



## Positive Approaches for Making Player Cuts

While being cut is most painful for the player who doesn't make the team, making the cut is also difficult for the coach. As a result, some coaches avoid communicating about this topic with players and parents. Coaches should recognize that handling the cut process openly, thoughtfully, and respectfully will provide important life skills and increase the chances that players who are cut stay involved in sports. To make player cuts in a supportive way, coaches can:

- **Set expectations** for tryouts ahead of time. Be clear about the criteria for selection - including physical and intangible characteristics like skill, size, speed, strength, coachability, work ethic, potential, commitment, and complementary skill sets. Knowing the criteria ahead of time helps players feel the process is fair and gives those who don't make the team areas to work on.
- **Meet individually** with each player that is cut. The coach has an important role in helping the player move on and nurturing their desire to continue in sports.
- **Approach these conversations** with empathy. Acknowledge that receiving this information may not be easy and give them space to express their perspective. Listen to understand them and validate their feelings.
- **Emphasize** that being cut is not a judgment of them as a person, but rather an assessment of their fit with the team based on a brief snapshot during the tryouts. Remind them that the picture can, and probably will change as they grow, change, and continue to develop their skills.
- **Provide** the player an assessment of current strengths and areas for growth. Make specific suggestions about steps to get better and encourage them to keep on trying. Avoid comparing the player with others when giving this feedback.
- **Keep the players in mind** if other opportunities to play become available. It is ok for a coach to admit that they regret cutting a player or feel they made a mistake.
- **Connect with parents/caregivers** of cut players to help them understand and encourage them to provide the necessary support their player may need to continue playing - without pressuring. Let them know that, while being cut is painful, it is an opportunity to learn life skills and can help them bounce back from future disappointments.

This resource was developed with PCA Trainer Joe Scally

