



MANAGING BEHAVIOUR IN SPORT: STRATEGIES FOR COACHES

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ABSTRACT

Coaches often provide their time freely because of the satisfaction, fun and enjoyment derived from watching their athletes grow and achieve their potential. However, from time to time, frustration can creep in as their focus turns to managing bad behaviour. The aim of this article is to assist coaches by providing four strategies for engaging young athletes in sport.

KEY WORD: *satisfaction, fun and enjoyment derived , good behaviour , positive feelings.*

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Positive reinforcement involves giving a 'reward' for good behaviour, such as following training instructions or performing a skill. To ensure positive behaviour is maintained, rewards could include simply commenting on good practice or offering a smile. By creating an association between good behaviour and positive feelings, athletes will wish to receive further rewards and will continue to behave well.

NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT

Negative reinforcement involves providing a negative response to bad behaviour. The coach can try telling the athletes to stop a bad behaviour or present a situation where if bad behaviour is continued a negative consequence will occur. An example could be the coach stating that if the group is badly behaved, the fun game at the end will not be played.

PUNISHMENT

This is split into two categories. Similar to negative reinforcement, the first is a negative consequence given when athletes behave badly; for example, making the athletes do exercises like press-ups – although caution should be used when adopting this action. If a coach uses press-ups as a form of punishment, members of the group may think they are subsequently being punished if the coach then wishes to include press-ups in a circuit session.

The second type of punishment involves the removal of something positive when athletes behave badly. The punishment can take the form of being excluded from that part of the session in one of three types of 'time out'. 'Observational time out' is taking the athlete out of the session but allowing them to watch. This allows the athlete to see the fun they are missing, thus encouraging a sense of loss. An 'exclusion time out' is where the young athlete is not allowed to watch the session. This could be by sitting the athlete in a safe position in a session going on next to the main session. A 'seclusion time out' is where the young athlete is completely removed from the session, with the coach asking a parent* to take the athlete home.



TACTICAL IGNORING

Tactical ignoring differs from the previous three strategies. As bad behaviour is often an attempt to gain attention, it can be stopped when no reaction is shown. By ignoring safe inappropriate behaviour, that behaviour is not being 'rewarded' with attention and will lead to it stopping.

in conclusion, coaches should not feel unable to control the behaviour of their young athletes. If one of the strategies discussed above does not work, coaches should try using one of the others. As each athlete is different, they will respond differently to each approach. So, try each one to find the best one for you and your athletes!

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