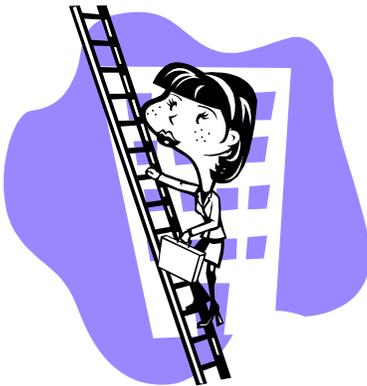


YouthFirst

*Coaches Learning About Youth Sports
The Sports Education and Leadership Program at UNLV*

Get Real, Would Ya?



As coaches in an athletic or sport environment, we hold the duty of being the main source of advice in regards to performance for those we work with. In this role, we must be sensitive to the feelings of these amateur athletes.

Discussing performance can be more effective when coaches and athletes mutually set realistic expectations in the form of goals. Goal setting is only productive when they are obtainable. To be obtainable, goals must be realistic.

Expecting perfection routinely is unfair, unrealistic and harmful to young athletes. Teaching children that mistakes are a natural part of performance is critical for its transcending power into other aspects of their life. Additionally, as coaches who work with teenage girls, your awareness of the bombardment of society's view of the "perfect" woman is critical. Our young female athletes rely on coaches to foster acceptance of an imperfect body and at times, imperfect performance.

A more effective strategy would be to impart the desire to "perform at their best". Teaching that the word "best" does not necessitate perfection is crucial in keeping athletes motivated and interested. Furthermore, unremitting "best" efforts increases self esteem which has been traditionally fragile for girls during her teenage years.

As a coach and mentor, the need to set realistic and reasonable expectations for players has tremendous benefits in the life of athletes. As a result, physical activity participation or sports involvement become a positive, and thus, lifelong experience.

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What A Failure!



*“You always
pass failure
on the way to
success.”*

*Mickey
Rooney*

*There is no such thing as failure, only results,
with some more successful than others
--Jeff Keller, Attitude is Everything, Inc.*

*There is no failure except in no longer trying.
--Elbert Hubbard, Writer and craft colonist*

Do you set unrealistic expectations for your athletes? Are your players victimized by your perfect goals and objectives? Do you verbally compare your players, making non-starters feel like failures?

Verbal comparisons from coaches among players are a major setback for athletes. Additionally, this behaviors leads players to become critical of themselves and others. As a result, their participation in a team setting becomes a negative experience and memory.

The act of comparing ourselves to others occur naturally. Players immediately recognize the skills of their team mates and opponents in ratio to their own. The danger occurs when coaches foster this behavior thinking it will result in increase effort and performance. If the player experiences no success or improvement in skill, the players quits because he or she has failed.

“What’s the use of trying? No matter what I do, it will never be enough. The coach always wants more, my parents are frustrated. I am not as good as the other kids. I wish they would just leave me alone. This used to be fun!”

11 year old boy in a city basketball league team

When coaches encounters a player who has become frustrated by the expectations of others, they have a responsibility to shift negative feelings into a positive, productive outlook.

Dr. Darrell J. Burnett suggests the key to stopping this behavior is found in teaching players to compete against themselves. Working together, coaches and athlete can set realistic goals wherein players compete against their past performance. Shifting the preoccupation of comparing themselves to others gives the player the control he or she needs in regards to their output. Additionally, coaches should involve parents in this crucial process. Teaching parents that adult goals for young athletes are not harmonious. Remind parents of the “fun factor” sports participation should encompass. Enlighten eager mothers and fathers of the unnecessary pressure they emit when unrealistic goals for youngsters are set.

Now, That's What I Call Progress!

Realistic expectations established between players and coaches can be measured in three ways; frequency, duration and intensity.

Frequency measures the repeated desired behavior.

Basketball

Goal: Making free throws

Measurement: Chart progress of free throws completed during practices and games.

Flag Football

Goal: Guarding zone and striping flags of those carrying the ball.

Measurement: Chart progress of goal during practices and games.

Duration measures the length of time the desired behavior occurs.

All Sports

Goal: Being on time to practice.

Measurement: Chart progress and look for improvement.

Goal: Not becoming upset by referee's call

Measurement: Record behavior for each game and look for improvement.

Intensity measures the amount of energy, drive and zest given for specific activity.

All Sports

Goal: Focus on game

Measurement: Using a scale, record player's interpretation of his or her focus. "On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being perfect, how focused were you on the game?"

Goal: Cheering on team mates from sidelines

Measurement: Using the scale method mentioned above, have player rate their behavior.

Strategies such as these provide continuous feedback for players in their goal setting. Additionally, providing varieties of goals from skill execution to attitude improvement gives players repeated success in all aspects. As a result, players enjoy a sense of achievement and accomplishment throughout the given sports season.

*"Failure is
an attitude, not
an outcome."
Harvey
Mackay*

Get It In Black and White!

Gene Donahue once said the difference between a goal and a dream is the written word. Simply setting realistic expectations for our teams and players have no value unless it has been documented and displayed.

Setting goals for team and individual players hold distinct advantages such as:

- Improved Performance
- Enhanced Quality of Practice
- Clarified Expectations
- High Intrinsic Motivation
- Greater Challenge and Less Boredom
- Pride, Satisfaction, and Self Confidence
- Decreased Anxiety
- Improved Concentration
- Time Management
- Self-Efficacy
- Greater Sense of Purpose

(www.tennisserver.com)

Despite tremendous benefits, coaches habitually neglect to record goals and their progress. As a result, this successful strategy is often neglected and thus making the team experience less meaningful for some participants.



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