

NETBALL AUSTRALIA

HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE

What motivates young people to play sport?

Young people are motivated to participate in sport for a variety of reasons. These include ego, pride, fear of failure, the challenge of competition, a desire and determination to succeed, the feeling of achievement from perfecting a skill and acknowledgement from peers, coaches and family.

Research has shown that young people highly value the intrinsic rewards gained from participating in sport. Rewards such as the enjoyment in throwing a ball, learning a new skill, or merely being involved in sport with their friends, mean more for young athletes than the extrinsic rewards of receiving trophies or prizes.

Making an effort to motivate and encourage young people in sport has numerous advantages:

- Their skills, self-esteem and confidence will develop.
- They will remain involved in sport rather than dropping out.
- They will want to come to training sessions.
- Participation will be fun and enjoyable.

Ten ways to motivate your athletes

1 Recognise achievement

The majority of junior athletes will develop self confidence and the motivation to try harder upon receiving recognition for their efforts, especially when it comes from someone they respect, such as a coach, parent or senior player. Recognise athletes' achievements in a variety of areas in addition to those related to performance or skill development. These might include:

- Positive social behavior
- Regular attendance
- Caring for equipment
- Assisting the coach, official or younger athletes.

This ensures that not only the superior performers

receive recognition. Strategies can range from a simple well done or a pat on the back to using incentive schemes.

2 Set goals

Success or failure should not be determined by the scoreboard, nor by the number of competitions won.

Provide opportunities for all your athletes to experience success by setting goals in both the short term and long term. Goal setting can have a dramatic positive effect on both motivation and skill development.

You can set specific performance goals that can, where possible, be measured. For example:

- In this activity see how many times you can use only one hand (skill development)
- During the next five minutes see if you can limit your opponent to under eight points (competition performance)
- This season try to miss only two training sessions (attendance)
- Ensure your bike tyres are inflated properly for each training ride (care of equipment).

An essential feature of goal setting for motivation is giving frequent feedback. Otherwise, the tracking of progress may become difficult, minor improvements may not be obvious and the performer may lose sight of what he or she is trying to achieve.

3 Self-motivation

The feelings of pride and self-confidence that arise from success, and the feedback gained from the coach and significant others may be more important than the achievement itself. It encourages the development of self-motivation, hence reducing a young person's need for reinforcement.

4 Provide leadership opportunities

Providing opportunities for leadership and expecting your athletes to assume (not too great) responsibilities are very important. Acknowledging

their efforts through leadership motivates further success.

5 Be consistent and enthusiastic

Young people are often heard to say 'I hope the coach is in a good mood today'. This indicates that the mood of the coach affects how young people enjoy their sport.

The environment a coach creates, what they say and how they say it, should be consistent, caring and enthusiastic. The coach's behavior towards all young people, regardless of their sporting ability, should be the same.

6 Provide challenges

Don't underestimate the motivational value of small-sided competitive activities or seemingly frivolous challenges.

7 Vary your practice programs

A variety of practice routines and activities will reduce the possibility of boredom. Challenging your young participants to invent a routine to practice a particular skill can be very successful in a number of ways. Your athletes learn to take some responsibility for their own training and you as a coach may learn a new and innovative activity.

8 Be organised

A carefully planned session increases the coach's confidence and this effort will rub off and help motivate players. Making sure enough equipment is available for the number of participants involved is often underestimated as a motivating factor. Nothing bores or frustrates young people more (often leading to disruptive behavior) than waiting in long lines, or watching the more talented athletes dominate the equipment.

9 You can make practice fun

Regardless of the level of competition or the ability of the participants, most young people take part in sport for enjoyment and fun. Ensuring that young people have fun encourages them to maintain their involvement.



Fun and enjoyment come from the personal satisfaction of achieving goals, receiving recognition, mastering skills and participating in competition. Modify the rules of your sport to ensure laughter - try a game of touch football where the players can only walk; football, basketball, or netball using the non preferred hand; dog paddle relays in a swim session. Don't ignore the contribution a few jokes and laughs have on motivational levels.

10 Punishment

Punishment may or may not be an effective deterrent to undesirable behavior, but it does nothing to indicate to young people what alternative behavior is acceptable, nor how they can modify their behavior. The threat of punishment can also increase the amount of pressure under which a young person performs, often leading to a mistake as a result of the fear of the consequences of making an error.