

## Tips for Successfully Communicating with Your Players

How you address your team can have a huge impact on player attitudes, morale and motivation. Use the tips below to connect in a way that strengthens your team's resolve and keeps them motivated on game days.

### Pre-game Pep Talks

- **Make eye contact.** People equate eye contact with honesty, and honesty is a key to motivating your team.
- **Be confident and direct.** Avoid terms like "sort of," "maybe" and "perhaps." Instead, be firm and precise. Show confidence in yourself, your goals, and your team.
- **Don't yell unnecessarily.** Yelling can be effective at times, but certainly not before every game. Changing your tone can be useful, however. Shock and surprise your players by yelling when they expect a whisper or vice versa. A silent stare or a hint of a smile may also work effectively.
- **Be careful about humor.** Decide upon a mood and then stick with it. Don't alter an earnest mood with a joke. Sure, your team can use a laugh from time to time, but it shouldn't come in the middle of a serious motivational speech.
- **Avoid strong, emotional appeals.** Overly strong appeals can defeat the purpose of a pre-game pep talk. When fear or emotion is strongly aroused and not fully relieved, your team may shy away. However, they can be powerful when used sparingly and at the right time.

### Post-game Wrap-ups

- **Take the right approach.** Choose the appropriate times to push your athletes ... and the times when it's better to encourage them. Sometimes the way to get a better result next time is to support your team with positive comments.
- **Develop resiliency in your players.** Training your team to battle through difficulties can create toughness in your players. This helps create a safe environment where they can excel.
- **Avoid pointing out obvious errors.** Players already know when they've messed up. They don't need you rehashing their mistakes every time. Sometimes the best strategy is to step back and hold your tongue.
- **Limit negative outbursts.** From time to time, it may be effective to come down on your team. But do it only when you need to make an important point. If you scold them too often, they'll stop hearing you.
- **Remain under control.** If your emotions are running high, you may want to give your players a chance to talk first. Ask them questions like: "What did we do well?" and "What can we get better at?" After they've provided their input, you can share your thoughts with them.