

Tips to Support Male Coaches

Girls deserve high quality trained coaches. Men can play a key role in girls' development and can be powerful allies in promoting girls' sports. Coaching a sex different from your own can present challenges. Here are some tips to help you be a great coach for girls and to contribute to their overall development.

1. Don't be afraid to push girls: Sometimes male coaches think girls can't be pushed as hard as boys. Girls can and do want you to challenge them physically and mentally with age and skill-appropriate activities. For example, include some fitness exercises in your practices to build girls' endurance.
2. Appropriate Feedback Delivery: Don't be afraid that giving specific skills-based feedback will hurt girls' feelings. In actuality it's the delivery not the feedback, which affects a girls' self-esteem. Give them skills-based feedback with a positive delivery. For example encourage girls with "great try, keep taking on the defender" but also include "next time, once the defender has committed to you, pass to your open teammate." Also, when giving a girl constructive feedback, pull her to the side so she doesn't feel singled out in front of the group.
3. Include a Female Role Model: Co-coach with a woman, hire a female assistant coach, or have a mother participate in the program. As great as it is that you're out there coaching, girls benefit greatly from female role models. *Tip: Make sure you give a female coach a specific role that values her skills, so your players see a coaching relationship that values both genders as coaches.*
4. Support Girls off the Field: Girls may need to talk about off-the-field issues. Make sure they know you are willing to talk with them, or be prepared to recommend someone else they can talk to. Depending on what the issues are you can recommend a school counselor, athletic director, or a school health center.
5. Be Professional and Responsible: All male coaches, especially young men whose players are close to their age, need to be highly aware of maintaining clear and professional boundaries at all times. Dress appropriately (shorts, sweats), use gender inclusive language (try not to say "guys come over here"), have one-on-one meetings with players off to the side but visible to others. Don't use inappropriate language or host dinners at your house without other adults/parents present.
6. Be Self-Aware: Look at and challenge your own assumptions about female athletes, the more you can see the girls as capable and strong, the more they will benefit from your coaching. For example, outline your expectations at the beginning of the program and encourage the girls to work hard to reach them. Motivate your players to give 100 percent against their teammates at practices.