

COACHING PLAYERS OF MIXED SKILL LEVELS

Coaches are tasked with creating a positive sport experience for all of their athletes. This can be made harder when coaching a team that includes athletes of mixed skill levels. Ultimately, it is the coaches responsibility to ensure everyone, regardless of skill level, is engaged, supported, and having fun.



COACHES CAN:

> HELP PLAYERS LEARN A TEAM CONCEPT

Create a supportive team environment where athletes connect with and encourage each other. Have athletes participate in acknowledging improvements they see teammates making through the course of the season.

> FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL PROGRESSION

Assess all athletes for their strengths and areas for improvement. Develop a plan to help each one progress and celebrate successes.

> PRAISE EFFORT OVER RESULTS

Regardless of skill level, athletes have more control over the effort they give than the results they'll get. Focus your praise on their efforts towards improvement and reframe mistakes as learning opportunities.

> AVOID USING LABELS

Don't refer to athletes as talented and others as not. Either label will limit an athlete's development. Be enthusiastic and mindful of your body language and tone when working with all athletes.

> MAKE PRACTICES FUN

Research shows that having fun, making friends, becoming a better athlete, and other factors are more important to most athletes than winning. If you teach skills in a fun and positive environment where every player feels a part of the team, winning will take care of itself.

When your athletes know that you are willing to work to help each one of them progress, to encourage them despite mistakes, to give each an opportunity to learn and play different positions, and that you value their effort, they will feel fairly treated. They'll learn a valuable lesson that everyone has talents that they can contribute to a team effort.