excuses for them.
- What type of rewards should I use?
 - Rewards that come from you the coach or other sources are called extrinsic rewards. Most athletes respond positively to extrinsic rewards like praise or recognition. Extrinsic rewards can be tangible items, such as T-shirts, decals, or ribbons, or they can be non-tangible, such as pats on the back or other expressions of approval. However, the most powerful rewards are intrinsic rewards, a type of reward that you as a coach cannot directly give. Intrinsic rewards include such things as feeling successful, having a sense of pride in accomplishment, and feeling competent. Although you as a coach cannot directly offer these rewards to your athletes, not recognizing their accomplishments may deny them the opportunity to experience these intrinsic rewards.
 - Successful coaches emphasize playing for intrinsic rewards over extrinsic ones. Intrinsic rewards are self-motivating that lends itself to greater personal responsibility, accountability, and personal pride. Ultimately, athletes who only play for extrinsic rewards will not maintain the long term motivation and desire needed to continuously succeed. The athlete who is driven from within to excel is always the one who wins the race, whether it be in sports or in life.

DISCIPLINE

Some educators say we should never punish the behaviors of young people, only reinforce their positive behaviors. However, when appropriately applied undesirable consequences do eliminate undesirable behaviors without creating other undesirable consequences. For elementary school participants, the most (some believe only) appropriate "punishment" is imposing a limitation on participation. In other words, the coach may suspend a participant from a drill, a practice, a game, or multiple games for inappropriate behavior. Suspension can be used as part of a positive approach when the following guidelines are applied:

- Use suspension as a corrective way to help athletes improve now and in the future. Do not use suspension as a means of retaliation or to make you feel better.
- Impose suspensions in an impersonal way. Young athletes make choices, and there are consequences for every choice they make. Shouting or scolding athletes indicates that your attitude is one of revenge.
- Don't just threaten to use suspension - do it, but give athletes a warning before suspending
- Be consistent in administering suspension
- Do not decide on a suspension until you are absolutely comfortable with what you choose. If you cannot think of an appropriate consequence right away, tell the athlete you will talk with them after you think about it.
- Once the suspension is completed, the player should be fully reinstated and treated as such.
- Never punish athletes for making physical errors
- Do not use suspension frequently. Doing so causes athletes to turn their interests elsewhere and resent you as well.

UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

People are motivated to fulfill their needs. Sports psychologists have learned that the two most important needs of young athletes are to have fun, which includes the need for stimulation and excitement, and to feel worthy, which includes the need to feel competent and successful. Understanding these needs will greatly help you as a coach successfully motivate your athletes.

The following are critical components to successfully motivating young athletes:

- Match the difficulty of the skills to be learned or performed to the ability of the athlete. In other words, the task must be difficult enough to challenge the athlete, but not so difficult that they see no chance of success. If the athletes' ability exceeds the challenge, the athlete will become bored. If the challenge far outweighs the athlete's ability level, the athlete will experience high levels of anxiety.
- Keep practice stimulating by using a wide variety of drills that keeps everyone moving
- Avoid constant instruction during practices and games. Give athletes the time to immerse themselves in the activity.

THE NEED TO FEEL WORTHY

Every person shares the basic need to feel competent, to experience some success, and to feel that they are worthy. As human beings, we are socialized into learning that our worth depends largely on our ability to achieve. Even children as young as four or five-years old understand this. With respect to sports, young athletes quickly translate winning to equal success while losing to equal failure. To win is to be successful, to be competent, or to be a worthy person. To lose is to be a failure, to be incompetent, or to be unworthy. When athletes experience a reasonable amount of success, it reinforces their sense of competency, which in turn motivates them to pursue their chosen sport further as a means of achieving excellence. But if athletes fail to experience success, they may blame themselves for failure and attribute it to a lack of ability. With repeated failure, some young athletes may decide to protect their dignity and self worth by not trying their hardest. Some may even quit playing entirely. **As a youth league coach, it is important to realize that sport participation can be potentially threatening for many young athletes.**

FILLING THE EMOTIONAL TANK

Many young athletes who try but do not succeed will eventually lose motivation and quit the sport. Even worse, they may refuse to try their hand at any other sport. As a coach, it is your job to prepare your players for success by giving them the proper skills and knowledge to effectively execute what is demanded of them. Because many young athletes associate feelings of self worth with winning and losing, it also the coach's responsibility to put their players in positions where they can be successful. In other

words, as a coach, do not ask your players to do something they are not physically or mentally prepared to do.

A loss in self-confidence and self-esteem leads to an athlete's reluctance to take risks. Success in sports requires taking risks. Athletes who are accustomed to failure may have the tendency not to take as many risks as the athlete who expects to be successful. A confident athlete who expects to be successful will put themselves out there, risk everything, and try their hardest. An athlete with low self confidence will be more reluctant to take risks and not try at all (this is especially true for the younger athletes).

Think about two gamblers sitting at a poker table. The gambler with the most poker chips is willing to take risks because he has a history of winning and being successful. The gambler with fewer poker chips may not take the same risks because he has a history of losing and being unsuccessful. Ultimately, an athlete's emotional tank functions in a similar fashion as these poker chips.

Consider the following example: For Billy, one of the least talented players on the team, trying to field a ground ball during a low key practice session can be a risk. "What happens if I miss it again?" "I really don't think I am cut out to be a baseball player." "If I miss this one, I might as well stop trying - it's easier to not try and fail than it is to try and fail!" "I am tired - I want to go home."

In the above example, Billy has low self-confidence and is on the verge of losing all motivation. As a result, Billy is ready to stop taking the risk of trying. Who knows - maybe Billy is ready to give up athletics entirely. Ultimately, effective coaches recognize this and intervene long before an athlete gets to this point.

The problem is that Billy's emotional tank is on empty. It is not that he lacks motivation or he is lazy. While many coaches may fall back on the old cliché, "practice makes perfect," Billy's inability to field a ground ball in this particular case has nothing to do with the fact that he is not working hard enough.

What Billy needs is for one of his coaches to pull him aside and work with him one-on-one. Go over the fundamentals again and slowly roll ground balls to him instead of hitting them. Put Billy in an athletic situation where he can be successful. Give Billy positive reinforcement and praise his work habits in front of his teammates.

Once Billy feels comfortable with fielding slow rollers, roll them a little harder, and eventually build him back up to taking ground balls on the field. This is what motivation is all about - recognizing when the emotional tanks are empty and giving athletes the right opportunities to build them back up again. Who knows - the same Billy who could not field a ground ball at age 8 may grow up to be a varsity team starter at age 16. If it was not for that coach who took the time to work with him and fill his emotional tank, none of this would have been possible.

THE DANGER OF SETTING UNREALISTIC GOALS

When young people begin playing sports, they quickly observe that coaches prefer superior performance and tend to give greater recognition to the athletes who excel. Desiring similar recognition, less skilled players attempt to be more like the skilled ones. In doing so, the less skilled athlete may be setting himself/herself up for failure by setting their expectations too high for their present skill level. If athletes themselves do not set unrealistic goals, often time parents and coaches do it for them. For example, coaches may set the same performance goals for the entire team, but it may be set so high that only a few of the top players will be able to meet those expectations. In addition, parents who are living vicariously through their children by wanting them to become athletic stars may be asking them to pursue goals that are beyond their reach.

Regardless of who is at fault, the result is the same - unrealistically high goals and expectations almost

guarantee failure. Unfortunately, many young athletes do not realize that such goals are unrealistic. Once they fall short, they mistakenly accuse themselves of not having ability, and they begin to feel unworthy.

HOW WE SHOULD DEFINE SUCCESS

Many young athletes learn from their parents, coaches, teammates and the media to gauge their self worth largely on whether they win or lose. As a coach, you must shift this paradigm, stray away from wins and losses as a means of defining success, and redefine what it means to be successful. The definition of success can be applied in two realms - success as a team and success as an individual: The two applications are as follows:

Team: Success is a team sport. Success is the inner satisfaction and peace of mind that comes from knowing you did the best you were capable of for the good of the group. (Definition adapted from John Wooden - notice that this definition has nothing to do with wins and losses)

Individual: Success must be seen in terms of athletes exceeding their own goals rather than surpassing the performance of others (Definition taken from the American Sport Education Program)

Using these two definitions of success, athletes can begin to set specific performance goals and behavioral objectives rather than goals that revolve around the outcome of winning or losing.

- My goal is to strike out less this week than I did last week
- I want to improve my foul shooting
- I want to learn to relax more and enjoy playing
- I want to work on becoming a better teammate

Once you as a coach teach your athletes to view success as something that is independent of wins and losses, you have unlocked the key to enhancing your athletes' motivation. As a coach, sit down with your players, get to know them, and help them set realistic performance and behavioral related goals. This will go a long way in keeping them motivated.

When coaches help athletes set realistic goals, athletes inevitably experience more success and feel more competent. By becoming more competent, they gain confidence and can tackle skills of moderate difficulty without fearing failure. They discover that their efforts can result in favorable outcomes. Failures no longer result in feelings of unworthiness, but rather they begin to trigger feelings of discipline and desire to work harder. What a life changing paradigm shift this is, whose effects can be felt far beyond the athletic field!

HOW ATHLETES LEARN

Coaching is teaching, and teaching is helping your athletes learn. Learning is a relatively permanent improvement in performance capability arising from practice. Because learning is not directly observable, it must be inferred from changes in performance over time. Because other factors besides learning can cause changes in performance, it is not always easy to know whether an athlete has actually learned a skill. The key to knowing whether learning has occurred is that the improvement in performance is more permanent.

When an athlete is first learning a new skill, their first objective is to understand how to perform the skill correctly. Doing so requires a great deal of mental activity, as the athlete is trying to program his/her mind into fully comprehending the correct technique and strategy. During the early stage, it is best to explain the skill and demonstrate the skill. This allows the athlete to get information in two ways - auditory and visual. Ideally, the auditory explanation and the visual demonstration, when used together, should enhance the instruction and increase the likelihood that the athlete will fully understand what is being asked of him/her.

It may be useful in some situations to explain and demonstrate what not to do, just as you would explain and demonstrate what to do. Make sure to explain to the athlete why mastering this skill is necessary. In addition, coaches must be careful not to teach too much at one time during this initial stage, for it is easy to overload young athletes. Remember: stick to the basic fundamentals, go slowly, and be patient. Be sure to break down more complex skills into smaller movements and build from there.

Once the skill is properly introduced, have the athlete practice the skill in a non-threatening and non-competitive environment. During this stage, the emphasis shifts to refining and applying the skill, as well as timing and coordination. As a coach, you must provide specific and quality feedback. A simple "good job" is not sufficient. What specifically is the athlete doing a good job with? Can the athlete improve? If so, in what specific area? With continued guidance, you may notice that the athlete will eventually be able to detect their own errors and make the necessary adjustments.

During the practice stage, the quality of practice is more important than the quantity. When it is all said and done, quality increases the learning curve, not quantity. As a coach, you need to decide how long each practice session should be, what drills to use, and when to move on to more advanced skills. The athlete's capacity to learn, personal motivation, and levels of fatigue dictate these decisions. As an athlete continues to practice, the skill eventually becomes more automated. During this stage, the skill is so automated that when the athlete begins analyzing the skill during its execution, the performance is disrupted. It is during this stage where the athlete learns to stop thinking and just let it happen. For a coach, the focus during this stage shifts from coaching-to-learn to coaching-to-perform.

COMMON COACHING PROBLEMS

THE PLAYER WHO ONLY WANTS TO PLAY ONE POSITION

"I'm a shortstop." "I can't play guard." "I've never played third base before."

The sooner the athlete learns that an athlete is an athlete, period—that a true athlete can play any position on the field and that different coaches see players' abilities and roles in different ways—the better off that player will be. Simply stated, the more positions the athlete plays, the better he/she will understand the game.

It is important for coaches to communicate the importance of versatility, especially as it relates to the athlete's future in the sport. Before moving a player to a new position, it is best to ease the player into a new role during practice. Let him/her get the feel for a new spot during non-threatening, non-pressure situations. Spend time teaching new responsibilities and the skill associated with the new position during practice so they are better prepared to transition during a game.

THE PLAYER WHO THINKS THE COACH'S LINEUP/STRATEGY/ ETC. IS WRONG

Certainly coaches can learn from their players. Someone out on the field has a different perspective than someone on the sidelines. Not always better, or worse, or right, just different. That player's insights or suggestions often can be valuable. However, it is the coach's job to see that those suggestions are offered at the appropriate times. Time can be allocated during certain practice sessions for discussions about strategy. That's when a rational team-wide discussion can be held. However, no coach can allow statements about other players or negative comments about coaching policy disrupt team unity. Criticism by players must be restricted to private conversations with the coach. Breaches should result in loss of playing time. There is a time for open discussion and a time for coach's authority.

PARENT INTERFERENCE

It is critical to take a proactive approach by setting expectations for parents at the beginning of the season. Holding a mandatory parent meeting at the beginning of the season can reduce the likelihood of parental interference. During this meeting, establish expectations for parent behavior and discuss in detail the negative consequences that may occur when parents cross boundaries. Before the season begins, help parents understand the importance of remaining clear of the bench area during games and why it is important for them to refrain from yelling instructions from the sidelines. Most parents will comply once you make it clear that your rules are designed with their child's best interest in mind.

However, some parents will still continue to cross that line despite your initial efforts. One clever way of dealing with parental pressure is to suggest that the parent come help you coach. The answer is usually no, for a variety of reasons. Use that line as a vehicle to open a discussion about the need to let the coach operate without interference, unless the parent wishes to donate a significant amount of time to the team.

When a knowledgeable parent becomes overly critical—and they're vocal enough to be undermining your authority, organize a meeting of all the adults. Calmly confront the issue head-on, ask for input, address it as rationally and articulately as you can, and stress the need for a united front.

COACHING A "SUPERSTAR"

Yes, this is a problem, and coaches need to make sure that the star player is consistently challenged, works collaboratively with his/her teammates, and maintains a respectful and humble approach to the game.

Many problems will arise if the superstar believes he/she is too good for the other players on the team. Always handing the ball to the star or singling that player out for constant praise and using him/her for every good example reinforces that player's feeling of being special. Good young players should be used as examples for others, but they also need to be criticized constructively, prodded and shown the necessity for working selflessly with others. Too many great athletes have stagnated as youngsters because they haven't been pushed to improve even more, pushed to develop team concepts and skills they'll need once they advance to a higher level of play.

All players must be held accountable to similar standards. A coach can't be afraid to sit a superstar down. If too many practices are missed, the player should sit; if a rule is broken, he/she should sit; even if the superstar is having an off day—the coach should resist the temptation to think that the star must be on the field at all times for the team to be competitive.

DISRUPTIVE PLAYERS

Often players disrupt practices or cause problems on the bench because they're bored or inactive. The cures for inactivity are simple. During practices, less talking by the coach, more movement by the players or smaller groups so each athlete is involved more in the action will help cure this issue. During games, don't just keep your attention on the field or court, but be aware as to what is going on in the bench area as well. Ask the players on the bench questions, tell them how soon you'll be substituting them in, encourage them to run, stretch, and keep their bodies loose, and remind them to keep cheering for their teammates. Keeping them involved as much as possible will limit the likeliness of disruptive behavior.

PERSONAL PROPERTY SEARCHES

An athlete may be asked to submit to a search of gym bag, uniform or other athletic gear when the athletic director, the coach, or another school official suspects that the student possesses drugs, weapons, or anything that might be detrimental to the health and safety of the student or of the team.

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Young athletes have short attention spans. They cannot handle as much information at one time as adults, yet there are many coaches who insist upon forcing every scrap of detail they know on their players, often at the most inappropriate times.

The pre-game talk is the wrong time to give a dissertation on athletic skills and strategy. This should have been introduced in bits and pieces during practices sessions so players could have had time to absorb the information and understand it thoroughly. New concepts should be introduced slowly and methodically, not quickly during pre-game speech. While reinforcing previously explained ideas before a game, concentrate on one or two key points. If you throw out eight or ten different thoughts in random order as they occur to you—you'll lose your audience entirely.

It's easy to attack every problem in sight every single day, hoping something will sink in. It's more difficult to pick out one or two ideas and reinforce them systematically. Ultimately, the latter requires foresight, planning, and patience.

LENGTHY POST GAME SPEECHES

The need for carefully thought-out and well-organized post game comments is crucial. Spend the few minutes while the players are packing up the equipment to think about what you want to say. That way you won't ramble or hem and haw in the few minutes allotted to you.

Again, don't overburden your players. If things are going poorly, twelve different ideas won't change things. Concentrate on one or two. Make sure to end your post game comments on a positive note.

Very little is to be gained from ending the game with negative criticism, unless the players are old enough to handle it and/or it is used so seldom it makes the players sit up and take notice.

FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE

There are two times when communication is especially important: when a player comes out of a game and when the game has ended.

No child likes to leave the contest. Every child who comes out of the game should be greeted personally by the coach. A pat on the head or shoulder is good. Better is some verbal comment, such as "Good work out there, I just needed to get Chris in." Or, "Wow, you really worked hard, take a rest, and support your teammates."

Even if a player was removed because he/she was playing poorly or couldn't handle his/her position, use this situation as a teachable moment. "Pat, listen, next time you're in there and you're batting against someone that throws that fast, this is what you should do..." It goes without saying, of course, that you should never, ever, remove a player immediately after he/she commits a mistake, no matter how grievous the error. To do so can only demoralize an already desolate youngster.

After the game is a fair time to analyze the game. You don't have to deliver an oratorical masterpiece or go over every player's performance minute by minute, but you can wrap up the game briefly. This is what we did well, this is what we did poorly, this is what we'll work on next week and practice is at the usual time. Resist the temptation to let everyone leave immediately after the game.

TOO MUCH YELLING FROM THE SIDELINE

"Keep your eye on the ball!" "Be aggressive!" "Follow through!" All these are bits of advice a coach can call out during a game. They're good advice, but they lose effectiveness when shouted over and over again. They also tend not to get heard when several different people—the coach, his assistant, the parents and all the youngsters on the sidelines—are yelling them at the same time. In addition, when you come to think of it, this advice is also really not that revolutionary. After all, athletes know that they should keep their eye on the ball, be aggressive, and follow through. Why not try spending one or two games quietly on the sidelines? Do your teaching during practice sessions and let the players play during

the game. Limit your advice to one or two key moments each game. You may be surprised by how well your players perform.

FOCUSING ON THE SCORE RATHER THAN THE PROGRESS MADE

Too many coaches look only at the final score. They tell their team "Great game!" in the first instance without realizing the opposition played better despite losing the contest. They also tell their team "Well, you lost again" in the second instance without congratulating them for how close this game was or giving them encouragement that perhaps the next time the score will finally be different.

You can play well and lose, just as you can play poorly and win. Your team knows after a game whether it won or lost. It's your job, as coach, to tell them how they played the game and what they need to do to be successful the next time around.

TEAM MEETING

You have only one chance to make a first impression. This becomes the utmost importance when you are working with young children and their parents. As soon as possible after the selection of your team, a mandatory meeting should be planned for all team member and their parents. The key to a successful season is to open the lines of communication between the head coach, assistant coaches, players, and parents. The team meeting is the time to express and explain several key points and inform all as to what you as a coaching staff plan to do throughout the season. This meeting can be done either in person or, in this age of technology, over email.

It has been our experience that a well planned out meeting before the seasons starts will avoid many problems that often occur in youth sports. Take the time to formally introduce yourself, your coaching staff, explain your philosophies and goals for the team, ask for interested volunteers, and discuss the league and team rules.

Below is a guideline of topics that should be covered in this introductory meeting:

- Team Roster (should include parents names, emails, and all phone numbers)
- The inclusion of prayer before and after every team activity
- Practice schedule
- Game schedule
- Coaching philosophy
- School's Athletic philosophy >> Parental Guidelines
- Attendance at practice and games
- Open line of communication
- Pre-game meals (high in carbohydrates); no sweets, junk food, soda, or foods high in fat
- No negative comments during games
- Communicate information such as rainouts, practice changes
- Communication using social media and internet
- How to care for uniform and equipment
- School rules regarding playing time
- Provide transportation to and from games
- Coaches are not covered with liability insurance for transporting students. Therefore, they are not allowed to transport athletes at any time. Parents who coach should use own discretion.
- Drop off/pick up policy
- Discipline policy (yours and the schools)
- Infractions: Throwing equipment, bad language, fighting or displaying temper, arguing with coaches and officials, ridiculing the performance of teammates/opponents, unexcused absence or tardiness, not having proper uniform/equipment, and leaving bench area during games
- Things to stress: hustle at all times, good sportsmanship, no jewelry, safety rules, and having fun.

PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

It is critical to create a strict and detailed schedule, work within each given time frame, and meet each objective for every planned activity. As a coach, it is important to explain what your practice plan is and how it will look before putting your players to work. Be sure to have all equipment out and ready when players arrive. Start each practice with conditioning to loosen them up. A coach could begin with a jog around the entire field or court. This gets the blood flowing through the athlete's muscles. After the jog, players could do anywhere from 4-6 sprints to recruit the fast twitch muscles. Various other movements, such as high knee skips, butt-kicks, karaoke, shuffling, and leg kicks also recruit important lower body muscles necessary for athletic performance. Once these exercises are completed, the team should could engage in an upper body and lower body stretching routine.

If your team has 12 players on its roster, you can break practice down to 1 coach and 4 players per group. If you are fortunate enough to have extra certified coaches on the team, you may be able to set up more groups or do multiple drills in areas that your team needs improvement with. The group practice plan will allow each coach to work on a certain area and drill. Each group should be no longer than 15-20 minutes. At the end of this time period, the groups should rotate but the coaches stay. With all drills, be creative and make them as challenging and fun as possible.

- Each practice should begin and end with prayer.
- Practices should be no longer than 1.5 hours for groups under 13 years old. Leave time for water breaks if kids are tired or it is hot out. In addition, it is recommended to end practice with a contest, challenge, or their favorite drill to help make it fun

In terms of running an effective practice, here are some other key points to follow:

- Stick to the time period allotted for each drill. Do not get bogged down in a drill and lose the whole practice plan. Get on with the practice, make a note on what fundamentals need more work, and spend more time on it next time.
- Do not spend too long on a specific drill. Keep your segments short, and maintain high intensity throughout
- Never tolerate a lack of hustling in anything you are doing. All players should be sprinting between drills and stations
- Create as much competition as you can in everything you do. Kids love to compete, so give them every chance to do so.
- Demand a lot of your players during practice. You will get what you demand, and players will rise to the level of your expectations.
- Use practice time to simulate game situations. Create pressure situations and make them work to get out of jams and difficult spots.
- Finish practices on a positive note

UNDERSTANDING A COACH'S ROLE IN ADMINISTERING SPORTS FIRST AID

Studies have shown that any delay in first aid care can cause further injury or prolong an athlete's recovery time. At minimum, all coaches should possess basic knowledge in sports first aid and CPR, in addition to being equipped with the proper supplies at every practice and game to treat all injuries, or, in the most serious situations, stabilize the athlete until help arrives.

Coaches are often the first to witness injuries. In more cases than not, medical personnel are not present at practices or games, so it is the coach's responsibility to appropriately administer first aid care. In addition, it is usually the coach who is responsible for determining when and if the athlete should return to competition.

PROACTIVE MEASURES FOR REDUCING INJURIES

The severity and frequency of sports related injuries can be significantly reduced if coaches understand and proactively perform the following duties:

- Properly plan the activity
- Make sure that athletes are in proper condition
- Teach athletes the sports skills in a progression so that they are adequately prepared to handle more difficult skills
- Provide proper instruction
- Keep up to date on better and safer ways of performing sport techniques
- Teach athletes the rules and the correct skills and strategies of the sport
- Provide a safe environment
- Monitor current environmental conditions (i.e., wind chill, temperature, and humidity)
- Inspect playing and training areas for hazards
- Provide adequate and proper equipment
- Make sure athletes are using top quality equipment
- Inspect the equipment regularly
- Teach athletes how to fit, use, and inspect their equipment
- Match the athletes according to size, physical maturity, skill level, and experience
- Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacity
- Immediately remove athletes from the activity if they are unable to compete without pain or loss of function (i.e., inability to walk, run, jump, throw, without restriction)
- Supervise the activity closely. Forbid horseplay
- Do not allow athletes to use sport facilities without supervision
- Warn of inherent risks. Provide parents and athletes with both oral and written statements of inherent health risks of their particular sport.

From a legal standpoint, coaches are expected to take action when needed and provide a certain standard of care. This includes performing basic first aid care for any injury or illness suffered by an athlete, in addition to CPR if necessary. It is strongly encouraged that every coach be certified in CPR.

KEEPING ATHLETE'S HEALTH RECORDS

It is critical for coaches to know if any of their players have certain health problems that could affect their sport participation or medical treatment. Diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, heart murmurs, allergies, and skin conditions are just some health problems that coaches and first aid responders must be made aware of. Furthermore, an Emergency Contact Information Card must be on hand at all times. Coaches must be able to immediately contact the athlete's parents, guardian, or other family contacts in case of an emergency. Coaches are responsible for obtaining this information from the parents/guardians of players.

PRESEASON PHYSICAL EXAM

Athletes who are not in shape are more likely to get hurt. In order to proactively prevent injuries, it is recommended that schools require a preseason physical exam. This should be a thorough exam performed by a physician to check for problems in the following areas: circulatory, respiratory, neurological, orthopedic, vision, and hearing. The physician should note any preexisting conditions or other potential health problems when deciding whether or not an athlete is cleared to participate.

PRESEASON SCREENING

While a physical exam will detect specific health problems, it does not provide insight about an athlete's overall fitness level. Preseason screening, which can be conducted by a trained fitness professional, can

evaluate athletes in the following areas:

Strength in the muscle groups most often used in the particular sport - for example, a football player's neck strength or a basketball player's ankle strength

- Flexibility or tightness in the majority muscle groups
- Cardiovascular endurance
- Body composition or percent body fat

Ultimately, these test pinpoint fitness deficiencies that could lead to future injury. It is in this area where having a sound physical education program can be so important. Physical education teachers can implement various physical fitness testing programs, most notably Fitness Gram, which can help athletes and parents pinpoint and address potential problems in these critical fitness areas.

PROPER WARM-UP AND COOL-DOWN

A proper warm-up is an exercise routine that prepares the body for vigorous physical activity. All warm-ups should begin with a light jog or anything that increases the heart and breathing rates. This should then be followed by a series of light calisthenics and stretching exercises that help prepare the muscles and tendons for vigorous activity. Once the activity has ended, it is recommended that athletes cool down their bodies as a means of returning their heart and breathing rates to normal levels. This can be accomplished through the following activities: walking, light jogging, and stretching.

STOCKING THE FIRST AID KIT

Coaches should have a first aid kit on hand for all practices and games. A well-stocked first aid kit should include the following items:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ▪ List of emergency phone numbers | ▪ Bandage strips - assorted sizes |
| ▪ Face shield (for rescue breathing and CPR) | ▪ Alcohol or peroxide |
| ▪ Bandage scissors | ▪ Antibacterial hand sanitizer |
| ▪ Plastic bags for crushed ice | ▪ First aid cream or antibacterial ointment |
| ▪ 3 inch and 4 inch elastic wraps | ▪ Athletic tape |
| ▪ Triangular bandages | ▪ Pre-wrap |
| ▪ Sterile gauze pads - 3 inch and 4 inch squares | ▪ Sterile gauze rolls |
| ▪ Saline solution for eyes | ▪ Insect sting kit (for outdoor sports) |
| ▪ Tongue depressors | ▪ Safety pins |
| ▪ Cotton swabs | ▪ Examination gloves |
| | ▪ Thermometer |

HANDLING SERIOUS INJURIES

Unfortunately, serious injuries are an inherent risk associated with sport participation. To minimize confusion and ensure that an injured athlete receives prompt medical attention, all coaches must develop an Emergency Response Plan. In particular, coaches should determine who is responsible for what duties, how a duty should be carried out, when certain actions should be taken, and what paperwork needs to be completed.

In order to remain in control of the situation, it is critical for all head coaches to have an athlete's Emergency Contact Information Card at every practice and game. This is especially critical if an athlete is unconscious and unable to tell

the coach who to contact or the contact person's phone number. Coaches should also have with them a Health History Form which details an athlete's pre-existing condition, medical issues, and/or allergies.

When a serious injury does occur, it is the coach's responsibility to lead and direct the response effort. Each emergency plan should follow the sequence below:

1. Check the athlete's level of consciousness
2. Send a contact person to call 911 and the athlete's parents. This can be an assistant coach or parent.
3. Send someone to wait for the rescue team and direct them to the injured athlete
4. Assess the injury and administer first aid care or CPR if necessary
5. Assist emergency medical personnel in preparing the athlete for transportation to a medical facility
6. Appoint someone to go with the athlete if the parents are not available. This person should be calm, responsible, and familiar with the athlete. Assistant coaches or parents are best for the job
7. Immediately report the injury and incident to the school principal, who in turn reports to the diocese.

HANDLING MINOR INJURIES

Most injuries do not require emergency medical attention. However, it is important for coaches to not take minor injuries lightly, as they can impair performance if not treated correctly. For minor injuries, coaches should take the following steps:

1. Evaluate the injury
2. Administer sport first aid
3. Remove the athlete from participation if the athlete is in a great deal of pain or suffers from a loss of function (cannot walk, throw, jump, etc)
4. Contact the athlete's parents and discuss the injury with them
5. When necessary, suggest the athletes see a physician to rule out a serious injury

Under no circumstances should an injured athlete return to competition. While injured athletes return to competition at the professional level, youth league coaches must not confuse managing a team of adolescents with leading a team of grown men and women.

CONCUSSIONS

A concussion is a complex injury that causes a disturbance in brain function. It usually starts with a blow to the head, face or neck, and is often associated with temporarily losing consciousness. However, it is important to understand that a blackout is only one possible symptom. When an athlete suffers a concussion, the brain suddenly shifts or shakes inside the skull and can knock against the skull's bony surface. If left untreated, a concussion can lead to a slow brain bleed.

SYMPTOMS

Concussion symptoms may be mild, moderate, or severe. Common mild concussion symptoms can include headache or migraine, temporary memory loss, and nausea. Moderate to severe concussion symptoms can include dizziness, dilation of pupils, migraine, convulsions, and temporary changes in vision, smell, and taste. A person may also lose consciousness. Below are the most common symptoms associated with a concussion:

1. Passing out
2. Not being able to remember what happened after the injury
3. Acting confused, asking the same question over and over, slurring words, or not being able to concentrate
4. Feeling lightheaded, seeing "stars," having blurry vision, or experiencing ringing in the ears
5. Not being able to stand or walk, or having coordination and balance problems
6. Feeling nauseous or vomiting.

With a loss of consciousness, it is clear to everyone that emergency medical services are needed. However, do not ignore the non-blackout symptoms mentioned above. Unfortunately, a pervasive mindset in some sports is that getting "dinged" is part of the game and you need to tough it out. This thinking is dangerous because it exposes the child to further injury when their brain needs a rest. It also prevents them from obtaining a proper medical assessment as soon as possible. No players with even the MILDEST concussion symptoms should return to a game or practice. They should be assessed by a physician immediately. If symptoms do not appear until several hours after the game, the child should still seek medical assessment.

RETURN TO SPORT

Anyone who has suffered a concussion needs to rest their brain until all the symptoms are gone. This means they should be able to read, do math and think at their usual pace with no headaches, fatigue or other symptoms. This can mean a few days resting at home, not doing school work and, definitely, no exercise. There is no timetable chart to follow; each child needs a treatment program tailored to their symptoms and circumstances. Younger children seem to take longer to recover than adults and it is not unusual for children to be out of sports for a month after suffering a concussion. If a player suffers one concussion, they are more likely to sustain future concussions. Researchers believe the younger the child, the more vulnerable the brain may be to these repeat concussions. Under no circumstances can an athlete return to action without clearance from a medical professional.

SECOND IMPACT SYNDROME

If someone with a concussion too hastily returns to contact sports or activities, a second concussion can result in Second Impact Syndrome — a potentially fatal condition. Second Impact Syndrome is when another blow to the head (even a minor one) results in the brain losing its ability to control its own blood flow, which increases pressure in the head and can lead to death, usually within 2 - 5 minutes. Second Impact Syndrome most often affects young athletes (in junior and senior high school), but any athlete who returns to a sport too soon is at risk.

ADMINISTERING FIRST AID FOR HEAD AND NECK INJURIES

The first step in administering first aid to an athlete suffering from head trauma is to send for medical assistance, regardless of whether the athlete is conscious or not. Stabilize the head and neck of the athlete, monitor the ABC's (airway, breathing, and circulation - particularly in an unconscious athlete), and provide rescue breathing and CPR if necessary.

In many cases, because of their structural and functional interconnections, an injury to the head will cause damage to some portion of the spine, and vice versa. Regardless of the type and site of the injury, the initial evaluation of a suspected spinal injury should be conducted in the same manner. In addition, because it is difficult to differentiate between a sprain, fracture, contusion, and strain, initial treatment should be the same for all. Never move the athlete during the evaluation unless it is impossible to check the ABCs or unless the athlete is in danger of further injury. If an athlete walks off the playing area and complains of pain anywhere along the spine, coaches should perform the evaluation with the athlete in the position in which they initially see him or her. For example, a standing athlete should remain standing. Also, if an athlete is wearing a helmet, leave it on. Removing it can cause further harm. If an athlete suffers a serious head or spine injury, call for help, immediately stabilize the head and spine, check the ABC's, and treat the athlete for shock and other injuries as necessary.

HEAT INDEX

Using the following scale, activity must be altered and/or eliminated based upon this Heat Index

Under 95 degrees Heat Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire. • Optional water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration • Ice-down towels for cooling • Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action.
95 degrees to 99 degrees Heat Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire. • Mandatory water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration • Ice-down towels for cooling • Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action. • Contact sports and activities with additional equipment • Helmets and other possible equipment removed while not involved in contact. • Reduce time of outside activity. Consider postponing practice to later in the day. • Re-check temperature and humidity every 30 minutes to monitor for increased Heat Index.
100 degrees to 104 degrees Heat Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ample amounts of water. This means that water should always be available and athletes should be able to take in as much water as they desire. • Mandatory water breaks every 30 minutes for 10 minutes in duration • Ice-down towels for cooling • Watch/monitor athletes carefully for necessary action. • Alter uniform by removing items if possible • Allow for changes to dry t-shirts and shorts. • Reduce time of outside activity as well as indoor activity if air conditioning is unavailable. • Postpone practice to later in day. • Contact sports and activities with additional equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helmets and other possible equipment removed if not involved in contact or necessary for safety. If necessary for safety, suspend activity. • Re-check temperature and humidity every 30 minutes to monitor for increased Heat Index.
Above 104 degrees Heat Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Sports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop all outside activity in practice and/or play, and stop all inside activity if air conditioning is unavailable.

Using the following scale, activity must be altered and / or eliminated based on this Heat Index as determined –

This procedure is to be used until such time as the temperature is below 80 degrees as no combination of heat and humidity at that level will result in a need to curtail activity.

These initial steps should help ensure the health and safety of the participants in sports. Adherence to these guidelines represents a conscious effort by the community to emphasize health and safety on a much higher level than any loss of competitive preparation.

Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, and Holy Week

On Sundays and Holy Days no school team or school-sponsored extracurricular activity i.e. practices, performances or games should take place until 1:00 p.m. Any exception must be obtained from the pastor or, in the case of non-parish institutions, the pastoral administrator and school administrator, who must be assured specifically how provision is made for attendance at Mass.

If Mary, Mother of God (Jan.1), Assumption (Aug.15) and All Saints (Nov. 1) are on a Saturday or Monday, activities may start before 1:00 p.m.

For Holy Week, school team or school-sponsored extracurricular activities must conclude by 4:00 p.m. on Holy Thursday and not resume until Easter Monday.

COACHES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows end users to engage in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website. A large percentage of internet traffic is centered on the use of social media. Social media includes, but is not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, Ning, Twitter, Second Life, YouTube, Linked In, blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, document sharing and email.

Pictures of individual students may only be published in printed and social media with written and dated permission from the parent or guardian. Permission is not required for group pictures (6 or more persons) as long as the names are not provided. No student information regarding phone number, address, family members or other personal information shall be published in social media.

St. Joseph School expects that its coaches will act responsibly and exercise good judgment (regardless of personal opinion) and discretion when placing on any Medium information concerning or otherwise identifying the team or any of its players. If the coach fails to act responsibly in that regard, the information and content placed on or communicated via a Medium can have a harmful effect on the school, the team and players and others associated with the team and the coach.

Bear in mind that coaches are viewed as role models by players and our wider society, and think carefully about how you represent yourself when using social media. User names are linked to you. Even if you don't use your real name, you can still be identified. Understand and use privacy settings where available on social networking sites to ensure that your personal information is kept private. Share only what you're comfortable with the whole world seeing. Be aware that 'friends' or contacts you have on social media platforms can share content that you post and tag you in photos. Content shared can be persistent and receive a greater audience than you initially intended.

Communication with players (e.g. notes, email, internet, telephone calls) must be for professional reasons only and be communicated directly through the parent. One-on-one conversations with players using social media are not appropriate and create potential ethical risks. Coaches should not "friend" a player.

Coaches should apply "the 24 hour rule" when upset (i.e. wait 24 hours before posting anything that was written in anger or disappointment). Posted comments, pictures, etc., cannot be retrieved once they are sent or posted and can be used by a complaining party should a grievance occur.

If players contact you by social media and ask for help or advice relating to sensitive personal issues, social media isn't the right forum for providing support. Consider redirecting them to appropriate support structures, such as their parents, school guidance counselor or principal.

DUTY TO REPORT DEPENDENCY, NEGLIGENCE OR ABUSE

Kentucky Revised Statute 620.030 calls for a duty to report dependency, neglect or abuse by any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is dependent, neglected or abused. Contact the principal and or pastor immediately.

Acknowledgements

The Diocese of Covington expresses gratitude to The Archdiocese of Chicago, Office of Catholic Schools and to Mr. Andrew Pohl, teacher and athletic director of Immaculate Conception School (North Park) for their assistance in the development of the Catholic School Coaching Guidelines.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COACHES

ASEP

American Sports Education Program www.asep.com

EYC

Ethical Youth Coaching www.ethicalyouthcoaching.com

NASPE

National Association for Sports and Physical Education
www.aahperd.org/naspe

NAYSI

North American Youth Sports Institute www.naysi.com

NYSCA

National Youth Sports Coaches Association www.nays.org

PACE

Youth Sports Institute Michigan State University www.educ.msu.edu/ysi

PCA

Positive Coaching Alliance www.possiblecoach.org

RESPONSIBLE SPORTS - LIBERTY MUTUAL

www.responsiblesports.com

SPORTS LEADER

www.sportsleader.org

REFERENCES

The purpose of this manual is to identify and highlight best practices for athletic administration and youth league coaching. The intent was not to create something new and unique, but rather to compile information from various credible sources into one document that can be readily accessed by school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, student-athletes, and parents. The following books, articles, and websites were used to compile the content of this manual.

AACCA School Cheer Rules (2010). Retrieved from www.aacca.org

American College of Sports Medicine. (2005). Youth Football: Heat Stress and Injury Risk. Retrieved from www.acsm-mee.org.

Archie, Kimberly. (2011) Ten Things I Wish I Understood Before My Daughter Made the Competitive Cheerleading Team. Retrieved from www.nationalcheersafety.com

Flegel, Melinda J. (1997). Sport First Aid. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Martens, Rainer. (1990). Successful Coaching. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

McGrath, Fr. Richard. (2009). Effective Athletic Administration for Catholic Schools and Parishes. Arlington VA: National Catholic Educational Association.

Michigan Governors Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports (2000). Position Statement: The Prevention of Injuries in Amateur Football. Retrieved from www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/vipf2/football.htm

Ninemire, Valerie. Preventing Injuries: What Cheerleaders and Coaches Should Know. Retrieved from www.cheer-leading.about.com

Woog, Dan. (1984). Curing Common Coaching Problems. Soccer Journal, Nov/Dec 1984.



INJURY INFORMATION REPORT

This report is to be completed for injuries involving

- a student, while under the responsibility of the school/parish
- an employee (or volunteer) acting at the direction of, or on behalf of, the school/parish

WHO WAS INJURED?

Name: _____

Check one: Student Employee Volunteer Other (specify below)

If student, give grade and age: _____

If employee (volunteer), give job title or duties: _____

For Employee, complete "Worker Compensation: First Report of Accident" and send to Catholic Mutual Insurance (not to State of Kentucky). For Volunteer, contact Finance Office, Diocese of Covington, for proper insurance form. Diocese of Covington, P.O. Box 15550, Covington KY 41015-0550, Phone (859) 392-1550

WHEN AND WHERE DID THE ACCIDENT HAPPEN?

Date: _____ Time: _____

Location (classroom, cafeteria, playground, gym, etc.) _____

WHAT HAPPENED?

Describe the accident: _____

NAMES OF WITNESSES: _____

WHAT KIND OF INJURY?

Part of body affected and type of injury: _____

WHAT ACTION WAS TAKEN?

____ Parent/Guardian notified Transported to doctor/hospital by school personnel

____ Student released to Parent/Guardian Emergency unit/ambulance called

Other _____

Person completing report: _____ School _____

Principal/DRE: _____ Date: _____

Original: Department of Catholic Schools - Attn. Jan Davis

Copy: School/Parish Files

Note: It is not necessary to send a copy of this report to Catholic Mutual. Thank you.

St. Joseph Parish and School Coach's Code of Conduct

St. Joseph Parish and School believe that sportsmanship is of significant importance, and its promotion and practice are essential. Coaches have a duty to assure that participation on the teams they coach promote the development of good character. This code applies to all coaches involved in interscholastic activities at St. Joseph Parish and School.

As a coach in the athletic program of St. Joseph School, I agree to the following:

1. I will teach, enforce, advocate, and model the development of the Catholic school ideal and good sportsmanship.
2. I will abide by the Elementary School Coaching Guidelines
3. I will support the mission, vision, and values of the parish and school, recognizing that athletics contributes to them but never supersedes them.
4. I will promote academic excellence and the educational process.
5. I will respect participants, officials, opponents, parents, spectators, and all others involved in the activity.
6. I will promote fair play and uphold the spirit of the rules in the activity.
7. I will model appropriate behavior at all times.
8. I will absolutely refrain from any physical or verbal abuse of the players entrusted to my care.
9. I will learn the rules of the sport and teach them to the players.
10. I will strive to teach the skills of the sport to all players.
11. I will ensure that all players have equal opportunities to learn and demonstrate skills in practices and drills.
12. I will abide by the playing time and participation guidelines specified for the sport and age level of the players I coach.
13. My priorities in coaching are as follow:
 - a. Player safety
 - b. Sportsmanship
 - c. Teamwork
 - d. Skill Development
 - e. Participation and camaraderie
 - f. Team achievement and victories

I have read and understand the requirements of this code and agree to adhere to them while serving as a coach for St. Joseph School.

Signature

Date

Printed Name