

Coaching Female Athletes

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1. There is a DIFFERENCE.....

- Coaching Education has not kept up with the rapid advancements of female athletics.
- Lack of 'traditional' coaching books that deal with the psychological differences between males and females.
- Several articles in academic journals that deal with coaching males and females.

2. Physical Differences

- In Track and Field and Swimming the performance difference in elite athletes is consistently 10%, High School 12% - 15%

Source: Fox, Bower, Foss (1993)

400m (m) 49.0 (f) 56.0 Long Jump (m) 22'0 18'0

Body size and Composition plays a role in magnitude of maximal and submaximal exercise responses.

Women to be shorter, lighter, have more fatty tissue, less muscle mass

Less hemoglobin, lower blood volume, and smaller heart volume than men.

- 12% Rule... When coaching both men and women, expect the females to do intervals about 12% slower than males.

3. Personal Research and Hypothesis

- The main reason that high school female athletes participate in sport is when they have fun participating.
- The main reasons female athletes quit sports is because of time conflicts.
- The main source of fun high school female athletes derive from athletic participation is the opportunity to spend time with their friends.
- High School female athletes prefer to have male coaches instead of female coaches.
- High school female athletes prefer to receive positive reinforcement instead of negative reinforcement from their athletic coaches.

4. Participation

Reasons for participation

- Males: Competition and Status
- Females: Fun and Fitness -
Females do not have fun from competition only....
Females have fun participating/competing in groups.

Reasons for quitting

- Males: Lack of perceived ability
- Females: Lack of time.

5. Why am I doing this?

- Women want more reasons for doing something than guys do.
- If women see value in what you want them to do, they will work extremely hard.
- Explain and teach athletes what and WHY you want them to do something.
- Female athletes like to work, but they LOVE TO HAVE FUN.... Dancing, singing, laughing,

6. Coaching Style

- Females athletes prefer a POSITIVE COACHING style, however they do expect and appreciate constructive feedback.
- However, Female athletes also EXPECT to be told when they are doing something wrong.
- Positive Feedback, Women want to know what they did right in addition to what they did wrong. Yelling and constant negative feedback will cause the Female athlete to 'tune-out' the coaches' comments.
- Encouragement, You may have to praise female athletes and convince them they can be successful and do things well. You might have to be a salesperson to help female athletes perform up to their abilities.
- Videotape, Females are extremely critical of their performances and usually know if they have made mistakes. They do not want to see the mistake again on videotape. Videotape is most successful with female athletes, when you use it to show how well they have played. Show the athletes examples of excellent performance Be selective in how you use video.
- Sandwich Technique, Surround a negative comment with two positive comments.
- Female athletes are not afraid to 'talk-back'. If a female athlete does not like a workout, coaching strategy, or team situation, they will let the coach know about. USE THE FEEDBACK.
- DO NOT individualize pressure. If you want to put pressure on your athletes, place the pressure on the team. DO NOT focus pressure on one particular athlete. If she fails, she let herself down, she let the coach down, she let the team down. If you put pressure on the team, reward the team.

7. Competition:

- Many experts have determined that the biggest difference between males and females is the level of the competitive spirit.
- Males might be raised to be more competitive, but females are becoming more competitive.
- Men will see sports in the terms of wins and losses.
- Women ARE competitive, but see extended value. Friendship, individual improvement, mutual gain.

8. Practice

- Women want to feel connected socially before practice begins. Talk with friends and teammates and ‘catch up’ before they are ready to work out.
- Allow athletes an opportunity to ‘gossip’ before practice, static stretching, and attendance, set up facilities, coaches meeting.
- “Explain What and Why” you want athletes to do for a workout.
- Competition women may have a harder time competing against teammates than males do.
- Practice itself is not fun. Social Time, Games, Bonding Activities, and Rewards make practice fun.
- Create incentives for athletes to compete or work hard in practice.

9. Charting

Anson Dorrance (Univ. North Carolina- Soccer Coach) charts everything in practice and posts the results on the team board. No comments are made; no selections are based on the charts. Dorrance claims that competition takes care of its self, the best players strive to get to the top of the charts.

- Track Examples: Post interval times, Grade Effort, Post an attendance chart, Create Team Honor Rolls, State Honor Roll, Post results from other conference/sectional schools, list letter points, create opportunities so athletes know where they stand.
- Positive Charting, Jim Thompson author of Positive Coaching recommends a system where you chart positive comments about each athlete, weekly.

10. Forgiveness

- Female athletes KNOW when they did not perform well. You usually do not have to tell a female athlete that she did poorly.
- Female athlete will usually blame herself for a poor effort.
- A coach should help a female athlete raise her self-esteem to quicken forgiveness.
- Female athletes may feel ‘bad’ for defeating teammates or friends.
- The coaches’ roll is to help the female athlete forget about the negative aspects of a performance.
- Kathleen DeBoer argues that when female athletes began blaming their coach, or other outside figures, for bad performances they are maturing and becoming more competitive.

11. Coaching Feedback

- Coaches should do be afraid of soliciting feedback for their female athletes.
- Pre-Season surveys asking athletes why they are out for the team, and sources of fun, how they like to be rewarded.
- Post-Season surveys asking the athletes about the season. What coaching behaviors did or didn’t they like, what activities were fun, etc.
- Incorporate captains and athlete feedback into coaching decisions.

12. Special Issues

The Female Triad
Specific Eating Disorders
Gay or Lesbian Issues
Male Coach / Female Athlete Relationship



13. Coaching/ Practice Strategies

- Create external sources of fun. Pre Season activities, team meals, movie nights, bowling, or overnight trips.
- Create a 'fun' family like environment on your team. T-Shirts, slogans, traditions, cheers. Do not be afraid to have fun. A non-traditional practice can go a long way towards team morale.
- Create a 'Democratic' atmosphere. Allow captains of athletes to make team decisions, let them plan the fun activities. The coach does not have to do it all her self.
- Female athletes like to participate in groups. When recruiting female athletes, you have to focus on recruiting groups. Recruit a coveted athlete's friends.
- Allow the athletes to spend time during practice to 'chat' with their friends. 10 minutes before practice to allow the athletes to 'catch-up' with friends can go a long way.
- Share your season plan and periodization. Make the expectations of ALL workouts clear.
- Understand that each athlete has her own comfort level with competition. Create opportunities in practice for athletes to be competitive. DO NOT get down on athletes that are not always competitive. Give the competitive athletes a chance to compete.
- Provide extrinsic rewards. Athletes of the Week awards, candy, t-shirts.
- "Chart" performance and statistics.
- Use FEMALE remodels. Posters, videos, articles, guest speakers.
- The coach should frequently set goals for the ATHLETE. Help build self-esteem and confidence by telling them what you think they CAN DO...
- Use Videotape to show athletes what they can do.
- Do not be afraid to provide negative feedback to a female athlete. Surround the feedback with positive comments.
- Tell female athletes what they did RIGHT; female athletes have an incredible ability to know what they did wrong.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A FEMALE'S FAVORITE COACHES

Fun

Knowledge of the Sport

Listened and Understood

Encouraging

Helped with Skills

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS A FEMALE'S LEAST FAVORITE COACHES.

Not Encouraging

Negative

Unfair

Mean/Rude

Favoritism

LIST THE TOP 3 REASONS YOU PARTICIPATE IN SPORTS

Fun

Be with Friends

Stay in Shape

Joy of Specific Sport

Enjoy Competition

Source: Creating a Positive Experience for High School Female Athletes. Eric Lehmann (2002)

Suggested Materials

Books

Dorrance, Anson and Nash, Tim (1996). Training Soccer Champions. Apex, North Carolina: JTC Sports, Inc.

Gilligan, Carol (1982, 1983). In a Different Voice. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Helgesen, Sally (1990) The Female Advantage

Thompson, Jim (1995) Positive Coaching. San Francisco: Warde Publishing Inc.

Tannen, Deborah (1990) You Just Don't Understand

Vernacchia, Ralph and McGuire Rick and Cook David (1996) Coaching Mental Excellence. Portolla Valley, California: Wade Publishers Inc.

Wilson, Susan (2000) Sports Her Way New York: Fireside: Simon and Schuster, Inc.

Academic Articles

Stewart, Craig and Taylor, Joan (2000). Why female athletes quit: Implications for Coach Education. *Physical Educator*, Winter 2000, (Vol. 57 Issue 4), Pgs. 170-178.

Stewart Craig (2001) Gender Differences in the Perception of Coach Behaviors. International Society of Biomechanics in Sport, Coach Information Service,

Tuffey, S. (1998) Kids Tell Us What is Fun about Swimming *Coaches' Quarterly*, 5(2), pgs. 2-10.

Gill, D.L (1992). Gender and sport behavior. In T.S. Hom (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp. 143-160). Champaign, EL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

Videotapes

“Surviving Competition: The difference between Female & Male Athletes in Competition”

Kathleen DeBoer (Championship Books and Video Productions)

“Surviving Practices: Creating a winning practice environment through gender understanding”

Kathleen DeBoer (Championship Books and Video Productions)

“Positive Coaching”

Phil Jackson and Jim Thompson (Positive Coaching Alliance)