

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

It's not easy being green. Of course, if you are from Saskatchewan it is a lot easier than if you hail from other provinces (The Rider Nation). Everyone that has ever coached has experienced the unique challenges that come with the first 5 years of coaching.

Here is a perspective to consider for both the rookie coach and the athlete on the receiving end.

Athletes your task is to look for opportunities to learn. For those that struggle with this consider the following; Oft times we learn in what we may consider *'the most unlikely places'*.

Coaches, Rome was not built in a day. Demonstrate your genuine interest in the individual and/or team. Do what make sense and carry out what you say you will do. Practice reasonableness and fairness.

The Non-Negotiables

Every coach needs to identify and establish their NON-NEGOTIABLES. Think through, reflect and sort out, what your non-negotiables are as a coach.

For example (but not limited to);

- Boundaries
 - Do My Job, Your Job list. This can be done with the athletes you are coaching or...simply your own list.
- Decision making at the event
 - Brainstorm a variety of scenarios with the team and from that decide on what action fits each scenario. For example;
 - Intoxication
 - Missed curfew
 - Poor sportsmanship (hitting, kicking, things or inappropriate language, refusal to honor commitments made, line up decisions, advice during tight match.

Everything else is negotiable.

The NEGOTIATED items

Goal setting – what does the player and team want to achieve. How are they going to work towards achieving the goal(s) so that they give themselves the best opportunity to succeed?

Commitment - Once the and how of goal setting is formed – does it balance with what their promise of commitment is?

THE BOTTOMLINE on goal setting is that the individual and team needs to take ownership of the goals. Therefore, they need to be involved in the creation of the goals AND as importantly what the commitment to get there will be.

Once the goal setting is established then its enforcement may be adapted by the team as a non-negotiable.

For the Coach at the Lanes

On the lanes come prepared – punctuality and preparedness in what is going to be done at the practice is critical. Whether you are a seasoned veteran or the rookie coach it is critical that you lead by example. Get there on time and be prepared.

Ingredients of a Practice

I have a basic rule of thumb. Generally, my practices are at minimum 60% focused on the development or reinforcement of 'how to execute' and 40% dedicated to some form of competitive experience.

I can further segment aspects of a practice to recognize drills done with pins or without, as well as drills done with scoring and without

If you are looking for some suggested games and drills read through some of the previous articles stored on this site.

What to do when things are not going well

Most importantly remain open, objective, optimistic, and focused on productive aspects of competition that coach and player control. As discussions unfold, ask open ended questions that cannot be answered with one word. What you want is discussion. Sometimes as things get tough, we can become evasive. Accountability is important here, but the tone of how you hold individuals and yourself accountable is important. It will be times like this when how you say something will be more important than what you say.

Along the way, own up to any mistakes and possible mistakes you may have made. Your willingness to be accountable is an important benchmark but... resist going overboard and suggesting through most of the discussion that *"You may have been able to do it differently"*. These discussions are not about blame, or avoidance of accountability.