

Micro-Learning Club Coaching document #2



Week 2: 30 September 2026:

Communication and Feedback:

Providing feedback to athletes is an essential part of coaching. It helps athletes improve their performance, learn from their mistakes, and grow both mentally and physically. Giving effective feedback is not always an easy task. It is important to understand the impact of your words with the right timing of your feedback. Also, how to personalise your approach and how to balance praise with constructive criticism. We will look at some key strategies for providing feedback to athletes.

Understand the impact of what you say:

The language a coach uses when providing feedback can influence an athlete's reception and reaction to the guidance being provided. Using affirming and constructive terms can inspire athletes, inspiring them toward better efforts and improvements. On the other hand, negative language can hinder their progress. It is very important that coaches pay close attention to tone, phrasing, aiming to support rather than to criticise. A coach's verbal approach should always foster an environment of growth and positivity, making it clear the intention to see the athlete grow and improve. Providing feedback that is constructive, focusing on specific areas for improvement whilst recognising strengths, can help athletes view feedback sessions as opportunities for learning.

The right timing of feedback:

Choosing the right moment to provide your feedback to athletes is crucial in ensuring its effectiveness. Immediately following a performance can be an opportune time for feedback. However, the emotions of the athlete post-performance need to be considered, as high emotions may compromise the ability to absorb feedback. It may be better to wait for a neutral emotional state before feedback is offered. Recognising when an athlete is most receptive and ready for feedback is as important as the feedback itself, making timing an important aspect of effective coaching.

Personalise your feedback approach:

Understanding the individual athlete is important when delivering your feedback strategy. Athletes come to training with their own set of experiences, motivations, and responses to praise and/or criticism. To effectively communicate, you need to recognise these differences and adjust your approach. For some athletes, a straight forward critique of their performance could assist. However, others may benefit from a more supportive conversation, promoting encouragement and positive reinforcement. These approaches demonstrate your investment in the athlete's growth and also enhance the receiving of your feedback.

Asking the athlete what their personal goals are, their aspirations and fears, can offer invaluable insights into the best ways to communicate. Also understanding an athlete's preferred learning style can assist in how you provide feedback, be it visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. These methods empower athletes, making them feel seen and supported therefore maximising the impact of your coaching efforts.

Balancing praise and constructive criticism:

Achieving a balance between highlighting an athlete's successes and identifying areas for improvement is a core aspect of coaching. We need to celebrate the progress an athlete makes, as this reinforces a sense of accomplishment and motivates continued effort and passion for the sport. Also, addressing areas that require enhancement is necessary for growth and skill development. The key lies in ensuring feedback is precise and actionable, helping athletes towards improvement with clarity and direction. By developing a mindset where constructive criticism is viewed as an opportunity for growth allows athletes to embrace challenges with resilience and determination.

Encouraging athlete involvement in the feedback process:

To enhance the benefits of feedback, transforming it into a dialogue with athletes is important. This approach fosters a deep sense of engagement and accountability in athletes, allowing them to be actively involved in their own development. Coaches need to encourage their athletes to share their perspectives, reflecting on their performances and identifying areas they feel need improvement. This collaborative approach ensures that feedback is not only received but fully integrated, laying a foundation for improvement and shared successes.

Yours in Athletics

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(sourced from The Coach's Playbook: Delivering feedback to athlete: bsnsports.com)