



## **A Good Coach and Manager**

### **Off-field activities must be organized and work delegated**

*By Karen Stanley*

#### **PLAYER MANAGMENT**

Individuals within the team structure - Remember that all players are different. Each has strengths, weaknesses, personalities, come from different backgrounds, etc. Coaches must adjust to each person on the team. Find out what each person reacts to best and coach accordingly. Remember, people first want to know that you care.

**Motivation and coaching styles** - The first thing to determine is why is this person turning out for soccer? What is each individual's expectation of the experience? What coaching style does each player best respond to?

**Treating the players with fairness** - There is a difference between treating players fairly and treating them the same. No exceptions should be permitted in applying team rules. Remind players that you don't yell, you talk loudly due to outside distractions and there is a need to be heard. Also emphasize that during a match people are being addressed as players, not as people.

**Talents of each individual** - All players bring a talent to the team. What is it? Try to find roles for those who will see little game action. Discover their talents and utilize them within the team setting.

**Communication** - Establish that you know that it is "their team." But let the players know that there is a certain expectation you have for them. "This is what I expect" needs to be repeated often. When coaching during a game, eye contact must be made by both the coach and the player. After there has been some dialogue, the player needs to respond (i.e., "okay coach"). Both players and coaches should demand honesty from each other. Use the "sandwich approach" when you critique a player's performance. Surround criticism with praise. Criticize the performance; praise the individual. Emphasize that objectivity is necessary for individual and collective improvement and when you do criticize, it is directed to the individual as a player, not to the total person.

**Quality individual time** - Remember that, as a coach, you are a very important person to each player. Find time to talk to each player on the team each day. While doing so, make eye contact.

**Expectations** - Learn from the past; establish new goals each year. Work with the captains in carrying out these goals.

### BEHAVIOIR MANAGMENT

**Expectations** - Be specific with what you want from them and what they can expect from you.

**Captain(s)** - Choice should ultimately be made by the coach. Votes can give the coach some indication of the players' preferences, but the coach has 51 percent of the vote.

**Teaching and developing leadership** - Have players take leadership training courses. Place players in public speaking roles. Leadership development is a major responsibility of the coach.

**The prima donna player** - Usually a vain, undisciplined person. Be demanding. Keep a close rein and record the player's positive and negative actions. The documentation will be needed if you dismiss the player from the team. Have the player, parents and your athletic director co-sign as events emerge. Evaluate how much time this player is demanding of your coaching time against what is spent on the rest of the team. When it gets out of proportion, ask the player to leave the squad.

**Acceptable versus unacceptable behavior** - List these expectations in your list of team rules:

- o Reputation - One bad example, one poor judgment can affect a person's viewpoint of the image of your team. "A team is as strong as the weakest link."
- o Lifelong values - The objective of coaching is to make a difference in players' lives. Instill good values (punctuality, ethics and morals, respect, communication, dealing with adversity, reliability, leadership qualities) in your players. Coaches have an opportunity to make a difference by everything we say, do, believe in and teach.

### TEAM MANAGEMENT

**Team rules** - Must have a legitimate purpose.

**Fairness and integrity, respect and diversity** - Players must build trust in each other and the team and must respect each other's differences.

**Captains and leadership** - Players who must be able to lead as well as follow, they must display loyalty, willingness to solve problems and be role models in observing team rules. The coach can insist that playing time not be an issue between player and coach.

**Goal setting** - Both individual and team goals should be set, including technical, tactical, physical and psychological goals. They must be reviewed and evaluated.

**Life skills** - Review lifelong values.

**Team building** - Can include such events as rope course training, esteem exercises, yogurt/pizza parties, posting of quotes, special awards (players of the week, etc.). Use

off-field time for these events. Review team goals three times a year with the team, small groups of players and individual players.

**Injuries** - Delegate care and monitoring of injuries to an assistant coach so the head coach can concentrate on team preparation and supervision.

**Academics** - The coach's attitude is important. All players are student-athletes. Emphasize study time on road trips, in rooms, etc.

**Psychology** - An important element in coaching, training for mental toughness should be included. One way is for a coach to referee scrimmages and makes unfair calls ("Part of the game!"), allowing them to develop skills for playing under adverse conditions.

**Life skills** - Need to address such issues as nutrition and alcohol and other substance abuse.

### **SEASON MANAGEMENT**

**Preseason** - Send the players letters that contain the off-season conditioning program and also remind players of goals, physical and otherwise. Establish the length and content of sessions (physical, technical, tactical and psychological) of your practice sessions. Will there be tryouts or will preseason be by invitation? Train yourself to be objective. Use assistant coaches or others you trust to give you feedback in order to maintain objectivity.

**Practice** - Content should be based on the team's deficiencies as demonstrated in prior games. Decide on length, field setup and necessary equipment prior to the session. Decide how to obtain assistants and utilize them effectively.

**Pre-game** - Prepare a pre-game check list, which should include all equipment needed. Make designing the pre-game warm-up joint effort of coach and players.

**Halftime** - An especially important time on the road. Know where you want to go before the game begins (i.e., trees on sunny days, etc.). Avoid distractions.

**Post-game** - Use some exercises in the cool down phase to avoid soreness, then carefully and briefly craft remarks. If you feel obliged to overreact, wait until the next day.

**Scheduling** - Strive for balance between games the team can win, games that are 50-50 and those that will challenge the team. Try to avoid lots of tough games in a row. Try to balance home and away matches throughout the season.

**Scouting** - Not many teams scout. If you can't observe the opposing team, call on someone whose judgement is valued to gain a sense of opponent's strength. Use an assistant to scout. If you play a team twice in a season, use a videotape to review that team's play.

## STAFF MANAGEMENT

**Assistant coaches, goalkeeper coaches** - Insist on loyalty. Give responsibility with the objective of having them leave and become head coaches themselves. Ask for their feedback and give them yours. If you don't have assistants, look in your community for various forms of assistance.

**Managers** - Many students want to get involved. They can be helpful performing meaningful tasks at practices and games.

**Team parents and volunteers** - People with a variety of skills can aid the team in various roles (fundraisers, travel, etc.). Volunteers may be great as demonstrators, goalkeeper coaches, etc.

**Facilities, equipment, personnel, athletic trainers** - They can take pressure off coach so he or she can coach.

## REFEREE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

**The referee's role** - To ensure safety for the players and to enforce the rules. Coaches must approach referees in an ethical fashion, keeping these factors in mind. Players and coaches make mistakes. So do referees, but referees don't have the ability to criticize players and coaches in a public fashion. The same professional courtesy should be extended to them.

**The refereeing profession** - One might think about how effective a surgeon would be if every move in the operating room were critiqued. NISOA's program of referee training is excellent, as most coaches would agree.

**The coach's role** - Support the referees in their decisions in the same manner as you as a coach would expect your assistant coach to support you.

**Good sportsmanship and ethics** - An excellent team goal is to be awarded the NSCAA Team Ethics Award of Merit for the fewest yellow card citations each season. Players are not to react negatively to officials' decisions. If they retaliate against an opponent or overreact to referees, the coach should remove them from the field.

**Bridging the gap** - Bring in a referee during preseason to discuss new rule interpretations and changes. Have players enroll in referee courses. Use the NISOA/NSCAA video "Critical Match Incidents" as part of your team training. Call unfair fouls during team scrimmages. Teach the team to recognize that players will not always agree with calls but they are part of the game and the players must learn to accept them.

**Teaching tools** - Learning to deal with authority and accepting different refereeing styles is an important lesson for players. They must learn to adjust to referees as they will have to learn to adjust to different fields, opponents, circumstances and situations in their lives.

## PARENTAL MANAGEMENT

**Involvement** - College is a time for players to disconnect from parents. Regardless of your coaching environment (youth, high school, college), the role you expect parents to play should be spelled out prior to the season.

**Parental support** - Their support is needed. Find roles for them. Many offer a variety of talents that can be integrated into your programs. Encourage game attendance but tell them that they must be encouraging, support your coaching decisions and not criticize the referees. If they want to discuss the coach-player relationship, the issue of playing time is not to be an issue for debate.

**Win-win philosophy** - Everyone feels good when the coach/player, coach/ parent and player/parent relationships are in sync.

## TEAM TRAVEL

**Travel rules** - Players must be clean, respectful and courteous at all times, especially in restaurants and hotels. So the driver can concentrate, no screaming or loud rap music in vehicles. Curfew must be observed. Rules are established to ensure the team image is a positive one. One incident of poor behavior reflects on the entire team. Respect for others is paramount.

**Tournaments** - Because of logistics, everything must be tightly organized. Viewing of other games must be addressed. Meals during the tournament need to include when, what and how much. Warm-up length for multiple games needs to be addressed.

**Organization** - Eating, changing facilities, travel arrangements, training room facilities, uniform selection, halftime arrangements are all concerns in a tournament situation. Know directions and distance to site, check and recheck game times, etc., to avoid or minimize slipups.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Becoming involved with your community is a life skill and can be nurtured within the team.

**Fund-raising** - Stage tournaments managed by your team. Golf tournaments are an easy way to fund-raise and "friend-raise."

**Clinics and camps** - Operate an all-girls day camp where team players serve as instructors. Players learn to become role models at the camps. Adopt a younger-age team your older team can mentor. Hold clinics for them and have them be "ball girls" at your games.

**Service** - Have players volunteer for service at food banks, deliver baskets, etc. Train players to give back to society. By helping run clinics they learn to give back to the game.

**Get your players into coaching** - Identify those players who might be good coaches. Take them with you when you do clinics, teach them to be coaches. Enroll them in NSCAA coaching courses.

**Mentorship** - Players have to understand and accept that they are role models. Have players adopt a youth team and become involved in its activities.

### **THE COACH**

The coach should strive to develop great people. Part of this is to have a positive attitude yourself and have it rub off on your players. A positive attitude is more important than aptitude. It is not enough to just be okay. Don't accept mediocrity, and don't let your players accept it. Strive for excellence. Attitude can be controlled. A coach's ultimate role is to teach both the game and the person within the spirit of the game.

