Developing Team Leaders: A Leadership Development Program to Build Effective Team Leaders

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Abstract

NASPE has developed national standards for coaches with Standard 8 focusing on providing athletes with responsibility and leadership opportunities as they mature. Standard 8 states that coaches should engage athletes in opportunities that nurture leadership and teamwork, which can be learned on the field and exhibited in life. It further states that sports provide an atmosphere for trial and error through practice and competition. Much is expected of team leaders; however, few of them are ever formally taught the leadership skills they need to perform effectively. Like physical skills, leadership skills must be systematically taught, developed, and practiced. Through a structured leadership program, some of the trial and error can be eliminated. High school cross country athletes (N=8) participated in an eight-week structured leadership program. The program met once a week, with each athlete leading a weekly session and the coach serving as a moderator. The topics addressed were: understanding the rewards, risks and responsibilities of leadership, leading by example, and vocal leadership. The athletes also spent five hours performing a community leadership service project and attended a leadership lecture presented by a national expert. There was a significant improvement between a pre and post self-rated Team Leadership Evaluation survey (Janssen, 2007). The athletes felt the program was effective, as they were able to develop insights and leadership skills needed to be more effective leaders.