

Motivation Techniques

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Below are some of the most effective techniques that coaches should consider. It's a compilation of experiences as a coach and instructor and what I have learned from other professionals. Depending on your situation, here are some techniques that you can choose from:

- 1. Know how important player motivation is.** Motivation: the ability to impel to action, incite to action. A coach's job is to teach and motivate. In order to do this effectively you need to know your players - know what makes them "tick". Motivating players can be the difference between a great practice and a "sloppy" practice, an average season or a state champion season.
- 2. Running laps, long lines, long lectures** before, during, or after practices once the regular season starts is not recommended. If conditioning is the reason you make players run laps, include this in your regular drills and encourage more intensity on each drill you run. That way they will work hard throughout the practice. For example: 3 v 3 on a 20 x 20 grid, players will have fun playing without noticing they are working on conditioning, and your practice will be more efficient. Avoid long lines, be creative and efficient with your drills, and avoid long speeches or explanations. Be clear and specific.
- 3. Coaching is teaching.** Be a teacher. A teacher's priority is the students' progress, NOT wins and losses. In order to teach you need to know what you teach and show the students you know the game and its mechanics. The players will make improvements, and this will yield more motivation.
Teach (explain) to them the reason why. Make a "sales pitch" to them and make sure players understand what you are "selling". If they don't understand they will not believe. Always tell them the reason why you are doing something.
Using passing and receiving for this example, let them know:
 - Why it's best to pass and receive with the inside part of the foot.
 - The importance of the first touch and why it has to be away from the opponent and into an open space.
 - Why they need to open their body when receiving the ball.The more understanding they have about the mechanics, the more they will buy into what you are trying to accomplish, and this will motivate them.
- 4. Celebrate small achievements both for the team and the individual.** Focus on other successes, not only on winning and losing.

There are other ways to “win” and be successful:

- The number of consecutive passes at one time.
- The number of times the team or the individual player gains possession of the ball.
- finishing a drill successfully
- Scoring a goal after accomplishing the objectives of the drill.
- When the team works together effectively.
- When a player/team breaks a bad habit.

There are so many other reason to celebrate in practices and games.

It is recommended (when you can) to end the drill or practice when the objectives of the drill or practice are accomplished.

5. Positive reinforcement. What is positive reinforcement? It’s when a reward is given immediately following a behavior to encourage the behavior to be done again. If a player receives a reward he/she is more likely to try to do it again.

Many ways to give a reward:

- A simple “well done (receiving the ball)”
- Praise players in front of others.
- If negative feedback is required use the “sandwich” technique: positive – negative – positive e. g. that was a great effort, but you need to look up to find your team mate before you pass, keep up the good work.
- Stop the drill to point out a positive behavior.
- More playing time.
- Awards (patches, stickers, small trophy, etc.)

Positive reinforcement works best when is it done consistently and is specific: “Good job stopping the ball” is better than “Good job”.

6. Set goals (individual and team). Make sure they are tangible goals, goals that kids can achieve according to their ability and inline with existent curriculum in your club.

Follow up after and confirm accomplishment.

Provide frequent feedback.

Again, in order to set goals, know your players and find out what makes them “tick”.

What motivates some players may not motive others. Is important not to overdo, but to be realistic.

7. Show you care. This is another way to motivate players, showing you care outside of the field and establishing a relationship. Attend their extra-curricular activities at school, show interest in how they are doing at school. Once they see you care they will

work harder for you. Post season and end of the season evaluations will give you the opportunity to have one-on-one meetings and find out more about your players.

- 8. Make practice fun.** We can all be motivated if we have fun playing. Enjoy the game with them and have FUN. Become a “child” but be careful not to be “childish”. As players grow older focus more on the competitive aspects of the game. Also make sure you create an environment where they can succeed. Most importantly, whenever possible make sure they all participate at the same time. And remember - no lines, no lectures, no laps.
- 9. Keep practice moving.** Don't spend too much time on one thing (on one drill, on one practice stage) as players may get bored or distracted. Keep practice moving. You can always come back later or go over the lesson during the next practice. Remember this is player *development*, which takes time. Results are not going to happen that day, that week or even sometimes that season. A well-organized coach needs to keep tracking time and moving from stage to stage effectively. As Coach John Wooden says, “start on time and end on time, no more no less”.
- 10. Keep competitive.** Adding the element of competition is another effective way to motivate players. Do this at every practice and during drills. Be creative and find a way to keep score on every drill during the practice. By doing that they will always compete. Just be careful not to overdo this.