

COACHE'S CORNER:

EDUCATE YOUR PARENTS! Most soccer Mom's and Dad's have very little back round or are not fans of the game. It can be boring, tedious, and not very technical if all they have seen is your typical MLS game, or U8 pack soccer game on Saturday!

Talk to them often about the importance of every single role on a team. Maybe a striker's role is a little more glamorized, but just as in football so is the QB and RB. Sports are just funny that way.

Most football fans would never minimize the importance of a solid Line backer, or DB, or how bout an Offensive Linemen that protects the QB? Every role is big in sports, and parents sometimes just need to be brought up to speed with what makes a solid soccer team from back to front...

Yes in that order. A team starts from the Goal Keeper and back line on out!

To a good coach, he knows the importance of sound Keeper or a tenacious defender. These roles are just important as the Striker, if not more so in the over all scheme of things.

BE A COMMITTED COACH: The Coach has to always set the tone for the entire team. He or She is who is looked to for all aspects of skill, leadership, guidance, support, knowledge, trust, motivation and discipline.

Always be on time and better yet be early. Be the first one there, last one to leave. This goes a long way to show everyone on your team they are valued. You are showing them you put them first, before yourself. If you are demanding the player and parent to make sacrifices, shouldn't you?

Do what you say you're going to do! Your word is your bond, this helps establish trust and an overall good environment when your team knows you mean what you say.

Communicate well! You have a Team Manager, always make sure the word gets out quickly and often. Keep everyone up to speed with plenty of notice.

Set up quarterly Parent meetings, just to touch base as unit. Your team should welcome these, and desire a good family atmosphere. Not meeting with them often enough will make them feel isolated, even unimportant.

PREPARE WELL, BE DEDICATED OUTSIDE OF COACHING TIME: Always have a practice plan for each session. Better yet, prepare well in advance for weeks or even months of training sessions you can progress towards. You can always extend certain drills and tweak session plans based on how it works, how well they caught on, or if there is much difficulty and you need to repeat the exercise many times.

This also extends also to **GAME PREPARATION:** Always know in advance who has been working the hardest in training, who has been dialed in the most and over all who seems ready and fit for specific roles. You should always reward the players who have been committed, working hard, and listening well to instructions. These are the players usually most eager and ready for game day!

Game strategies can change as a game goes on, every good coach knows it won't always go according to plan. But plan for change and adjustments also! Have 2-3 lineups ready to pull from. Whether you need to pack your midfield with strength and speed, or if you are trailing at the end of a game and should add 1-2 extra players in your attack. Always have back up plans!!!

The game is filled with emotion, excitement, dissapointment, etc. Have pre-determined plans you strategized in advance to pull from.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL: If you constantly get mad at the ref and blame games on him or her, shout profanity, or cuss out your players. How do you think your players will learn to react when the going gets tough? Will they take accountability or will they learn to pass blame? We need to teach them to step up in the toughest of situations. We all get shook up, but when we stay poised we show them how to cope. Teach them to compete hard, but always with good sportsmanship. If we can not pass this on to the player, we should re-think our calling as coaches. The wins and losses will not matter in 10 years from now, even a few years from now. Mainly, how well did you develop and prepare the athlete to do their role and most importantly did they do it with the right mindset? We often see failed sportsmanship by a coach who always tears down a player. And then teammates tearing down one another. Its not hard to spot if you've been involved in sports.

DEALING WITH UNRULY PARENT: Sometimes you just need to spend a 1 on 1 conversation with a parent. Clear the air, answer questions, try with as much that is in you to be reasonable and see what the real concerns are. If you can avoid a Parent/Player from being dissatisfied or prevent their departure, this normally is what's best for the team in most situations.

But there are instances where you may never see eye to eye. A parent may never buy in to your coaching style. Or the parent may genuinely just not like you, or you not like them. There is nothing wrong with letting parents know your team is not the right fit. Some times it is better to move a player on, and all parties will be much better off in the long run. What you need to avoid is a negative vibe permeating your team. All it takes is one unhappy family to plant bad seed with other parents (who are normally pretty happy) and before you know it, you have a clan of despisers going after you for the smallest of things! I have been around Youth sports long enough to watch it all unfold. Sadly, if one is truly unhappy, the tendency is to make sure everyone is unhappy.

IMPORTANT STEPS TO TAKE WHEN A PARENT CROSSES THE LINE OF NOT RESPECTING YOUR COACHING: Always reach out and try to have a 1 on 1 talk. See if a mutual agreement can happen. Be reasonable but always be upfront and truthful to your parents. Never let situations go with out addressing. Your asking for a potential disaster waiting to happen, and sometimes it could have been avoided. If more situations arise, take the issue to your Club board. The Club board will review each situation individually and help the coach decide what next steps need to happen for the better of the team and club.

FINAL REMARKS: If any of these things seem too difficult a task or just not worth it, then we should not really be out there coaching. If we really love what we do, it will show in all these aspects by mainly working hard to improve ourselves in the many tasks a coach must learn to master. Exhibiting sportsmanship as well as technical understading makes for a solid long term coach. Be a "Class A" coach! Not just a coach with an "A license" but an "F" when it comes to class ! Our kids are worth it and they deserve it.

