

Post-Season Coaches' Meetings: A Forgotten Must-Do

As athletic administrators we all have too many jobs to do and too little time to get them done. One job that is often neglected can help prevent many future problems and headaches from adding to our growing list. The one must-do that is often forgotten in the shuffle of our hectic year is the post-season coaches' meeting. If properly constructed, the post-season coaches' meeting can be a vital part of the athletic department protocol at your school. It can serve as a form of closure from the year completed and a springboard to the upcoming season.

Many athletic administrators do a good job of starting the season with an organizational meeting and pep talk for their coaching staff. Quite often they monitor practices and games as part of a regular schedule. But once the season ends, they are often remiss in scheduling and completing an effective post-season meeting with their head coaches. Athletic directors are often in such a hurry to move forward with the next sports season that they neglect to properly put the previous season to rest. A post-season coaches' meeting can do just that!

Some of the best time I have spent with my coaches over the years is the time after the season where we can both pause and reflect on the job done during the year. This is a great time for me to talk with my coaches as well as giving the coaches a chance to voice their opinion on my support and/or work for them as an athletic administrator. A meeting after the season allows for a more relaxed atmosphere that is free from the tension of regular season planning, coaching pressures and player/parent interaction. It also allows all involved to gain perspective about the season recently completed before discussing the future.

I like to hold my post-season meeting with the head coach of every sport at least two weeks after their season is completed. In most cases we try to hold the meeting no more than a month after the completion of the season. This time frame allows ample time for the coach to meet with his staff and players. It also allows the coach time to complete his inventory and budget request for the following year and reflect on the past season. A meeting within a month of the conclusion of a season is also recent enough to keep ideas and concerns fresh in the mind of the coach as well as the athletic administrator.

The post-season meeting should be divided into three phases. The evaluation phase is considered first. The evaluation phase addresses both the head coach and his staff. The evaluation phase is followed by the program assessment phase. A program assessment meeting should involve input from both the coach and the athletic administrator. A post-season coaches meeting should always conclude with the budgetary discussion. A budgetary discussion held a year in advance of the upcoming season is a valuable tool in keeping an athletic department on solid financial ground.

Our school corporation requires a written evaluation of all head coaches. I also require each head coach to perform the same evaluation for all assistant coaches. The head coach and I spend the first portion of our post-season meetings discussing these evaluation tools. I discuss the written evaluation of the head coach and highlight both strengths and weaknesses. As part of the evaluation I will give suggestions for improvements in areas that I feel are weak. I also try to praise and reinforce positive areas. The head coach is allowed time to critique his/her work as well as any positive and/or negative comments about my work as an athletic administrator. The head coach also shares feelings on his or

her staff by going over the results of the individual staff evaluations. Also included in this phase is an evaluation of other support staff and their work with the athletic department. I look upon this meeting as a means of improvement and not one of purely negative feedback from either direction.

Once the evaluation phase of the meeting is concluded, we move to the program phase of our discussion. Our coaches are free during this time to discuss the current status of the program and their vision for future changes and improvements. Future scheduling requests, as well as other administrative matters are often part of this discussion. This also allows me to time to express my views on both the current status and future vision I have for the program. I often use this time to share feedback with the coach from parents, athletes and other concerned patrons I have encountered during the past season. Some of this feedback is negative, but I also try very hard to share as much of the good news as I possibly can. Our coaches get a lot of negative feedback from several directions during the course of a season. I try to pass along as many positives as possible during this portion of the meeting.

The final phase of our meeting is one that is essential to our fiscal survival. I review the budget report from the season just concluded. Also included are budget reports from the previous year as well as the inventory report from the past season. Current budget trends for the total program are shared and projections for the year are considered. Financial trends over the past 10 years in our program are also used as a part of our discussion. Gender equity considerations are a major emphasis in all discussion about athletic finances at our school.

Once the budget information is on the table we work together to craft a budget for the coming season. We look at needs, wants and perks that could improve the program. Within our budget framework an agreement is reached on how we will reach our goals for the coming year. Quite often I will inform the coach of what I feel the athletic department can afford to do in the coming year. At this point the head coach can commit to fund-raising and other alternatives to raise the additional money needed to complete the upcoming sports budget. Often our athletic booster club and individual sports booster clubs serve as valuable tools in bridging the gap and securing the funds needed to adequately fund our sports teams. We try to leave this final phase of the meeting with a written plan for the direction we are heading financially. This plan can then be shared with the coaching staff, parents and athletes in a straightforward and honest manner.

Many times as athletic administrators we feel like we are swamped and too busy to give up an hour or two in meeting with a coach whose season is concluded. But I feel that the time spent in a post-season meeting with your head coach is the most valuable time you can give. It gives a great opportunity to evaluate the ups and downs of the past year. This time gives the athletic administrator a time in which he/she can "coach your coaches" for future improvements. It also gives both the coach and the administrator a chance to look at the bigger picture of program direction with a clear focus. Finally, it gives both parties a chance to plan for the financial future of the individual sport as well as the athletic department as a whole. Take advantage of the time to construct a post-season meeting with your coaches that will benefit your total program. You will be glad you did!