



Munciana Coaching Newsletter #2

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Feedback Traps

By Cheryl Coker, Ph.D., Department of Human Performance, Dance and Recreation, New Mexico State University.

The importance of providing feedback to your athletes regarding their performance is without question. Unfortunately, a number of feedback traps exist that coaches can easily fall into. These traps reduce feedback effectiveness or worse, create unintentional consequences that can hinder performance. Following are five common feedback traps that should be avoided.

Trap #1 -More is Not Better!

Feedback serves many purposes. It can reinforce a behavior, provide information about the correctness of a performance attempt, explain why an error occurred, prescribe how to fix an error and motivate athletes to continue working toward their goals. Accordingly, feedback facilitates skill development and performance. It stands to reason then, that one might think that the more frequently feedback is given, the greater the gains in learning and performance. This, however, is not the case, and in fact, can be detrimental.

If feedback is given too often, athletes become accustomed to receiving it and can develop an overdependence on the coach. When this occurs, they are no longer actively engaged in processing and assessing response-produced sensory information, but instead simply wait for the coach to tell them what happened and how to fix it.

The danger with this strategy is that the athletes are no longer forced to develop necessary problem solving skills to develop their own error detection and correction mechanisms. In other words, athletes will not learn how to ascertain the specific cause of an error, nor will they be able to determine the adjustments necessary for its correction. Instead, you should prompt athletes to evaluate their performances prior to providing feedback. This strategy promotes reflective thinking that leads to superior learning.

Trap #2 – Offering Feedback Too Quickly

When feedback is provided too quickly, the athlete is not given the opportunity to attend to and process response produced sensory information. As discussed previously, this inhibits the athlete's development of important error detection and correction mechanisms. Asking athletes to assess their performance before

telling them what you observed is a superior strategy for skill development.

Trap #3 – Giving Too Much Information

Long, extensive feedback overloads athletes with too much information and can cause confusion and frustration. Likewise, attempting to correct multiple errors at a time can overwhelm and challenge an athlete's attentional capacity. Focus on one correction at a time and follow the KISS principle: keep it short and simple.

Trap #4 – Interfering With Automatic Processing

When athletes reach elite levels, their movements are performed automatically, with little or no conscious effort. Coaches, however, can disrupt these processes when the feedback they provide causes the athlete to focus consciously on a technical element of a normally automatically performed movement. To illustrate, try to determine your natural stride length as you walk several meters. It should be apparent that consciously focusing on a skill that you usually give little thought to changes the internal rhythm of the movement. Consequently, in competition, feedback should support the adoption of a non-awareness strategy. In other words, athletes should not be focusing on the technical execution of the skill while performing it, but allowing the movement to occur naturally.

Trap #5 - Misdirecting Attentional Focus

Choose your words carefully when conveying information. Coaches sometimes unintentionally misdirect an athlete's focus by the way they phrase their feedback messages. By telling an athlete not to worry about hitting the hurdle, you have actually planted that thought in the athlete's mind. Similarly, if you tell a goalkeeper not to let the opponent intimidate them, you have changed the athlete's focus from concentrating on blocking the shot to recalling past failures against that opponent.

Conclusion

Through feedback, coaches communicate to their athletes information to enhance skill development and performance. To ensure feedback effectiveness, however, coaches should recognize and avoid these five feedback traps just presented.

(Reprinted from the USOC's Olympic Coach

VOLLEYBALL ACE™ DRILLS

Team Defense vs. Coach

From *101 Winning Volleyball Drills From the AVCA*, 2000

Number of Players: 6
Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective:

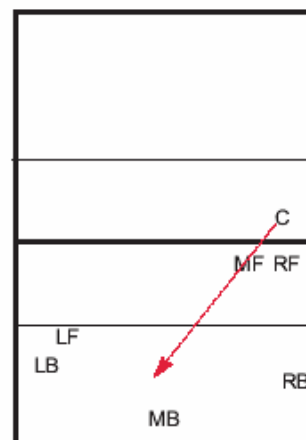
This is a controlled drill that allows for excellent teaching of exact defense situations. Proper positioning is required on each play and gives the coach the opportunity to repeat exact situations.

Directions:

1. The coach (C) attacks balls against a team of players on the opposite side of the net.
2. The players must play good defense and convert

the transition to attack successfully.

3. Players should be rotated frequently.
4. Play continues for a predetermined amount of time or a certain number of successful attacks.



Concentration

From *101 Volleyball Drills*, edited by Peggy Martin, 1998

Number of Players: 3-9
Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective:

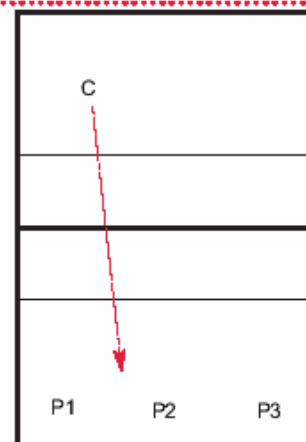
To enhance player communication and focus.

Directions:

1. From a prone position at the baseline, three players (P1, P2, P3) prepare for the start of the drill.
2. The coach (C) then slaps the ball and sends a high, free ball into the players' court.
3. Players must pass, set and hit in order. Each

player must also execute each skill by the time three balls have been put in play by the coach.

4. If a player has to repeat a skill, the drill begins again.
5. During the drill, the players must communicate in order to determine whose turn it is to pass, set or hit.
6. The players must then return to the prone position after each attack over the net.
7. After the three players successfully complete three contacts in order, three more players take the court and replace them.
8. Allow the players to problem-solve in this drill. Give very little instruction. The players should be required to communicate on every ball touch, a habit that should carry over to live game action.



Six at the Net

Joan Powell, Coronado High School (retired)

Number of Players: 12
Number of Balls: Steady supply

Objective:

To cause a team to play out of system and to force players to make the best of a chaotic situation.

Directions:

1. Players play six-on-six, with one team at the net facing the same direction and holding onto the bottom of the net.
2. The coach (C) hits the ball to the floor and the team at the net scrambles to get to the ball and play it three times.

3. Opponents respond to their play, and the game continues.
4. The coach changes sides and has the other team scramble from the net.
5. Play to a set number of points.
6. This drill calls for considerable communication and effort. Be sure to vary the bounced ball -- low, high, far, on the court, off the court.

Variations:

1. Allow the scrambling team only two hits. The bounced ball simulates an errant pass, and the team gets two more hits to get the ball over the net.
2. Set the score at 20-20 and play to 25.

