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## Champion Coach Note: Correcting Undesirable Behavior, Giving Ownership

*This week's note comes to us from Notre Dame Social Foundations of Coaching student Caroline Corbett with advice on making the best of a bad situation.*

Often in sport, tempers can flare. The intensity and high action of play can make any emotion amplified to an extreme. Game time makes it a little more difficult to deal with these temper flare-ups but they should be dealt with effectively during practice. Here are some tips when dealing with a player that has an outburst, bad attitude, or other similar issue at practice. The goal of these tips is to correct behavior and prevent it from happening in the future.

### 1. Deal with the issue in the moment

- Dealing with the issue right away is most effective. The player will know exactly what he or she did and why it is an issue right at that moment. During practice, have an assistant coach take over or have the rest of the team run a drill so that you have some time to speak with the athlete.

### 2. Stay calm and poised

- Staying calm and poised will allow the athlete to calm down as well. It will show that you are in control of the situation.



**"You don't drown by  
falling into water.  
You drown by staying there."**

**-Edwin Louis Cole**

### 3. Allow the player to vent

- You may not know the real reason behind the outburst. There could be something going on at home that came out on the field, court, etc. Venting will allow the athlete to calm down and become more rational.

### 4. Empathize

- Make it clear to the athlete that we want to correct whatever issue caused this problem. This will send a clear message that we are with the athlete, working to help him/her.

### 5. Focus on the issue, not the person

- Communicate to the athlete that we want to fix the problem. Explain why this issue is affecting the team's attitude or performance or how it is holding back the athlete individually. Make sure not to make it a personal issue.

### 6. Always give the athlete an out

- Give the athlete an opportunity to decide what the best solution to the problem is. What do they believe would be the best way to fix the issue? This allows the athlete not to feel backed against a wall.

### 7. Focus on a solution

- Once the issue has been identified, the discussion needs to move forward on how to resolve it. Set goals for changing behavior that the athlete agrees to and acts upon with practice.

These tips are all designed to provide athletes with ownership of their sports experience. They will start feeling like they have some control over their play and will appreciate the opportunity to correct their own behavior and not just be told what to do. These steps may seem extensive but it can actually be a very quick conversation. Just remember to keep these tips in mind and behavior can be corrected immediately and for the future.