



Coach-Parent Meeting

Many coaches find that the most challenging relationship to manage is their relationship with the parents of their players. The reality is that your relationship with the parents is just as important as your relationship with the players. You will likely experience a range of parental behaviour both positive and negative toward both you as coach and the players and this will have major implications for you. However, many of the issues that may arise from parental behavior can be solved by having a simple coach-parent meeting before the season starts.

Purpose of the Meeting

- Allow parents to become acquainted with you and the other parents
- Help parents understand your coaching philosophy
- Help parents understand the objectives of the team
- Explain to parents the team rules or policies or procedures
- Let parents know what is expected of the players and of them
- Let parents air their concerns
- Establish clear lines of communication between you and the parents
- Obtain help from parents in conducting the season's activities

Planning the Meeting

When should the meeting be held?

As soon as possible after you have been allocated or chosen a team.

How long should the meeting be?

Try and keep the meeting short and to the point. Unless you are combining it with a social event keep it to around an hour.

Should the players attend the meeting?

There are mixed views on this but it would be helpful if the players heard the same message the parents are getting.

Meeting Agenda

Here is a logical example of how you may conduct the meeting.

Introductions

Introduce yourself and if you have any assistants introduce them. Give a little background about yourself: why you're coaching, your experience in the sport, what you do for a living etc.

Coaching Philosophy

Present a brief review of your coaching philosophy if you don't have one explain;

- The emphasis you give to winning; having fun; and helping athletes develop technically, physically, psychologically and socially.
- The methods you use to teach skills (you might describe a typical practice).
- The benefits their players will get by participating in your sport

Potential Risks

Be sure parents know the potential risks of participating in your sport. No one likes to hear about injuries but it is your duty to inform parents of the inherent risks. In football many injuries are prevented by wearing correct footwear and shin pads. Some parents also like their child to play with a mouth guard.

Your Programme

Following are some things parents want to know. You may think of others.

- How often and when/where does the team train?
- How long is the season?
- How many games will there be?
- How do you decide who plays and who doesn't?
- How do parents communicate with you or your assistant?
- Who decides when a player is ready to play after an injury?
- What can parents do at home to help the player improve their skills?

Parent Code of Conduct

Go through the Parent Code of Conduct and allow discussion. Once they have agreed to the code, get the parents to sign a copy and then collect them for your file. Explain there is also a Coaches Code of Conduct and Players Code of Conduct which you may quickly explain the details. The following ten points will help parents raise their awareness of why children play. This in turn should be reflected in the parent's behavior!

Ten Things Kids Say They Don't Want Parents to Do - Dr. Darrell J. Burnett

1. **Don't yell out instructions.**
During the game I'm trying to concentrate on what the coach says and working on

what I've been practicing. It's easier for me to do my best if you save instructions and reminders for practice or just before the game.

2. **Don't put down the officials.**

This embarrasses me and I sometimes wonder whether the official is going to be tougher on me because my parents yell.

3. **Don't yell at me in public.**

It will just make things worse because I'll be upset, embarrassed, or worried that you're going to yell at me the next time I do something "wrong."

4. **Don't yell at the coach.**

When you yell about who gets to play what position, it just stirs things up and takes away from the fun.

5. **Don't put down my teammates.**

Don't make put-down remarks about any of my teammates who make mistakes. It takes away from our team spirit.

6. **Don't put down the other team.**

When you do this you're not giving us a very good example of sportsmanship so we get mixed messages about being "good sports."

7. **Don't lose your cool.**

I love to see you excited about the game, but there's no reason to get so upset that you lose your temper! It's our game and all the attention is supposed to be on us.

8. **Don't lecture me about mistakes after the game.**

Those rides home in the car after the game are not a good time for lectures about how I messed up -- I already feel bad. We can talk later, but please stay calm, and don't forget to mention things I did well during the game!

9. **Don't forget how to laugh and have fun.**

Sometimes it's hard for me to relax and have fun during the game when I look over and see you so tense and worried.

10. **Don't forget that it's just a game!**

Odds are, I'm not going to make a career out of playing sports. I know I may get upset if we lose, but I also know that I'm usually feeling better after we go get a pizza. I need to be reminded sometimes that it's just a game.

Question and Answer Session

Throughout the meeting there should be opportunity for parents to ask questions as they come to mind. Allow a little bit of time at the end for any other questions.

Closing Comments

Thank parents for coming.

The above agenda is only a guide; you might find there are other issues that need addressing or that you would prefer to conduct the meeting in a less formal order.

During the season

Here are some suggestions for maintaining communication with the parents of your team.

- Keep parents informed and involve them constructively.
- Don't allow players to play you off against their parents. Talk to the parents directly.
- Inform the parents immediately if a serious problem arises involving their child.