Preparing for Success with Preseason Coaches Meetings

BY DON SHOWALTER

The preseason coaches’ meeting is one of the most important meetings that take place during the year. The meeting can set the tone for coaches as the year gets started for athletic events. To make this meeting valuable for everyone involved, planning must be done by the athletic director.

> Always have a printed agenda at the meeting to give to the coaches. This will help them to take notes and to make sure nothing of importance is left out. Always leave a time on the agenda for comments because coaches may have to address issues they feel are important.

> Stay on the issue at hand. Many times, the conversation may drift off the topic, which can be good for a short period of time. Have the conversation at the end of the meeting where other issues can be addressed by the coaches.

> Make the meeting fun and interesting. Sometimes, meetings at the beginning of the year are boring and only disseminate information that many coaches have already heard many times. This information can be provided in many different ways. For example, a quiz could be given to the coaches with multiple-choice answers that offer good discussion about the topic. Also, coaches could role-play about situations that may happen during the year – situations with parents, administrators and athletes are good to role-play and then discuss how to handle these situations.

> Work on team-building activities with the coaches. These team-building activities are good for coaches to do, and then they can do these activities with their teams as well. This will get the coaches thinking about what ideas to work with their team. Relays such as balloon races, filling a container with water by using a spoon are examples of fun and kind of crazy activities to use with the coaches. This also breaks up the monotony of just sitting and listening to someone speak about a topic.

> Invite speakers to the meeting. Good topics are injuries and nutrition. Have other people visit with the coaches about team-building activities, leadership within a team, motivation, goal-setting or parent relationships. This may be information they have heard from you as athletic director but may have more interest from another person and voice.

> Undoubtedly, there are very good coaches on your staff who are a great resource for other coaches. Give these long-term coaches a topic and have them present this to the rest of the staff. This would be good for the staff as one of their highly successful peers is giving great information.

> There are some excellent DVDs on topics that would be of interest to coaches – leadership, team building, dealing with parents, coaching the elite athlete, coaching psychology, goal-setting as well as other pertinent topics for coaches. This again holds the interest of the coaches and provides great ideas.

> While the meeting can lend itself to “what not to do” or policies that may seem negative, the athletic director needs to end the meeting on a positive note for the new school year. Naturally, everyone is excited to start the school year and the coaches are looking forward to what their season has to bring. They should leave the meeting in a positive frame of mind ready to pursue the goals they have in mind for the new season.

> Give a short review about a good book that was read during the summer. Coaches oftentimes are looking for a good book to read that will be of interest and will also help them in their coaching duties. This can provide a good motivational tool for coaches to hear about a good book that was read by another coach.

> Keep the meeting to no longer than two hours and closer to 1½ hours in length. Provide something to eat – sandwiches, pizza – as this usually makes for better concentration. It is nice to give out coaches’ gear at this meeting as well. Polo shirts, jackets or hats with the school logo are well worth the cost as your staff will appreciate the apparel.

Set the tone for the school year, make it a positive evening and enjoy getting to know each other as colleagues.

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