

Conducting Pre-Season Coaches' Meetings

One of the tasks that many Athletic Directors dread is the annual pre-season meeting for the coaching staff of your school and/or district. This is often an intimidating meeting for new members of the staff and a pivotal first step for the Athletic Director in setting the tone and direction for a new athletic year. If well planned and well executed, this first meeting can be a springboard to a great new year. It can open doors of communication between the A.D. and the staff that will insure proper feedback for both in the years to come. This meeting can be a great opportunity to discuss the expectations of the entire staff as well as review all rules, regulations and procedures to be followed by all concerned during the upcoming year.

I feel that every pre-season meeting with your coaching staff should be complete and sequential. A well-planned agenda should be printed and distributed to the staff in advance. I send this agenda in two summer reminder letters to every member of our coaching staff and school administration. The topics are the same every year. The details may change as rule changes are implemented, but the basics remain the same.

All rules and regulations from our state association, district and school are always covered first. Academic eligibility, physical examination forms and any transfer information is discussed at length. At this time, our insurance policy and all emergency plans and procedures are highlighted.

Next we discuss the pre-season parent meeting that every coach is required to hold. Coaches are given a checklist of items they must cover with parents. Attendance, behavior, appearance, conduct, awards and squad cut policies are just a few of the items on this list. Coaches of each sport can add information unique to their programs.

Regardless of the nature of the sport, we must constantly remind our coaching staff and our athletes of the potential danger of athletic competition. The risk of injury is always at the top of any list of discussions in the area of risk management in our athletic department. Copies of our risk management tape series are available at this meeting.

It is vital that the coaches, athletes and parents are aware of our chain of command. The head coach should always be the first to discuss concerns with the parent. Our coaches are reminded to inform the parents of this policy early and often. Many times a direct discussion between the coach and a parent or athlete can prevent major confrontations at a later time.

Another item always on our agenda is the care of equipment. As athletic budgets continually tighten, we must often remind all involved that athletic equipment is owned by the high school. It is loaned to the athlete for use during the season. It is the ultimate responsibility of the athlete to return all equipment in good shape and in a timely manner.

The next item on our agenda is the awards policy. Every coach is required to turn in to the A.D. a summary of how all awards and honors are given to athletes. This award policy is also discussed with the parents before the season begins to reduce the risk of misunderstandings that could arise in the post-season. All awards criteria are on file in the athletic office at all times for review by parents, athletes and staff.

Every summer we work with our guidance staff to stay aware of changes in the NCAA Clearinghouse. All coaches are given checklists to give to all athletes to help them monitor their progress in the NCAA core classes we offer at Castle.

Our athletic booster club is a huge part of our program. We discuss sport representation and booster club membership for all of our parents and coaches. The income generated for our teams is invaluable. Therefore, we think it is very important to push the booster club and highlight what is done for our athletes by such a great organization.

Another area of concern that we discuss at length is our insurance policy. We do not pay for insurance for our athletes, but we require coverage for all who wish to play. Our school district offers a low priced plan that covers our athletes for a very low price. This coverage will protect athletes until our state association catastrophic policy kicks in at \$ 25,000.

Every year the coaches are reminded of our ticket policy. All prices for games, season tickets and all-sports passes are distributed. Coaches can then pass this information on to all parents. The athletic department sends a yearly press release to all local media to remind all patrons of any changes. Our comp ticket policy is also discussed with the staff at this time.

The pre-season meeting is a great opportunity to distribute game schedules, practice schedules and bus schedules for the entire school year. Updates and changes can always be made at a later date. We have found that the earlier we can get this information to the parents, the less conflict and confusion arise.

We have a Hall of Fame at Castle High that is a highly coveted honor. Every year we review all of the standards that must be met to enter the hall. We encourage our coaching staff to discuss these standards with their athletes and their parents as early as possible. These policies are also in our athletic handbook as well as being posted in the gymnasium.

Finally, we use the pre-season coaches meeting to hand out as much in the way of handouts and written information as possible. All athletic physical exam forms, code of conduct forms, student athletic handbooks, emergency cards and other pertinent information are distributed at this time. In this manner, coaches can get this written information to our parents and student-athletes as early as possible.

Like any good team, your athletic department needs to get off to a good start. A well-organized pre-season coaching meeting can set the tone for your coaches and your athletic department. Don't miss a great chance to make a first impression every athletic year.