

Democratic Coaching - Part 1

by Tom Paterson

Truthfully I don't do it very often, but instructing is an art. And for the coaches it's the intangible reward that pays the biggest dividends. We know there are the obvious rewards being able to share and help, but there can be a real internal personal gratification from seeing how clearly you may be able to clarify and punctuate your points of view. Instruction is after all a point of view.

Ruminating through Level one and two certification programs of instruction the resources are quick to go on about how coaches are communicators. Communication is important. But without knowledge communication falls into empty wastelands.

To be persuasive communicators you need to practice what you say, believe in what you say, and possibly most importantly have others recognize that your words and practice make sense. When you can do that you know you have latched onto a skill worthy of an artist.

Possibly the easiest component of the three skills of communication mentioned is knowledge, read a book, ask questions, test your own ideas, but the other part of getting others on board requires the instructor to talk, use words. Words carefully chosen convey the message of knowledge.

As we busy ourselves communicating the world has changed. Not too long ago an instructor or coach that was simply the "boss" and dished out instructions fit right in with what was the "norm". Today's players need more, they need the opportunity to think for themselves, to become problem solvers. Democratic rather than autocratic is the way to go. It enriches everyone, and keeps all members (including the coach) on the same level playing field with equal responsibility. How does it work? The first rule of Democratic coaching is discussion. The initial discussion focuses on job description. Take a "My Job" - "Your Job" approach, there are no wrong answers. Form a "T" chart. Invite all members (coach included) to provide their ideas.

The Players Job May Include The Coaches Job May Include

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Next after the brainstorming of “My Job” – “Your Job” come to an agreement by consensus (approx 75% approval or greater) on what to do when an issue comes up for discussion that cannot gain consensus when voted on. (i.e.) does the coach make the final decision, do you toss out the issue and come back to it, Once you have reached this stage you are ready to tackle the everyday responsibilities of being a truly Democratic Team in Progress.

By sharing the power within a team through democracy you empower the members to problem solve, cooperate and get to really know each other. From that respect and trust can flourish. Regardless of outcome you’ve got a team that works together and sticks together.

Task three take the jobs identified in the T chart and discuss each item. Come to a democratic agreement on each item. On such matters as: which issues are highest priorities? What jobs are given to each member and as importantly why?