



“A team that won’t be beat can’t be beat”

COACHING LEADERSHIP – POSITIVE THINKING

Very little is gained by dwelling on the things that go wrong as opposed to the things that go right or may go right, as long as steps are taken to learn from the things that go wrong and they are not just ignored. Help your team stay positive.

If you or your players do dwell on the negatives, you and they might just convince yourselves that things aren’t ever going to go right. With that mindset maybe they never will!

This doesn’t mean you and your team shouldn’t face the facts about play improvements and how to get better, it just means you and the players just never lose faith that the team will get better. It’s an attitude.

A player’s and a team’s confidence is a fragile and important asset that needs to be nurtured by coaches so that the players and the team will be receptive to improving by trying new ideas never tried before.

One good way to build confidence is to openly let the players know in front their teammates what skills, physical or mental, they are doing well on and keep track of them in your coaches notes regarding each player so later as the player improves you will be able to identify the improvements over the season and build on each of them. This is especially true after a loss.

Another example for the team would be if the team had a good goals against average to remind them of how good it is and why before you move into teaching new defensive systems to make it better or work with individual players on their improvement.

To switch to another sport where confidence is key, golf, have you ever noticed how many times a player who has walked up to the tee on a par three and said “I hate this hole, it is just about impossible to keep it out of the water”, immediately hits the ball in the water! Or when the last thought that is in your mind before your 5 foot putt is “I’m going to miss”, guess what you do, that’s right, miss.

The same applies in hockey. “Gee, their goalie is just about unbeatable” results in missed break aways or open nets because the player has already convinced himself he cannot do it. He tightens up, puts pressure on himself, takes too long to shoot, and starts aiming rather than feeling the shot going to his target.

Self confidence, self esteem and positive thinking go hand in hand with the right amount of looseness to execute with finesse, to take and give passes, to focus and have the awareness to make plays and see the whole ice out there.



So coaches should constantly create a climate of positive thinking and look for positive items to build on with players and units on the team, even if few exist.

Destructive comments from coaches or players to a player like “you are terrible in our end”, or “what kind of pass was that” that don’t provide solutions are not helpful in helping a player or a team to make a better play next time. When commenting on a player’s play always give the reason a more preferred result could have been accomplished if he had done something else.

Another way to build a player’s confidence is to ask him for the solution or suggestions on his play improvement rather than to dictate them to him. So, when a forward goes in on a one on two in their end and tries to beat both defencemen and loses the puck when the defencemen have backed in to the top of the circle, you might ask what other options did you have? He will likely say shoot from the top of the circle and you can then agree and perhaps add “yes, and use one defencemen as a screen”. It then becomes his solution, not yours and he will feel better about it and be more apt to remember it for next time.

A word of caution here is the obvious. All players are different and some will respond to criticism in an “I’ll show you” response better than the more tactful positive way but not many.