

## COACHING STYLES

There are three basic coaching styles:

1. The authoritarian is where the coach makes all the decisions without any input from his/her athletes. This style may help the athletes learn to follow orders, but will not necessarily help the young athletes develop thinking skills and personal qualities. Also, because one person is making the decisions, athletes may rebel against the coach and not follow the coach's demands. Also, the athletes are told what to do, but not necessarily why they are doing it.

I was an authoritarian coach when I first started. Because I was an inexperienced educator (I'm not a teacher by profession), I thought the only way to run a team was by making all of the decisions without any input from the team. I thought I knew what was best for the team and just wanted the athletes to follow orders. This worked to a point, until the athletes questioned why they were performing certain drills. Then I understood that this style cannot be used all of the time.

2. The casual coach basically lets the players run the program. This is the easiest style to put into practice and is used by coaches who are not very experienced. The athletes typically enjoy this style of coaching the most. However, the greatest issue with this style is that the athletes will not improve very much due to the lack of direction and training the coach is providing. As a casual coach, you're basically a supervisor than a teacher.

I had just started using this style of coaching recently. My varsity team has a few girls who are experienced volleyball players. They asked me if they could try a few offensive plays during practice and to work with the setter, who isn't as experienced, to practice these plays. I leave them to run the practice because it's something they want to try to do to improve.

3. The co-operative coach has the players sharing in the decision-making process. The coach guides the athletes with decisions and athletes buy into this style because they are part of the decision-making process. Athletes will work harder to achieve the goals set by the team and will show more respect and be more willing to listen if they know that the coach is genuinely interested in their opinions. It also makes the coach more approachable if an athlete or the team has questions or concerns. However, this style requires some skill and balance by the coach to know how much decision-making is required of the athletes, because not all athletes see the team perspective, but have their own individual perspective.

I have used this style the most. After using the authoritarian style and taking some more coaching clinics, I started to think like an athlete. If I were an athlete, I'd like to understand why I'm asked to perform certain tasks. Now I question my athletes as to why they think they keep serving the ball out, why the pass was crisp right to the setter, and why they think we're running serve-receive drills every practice. My athletes realize that I'm looking out for their best interests and want them to improve. I'm not sure if the

other styles reveal that as easily as the co-operative style.

A good coach will use each style at different times. Co-operative is good for teaching new skills, decision-making, and problem solving. Casual is good when team morale needs improvement. Authoritarian is needed if the team is unfocussed and needs to be put back on track. However, the coach can use their preferred style in any of these situations or the one they feel is most appropriate for the situation.