

Essentials for Coaching Children

Coaching Tips 2

The impact of a coach on children. Emphasis on winning and other goals

Now you're a coach, and coaching comes with great responsibility.

Coaches can have a profound impact on children and their attitudes towards sport.

Why do you coach (what's important to you)?

Your motivations for coaching will affect the way that you coach.

You may be coaching to help children:

- have fun
- learn the sport and its skills
- develop personal/life skills

Or you may be coaching because you love to win!? More about this later.

Whatever your motivation, your actions/behaviours must reflect your beliefs, and be clear to the children. For example, would a coach who wants to help children have fun and develop life/personal skills, be angry with the children if they lost?

Emphasis of the coach on winning

The emphasis on winning/losing needs to be considered by the coach because winning in some form is essentially the aim of competitions. Kids are often naturally competitive (not always) – and there is nothing wrong with that.

It's great to win and it's ok to want to win; however, it will not always happen. So, winning cannot be put on a pedestal nor can it be the primary motivation for participating.

The following behaviours of a coach may indicate that they are placing too much emphasis on winning:

- playing mostly the best players
- not giving everyone a go in all positions at some stage (junior sport)
- playing sick or injured children
- getting angry or looking annoyed at players when mistakes are made
- over-celebrating a win
- appearing overly disappointed at a loss
- making children feel bad when they lose.



A coach who places too much emphasis on winning may cause a child to:

- ‘withdraw’ and be too frightened to try
- become confused or angry
- perform even worse
- be unable to improve
- feel worthless
- quit.

Goals other than winning

There needs to be a different focus and that focus can be on:

- their team spirit, persistence, skill, improvement
- putting the practice concepts into the game
- striving to give their personal best
- individual goals (e.g., try to make every throw go to your teammate this quarter, not to the opposition)
- team goals (e.g., keep the ball in our half for most of the quarter)
- keeping team talk positive
- winning graciously – not over doing the celebrations
- learning from losing – making each loss an opportunity to improve.

The impact a coach can have on children

Coaches play an important role in the life of a child. For many professional athletes, their early coach or coaches still have had the most profound impact on them.

Ways you can positively impact the lives of the children you coach:

- provide the fun and challenges they seek
- help develop personal/life skills (persistence, teamwork, fair play, positive attitudes, self-discipline, self-esteem, social skills).
- encourage life-long involvement
- make them feel included and important
- be a powerful role model of positive behaviour
- teach them how to show respect for others.

Judge your coaching not on your win/loss record, but rather on whether the children achieved all of the small goals you set them, and also whether they developed their game/physical skills, had fun, learned the sport and developed their personal/life skills in your care.

Coaching is a responsibility, but it's a **GREAT** responsibility!