LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

// Develop a set of ethical guidelines for your coaching practice that are mindful of the moral development of your athletes
// Explain your coaching philosophy, understanding that coaching is mentoring
// Employ ethical coaching methods based on personal moral principles
// Foster and facilitate sportsmanship and ethical behavior in your athletes
// Employ decision-making strategies and quality coaching methods to navigate difficult situations with athletes and parents
// Appreciate the importance of effective communication with parents and athletes and understand your role in fostering it

INTRODUCTION

Coaches assist athletes in making decisions as a trusted resource and must accept that responsibility seriously. Coaches are role models and aim to impact the lives of their athletes.

A TrueSport coach fosters development of the athlete in providing life lessons. Research shows that coaches are the number one influencers in an athlete’s life, with their influence affecting athletes’ current and future choices. In addition to the role of coach, they are also mentors. Top-level coaches understand their roles in both of these areas. Mentoring is a skill that must be cultivated over time. Lessons on the playing field carry over to life lessons, which the athlete will experience.

Coaches must formulate a philosophy of working with an athlete based on their sport environments, the policies and rules of the organization they are associated with and a consistent thought process for all athletes they work with.

Coaches must evaluate the goals of the program and the athletes before determining how best to direct an athlete in the sport environment.

WHAT TYPE OF COACH ARE YOU?

The Novice (Freshman) Coach

All coaches start here. The novice coach typically focuses on the X’s and O’s as he/she learns the ropes and settles in. The main emphasis is on surviving the season, wins, and performance. He/she emphasizes policy, rules and following procedure.

The Intermediate (JV) Coach

When the emphasis shifts from athlete performance and begins to include self-reflection and learning, a coach moves beyond the novice phase and into the intermediate phase. Here he/she begins to develop his/her own competency and proficiency as a leader.
The Expert (Varsity) Coach

As the learning process continues and a coach develops, he/she may progress to the expert development stage. At this point, there will be a greater emphasis on watching, assessing, learning, and sharing what he/she feels he/she has to contribute, over immediately taking control. Expert coaches deliberately and intentionally tinker with things based on their educated knowledge. They take full responsibility for their own actions, and they look for the role they play in the actions of their athletes, both good and bad. For a coach at this level, there are no bad athletes or bad sessions. It is always a matter of going back to the drawing board.

HOW CAN YOU SET THE FOUNDATION FOR BEING AN EXPERT LEVEL TRUESPORT COACH?

// Grow to Lead: Be a role model for my athletes and encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, fans and officials at games, practices, or other sporting events, while refraining from behaviors that will negatively affect my athletes.

// Fair Play or No Way: Demonstrate respect for the game and the rules of competition, fellow coaches, officials, parents, fans and athletes.

// Be Courageous: Stand up for what is right, both in sport and in life, and encourage my athletes to do the same, stressing the importance of having a moral and ethical foundation on which to stand.

// Practice Humility: Instill confidence in my athletes and model the way to win with grace and lose with dignity.

// See Further than Today: Use sport as a vehicle for imparting the values of responsibility, respect for self and others; work ethic; and sportsmanship, and understand that these values carry over beyond today, from the playing field into life.

// Believe in Better: Cultivate hard work and dedication in my athletes that will translate into success both in sport and in life.

// Keep it Real: Focus on having fun and create an environment where my athletes can do the same, while emphasizing the importance of trying their hardest, even if it leads to failure.

// Achieve More: Winning is not the only priority – celebrate progress as well as results, stressing that competing fairly and with respect makes one truly victorious.

QUALITY COACHING METHODS

// Lead by example: You are one of the most influential people in these athletes’ lives at the moment.

// Focus on the path: You attention and praise should be toward the athlete’s effort and achievements, in addition to the outcome.

// Turn mistakes into lessons: Mistakes are a part of the journey to success. Use them as teaching opportunities for your athletes.

// Reward and Recognize: Acknowledge your athletes when they do something right and reward positive behaviors.

// Set clear expectations: It’s easy to tell athletes what not to do, but this doesn’t always help them figure out what they should do.

CHALLENGES

Creating a positive environment for your athletes is just the beginning. Expect challenges along the way not only for you, but for your athletes as well. The key for you is to see the challenges from the athlete’s perspective – not just from your point of view or that of their parents.

Be sensitive to the athlete experiencing:

// Internal Pressure: I have to win – to prove that I am #1.

// External Expectations: Everyone expects me to win – my friends, my family, my school and my community. I can’t let everyone down!

// Peer Pressures: I can’t let my team down. They depend on me to perform well.

// Parental Pressures: My parents get so mad when I don’t do well.

// Temptation to Take Shortcuts, Bend the Rules, or Cheat: Nobody will even know… if I just do it this one time.

// Body Image: I need to be leaner and stronger than what I am, no matter what it takes.

// Risk of Injuries: I don’t have time to be hurt or recover. This game is so important that I can’t afford to miss any training.

// Scholarships: I have to do well and impress these scouts, or I won’t get a scholarship.
The coach can help the athlete overcome these pressures or negative situations:

- **Be proactive:** Develop a healthy culture that focuses on and rewards personal effort, not just outcome.
- **Talk about expectations:** Prioritize and navigate both your and your athlete’s expectations and how those relate to the pressures your athlete faces.
- **Stay connected:** Take the time to check in with your athletes off the playing field. Injured, absent, or marginalized athletes are more likely to struggle.
- **Watch for warning signs:** Be alert for athletes who are overly critical of themselves and who don’t balance their perceived problems or “failures” with their positive achievements.
- **Be mindful of your actions:** Actions often do speak louder than words. The way that you act is just as important – if not more important – than what you say.
- **Communicate and educate:** Keep the lines of communication open, and educate parents and athletes on positive performance, sportsmanship, resources, and proper training.

**WORKING WITH PARENTS**

One of the most consistent sources of stress for coaches is working with parents. Coaches face the difficult situation of parents pressuring athletes; often the parent has a different impression of the situation than the athlete. The coach must be the intermediary to explain to the athlete the positive intentions of the parent, while helping the parent to realize that they are creating a negative situation for the athlete.

**Coach should develop a sense of trust with the parent:**

- Clearly demonstrate you care about each athlete on your team regardless of athletic ability, not only as athletes but also as people regardless of their athletic ability.
- Show empathy towards your athletes particularly when they are injured or struggling.
- Be aware of your power as a coach and avoid using your power in an aggressive or intimidating manner.
- Earn the respect of your athletes and parents, do not demand it.
- Conduct yourself with the same respect and professionalism that you expect to see in others.
- Be attentive to parents’ concerns. This doesn’t mean you always agree, but truly listening is a positive and valuable skill in positive communication.
- Be consistent and fair in team policies and decisions.
- Be sure you words and actions act the team mission.

**PRE-SEASON PARENT MEETING**

Pre-season Parent Meeting provide an opportunity to build a partnership of trust. Set your expectations for both athletes and parents in a clear and concise manner.

**Tips for Holding a Meeting:**

- Make the meeting mandatory
- Introduce yourself
- Discuss your coaching philosophy
- Set clear expectations for behavior
- Share your season’s goals
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

// Recognize the inherent dangers of supplements and energy drinks, and educate your athletes and their parents on the potential health risks of using them
// Understand the difference between energy drinks and sports drinks and identify the dangers of energy drinks
// Instill healthy training habits and the importance of proper nutrition and hydration in your athletes
// Guide your athletes in becoming better decision-makers by having honest, open conversations with them about their choices

INTRODUCTION

Often athletes believe there is a quick fix and do not weigh the risks involved in using supplements. Athletes face pressures to gain weight, become more powerful and stronger, and do not understand the hazards of excessive use of supplements or know the side effects involved. There are serious health risks and many anecdotal situations about athletes who have had health issues or died of excessive abuse of supplements.

Common athlete perspectives:

// It’s no big deal. It’s a good way for me to get as strong as I can.
// Oh, everybody takes protein powder. It’s good for your health to have a lot of protein anyway.
// I just need a quick hit of energy before practice, so I drink one of these.
// Of course vitamins are safe—even my grandmother takes them!

The coach must be educated to provide the risks involved to athletes and to refer their athletes to the appropriate resources in determining which supplements are not banned, along with any health risks involved in a legal supplement.

SUPPLEMENTS

What is a dietary supplement?

// Products containing dietary or nutritional ingredients intended to supplement the diet.
// Supplements are not intended to be consumed as meals or as meal replacements.
// They are taken by mouth, but can come in many forms: tablet, capsule, powder, liquid, etc.
// Supplements include vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids, protein powders, energy products, and more.
Where are supplements available?

- Online
- Supermarkets
- Health food stores
- Drug stores
- Gas stations

Can I guarantee the information on the label is accurate?

Due to minimal regulations in the supplement industry, some products are mislabeled, contaminated by substances such as pesticides or heavy metals, or may be inadvertently tainted with prohibited substances.

A dietary supplement may claim it is “natural” but that does make it safe to use. Many natural substances are toxic, poisonous, or deadly if used.

No supplement is approved by the FDA.

Avoiding Dangerous Supplements

The public usually believes drugs on the store shelf are safe for consumption. Athletes often fall prey to supplements sold over the counter, only after a positive drug test, which can destroy an athlete’s career, do they learn a supplement is illegal.

Reduce your risks by avoiding supplements that:

1. Promote all in one muscle complex that turns fat into muscle
2. Contain an ingredient that ends in –ol, -idol, -stene, or that contains numbers
3. Contain proprietary blends in the ingredients
4. Contain “trademarked” or “patented” ingredients or blends of ingredients
5. Claim to treat a disease (cancer, obesity, the common cold, etc.)
6. Advertise themselves as “the newest scientific breakthrough,” “secret formula,” or “what the FDA doesn’t want you to know”
7. Claim to be safe because they have been “used for centuries” or are deemed “traditional”
8. Claim to be an alternative to prescription medication

As a coach, you should make sure that your athletes:

1. Investigate the ingredients to ensure there are not any red flags
2. Scrutinize the company
3. Verify that the product has undergone third party testing
4. Check the FDA for product alerts or recalls.

Athletes must know and realize that the benefits usually do not outweigh the risks.

ENERGY DRINKS

Examples of red flags seen on energy drinks:

1. Improves focus and concentration
2. 8 out of 10 doctors recommend this product to increase stamina
3. Now with Vitamin B making it a healthy alternative to soda

Energy drinks contain caffeine and stimulants which can be hazardous to health. Because they are so easy to find in public markets, grocery stores, gas stations, etc., athletes often fall prey to their quick fix advertisement. There are no positive effects of energy drinks that outweigh the potential harm they can do.
What are the possible side effects?

- Heart palpitations
- Headaches
- Respiratory distress
- Insomnia
- Tremors / shaking
- Dizziness
- Agitation/restlessness
- Chest pain
- Gastrointestinal upset
- Tingling or numbness of the skin

What are the signs of an overdose?

- Confusion
- Breathing troubles / muscle twitches
- Convulsions
- Fever
- Hallucinations
- Vomiting
- Increased thirst
- Irregular or rapid heartbeat
- Excessive sweating, appearance of nervousness

Athletes often give weak excuses to use energy drinks, often citing to serve as a quick fix for energy or hydration.

**TRAINING, NUTRITION AND RECOVERY**

Be prepared to discuss the use of water for hydration instead of energy drinks. Provide healthy post competition snacks that ensure appropriate recovery and hydration. For recovery, remember that the best window for recovery is within a 30-60 minute period immediately after competition. Whole and unprocessed foods make good recovery items. Apples, slice of cheese, low-fat chocolate milk make excellent recovery foods.

A coach should educate parents on portion size and healthy food choices to supply as snacks for the athlete or team.

The coach must be prepared to discuss and educate athletes on practices that an athlete may be curious about. For example, losing weight by excessive sweating and not hydrating is a common mistake youth athletes make in trying to control their weight. The coach needs to be able to explain the benefits of building muscle and losing fat weight by a combination of proper nutrition and appropriate training to build muscle.

Best practices indicate that coaches should not prescribe or encourage a particular diet or supplement to any athlete. Coaches should refer athletes and parents to licensed medical personnel as it concerns nutrition, recovery from training, and over the counter supplements.