

Gentling the Cruellest Cut of All

A "note" on how to let down the kids who don't make it in your tryouts

TRYOUTS FOR YOUR basketball, volleyball, and swimming teams are coming up and the dismaying thought of cutting eager young prospects looms in the future.

What is the best way to tell a young athlete that he/she doesn't have the ability to make the team? How many hearts are you going to have to break?

For years, coaches have done it



by posting lists on a bulletin board or office window or whatever. Or talked to each young athlete as the others waited their turn nearby.

Each of these methods gets the job done, but with little regard for hurt feelings or wounded psyches.

Is there an easier way of letting the kids down? We say yes. There's a way to do it quicker, more privately, and with less pain.

At Rockford Middle School, where we have 60 to 80 kids trying

out for our two 15-man basketball squads ("A" team and "B" team), we do it with a simple note.

Before tryouts begin, we make up two sets of 15 notes of exactly the same color and shape that say, "Congratulations, you made the 'A' team. Practice is tomorrow at 2:45," or "Congratulations, you made the 'B' team. Practice is tomorrow at 4:00."

We also make up a third set of 30 to 50 notes that say: "Thank you for your effort and enthusiasm this week, but you have not made either team. We hope you will continue to work on your game and try out again next year."

At the conclusion of the tryouts, we decide which of the players have made our two teams and which have not. We put their names on the back of the corresponding slips and pass out the slips to the players.

The players can look at the slips whenever they choose—immediately or on the way home or even after they get home. They are trusted to respect the privacy of the other athletes and to keep their elation or dejection to themselves.

After handing out the slips, the coaching staff keep themselves available to talk to any of the athletes who have a question.

The system is simple to administer and eliminates confusion—athletes crowding around a posted list or listening for a name that will never get

called. The "note-ification" process is both immediate and private, and it has worked well for us.

The actual contents of the note can be handled in any way you choose—made softer, shorter, longer, any way you want to make it as easy on the kids as possible.

SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS

To facilitate the coaching job during the year, we have prepared a list of the seven steps needed to ensure a successful season.

STEP 1 a pre-season meeting with any student interested in trying out for team.

When tryouts will be held.

What has to be done prior to tryouts (physicals, pay to play, permission slips, equipment needed).

What to expect during tryouts (types of drills, what coaches are looking for).

The pre-season meeting provides the coach with a list of the people coming out for the team and enables him/her to pass on the essential information to players and parents.

STEP 2 a list of all the candidates that is given to the teachers, who can comment on the students' progress and behavior in the classroom. Gives the coach some valuable insight on the players.

STEP 3 try-outs—three to five days in which the kids are evaluated on their fundamental abilities. Extra adults are brought in to help with the process. All the testers are equipped with checklists on what to look for.

STEP 4 the pruning of the group through the "note" system.

STEP 5 an interaction meeting (30 to 60 minutes) of players, parents, and coach, at which we discuss team goals and expectations of players and parents, and pass out schedules and list of names, numbers, and addresses.

STEP 6 the season (practices and games).

STEP 7 end-of-season party and distribution of literature on how to improve during the off-season, including drills and lists of summer camps. ■

by Tracy Alan Ouellette
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MARSHALL THUNDERING HERD BASKETBALL

WEEKLY WORDS OF WISDOM

THREE KINDS OF PLAYERS

FIRST, those who win the game for you; true champions, legends. They're never satisfied with their past performances, they peak at crucial times, and they always put their opponents away. They play like they're 20 points down even when they're 20 up. Killer instinct.

SECOND, those who don't get you beat - - nice guys; they don't make mistakes, no great skills, but they play their roles.

And THIRD, guys with potential but who don't reach it. They don't play hard all the time; you never know what to expect out of them; they're losers. They're the guys who get you beat.

WHICH ARE YOU?

GO HERD! 10

Players Coaches Love

by Coach Rick Crotts

The purpose of this article is to encourage you as athletes to think of what you can do for your coach.

All coaches love certain qualities in athletes...most go the way of least resistance and take the easy road to training. Coaching involves making sure the athlete doesn't travel that path. So the question is "what can I do for my coach to get the most out of my ability?"

Get Self-Motivated

First, you need to be self-motivated! Give a total effort every time you compete. Coaches look into what shows up in a player's heart as evidenced by the way he or she plays. Secondly, be willing to give the kind of physical and mental effort necessary to win in practice as well as the competitions. Make it personal excellence time!

Listen and Learn

Next, listen to meaning of the messages from your coach, not how it is said. The next time your coach gets a little tough with you, stand back and listen to the message. Don't make judgments or take it personal. If your coach did not care they would not bother to correct you. Think of what the coach is looking for. Work hard on those areas. Work to improve your lesser skills into strengths.

Know Your Role

Know your role on the team. If you don't know ask. Most of us like to be the go to guy - the scorer, but coaches love great defenders, great rebounders, players who give of themselves and ask nothing in return. There is always room in the line-up for these kind of players. You are forcing the issue with playing time, because when you give your coach has no choice but to play you because they love your effort.

Three Things Your Coach Would Love

There are three things that your coach would love from you. First, love the game. "The Game" might be what is in season at the time. Convince your coach that this is the most important time in your life.

Secondly, work hard. Good things happen to people who work hard to make good things happen. Playing time is conditional based on hard work. Vince Lombardi said, "the harder you work, the harder it is to quit." You can always offer hard work.

Third, be loyal to your coach. Believe in your coach and he will believe in you. Jerry Tarkanian said, "the only bad kid is one who won't be loyal to his teammates and coaches." Respond positively to challenges from your coaches and your opponents. You will grow and develop, win or lose.

Respond to the Challenge

These challenges will linger in your memory long after the game is over. When your coach gets tough, they are looking for a positive response. Give them attention! Great players don't have to be inspired by the coach to get "up" for a game; all you need to know is that any game is important, and how you should play it is with intensity and focus. Let your coach sit back and enjoy the ride!

