



## **PLC Coach Note:** ***Respect Between Coaches and Athletes***

To run an effective and meaningful sports program, players must respect the coaching staff, especially the head coach. Some coaches, in an effort to command respect from their players and maintain order on their team, will utilize fear tactics. These coaches may try to instill fear in their athletes by being mean, tough, inflexible and intimidating. Certainly, a little tough-love should not be out of the equation, but some coaches seem to believe that quiet acceptance of every coach decision and a lack of complaints means that their team respects them. Generally, this isn't true. In many cases, the players are just afraid to speak up and their fear can lead to resentment. One key example of this is when coaches use punishment as a way to enforce team rules. Running sprints as punishment for being late or making a mistake is not conducive to building a good coach-athlete dynamic. There are more effective player-growth oriented ways for the coach to establish rules, expectations and consequences without turning practice into punishment and fostering resentment. A suggested book is Jeff Marx's *Season of Life* to get a feel for the flow of respect from athlete to coach and what it takes to achieve that balance.

Fear is not respect. Some tangible positive ways coaches can elicit (not command) real RESPECT:

- **R**emember prayer before and after practices and games.
- **E**mpathize with your athletes as people
  - caring about how they are doing



**“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God”  
(1 John 4:7)**

outside the sport.

- **S**eek input from your athletes about the team.
- **P**lan, with your team, expectations for performance and behavior within the group.
- **E**arn your athletes' trust by making fair and just decisions on line-ups and playing time.
- **C**ommunicate with your athletes on how you arrive at your coaching decisions for the good of the whole team.
- **T**each by example. Treat officials, athletes, opponents and spectators with respect. Your good actions will speak louder than any words ever could.

Keep open lines of communication. If you are dealing with mature young adults, use the captains' input to check the pulse of a team. Try to meet with players one-on-one before and after the season to set goals, and check their progress. Listen to what your athletes have to say, but don't necessarily be afraid to make unpopular decisions.

Listen to what your athletes have to say, but don't necessarily be afraid to make unpopular decisions for the good of the team. Sometimes finding the balance between being the "cool" coach and the coach who gets respect and results is difficult. Have you found any other strategies that work well? Let us know at [plc@nd.edu](mailto:plc@nd.edu)!