

GSM International Coaching Education Articles for Developing Your Players

PLAYERS GET IN A STUCK MODES OR DEEP VALLEY OF POOR PERFORMANCE SO NOW YOU CAN HELP THEM

How Can Coaches Help and Guide Their Players to a Higher Level of Performance

STEP ONE

RULE OUT THE PHYSICAL

Before you assume that a slump is mental, you have to rule out the physical or technical factors that might be causing it. If I'm not hitting, is there something wrong with my stance, grip or swing mechanics. If I consistently commit errors is there something skill-wise wrong with my fielding technique. Don't assume you have a head case until you're sure the physical part of the performance is ruled out.

STEP TWO

IS THE SLUMP RELATED TO SOMETHING GOING ON OFF THE FIELD?

Sometimes players get into a slump because they are preoccupied or distracted by family or personal problems/pressures. Sometimes a slump is one of the only ways a player can cope with too many performance demands. Your player may not even be aware that this is the case as the problem is going on just out of consciousness. Also, as a coach, you might want to take a look at your behavior about the player. Sometimes slumps are directly related to how the coach deals with the ball player.

STEP THREE

DEVELOP AWARENESS OF THE SLUMP AS A DIRECT RESULT OF FAULTY MENTAL STRATEGIES

Player slumps are most often self-maintained by what the players say to him/herself Just before an at-bat or play in the field. As a coach, you want to find out how the athlete sets themselves up by discovering their pre-performance self-talk, imagery, and focus.

STEP FOUR

NORMALIZE AND REFRAME THE SLUMPING IN A HOLE OR PERFORMANCE

Player slumps and failure in this soccer are normal. To be successful players must learn to deal with and master failure and the coach if there to help. A bad game or two does not cause the slump. The slump is a direct result of what the player says to themselves about their failures. Help your players reframe the meaning of those bad games as what they need to do to have the good ones. Failure gets you closer to success if you learn from them and then forget them.

STEP FIVE

CHALLENGE FAULTY BELIEFS

The slumping player has stopped believing in them. If left unchecked these negative beliefs will continue to keep them stunk. As a coach, you have to help the athlete restore this confidence. Catch them doing

things right. Assist them to remember their successes (the slumping player develops amnesia for their good games). Confront their negativity and challenge they can't. Let them know in as many ways as possible that you haven't lost your belief in them.

STEP SIX

RESTORE CORRECTIVE IMAGERY

A slumping player has a tendency always to see what they don't want to happen instead of what they want to have happened. Help your players change the channel and begin to focus on making that play, getting that hit instead on what they are afraid. The more internal practice of the right images, the more chance the ball player will have of quickly snapping out of the performance difficulties.

STEP SEVEN

RESTORE PROPER PLAYER CONCENTRATION OF YOUR PLAYERS

The slumping player thinks too much and focuses on his/her head. When you're on, you're not thinking, and instead, you're on automatic, focusing on the ball and just reacting. It's the wrong focus that's the leading cause of the slump and that prevents the player from just trusting and letting the hits happen. Being too conscious causes the player to try too hard. Help refocus them and distract their conscious mind from the playing situation.

STEP EIGHT

COACH THE HERE AND NOW AND THE IMMEDIATE THAT NEEDS TO BE FOCUSED ON

When you play well you're mentally in the here & now. The slumping player is in the past, thinking about mistakes and failures, or in the future entertaining the what-ifs or they are in the wrong mental place, worrying about you and their playing time or focusing on the umps or rowdy fans. Teach your players how to recognize when they leave the here and now of the performance, and to quickly get themselves back.

STEP NINE

REPROGRAM YOUR PLAYERS THOUGHTS AND DEVELOP SELF-CONFIDENCE

The slumping player maintains a lot of emotional negativity. They are continually down on themselves. Their negativity is part of the overall problem. Help them work on changing their "mental diet." Help get them off all that mental junk food (like I not right or always mess up or I'll never get there). Do not collude or agree with their negativity. Remember Garbage In; Garbage Out never cuts it.

STEP TEN

COACH YOUR PLAYERS WITH STRESS CONTROL TECHNIQUES

The players who get themselves stuck in a slump have trouble staying calm in the clutch. Their nervousness gets in their way of relaxing and performing to their potential. Teach them how to control their breathing and muscle tension, and you'll help them snap that slump.

STEP ELEVEN

ACT AS IF YOUR PLAYERS WILL PERFORM AT A HIGH LEVEL

Have your players who are stuck, act as if they are not. Acting as if has to do with how the player carries. It refers to their posture. Watch a ball player who's slumping, and you'll see it in their face, shoulders, head, and step. As a fallback position" teach your players to act as if by carrying themselves like a winner on the outside, regardless of how they may feel on the inside.

Know the Factors That May be Stressful for Youth Players

Coaches can do an excellent service to the younger player by helping each of them to develop self-confidence, a sense of personal worth and mastery, and a constructive attitude toward failure and adversity. Behavior that adults view as encouraging can often be perceived by players as stress producing and pressure-filled. Younger players will freely choose to participate in activities that they consider as worthwhile, enjoyable and fun. The challenge for coaches is to maximize the inherent joy of the beautiful game of soccer and minimize experiences that increase children's anxiety and the likelihood of burnout.

Practical suggestions for coaches:

1. Avoid a win at all cost attitude.
2. Transform community/club pressure into parental interest, support and encouragement.
3. Avoid over training, long, repetitive practices and excessive time and travel demands.
4. Avoid using perfection as the standard for judging a player's performance.
5. Don't associate a player's worth or value as a person with their performance and ability on the soccer field (i.e. winning or a great performance means that I like you more).
6. Make sure that your non-verbal behaviors are congruent with your words and that the coaching is consistent across situations (i.e. sulking after a loss even though the team played well or being happy following a poor performance by a winning team).