

Planning a Preseason Team Meeting

by Richard K. Stratton

Many coaches do not start off the season with a formal meeting that includes the coaching staff, the athletes, and the parents. This is a mistake that can result in problems as the season progresses. Before your first practice of the season you should hold this type of meeting. There are many things that could be discussed. One consideration before setting the agenda is to include the parent(s) as well as the athletes in the meeting. This can help head off later misunderstandings between you and the parents about your coaching style, etc. In no particular order you should include on the agenda:

- Your coaching philosophy
- Your coaching style
- Your general goals for the team
- What you typically do during a practice session
- What you expect from the athletes (athletes' rights and responsibilities)
- What you expect from the parents (parents' rights and responsibilities)
- Discussion of the risks involved in the sport (include a discussion of medical care processes)
- Season practice schedule and game schedule
- Allow time for questions from the parents and athletes.

Depending on the sport you are coaching there may be other issues such as: travel plans, bad weather contingency plans. In your discussion of your coaching style you might include things such as how decisions are made (leadership style), the role of assistant coaches if you have any, how you teach, and whether or not you use physical contact with the athletes when you coach.

The key is to cover anything you can think of that might come up during the season. Be thorough. Not only does this help reduce problems later in the year, but also gives the athletes and parents a feeling of confidence in you by demonstrating that you think and plan well for the best possible experience for the athletes on your team.

Note from the Optimist Club of Stanley Park: This initial meeting is the opportune time to formulate a coaching “nucleus” – i.e. one person cannot do it all. Recruit help – you’ll need 4 or 5 people to ensure each game/practice runs well. (Blastball requires even higher levels of adult help.) Roles will probably have to change from one week (game) to the next due to other commitments so take all help as available.