

Chapter 13. Five Considerations When Handing Out Disciplinary Measures

Keeping your athletes in line can sometimes be a challenge. When they violate team rules, getting them back on track is one of the unpleasant aspects of coaching that must be done.

Recommendation: Here are five aspects of discipline to consider and potential pitfalls to avoid.

1) **Waiting too late.** Small problems are easily resolved. But if you turn a blind eye to small problems because you don't want to confront them, they will soon escalate into bigger problems. Address infractions shortly after they occur.

2) **Coming on too strong.** The most effective discipline is progressive. Begin by taking small corrective actions. If those fail, proceed to harsher measures.

If you threaten to kick a kid off the team for minor infractions, you create an atmosphere of fear and mistrust.

3) **Make discipline finite.** Think of discipline as a form of training. It's an ongoing process. Work to make sure athletes see the method of your disciplinary actions.

4) **Make sure all sides are heard.** Provide athletes a chance to explain their side of the story. Sometimes their stories may merit further scrutiny. Other times, they won't. In any case, if you jump all over a kid for something they didn't do or were a very minor "partner in crime", you will create resentment.

5) **Examine root causes.** If an athlete does something they know that clearly crosses the line, try to get under the surface. Are they homesick? Did they get drunk and disorderly because their girlfriend or spouse left them? Are they acting out poorly because they are unhappy with the way they are being utilized on the team? By trying to find out what is causing the bad behavior, you may be able to improve the person's on field performance as well.

P.S. There are simply a few athletes who are just trouble makers. They should be put on a "short leash" and if they don't behave up to standards, released.