

# Communicating Effectively with Players and Their Parents

By Melissa Cole

According to Webster's Dictionary, communication is the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or information. Coaches need to effectively communicate with their players to provide them with information that allows them to enhance their training and performance. Coaches also must be prepared to effectively communicate with parents. Communication is a two way process that includes both giving and receiving non-verbal and verbal information.

Fifty percent of communication is non-verbal. Eye contact, heard-nods, smiles, bodily contact, laughter, and posture are forms of non-verbal communication. Younger players can easily misinterpret certain forms of non-verbal communication. For instance, if a coach rarely smiles, players may classify the coach as mean and not perform as well based on this assumption. Generally, facial expressions are a good indication of how players are feeling. Being sensitive to the non-verbal signals can aid coaches in better understanding their players.

Follow the following six C's for effective verbal communication. Present information clearly. Be concise, not long winded. Provide correct information that is not misleading. Give complete information, not just bits and pieces. Be courteous to your players. Provide constructive criticism.

Communication Pointers:

- Always look for something positive to say to your players. If you are criticizing, provide some positive feedback that that will allow that player to effectively change their action or behavior.
- Talk to players on their level physically and emotionally. You may have to get down on your knees so you are eye level. Use simple and direct statements so nothing is misinterpreted.
- Avoid sarcasm.
- Do not wear sunglasses. Eye contact is necessary for effective communication.
- Listen carefully. Take time is listen to what every player has to say and how they say it.

Good communication between coaches and parents needs to be present early in the season. Coaches should arrange a pre-season meeting with parents to set the stage for effective and open communication throughout the season. This will give coaches the opportunity to explain their coaching philosophy to parents and to answer their questions. Also, use the pre-season meeting to recruit volunteers, handout the schedule, and discuss equipment costs. Most importantly, remind

parents that it's just a game and it's for their children.

Knowing the essentials for effective communication can enhance your coaching experience as well as your players and parents experiences.