

INFORMATION FOR MATER DEI COACHES

The following information was pulled from the Topeka Catholic Schools Coaching School and Leadership Seminar materials presented by Rick Strecker.

“Sometimes I think that the most influential motivation for some of our young people is the camaraderie they feel as a member of the team. Sometimes I feel that the most important contribution to their self-esteem comes from their acceptance by teammates and adult coaches. Sometimes I watch students who have had a rough time with other authority develop a trusting relationship with an activity sponsor.” - Rick Strecker

Making Kids Come First – A Coaching Philosophy

The practices where we teach and the games that we play are for the kids. Coaches and officials should always take great care to insure that the attention is focused on the players. We should be fundamentally concerned that players are:

1. Having Fun
2. Learning Skills
3. Displaying Sportsmanship
4. Improving Physical Fitness
5. Striving to Do Their Best

While winning is always a secondary goal of competition, the above concerns are much more important. The five objectives above always work to the benefit of the players. Overemphasis on the score potentially can put winning, the coaches, or the officials in primary focus rather than the kids.

Avoid the challenging temptation to place winning as the primary objective during a contest. Do your best to avoid trying to influence the nature of the game by trying to intimidate or harass the officials. That mindset places you and the official as the focus of the contest rather than the players. If you have a concern with an official, try to quietly and inconspicuously visit at the halftime or after the game. The officials will appreciate that approach and probably at least consider your opinion.

Making Prayer a Priority

The quality of our program that makes it different from any other school based activity program is the relationship with our faith. Our programs serve as extensions of the parish first and foremost.

Making prayer a part of our practices and contests will help to insure that the uniqueness of our activities remains intact. The student athletes will obviously benefit from your example as a role model with regard to prayer. Try to help the players realize the gift that they have received that allows them to be active. Help them make sure that everyone is having fun and that they treat each other and their opponents with respect.

Education

School athletic programs are co-curricular. They must be educational or they should not exist. If there is not a strong educational component to the program and to your coaching then we are failing our athletes. Do your best to make sure that each player learns the necessary skills of the sport you

are coaching. Improve your knowledge of the game or sport by asking questions and attending clinics. Make sure that all of your commands are instructions that do not belittle or purposefully embarrass the players. Try to emphasize the following three areas of development:

1. Physical - Make sure the players are consistently improving their skills and athleticism during your practices and encourage them to work on their own.
2. Psychological – Aid the development of their emotional responses to competition, success and near success. Talk about how you would like to see them react during and after competition, win or lose.
3. Social – Help them develop qualities of sportsmanship, citizenship, and Christian character. Teach them to have fun during competition, along with striving to do their best.

Again, your example is critical in their development. They will watch with great interest in how you respond to challenges, how you interact with officials and how you interact with the other teams and coaches.

Relationships with the school – Principal and Faculty

Remember that the principal of the grade school is ultimately responsible for the welfare and direction of the activity programs. Typically, he or she along with the pastor, has designated some of that responsibility to your athletic director(s). Keep in mind policies on Academic or Behavioral eligibility (*see Athletic Handbook*).

In addition, the principal and parish have a reasonable expectation that students who display inappropriate behavior at practice or during games will be responsibly dealt with. Our principals have a deep appreciation for the work that the coaches in the Topeka Parochial League do for/with their students. Let's do everything we can to insure their support and the support of the faculty.

Relationship with the Family

Probably the wisest strategy that a coach can employ with parent(s)/guardians is to have a mandatory parent-athlete meeting. If you can, have it prior to the start of practices. The meeting probably does not have to be more than half an hour long, but it should probably be that long. If you would like, have the Athletic Director(s) present for support. (see attached "Information for Parents of Athletes").

If you invite reasonable, adult conversations with parents and refuse to become agitated, you will defuse most potentially bad situations. Kindness and compassion will go a lot further than anger.

Medical Kit

Medical kits are supplied by your school and must be available at all practices and games. Failure to have such emergency medical supplies on site is potentially negligent. Remember that treatment of blood injuries is specifically described: the caregiver must wear latex gloves, avoid skin or membrane contact with the body fluids of the injured, and appropriately dispose of contaminated materials. Students should NEVER administer first aid to students, especially in the case of blood injuries.