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## Weekly Coach Note: Coaching Relationships

This week we focus on the "R" in the GROW approach in understanding coaching as ministry.

As a coach, it is important to cultivate healthy relationships on your team. There are so many relationships that your players will be involved in, and it is a vital role of a coach to make sure that your players are engaging in fun, respectful, fruitful relationships.

**With teammates:** Perhaps relationships with teammates are the easiest kind of relationships to overlook for a coach. Because players are working with each other and they are all on the same team, it could be assumed that they will have a lot in common and that friendships will flourish. While this is likely, it is important to make sure that you are encouraging relationships with all players and that everyone feels welcome. Maybe a lot of your players attend the same school or are on the same academic track, and naturally mesh, but it's key to make sure that every member feels valued. Do this by keeping a good pulse on the team. Meet with captains to see how team chemistry is developing. And make practice more than just a place to work on skills; make it a fun place where enjoyable shared experiences can turn into lifelong memories.

**With opponents:** It is in a coach's and a player's best interest to respect an opponent. Treating a competitor with dignity and respect will make players more humble and tenacious in competition. It might be easy to write off an opponent as inferior and then get defeated because of the cavalier attitude. It also is easy to caricature the opponent as an "enemy."



**"Make sure  
your players know  
they are working  
with you,  
not for you."**

~ John Wooden

Remember that the term "compete" comes from the Latin *to strive together*, and competitors are best seen as challengers who have the opportunity to bring out the best in your athletes. This respect begins with you as a coach, and the welcome you show to other teams, and how you act when you are a guest in their home.

**With officials:** Officials always seem to get the short end of the stick. A great game by an official is one in which they are barely noticed. A bad game is always exaggerated to feel like the end of the world. Encourage your players to realize that an official's place is to maintain that the rules of the game. They are not going to make every call perfectly. Their job is extremely difficult, and officials will perform best when they are working with teams who are respectful and courteous.

**With fans and parents:** Parents and fans often emit enthusiasm, intensity, and scrutiny while watching youth and high school sports. Make sure that your players know that their only responsibilities on the field or in the gym are to their coach, their teammates, to themselves, and to God. Their focus should be on the goals that they have set with you and the rest of the team. Fans and parents can be an asset to a team, but if you see that fans or parents are becoming an unhealthy distraction to a player, stick up for your athlete in the appropriate manner, and contact an athletic director or league official if necessary.

Dedicating time as a coach to developing quality relationships around sport will make the sport experience more enjoyable and growth-filled for all of your athletes and yourself!