

How to Give the “After Game Talk”



How to Give the “After Game Talk” - Written By **Keri Casas**

After years and years of witnessing, being a part of, and giving the “After Game Talk,” it is evident that it plays a HUGE role in team communication, confidence, and attitude. Many coaches fail to really understand the importance of this talk as they simply want to get their point across, (good or bad), repeat their point, and tend to do so over a long period of time.

Now some coaches may give positive feedback after a well-played or won game, but many tend to save their disappointments and frustrations with their team for these talks. This is absolutely the worst place a coach could express those feelings. Female athletes do not respond well to constant, negative criticism. It is understandable that coaches are frustrated after losses, but guess what; your female athletes are frustrated too. They understand when they do poorly and when they don't have a great game. After a game, the last thing they need to hear, especially from a male coach, is how poorly their game was executed.

Female athletes tend to hold on to things, whether good or bad, and constantly think about them; “Why did I look at strike 3? I can't believe I missed that ball. I had a bad game.” Things like this constantly go through a female athletes head; we self-analyze and criticize more than any other person could. Already feeling defeated after a game, the “After Game Talk” can be crucial to your female athletes' mental game.

If a coach tends to talk about all the mistakes, both individual and team, he could make their athletes feel very insecure. No female athlete wants to be put down, or made an example of in a negative fashion. The truth is, they already know if they made a crucial mistake, and their teammates know as well; putting the athlete “on blast” can really hurt an athlete's confidence and security.

After all that, do any of you coaches feel badly about your “After Game Talks?” Did you notice how I droned on about the negative aspects of the “After Game Talk?” It does not feel good to be constantly criticized and now you can imagine how your athletes may feel. So how does a coach give a proper “After Game Talk?” Although this may seem ridiculous to many adults, it is extremely important to female athletes; compliments. Compliment the things that they did well and the plays they did right. This does not mean that every talk has to avoid the negative aspects of the game played. A coach can let the female athletes know what went wrong, but focus on the next game and stay positive. Dwelling on the game that just ended will only help the girls carry that negativity into the next game.

Here is a good example of a quick “After the Game” talk:

“Well, ladies, we didn’t play our best in that game. I saw a few mental errors, but they are things that we can fix for our next game. Let’s be aggressive, strong, and put that game behind us. Taylor, great job with that sacrifice bunt; Sarah, nice throw into home; Emily, great pitching today, you fought really hard. Let’s take the good things out of that game and bring it into the next game. Let’s have lots of energy and work hard every play”

Having a talk like this allows for the girls to understand that they need to perform better in the next game, but it also highlights positivity in a negative outcome. It is important to find a compliment for every athlete, as every athlete plays a significant role on your team.

Another good activity in your “After Game Talk” is to have the athletes do the talking. Sometimes it is necessary for the coaches to step back and let the athletes share their feelings about the previous game; this way you can get an understanding of their opinions and thoughts on how they played and what they can improve.

To maintain team unity, it is a good idea to end the talk by having all the athletes say one good thing that their teammates did during the last game. For example, Jordan tells Annie, “Annie, you pitched really well in that game.” Annie tells Julia, “Julia, you had a great hit to center.” Etc. This helps the team stay positive and helps your female athletes to support each other rather than break each other down after a loss.

Key Coaching Tips for the “After Game Talk”

1. Keep it short and simple. Female athletes will lose your attention after awhile so it is best to make you point quickly while they are listening and attentive.
2. Stay positive! The more negative you are during a talk, the less they will listen to you. Remember, female athletes do not like to be talked down to.
3. Be careful with your words. Whatever you say will stick with the female athlete and carry on into the next game. If you want better performance out of your team, do not dwell on a loss and have a strong outlook for your next game.

Credit to Gary Leland, of Fastpitch.TV and link to <http://Fastpitch.TV>