Stages of Team Building: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing

Developing team cohesion for the building of a successful team means going through some stages. Sport psychologists have come up with four stages that groups of teams go through. These stages are typical of most teams. It may be a surprise to you that one of the stages that is normal for teams is to experience fighting!! But we will begin with the first stage.

The first stage is called forming, and is also known as testing. In essence, team members are sizing each other up. Players are making judgments about the coach. Players are making judgments about the strengths and weaknesses of the other players. Players are making judgments about their own strengths and weaknesses and where they fit in with the team or group. They may be asking themselves questions like, “Will I have a positive experience by being on this team?” Or they may ask, “can I make a commitment to spend many hours together with this group on an ongoing basis?” Players might not actually verbalize or say what’s going on in their mind, but it is entirely normal to wonder about these things during this stage of team building.

The next stage is called the storming stage, also known as the infighting stage. During this stage, there is much arguing, tension, conflict, and rebellion. It is in this stage that players are competing against one another. They are trying to establish their position on the team. Will
I make the team? Will I be a starter? Will I be a substitute? What does the coach think of me? Do the other players respect my abilities in sport? What can I do to show the coach and my peers that I deserve to get lots of playing time this season? This is the time that the coach is trying to decide who fits where. This is the time that players are trying to secure their position on the team. Players want to know what their role or job will be on this team. There is a lot going on socially during this time. Leadership skills, which are a form of social skills may be just as important or even more important than natural ability. It is important to show the coach, during this storming time, all of your best characteristics and attributes as an athlete, and as a person.

The third stage is the norming stage, or the organizing stage. This is the stage in which everyone on the team is assigned a role by the coach and perhaps, with some help from help from the captains of the team. Each player should clearly be able to describe what it is that they will contribute to the team. All jobs or roles should be respected by all members of the team as being important and valued. A non-starter, after all could quickly become a starter if a starter were to become injured. The norming period is the quiet period that follows the storming period. Each player should have accepted there place on the team. If players continue to express dissatisfaction with their roles, the team will not be successful. Such negative attitudes should not be accepted. A major part of being on a team is selflessness, sacrificing personal desires that are in conflict with the team’s vision of success. That does not mean that a non-starter does not continue to work diligently to improve; quite the opposite is true. It’s just the main focus now is TEAM not ME.

The last stage is called the performing stage. It is this stage that mature closeness occurs between teammates and coach. Remember, it is a mature closeness that respects others. At this point, each team member is genuinely concerned about the welfare and progress of other teammates. When another teammate experiences success, other teammates are genuinely happy for that person, not sulking in jealousy of them. In fact, teammates help each other to achieve success. In this stage, there is a high degree of trust.

TEAM CLIMATE

What is the “weather” like in your team environment? Is it warm and nurturing? Is it stormy, with lots of arguing? Is it sunny, with lots of hard work and lots of improvement? Is it cold, with every player out for himself or herself?

The team climate is important in creating a successful team. It is an important responsibility of your coach to establish a team environment in practice and games that is positive and encouraging, yet still instructive. After all, you want to learn the sport you are playing and becoming better at it or you wouldn’t be there. But it is so important that you feel that you are respected as a person. While the coach may, on occasion, raise his or her voice, it should be done with the motive of helping you become a better player, not to tear you down as a person.

You can help develop a positive team climate by encouraging others to do their best, being a positive role model, not gossiping, and by showing respect to your coach, teammates, other teams, and referees.