

## Scheduling the all-important first team meeting

Undoubtedly, the most important team meeting is the very first one of the year. You want both the children and their parents to attend this meeting. To accomplish this, let them know that it's mandatory that they be there. The meeting should last no more than 20 to 30 minutes, and if you want, you can even hold a brief practice session afterwards. To stay on schedule, come with an outline of the items you want to cover in the meeting.

- Have all the essential information already typed out and ready to hand out.
- Find out who can help you. (Team manager/phone committee chair)
- Explain the league rules of participation.
- Explain the rules regarding equipment and safety instructions.
- Ask the parents to review with you any medical concerns regarding their children in a private conversation, perhaps after the meeting.
- Discuss candidly with the moms and dads what you expect from them, especially with regard to their conduct at practices and games.
- Talk about sportsmanship and how you expect the children to behave.

Explain to the athletes what it means to play in a sportsmanlike manner (shaking hands with opponents after the game, treating the officials with respect, no trash talking or taunting, and so on).

- **Go over team discipline briefly.**

For the time being, just tell the children and their parents that you expect them to be on time, to come to the practices, and if they can't make it to a practice or game for any reason, to contact you via telephone - ideally at least 24 hours ahead of time. Ask them not simply to tell a friend on the team to tell you that they're not coming to practice or a game.

- **At the end of the meeting, take a few minutes to hand out schedules, directions, and uniforms (if they are available).**

As you wrap up that first meeting, take a moment to ask for questions from the parents. This gives parents a golden opportunity to clear up any potential misunderstandings or misconceptions about what it is you want from them and their children during the course of the season. This is also the time when individual parents may come up to you with questions and requests. If you feel that the meeting is going too long because you're being bombarded at this time with too many questions, simply ask the parent to call you at your home later. That way, you don't feel compelled to make snap decisions that may come back to haunt you later in the season.

Don't forget to smile throughout the meeting! It's supposed to be fun - and as the coach, you're the one who sets the tone.

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- I. Find out who can help you.
- II. Explain the league rules of participation.
- III. Explain the rules regarding equipment and safety instructions.

- IV. Ask the parents to review with you any medical concerns regarding their children in a private conversation, perhaps after the meeting.
- V. Discuss candidly with the moms and dads what you expect from them, especially with regard to their conduct at practices and games.
- VI. Talk about sportsmanship and how you expect the children to behave. Explain to players what it means to play in a sportsmanlike manner (shaking hands with opponents after the game, treating the officials with respect, no trash talking or taunting, and so on).
- VII. Go over team discipline briefly. For the time being, just tell them and their parents that you expect them to be on time, to come to the practices, and if they can't make it to a practice or game for any reason, to contact you via telephone - ideally at least 24 hours ahead of time. Ask them not simply to tell a friend on the team to tell you that they're not coming to practice or a game.
- VIII. At the end of the meeting, take a few minutes to hand out schedules, directions, and uniforms (if they are available).

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### **Parent meeting checklist**

Your initial meeting with parents should include the following topics. Have all the essential information already typed out and ready to hand out.

Essential information includes your name and home phone number, as well as that of assistant coaches.

- Find out who can help you. You need a team parent - a parent helps out with making phone calls in case of venue/scheduling changes, bringing juice/water to games, and so on. This is the perfect time to ask for a volunteer.
- Explain the league rules of participation.
- Explain the league rules regarding equipment and safety instructions.
- Ask the parents to review with you any medical concerns regarding their children in a private conversation, perhaps even after the meeting.
- Discuss candidly with the moms and dads what you expect from them, especially with regard to their conduct at practices and games.

- Talk about sportsmanship and how you expect the children to behave.
- Go over team discipline briefly. For the time being, just tell the children and their parents that you expect them to be on time, come to the practices, and if they can't make it to a practice or game for any reason, to contact you via telephone - ideally at least 24 hours ahead of time.

At the end of the meeting, take a few moments to hand out schedules, directions to away games, and uniforms. (Make sure that the children try them on and that they fit before they leave!) In addition, take some time to meet and greet the parents you don't know. Try to learn each child's first name and introduce yourself to each one.

### **Parent Orientation Program Agenda**

#### **Introductions (10 minutes)**

Introduce yourself and any assistant coaches. Give a little background about yourself: why you're coaching, experience in the sport, etc. Let parents know what qualifies you to coach and why they should trust you in taking responsibility for their child. Have your assistants describe their responsibilities to help parents get to know their roles and feel comfortable with them.

#### **Coaching philosophy (10 minutes)**

Present a brief review of your coaching philosophy. Be sure to discuss at least the following points:

- I. The benefits their athletes are likely to derive from participation in the sport.
- II. The methods you use to teach skills (you might describe a typical practice)
- III. The emphasis you give to winning; Having fun; and helping athletes develop physically, psychologically, and socially.

#### **Demonstration (10-20 minutes)**

Parents may not know much about the sport. Provide an overview of the skills, scoring, and general rules. You might want to use some of the athletes to demonstrate. This is also a good opportunity to discuss the equipment required for the sport. Emphasize safety when discussing equipment.

#### **Potential risks (10 minutes)**

Be sure parents know the potential risks of participating in the sport. Be sure to be specific. Keep the discussion upbeat by telling parents what precautions you take to minimize the risk of injury.

#### **Specifics of your program (15 minutes)**

- How long is the season.
- When/where are practices.
- How many league games/tournaments are involved?
- How do you decide who plays and who doesn't?
- How frequently does the team travel and who pays?
- What equipment does the athlete need to purchase?
- How do parents communicate with you and/or assistant coaches?
- What can parents do at home to facilitate the athlete's physical development or learning of sport skills?

#### **Player policies (15 minutes)**

Introduce your team rules and the consequences of not following team policies.

#### **Parent policies (15 minutes)**

Review the Parent Guideline sheet.

*Consider adding some of your own team policies such as:*

- Parents must remain in the spectator area.
- Let the coach be the coach.
- Avoid any derogatory comments to coaches, officials and to other parents.
- Do not coach your daughter during the contest.
- be in control of your emotions. Help when asked by coaches or officials.
- The 24 hour rule is in effect. Should you have any concerns about the team you must wait 24 hours before discussing the situation with the team manager.

**Questions and answer session** (15-18 minutes)

**Closing comments** (2 minutes)

Thank the parents and players for attending and ask for their cooperation and commitment during the forthcoming season.