

Guidelines for Setting Goals

Helping your team and each of your athletes set goals does not have to be a difficult process. If you understand the concepts of goal setting described in the feature article in this issue of CYS and utilize the guidelines described below you should do fine.

- Set specific, objective goals. By objective, we mean that the goal must be stated in measurable quantitative terms. For example, a tennis player might set a goal of hitting 70% good first serves. You must avoid subjective goals that are based on the opinion of the evaluator, such as most valuable player. If you want to name a MVP at the end of the season, that's fine, just don't use it as a goal.
- Use a combination of long-term and short-term goals. Short-term goals provide the means and direction to achieving the long-term goal. Both are necessary.
- Evaluate frequently. You and your athletes want to know how you are progressing towards achieving the goals you have set. Relatively frequent evaluation will help keep the athletes motivated as they see progress or encourage them to work harder if they are behind. It also lets you examine the effectiveness of your practice plans and make adjustments as necessary.
- Set reachable and challenging goals. This applies to every goal set. You must find the middle ground between hard, unachievable goals and easy, non-motivating goals. This is a good place for the coach and athlete to work together in setting the goals. When athletes are involved in setting the goals they feel responsible for the goals and will be motivated to achieve them. If you set goals for the athlete, they may not feel any sense of ownership and not be as concerned whether or not they achieve those goals.
- Set goals with individual differences in mind. Each athlete is an individual and must have his or her own personalized goals. This will make the goals meaningful to the athlete.
- Now the hard one: set individual athlete's goals in conjunction with the team's goals. Obviously, what sport you are coaching will affect the difficulty of accomplishing this guideline. Typically, the team must get together and set the team goals first. Then, the coach will assist each individual athlete in setting his or her goals within the constraints of that athlete's role on the team.

This article provided by Dr. Richard Stratton, Health and Physical Education Program, Virginia Tech