

Building a Positive Coaching Team

Over the past two years as I have worked on developing our new coach education system it has become very obvious to me that we have never done a good job in the old NCCP of developing assistant coaches. Coming from a football background where it is physically impossible for the head coach to “do it all”, I believe we need to make sure our assistant coaches have clearly defined roles. Last year at the midget nationals I initiated a pilot project to evaluate coaches in the competitive environment. It became very obvious that many of the head coaches had not defined the roles for their assistant coaches. In fact on most teams the head coach assumed that the assistants knew their roles, but when asked to articulate the assistant coaches gave a vastly different picture. Observing coaching teams over the past year I have seen many effective coaching teams. The ones that work have clearly defined roles and the assistants know their level of authority. The head coach has delegated responsibilities to the assistants for which they are clearly responsible.

Moving forward into this year’s National I want to add a component for the assistant coaches. I have taken the idea from a book called *If You Want It Done Right You Don’t Have to Do It Yourself: the Power of Effective Delegation* by Donna M. Genett. I have applied the idea to the head / assistant coach relationship. In this book she talks about the three levels of authority:

1. **Recommend** – here the head coach wants input from the assistant coach before the head coach makes a decision. Research is sometimes needed to help discover the best alternative. The assistant should be able to give reasons for his/her suggestion. Too often assistant coaches tell head coaches what they think they want to hear. Many head coaches don’t want to hear contrary opinions from their assistants. A major growth step in the head/assistant coach relationship is the ability to recommend what one really believes based on **facts**.
2. **Inform and Initiate** – here the assistant informs the head coach of the best course of action based on researched facts (this could be as simple as specific examples from a game or practice. The assistant should use phrases like; I think we should do this because I have observed that... Where at all possible statistics or video to back up the recommendation will help). The head coach wants to be informed before action is taken to prevent any possible unforeseen problems. After informing the head coach the assistant is then free to initiate the action. This shows the head coach believes in the ability of the assistant, but wants to have that one level of authority left to prevent mixed messaging or problems from occurring. This is often the case when dealing with any messaging being delivered to outside groups.
3. **Action** – this level of authority is when the head coach has given the assistant coach full authority to initiate and carry out a strategy to competition. This is done because the head coach has full confidence in the abilities of the assistant. Very often this occurs when the head coach gives an assistant a group of athletes to

work with in practice. It is totally up to the assistant to make effective use of the time. The assistant and head coach has developed trust in each others abilities.

Using this three level system a head coach can more clearly define for the assistants their roles. Also it is a way in which over time an assistant can grow as a coach. If after a number of years an assistant still only has recommendation authority there has been little growth of that coach in the system. This is not always the assistant's fault. Very often it is the head coach's inability to give up control. If we are going to grow our game we need to also grow our coaches. There is no question that the effective use of our assistant coaches is one area we can all improve.

What follows below are some suggested areas to consider: I have included some examples for certain aspects.

Pre practice (in between practices)

Meeting with staff to plan practice

- Recommend drills and concepts that need to be covered
- Recommend and then initiate the drill in practice
- Action – assistant is given a block of time to work on drills or concepts of their choice

Video work

Playbooks

Player meetings

- Recommend that a coach meet with a player based on observations of behaviour
- Inform that the coach you are going to initiate a meeting with a player
- Action – has the ability to meet with players on own with out talking to head coach

Individual workouts

- Recommend what players should work on
- Inform that the coach you are going to initiate a workout with a player
- Action – has the ability to workout with players on own with out talking to head coach

Monitor players conditioning, training diaries etc

Practice

Warm up

Skill work

Offence / Defence

Scrimmages

Cool down / recovery

Stats

Feedback to players (Stopping a drill or scrimmage)

- Recommend that the head coach say something to the team or players
- Inform the coach you want to initiate feedback with a player/team

- Action – has the ability to give feedback to the players or team on own with out talking to head coach

Post practice

Debriefing

Recovery

Staff meetings

Player meeting

Extra work by individual players

Pre game (game day)

Scouting reports / match ups

Video clips

Monitoring athletes

Video equipment

Stats

Medical

Table responsibilities (roster, starters)

Pre game warm up

Game

During game

- Your team on offence
 - Recommend things to head coach about actions or adjustments on offence
 - Inform that the coach you are going to initiate an action
 - Action – has the ability to take action without informing head coach
- Your team on defence
- The opponent
- Match ups
- Perimeter players
- Interior players
- Monitor bench players
- Stats (fouls, playing time, etc)

Dead ball situations

- inbounds plays
- change of defence/ offence
- Foul shots
- Subs – preparing subs, making subs
 - Recommend subs
 - Inform coach you are initiating a sub
 - Ability to make subs without informing head coach
- Debriefing subs

Time outs
Quarter times
Half time

Post game

Recovery / cool down

Debrief

- Recommend actions
- Inform and then initiate action
- Take action

Stats

Media

Meetings – coach, player, parent???