

Coach's Concerns: Motivating Your Athletes and Yourself

Athletes enter sports expecting to learn skills, develop fitness, participate in competition, and, most importantly, have fun doing it.

What motivates you, their coach? Hopefully, your motivation is based on helping your athletes reach their expectations. That is, their goals are your goals.

As you plan practice sessions, consider how each activity will contribute to developing skills, developing fitness, or otherwise prepare them for competition. Some activities may accomplish all of these goals at the same time. Other activities will be more limited.

Although we often think of practice sessions as work and the game days as fun, it doesn't have to be that way. Practices should be fun too! This is not meant to trivialize the importance of practice; actually it is just the opposite. You want your athletes to look forward to coming to practice and to work hard throughout practice. How do you do this? It is not always easy.

VARIETY is one way. Use different drills; there is usually more than one way to teach and learn any particular skill.

Create a POSITIVE practice environment, one that focuses on what the athletes are doing right rather than what they are doing wrong. The athletes should not be afraid to make mistakes. Help them to understand that people who don't make mistakes are people who are not trying very hard and who don't care about becoming a better athlete. Even the very best athletes make mistakes.

If your athletes are having fun and becoming better athletes in the process, chances are good that you will be having fun too.

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