

CONNECTICUT INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

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CIAC COACHES UPDATE

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Volume III Issue VI

Dr. Bob Lehr, Editor

Greetings from the CIAC staff. This will be this year's last Update. We hope that you found the previous issues worthwhile in that they helped your coaching efforts.

One of the issues that coaches often face involves getting a team or an individual ready for a big event, perhaps a state championship contest. This article may prove valuable to you.

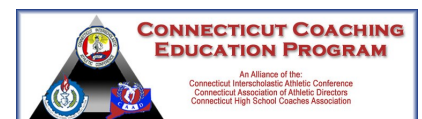
You may know that the CIAC conducts Athletic Program Evaluations. Schools volunteer to go through the evaluation process by surveying student-athletes, parents and coaches. A team of five visits the school, conducts interviews, reviews records and otherwise conducts a thorough examination of all involved in the school's athletics department. Most schools have found it worthwhile and a benefit to the athletic director. One of the areas that has been consistent throughout every evaluation that has been completed thus far involves evaluations of the student-athletes at the end of their respective seasons. We encourage all coaches to consider providing their student-athletes with an end of the season assessment as well as advice on how to prepare for next year's season. The CIAC has samples of those evaluations for anyone interested.

By the time this article is received many of you will be in the CIAC tournament or your season may have concluded. We hope that you enjoyed your coaching efforts. For those coaching individuals or teams that are remaining in the tournament, good luck in your competition.

Have a restful and enjoyable summer.

Bob Lehr, Editor

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PREPARING FOR MAJOR COMPETITIONS: Team-Building

By Sean McCann, Ph.D. Sports Performance Division, Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center

The USOC Sport Psychology Program has found that a majority of our National Governing Bodies believe Team-Building is an important factor in performance at the Games and other international competitions. What surprises many people is that this factor is not limited to traditional team sports. In fact, the challenge of team-building is often more of an issue for coaches of individual sports. Unlike team sports, where team building is built into training and competition, individual sport coaches often face the task of working with a “team” of individual athletes thrown together in a short period of time before a major trip. This article outlines some basic team-building rules for coaches who have been burned in the past by a team environment which hurts performances.

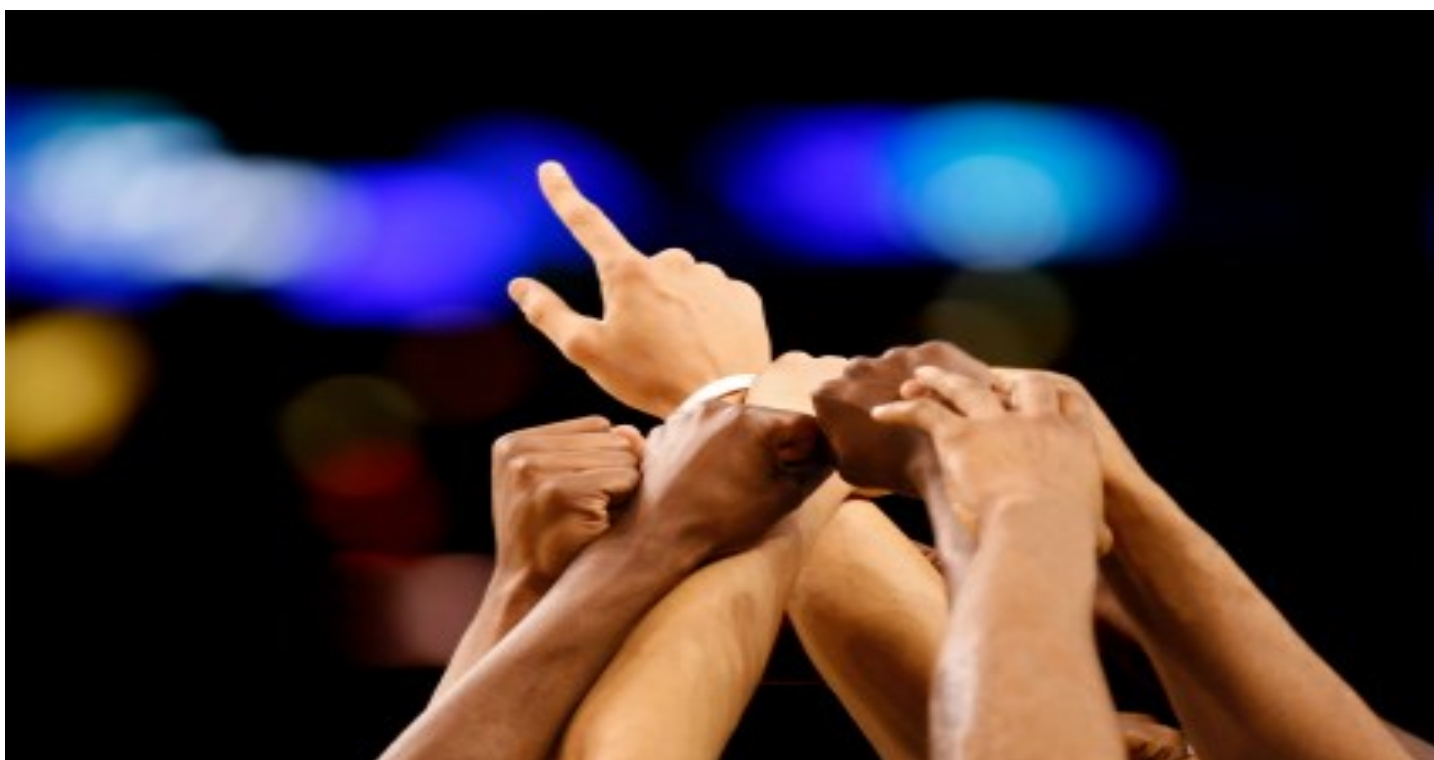
Step 1: Decide If It’s Important Enough To Take The Time.

It may be helpful to ask yourself the following question: Does the team environment promote individual excellence, or does it interfere with it? By taking a bottom line

approach, many coaches realize that medals may be won or lost based on how well athletes work and live together in training and competition settings. If you work on team-building because it helps performance, not because you want everyone to be happy, your team-building work will be more focused and effective.

Step 2: Decide What You Expect From A Team.

Your ideal team environment may not be realistic with the athletes you have. For example, some coaches might prefer to have athletes socialize together and be best friends, but many of the athletes may have developed into rivals as they have competed for team slots. Rather than making the team be a place of friendship or “family”, it may be appropriate to make the team environment one of “professionalism”. In other words, think of your teammates as co-workers, and you are less likely to swear at them or refuse to eat at the same table with them. Once you do decide what kind of team environment you want, as a coach you need to make that environment an expectation, or you will not move closer to achieving it.



Step 3: Talk About It.

Once you decide what you want from your team, you need to communicate that expectation. It is surprising how many team meetings a team can have without talking about anything other than logistics such as practice times, housing accommodations, and travel arrangements. Early on in the team-building process, it is important to have a team meeting to discuss the advantages and challenges to successful team building. Consider adopting the following meeting structure that we have used to start team-building exercises:

- 1) Team strengths: Have the team think out loud about the things that make the group strong. These characteristics can be used as rallying points later in competition.
- 2) Team Challenges: What are the things that might get in the way of a strong team and strong performances? Have the full team brainstorm typical challenges such as team negativity, fear of competition, or bitter rivalries that cause team dissent. By having the team acknowledge factors that get in the way early on, they will become easier to discuss and eliminate as they happen in competition.
- 3) Team Goals: Have the group decide what are goals for the entire group. These should be goals that help make individual goals easier to achieve. Examples might include: better communication; competing with other teams rather than your own team, or; focusing on the team strengths in competition.

Step 4: Walk The Talk.

If you have decided that the team environment does impact individual performances, you have talked about it, and have come up with goals for the entire group, then make those goals important.

Remind the team about those goals during competition, and evaluate whether the team is achieving them. Don't be afraid to have a team meeting during competition which focuses on re-charging the team, reminding the team of its strengths, challenges, and goals. Remember, the team looks to the coach to see how important these team issues really are. Once the athletes see that you really do expect the team environment to support individual excellence, they will make efforts to work for the team. If the athletes see you ignoring the team issues, they will become cynical and slip back into the same behaviors you wanted to prevent in the first place.

What About Tough Situations?

There are a number of situations which may interfere with effective team-building. These situations include:

- 1) A history of conflict between two more team members.
- 2) A lack of confidence in your ability as a 'team builder'.

In these situations, it might be worth while to bring in a consultant with experience in working with teams. Bringing in a sports psychology consultate may offer some advantages for a coach in a tough team-building situation. Consultants should not make decision about athletes' playing time or training issues, and consultants should be able to tolerate the strong emotions that sometimes occur in team-building. A good consultant can free up a coaching staff to become part of the team-building process rather than just orchestrating it. Finally, watching a consult work on team building can provided the coach with ideas on handling these issues in the future.

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AUGUST 2013 CEU MODULE OFFERINGS

NO WALK IN REGISTRATIONS

Being offered at CIAC OFFICE
30 Realty Drive, Cheshire, CT

Thursday, August 22 - 2013 from 6-9pm

Module 9 - Sport Psychology for Interscholastic Coaches

Friday, August 23 - 2013 from 6-9pm

Module 13 - Nutrition, Performing Enhancing Supplements

Saturday, August 24 - 2013 from 8:30-11:30 am

Module 5 - CIAC Rules & Regulations

Saturday, August 24 - 2013 from noon-3pm

Module 4 - Legal Aspects of Interscholastic Coaching I (14 Duties)

Saturday, August 24 - 2013 from 3-6pm

Module 16 - Appropriate Use of Electronic Media by Coaches

Registration for any or all of these 5 modules must be done online at

<http://www.ctcoachinged.org/CEU.html>



NOTE TO COACHES

In the event you are audited the State Department of Education will first check our data base electronically which will save you time and aggravation. Our data base will ONLY show courses taken with us. Be careful of any other entities offering courses to make certain they have SDE approval.