

Coaches as Asset-Builders

Tips for Coaches Based on the 40 Developmental Assets

Coaches teach young people not only the rules and strategy of games but important lessons about life as well. You can help young people develop confidence and self-esteem, help them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully, teach them ways to take care of their health and well-being, and help them develop skills for communicating with others.

Here are a few ways coaches can be asset builders:

- Learn the names of all the players on your team.
- Create and maintain a positive atmosphere.
- Focus on helping players improve, not be the best.
- Make a point to talk at least once with each player each time you practice.
- Know that highly competitive sports can often cause a great deal of stress for young people.
- Care about your athletes' lives outside of the sport.
- Adapt your teaching style and language to players' age levels.
- Set goals both for individuals and for the team.
- Catch kids doing things right.
- Use the *sandwich method* of correcting a player's mistake—first praise, then constructively criticize, then praise again.
- Always preserve a player's dignity.
- Insist that all team members treat one another with respect.
- Be specific about a code of conduct and expectations for athletes, parents, spectators, and team personnel.
- Encourage athletes to do well in school.
- Recognize that the two top reasons young people participate in sports are to have fun and to spend time with their friends. Winning is not one of their top reasons.

- Respect other activities and priorities in athletes' lives.
- Find ways for each and every child to participate.
- Listen to and encourage your athletes' dreams, concerns, and desires.
- Take time at the end of practice to have the group offer positive comments about each player's performance that day.
- Split up cliques on the team by mixing up groups for drills and scrimmages.
- Plan a community service project for the team.
- If you have an end-of-season gathering, take time to say a few positive things about each player.

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