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Youth Tennis Coaches' Guide

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Introduction

Being a coach for a youth tennis program is no small feat. Such a job involves a lot of work. You'll need to plan lessons, find a site, obtain student athletes, schedule practices, run tournaments, work with parents, collaborate with community member and much more. Above all you will have to teach your student athletes how to play tennis. With all of these responsibilities it can be easy to lose sight of what is most important about youth sports: positive youth development.

This coaches' guide will help you understand why positive youth development (PYD) is so important and how you can ensure that your tennis program provides it. The guide will start with qualities you'll need to embody and behaviors you'll need to adopt. Coaching is no easy task, and not everyone can do it, but with perseverance you can learn how to coach successfully. Following this you'll learn what PYD is all about and how children's development will affect your program. With knowledge of child development you can begin to plan your program. This guide will provide you with a number of suggestions and other advice on how to do that. Finally, you will learn a bit about evaluating your program. This very important step will help you to improve your program for next season. Using this guide you should be able to plan and carry out a successful youth tennis program.

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What makes a good coach?

While coaching tennis will require expertise that coaches of other sports do not need, much of what makes a good coach is universal throughout sports. There are numerous personality traits and qualities that all great coaches seem to possess (Halliday, 2010). Additionally, all effective coaches must create strong relationships with their student athletes. Student athletes who feel they have strong bond with their coaches tend to be more motivated, perform better, and enjoy themselves more (Stewart & Owens, 2011). These relationships are often based around a coach's ability to fulfill and balance a number of roles (Short & Short, 2005).

Qualities of a Good Coach

Temperament is often an important factor in deciding what kind of career a person may choose. Some people know they don't like high pressure situations, or that they don't work well with others, and choose careers accordingly. Coaches too must have a certain persona, or possess certain qualities and traits. According to Brian Halliday (2010), there are seven qualities of an exceptional coach.

1. **Approachable:** A good coach needs to be welcoming and approachable. Talking with a coach should be easy and non-threatening. Make yourself open and accessible to athletes, parents and other people associated with your team or program.
2. **Knowledgeable:** As a good coach you must be well-versed in all areas of the sport you are teaching. As a tennis coach it will be essential for you to have a good understanding of the mechanics of good play, such as ground strokes and footwork. You will also need to be versed in the strategies and methods of play. It will also prove necessary for you to keep up to date on the rules and regulations.

3. **Good Communicator:** A good coach is able to spark interest and maintain attention through his or her dialogue. He or she is able to make a point clearly and concisely. Coaching young children will require that you think carefully about how you describe and state your instructions. You will need to consider what kind of speech keeps their attention, and what kind of terminology they will understand best.
4. **High Expectations:** A good coach sets goals that athletes are challenged to meet. These goals are clear and measurable. These high expectations motivate athletes and serve as a reward. High expectations for young children beginning tennis could include rallying a ball over the net 10 times, hitting a target or beating a previous record. These are all clear and measurable.
5. **Creative:** A good coach is creative with practice and game play. When coaching young children you will need to find ways to make practicing fun. This will require you to be creative about many elements of the game. You may turn familiar games like Simon Says into a footwork drill, or turn familiar concepts like a forehand into a challenging game with an exciting reward.
6. **Enthusiastic:** A good coach is always enthusiastic! Good coaches show enthusiasm for the sport itself, practices, a particular game, a single achievement or even the arrival of each student athlete. The young children you coach will soak up your enthusiasm and mirror it.
7. **Good Attitude:** A good coach is able to stay positive. Just as children will mirror your enthusiasm, they will mirror your attitude. It is important that you begin and end practice, lessons and games with a smile. Your good attitude will be encouraging and motivating to your athletes.

Coach-Athlete Relationship

Relationships that children build with adults frequently influence the development self-esteem. Similarly, the relationship student athletes share with their coaches can shape their perception of their own competence. What's more, student athletes' motivation, satisfaction and level of performance can all be related to the quality of their relationships with their coaches (Stewart & Owen, 2011). Sandra and Martin Short (2005) proclaim that a good coach-athlete relationship can be attained through the balance of the five roles a coach must fulfill.

1. **Teacher:** A coach is most recognizably a teacher of a sport. As a teacher, a coach must use his or her knowledge of the sport to teach athletes new skills, and train them to play at their best level of performance.
2. **Organizer:** Being an organizer is a role coaches perform off the field or court. A coach organizes games, practices, lessons, transportation and many more aspects of a typical sports season or program. Being organized during practices and lessons can also help things run smoother. While the student athletes might not see the organizer role of their coach, it is an important part of why and how they play and learn.
3. **Competitor:** During games and competitions the student athletes aren't the only people competing! Coaches of team sports will have a more active role in a game, but even as a tennis coach you must be a part of the competition. You will provide advice and mediation, and observe the overall game play. It is important that you monitor your emotional response and provide a good model for your athletes.
4. **Learner:** It is a coach's responsibility to educate him or herself. Being knowledgeable about the sport and methods of teaching the sport requires that coaches keep up to date.

A coach can always learn and try new ways of teaching, and these new ways may benefit the student athletes.

5. **Mentor:** This role can have the strongest effect on student athletes. Fulfilling this role successfully means you are a positive role model. Talking about problems, sharing success, providing support or offering counsel are all ways of being a good mentor.

After this section you hopefully have a better idea of what your role as a coach will be.

With practice and time you will learn to embody the qualities which will help you succeed.

Time and experience will also help you discover the best balance of the five roles. With this new understanding of yourself you can begin to consider your future student athletes.

Positive Youth Development

As a coach you have the opportunity to teach student athletes a new skill. In your case this skill is tennis. You will teach your student athletes how to hit the ball, how to play a point, how to score a game, and how to win a match. But your program and lessons can provide those children with much more than just tennis skills. Your program can promote Positive Youth Development.

Positive Youth Development, or PYD, is a notion that child development should be a strength-based experience. For all children to develop to the fullest of their potential, the caregivers should focus on positive social activities and help children avoid negative or compromising behaviors. These positive social activities should provide children with a chance to practice their newly developing physical, social and emotional skills (Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan & Bloom, 2011).

Jones, et al. (2011) report that PYD accomplishes five objectives referred to as the 5 Cs.

1. **Confidence:** This refers to the internal feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Student athletes who have a positive experience in sport show positive feelings of self-worth and self-esteem.
2. **Competence:** Competence is an individual's belief about his or her own ability to do something successfully. In PYD this can be social or physical competence. When playing tennis, or any sport, student athletes can feel socially competent about their relationships with their teammates and peers, and physically competent about their own skills and ability to compete. This competence is related to confidence in that student athletes who believe they are competent will be more confident.

3. **Character:** In this capacity, character is defined as a respect for cultural and societal etiquette and a sense of integrity. Sports can provide a pro-social environment in which children can practice making positive choices and building their character.
4. **Caring/Compassion:** This particular outcome is exactly what it sounds like. Sports provide an opportunity to learn sympathy and empathy for others. When sports are in a pro-social environment, with coaches teaching children to respect and consider the feelings of their opponents and teammates, caring and compassion can be achieved.
5. **Connection:** This outcome encompasses a bond created between student athlete and family, community and institutions. When a sports program has strong ties and relations to the community and the families within the community, the student athletes learn and replicate those bonds.

When conducted appropriately sports can help children develop the five Cs and experience positive development. These kinds of results can't always be achieved through sports though. The success or failure of a program to promote PYD and the 5Cs depends on the coach and the philosophy of the program. A coach must begin a program with an understanding of child development and the goal of providing a PYD experience. By setting a philosophy that focuses on achieving the 5Cs a coach can help his or her student athletes achieve PYD in all areas of their development (Jones et al, 2011).

Sports are a very physical domain. By definition sports require that participant complete some kind of physical task. Often the goal of sports is to perform a physical task successfully. They are therefore very beneficial to children's physical development. Sports provide children with the opportunity to practice any number of physical skills. Every sport can promote different physical skill development. These skills are all very important to healthy development, but long-

time involvement in sports can help children develop something just as important: a healthy lifestyle. Being involved in sports early can help children develop a positive attitude about exercise and physical activity. This positive attitude about exercise can lead to a positive attitude and a healthy lifestyle in adulthood (LeBlanc & Dickson 1996).

Despite the fact that sports are based on physical skills, they also provide a setting for the use of social skills. Children can learn a number of important social skills from sports settings. Sports require the athlete to be in the company of a number of different types of people, and develop a number of different kinds of relationships. With guidance from coaches children can learn how to respect their teammates, opponents, coaches and officials. This time spent with people can also help children create new peer relationships. Playing a sport creates a sense of community and gives children a sense of belonging. As children get older and continue in sports they will also have the opportunity to take on leadership roles. All of these opportunities provide positive ways for children to develop their social skills.

Sports can also provide an excellent opportunity to develop important emotional skills. Exercise itself promotes emotional health by providing an outlet for emotions (LeBlanc & Dickson 1996). A person's self-esteem is comprised of a number of specific self-concepts. Each self-concept helps add to the overall self-esteem of a person. Sports and exercise can promote a positive physical self-concept, which can lead to a more positive self-esteem (Slutzky, 2009). Sports can provide more than just exercise though. They also provide an opportunity to learn emotional control. With guidance from a coach student athletes can learn how to manage success and defeat gracefully. They can learn how to show their emotions in a socially acceptable manner (LeBlanc & Dickson 1996).

Positive youth development can be achieved through sports, but it is up to the coach to provide an experience that teaches more than just the skills of the game. It requires a well-informed coach who has a goal of promoting positive physical, social and emotional development (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte & Jones, 2005).

Physical, social and emotional developments are very important, and will be very influential to your program. The next few sections will provide you with the information you will need to know about child development while planning and running your program.

Understanding Children's Physical Development

Anybody who works with young children should have some understanding of their growth patterns and development. As a coach it will be important for you to be knowledgeable in the specific area of physical development. Knowing how your student athletes develop will be helpful when you need to plan your activities and lessons. Planning activities and lessons based around your knowledge of children's physical development will ensure that your students experience more success.

Before planning all your lessons around developmental checklists and broad generalizations about development across the ages, there are several guidelines you must consider.

1. *Physical growth and development is a nonstop, differentiated, ordered, and progressive process.* This means as a coach you need to consider where your students are in the process before planning your lessons. Those lessons should complement and coincide with your student athletes' level of physical development, and they should grow and change just as physical development does.
2. *Heredity and environment factor into physical development, and every individual's development will vary.* Every child is unique and comes from a different environment. You will need to consider these differences and adjust the way you coach to provide equal and appropriate environment for all the children.
3. *Every age level exhibits differences in physical development.* You will need to have a wide variety of activities available to accommodate a number of levels of physical development.

4. *A child's physical needs must be met before they can function appropriately.* This means it will be necessary for you to find a balance between a good amount of physical activity and motivation to keep playing or practicing.
5. *Different parts of the body develop at different rates.* Be aware that small and large motor skills develop separately.
6. *Physical differences between children can have an effect on a child's personality.* This makes it very important that you ensure that every child feels successful in some manner (Humphrey, 2003).

Physical development is generally separated into three areas: gross motor development, fine motor development, and balance and coordination. Gross motor development is often referred to as large motor development. This is because gross motor development involves the use of larger muscles such as those in your torso, arms and legs. Large motor skills include running, jumping, walking, and rolling among many others. These large motor skills are generally the first to develop. Fine motor development is also referred to as small motor skills. Small muscles like those in your hands, fingers and feet are those being referred to when discussing fine motor development. Small motor skills are things like picking up a ball or gripping a racquet. Typically, small motor skills develop after large motor skills, although there is much overlap. Balance and coordination skills are the ability to move in such a way that actions become more automatic and smooth. While a sense of balance is important, this set of skills includes the coordination of movements to perform complex activities and hand-eye coordination. While large and small motor skills are developing slowly in the earliest stages of life, balance and coordination skills begin developing quickly upon birth and continue

throughout childhood. While these skills are often considered separate from each other, they are all important for the overall physical development of the child (Brotherson, 2009).

Every child develops gross motor, fine motor and balance and coordination skills. They also all go through a number of specific aspects of development. These aspects describe the ways in which children grow. The first way is directionally. Children tend to develop from head to toe. The first muscles they develop are those at the top of their body, such as neck and arms, followed by the lower muscles like legs and feet. They also develop from center-out. This means that the first muscles to develop tend to be those in the torso and the muscles that develop later are those in the limbs. Another aspect of development is from general to specific. An example of this kind of development is being able to wave your arms before you can clap your hands. Another aspect of development is differentiation to integration. This aspect is about children figuring out how to use different muscles together to do a complex task. These aspects of growth are important to keep in mind when planning lessons and activities. They can help you understand what sort of goals and expectations you can set. Once again, this can help you create an environment and program where all children experience success (Brotherson, 2006).

As a tennis coach it will also be beneficial for you to know a little bit about several specific ballistic motor developments. A ballistic skill is projecting an object by applying force. The ballistic skills specific to tennis are known as side-arm striking and over-arm striking. These would be translated in tennis as ground-strokes and serving (Haywood & Getchell, 2009).

Side-arm striking is what can be observed in tennis as a forehand or backhand ground-stroke. According to Haywood and Getchell (2009) a proficient side-arm strike follows the sequence: backswing with a forward step, rotate pelvis, rotate spine and swing, extend arm, make contact with the ball, and follow through with racquet. This is the sequence you would expect to

see an experienced tennis player make. The children you teach will likely show a number of phases leading up to that motion. The youngest or least experienced children will display a chopping motion first. They will face the ball as it comes to them and try to swing in a vertical pattern. Following instruction and practice they will begin to exhibit the second phase. In this phase the children will stand sideways, and swing the racquet in a horizontal motion, and take a forward step in order to strike the ball. The third phase children exhibit will be rotation of the body. As each of these phases is reached, or completed, the children will be able to link all of the movements together to create a proficient side-arm stroke (Haywood & Getchell, 2009).

Over-arm striking is what can be observed in tennis as a serve. A player who hits a proficient over-arm strike first holds their elbow at an angle between 90 and 119 degrees before striking, and then rotates their pelvis and spine (the trunk), all the while letting the racket lag behind their arm throughout the swing. When young or inexperienced children begin using over-arm strikes they will display very little trunk rotation, and the racquet and arm swing together. They also use a collapsed elbow, or an arm position in which the elbow creates an angle of less than 90 degrees when beginning their swing. As the children improve their over-arm strikes they will begin to display more trunk rotation, an elbow angle of 90 to 119 degrees prior to striking, and a racquet lag. Racquet lag means that while the arm is swinging the racquet will lag behind and follow in an upward extension. Being able to link all of these steps together will provide the children with a proficient over-arm stroke (Haywood & Getchell, 2009).

With knowledge of physical development there are a number of things you can do to improve the physical development of your students. Sean Brotherson (2009) suggests the MOVE formula. Each letter stands for a different element of a program that encourages physical growth and development. M stands for Motivation. Oftentimes the best motivation for children

is being able to play with their peers and adults. If children are enjoying themselves, they are more likely to be motivated. The O in MOVE is for Opportunity. It's important that children are provided with opportunities to engage in physical activities. In this case opportunity includes time, space and materials. V is for Variety. Ensuring that your lessons and activities are various will assure that you cover all levels of development and all types of interest children might have. It's important to provide a number of activities that will accommodate your lesson to ensure that all of the children can participate successfully (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010). Our last letter, E, stands for Equipment, Encouragement and Enthusiasm. Equipment must be developmentally appropriate as well as diverse. Showing enthusiasm for the activity and encouraging students will help keep them motivated and excited about improving their skills. Using this formula you can provide a program that encourages and improve physical activity and development.

Physical development is clearly very important to a sports program. Knowing how children develop and how that development will affect your program can be very beneficial. However, social and emotional development will hold an equally important position and should also be considered while planning your program.

Understanding Children's Social and Emotional Development

While being a coach requires you to be aware of how children develop physically, it will also benefit you to understand how they develop socially and emotionally. Social and emotional aspects permeate every part of our daily lives, and will therefore be a part of your coaching. Having an understanding of the way children develop socially and emotionally, and how your program and coaching will affect that development, will help you to be an effective coach.

Social Development

As Humphrey (2003) states "sports activities are essentially socially oriented" (p 68). Your student athletes will be developing their social skills in every part of their lives, including in your program or lessons. While every child you coach will be developing differently, there are certain trends you can expect children of different ages to display. For instance:

- 2 – 6 years old: Children under the age of six are only just beginning to understand that their mind and thoughts differ from those of other individuals. In general children of this age start off very egocentric. They are very wrapped up in their own thoughts and feelings and may fail to consider their peers' emotions. As they develop, they will slowly come to realize that other people experience different emotions than they themselves are experiencing, and that they can have an effect on other's emotions. This is an important development and is the first step towards understanding other people.
- 6 – 10 years old: Between the ages of six and ten children will begin to realize that individual people are likely to interpret and perceive events differently than other people. They also are beginning to make a connection between peoples' thoughts and feelings.

- 10 + years old: After the age of ten children will begin to actively identify nonverbal cues and notice other nuances that give clues into a person's thoughts and feeling. This is when children are truly able to start considering other peoples' perspectives.

There are a number of things you can do to help children work through some of these new realizations. Some of these include:

- Talking about individual feelings and how other people are feeling.
- Encourage looking at events and occurrences from someone else's perspective.
- Help children to recognize non-verbal cues as clues to feelings (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010).

As a coach you can have an effect on many aspects of your student athletes' social development. You can help them with specific social skills, as well as the broad developmental concepts mentioned above. The way you run your program and coach your student athletes can teach them a number of important skills. One such skill is respect for others. Playing any sport requires that you show respect to your teammates as well as your opponents. Respect for other people is a skill which carries through into other parts of life and will be important throughout life. In addition your program can provide children with the opportunity to meet new people, and can challenge them to get along with each other. These new relationships can help the children develop a number of social values and teach them the importance of cooperation (Humphrey, 2003). According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (2009) an effective sports program can provide a number of assets to the student athletes participating.

These assets are:

- "Support from significant adults and peers
- Feelings of social acceptance

- Close friendship and friendship quality
- Leadership, teamwork, and cooperation
- Respect, responsibility, courtesy, and integrity
- Sense of civic engagement and contribution to community
- Resistance to peer pressure to engage in risky behaviors (“Promoting positive,” 2009)”.

Emotional Development

In the same way that sports are a very social construct, they are also a very emotionally driven occasion. Your student athletes will be developing their emotional skills alongside their physical and social skills, and this development will affect your program and lessons (Humphrey 2003).

Just as in their physical and social development, not all children will go through emotional development in the same way or at the same rate, but there are certain trends you will be able to observe. As children age they will demonstrate a wider variety of emotion, and show a better understanding of their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. The earliest emotions an infant experiences are fear, anger and pleasure. While infants will respond to and even mirror emotions like sadness and disgust in others, they do not experience these emotions until later in their development. In early childhood children between the ages of two and six will experience and be able to identify a plethora of emotions including happiness, sadness, anger and disgust. They will also begin to develop self-conscious emotions. Self-conscious emotions are emotions that reflect an awareness of societal standards and include pride, guilt and shame. Young children will also begin to reflect on their emotions, and how they affect their experiences with others. It is at this age that children begin to show empathy, or the ability to consider

another person's feelings. As children enter middle childhood and adolescence they will begin to develop methods for controlling their emotions and emotional responses. It is critical at this period that children have positive role models who display appropriate emotional control. As they enter secondary school children will face new pressures that will make understanding and controlling their emotions increasingly difficult. While most children will follow this general frame of development it is important to remember that these trends of emotional development can also be affected by gender, cultural and socioeconomic differences (Humphrey, 2003).

Athletes of every caliber will experience a wide variety of emotions, from joy and excitement to sorrow and anger. According to Humphrey (2003) any children's sporting event should produce positive emotions, specifically fun and enjoyment. Sports are a way for children to release a lot of their emotional tension. Much of children's time is spent in a classroom or indoors where they are required to be calm and collected. Sports give them a chance to be loud and exert much of their pent up energy. Sports are a time and place when children can be uninhibited to show their excitement. The enthusiasm and encouragement you show as a coach can promote positive emotions like joy, excitement, and fun.

However, sports don't provoke just the positive emotions. The high pressure situations during competitions and the drive to improve skills in practice can often incite frustration, anger and sorrow. While these are both healthy and normal emotions for children to experience, the way children react to them depends on their level of emotional development and emotional control. Sports can be an excellent opportunity for children to learn how to appropriately control and display these emotions. With guidance from their coach, student athletes can learn to be self-aware, or learn how to recognize what kind of emotions they are feeling. They can also learn how to control those emotions and release them in a socially acceptable manner. Many

students struggling to learn a new skill will be frustrated or even angry with themselves. They must learn to recognize the emotion, control it, and release it. A coach can suggest a number of calming or focusing exercises such as taking deep breathes and imagining a successful attempt. With proper guidance sports can help children understand and learn to regulate their emotions (Humphrey, 2003).

With your new knowledge of PYD and physical, social and emotional development you can begin planning your program! This next section will provide a set of guidelines and a number of suggestions to help you keep PYD in mind as you plan.

Planning a Program that Fosters Positive Youth Development

As we have already discussed, a sports program can have a number of goals. These goals may include teaching skills necessary for playing the sport or skills necessary for strong physical, social and emotional development. Not every sports program will achieve all of these goals though. A lot of thought and planning goes into a program that will teach the skills of the game and foster Positive Youth Development (PYD). A program meant to provide a PYD experience is not focused exclusively on the sport or the team as a whole. It is focused on the individual child and ensuring that he or she is developing positive physical, social and emotional skills and habits (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

Before discussing what coaches should do to provide a program with PYD goals, it is important to note the importance of other adults involved in the program, namely parents. Parents can emphasize the positive experiences their children are having on the courts by providing praise and demonstrating their belief in their children's abilities. Coaches can work with parents to let them know just how influential they can be, and provide them with ways to be a positive influence (LeBlanc & Dickson, 1996).

So what should a coach do? A good place to begin is with your program's philosophy. A sports program with heavy focus on the skills necessary to play and win the sport isn't unusual. However, a program philosophy like that is performance oriented and is not conducive to PYD. Some sports programs chose a philosophy based on keeping kids out of trouble, or helping them fit in and make friends. While these aren't bad goals, they also aren't able to provide PYD. A philosophy that fosters PYD focuses on effort, self-improvement and intrinsic motivation while teaching the sport. This philosophy creates a positive environment where children can learn to enjoy their success and improve upon their mistakes. Of course, a good

program needs more than just a good philosophy. There are three critical areas you will need to consider while planning the rest of your program: context, internal assets and external assets (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

Context

Context is most closely related to the philosophy you chose for your program. The context refers to the conditions that are most relevant to your program. The context is the climate or atmosphere you create. Your philosophy is a good starting point for this context, but there are a number of other matters you need to consider including.

One of these matters is initiative. Young children go to school, do homework and have what they perceive as a vast number of other responsibilities that they “have to” do. If your program simply adds to their pile of “have to dos” your student athletes may not be particularly receptive to the skills and lessons you are teaching. It is therefore very important that you make your program something that kids “get to do”! Something they will choose of their own initiative. The best ways to make your program a “get to do” is to make it intrinsically motivating, challenging and important. Intrinsic motivation is a motivation that comes from within the individual, and can be fostered by setting goals which we will discuss later. Your program must also provide a challenge so that your student athletes want to keep coming back to improve. Making your program important to each child can be as easy as acknowledging each child’s own improvement and his or her importance to the team, the program or even you as a coach. A program that provides children with a sense of initiative is very good for PYD. Initiative is an important component of creativity, leadership and altruism (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

A second element of context is creating a sense of belonging. Your program can serve as a place for children to meet their peers and create their own community of friends. This is a very important factor in their social development. They can learn how to be a part of a larger group. Being a part of a team or sports program can help children attain peer acceptance. This peer acceptance is important to a child's social and emotional development. Being part of a sports program and a community of friends can also help children to develop a sense of identity. With positive guidance from coaches and peers and a sense of belonging a child can begin to develop a positive self-image (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

Another building block to context is ensuring that your program sets goals and provides incentives for the children participating. You should be sure to provide both long term and short term goals and incentives. These goals and incentives allow children to make a long term commitment and at the same time receive immediate feedback about their progress. The long term process of completing the program can provide a number of road-blocks or obstacles they must overcome. The ability to work through obstacles and stay committed to a goal is an important part of psychosocial development (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

The final thing to consider about the context of your program is the level of comfort and safety it provides socially and emotionally. The children learning in your program should feel safe to make mistakes and learn. Knowing how children develop physically, socially and emotionally, and where each of your student athletes is developmentally, will help you to determine what kind of rules or guidelines you need to set up to ensure the comfort of everyone involved (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

Internal Assets

Internal assets are those skills which you want your student athletes to internalize. They are the life skills you plan on highlighting, and the social and emotional development you want to encourage. Just as you need to consider which tennis skill you will teach each day, you will want to choose a life skill or developmental skill you want to focus on throughout the program. It could be any of the skills we've discussed, such as empathy, sportsmanship, respect, or communication. The key to teaching these internal assets effectively is infusing or combining them with sports skills in as seamless a manner as possible. Rather than teaching a lesson on serving and then moving on to a lesson about respect, you should try to teach the two at the same time. However, it takes a considerable amount of time for your students to internalize the skills you've taught them. You will need to consider this internalization time when planning how many skills or how much of a skill you want to teach each day, each week, or even in the entire course of your program. The final piece of internal assets that you will need to take into consideration during your planning is how you will teach the children to transfer these life skills and social and emotional development beyond your tennis program into their everyday lives. A fantastic way of doing this is by working with the parents of the student athletes, but more on that in External Assets (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

External Assets

The external assets of a program are the supports that are put in place to provide children with opportunities to learn and practice new life skills. Coaches, parents and other involved individuals need to work together to provide these opportunities. One of the first assets to establish is meaningful relationships with caring adults. This means both coaches and parents need to let the children know that they will be positive and supportive throughout the learning

process. These adults should hold high but achievable expectations for the student athletes involved. Coaches can work with the parents to determine these goals for their children. It is important that coaches realize that each child is an individual, and that all children will not learn in the same way. Parents can be a coach's best resource when determining how best to help their child learn. Parents are also a great way to continue the skills education outside of the program. Practicing their newfound life skills at home with the parents will help children to better learn the lessons taught in the program. Another excellent asset to explore is peer teaching. Having slightly older children teaching younger children can be an excellent way for all the children to build self-esteem and practice their new social and emotional skills (Petitpas, Cornelius, van Raalte, & Jones, 2005).

With this information you should be able to plan a program which fosters Positive Youth Development and teaches your student athletes a number of important social and emotional skills to use throughout their lives. You will need to reflect on your program to determine what you did well and what could be improved. The final section of this guide will give you an overview and several examples of evaluation.

Evaluating the Program

After completing your program you will be able to determine how well it went. There will undoubtedly be parts that were highly successful and parts that were less successful. There are a number of evaluations you can conduct during and after your program that will help you determine what you need to improve on.

Evaluation is a very important part of coaching. Evaluating your program will help you to determine which objectives you were able to meet and which you were not able to meet. It can also help you to see why you did or did not meet those objectives. Knowing how well your program or lesson went will help you to plan future programs and lessons (Logsdon et al., 1977, p 288).

There are two ways to perform evaluations, formative and summative. Formative evaluations take place during the learning process. These kinds of evaluations are usually informal and will help you to plan from a lesson to lesson basis. Examples of formative evaluations include observations made by the coach, diary entries, or checklists. Summative evaluations are made at the end of the program. They are typically more formal and will help you to sum up your program and plan for future programs. Examples of summative evaluations include tests or surveys. Both forms of evaluation can be helpful (Logsdon et al., 1977, p 288).

The most important thing to remember when creating and using evaluations is that your evaluations should go hand in hand with your objectives. The purpose of an evaluation is to determine whether or not your objectives have been met. There are many types of evaluations you can use, as long as they are appropriate to determining whether or not your objective were reached (Logsdon et al., 1977, p 288). Some of the best evaluations to use in a program with objectives focused on positive youth development (PYD) include diary entries, dialogues and

scales. However, any evaluation you can create that determines the success and shortcomings of your program can work too. In most cases it is best if you at least modify existing evaluations to suit your needs (Logsdon et al., 1977, p 291-301).

Diary entries serve as a formative evaluation. They are an excellent way for student athletes to keep a record of their day to day experience with the program. After each lesson, or after a particular lesson, the coach can provide the students with a reflection question or topic to write about in their journals. These topics should be based on the objectives you are evaluating. For example, if your objective for students to understand that mistakes are opportunities to learn and not reasons to be upset with oneself, you may present them with a writing question such as: "Did you make any mistakes while playing today? How do you feel about them?" If you chose to use a diary evaluation, it is important that you keep in mind that many of the questions you are asking are personal. You should ensure your student athletes that only you will read the diaries, and that you will not be sharing them with anyone else. It is also important to keep in mind that these diaries are about free expression. Allow the children to address the question or topic in any form they like, including writing, drawing, poetry or other creative means. In addition, you should not leave any editing marks. When used appropriately, diaries can be an effective means of evaluating your student athletes' learning (Logsdon et al., 1997, p 292-295).

Dialogues are another excellent formative evaluation. A dialogue is simply a conversation that takes place between the coach and one student athlete. Dialogues can be planned in advance, or can be very brief occasions that take place during the lesson. A dialogue is made of questions or topics you plan to speak with your student athlete about. Dialogue questions should support your objectives just as the previously discussed diary topics would. For example, if your objective was for students to display respect for their teammates and opponents,

you may use dialogue questions such as: “How do you feel when you play against someone? How do you treat that person? Why would you act that way?” Dialogues are another evaluation tool that can help you get a better understanding of the day to day learning of your student athletes (Logsdon et al., 1977, p 295-296).

An excellent way to determine the overall success of your program is with a summative evaluation. A scale or survey can be particularly helpful. Scales and surveys can be created by you according to your objectives. These scales and surveys can also be made based on the abilities and ages of your students. The youngest children may prefer a simple scale with smiley and frowny faces. Other simple scales can use numbers, while more complex surveys can require written answers. The following examples of different types of scales are for the objective: Student athletes will leave the program with a more positive sense of self.

Scale 1: For youngest children

Please color in the face that shows how you feel.

1. Playing tennis makes me feel:



2. When my coach helps me I feel:



3. When I do a good job I feel:



Scale 2: For slightly older children.

Please answer questions on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "Very Unhappy" and 10 being "Very Happy."

1. When I play tennis I feel

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. When my coach helps me I feel

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. When I do a good job I feel

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Scale 3: For older children with good writing skills.

Please answer these questions.

1. How do you feel when you play tennis?

2. What kind of things does your coach do that make you feel good about yourself?

3. What kind of things make you feel good about yourself?

These are examples of very simple evaluations. You can adjust and create scales and surveys to fit your needs (Logsdon et al., 1977, p 299-300).

Diaries, dialogues, scales and surveys are only a few possible evaluations you can make use of in your program. Any evaluation of your own creation can be just as effective provided you base it on your objectives. It is important that you use your evaluations to make

modifications to your program. Review the diaries, dialogues and surveys to determine which objectives were met and which were not. You will then be able to begin making changes to your program to make improvements next time. Evaluations will help you to create the most effective program.

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