Developing A Positive Conditioning Environment

Mark Stanborough, Ph.D.
Emporia State University

Abstract

One of the most difficult and negative parts of practice has traditionally been conditioning. For years, coaches have used conditioning (running and exercise) as punishment. When athletes do not meet the expectations of the coach, conditioning is often used as discipline. However, highly conditioned teams are more likely to be successful teams. Therefore, conditioning is positive and is a desired effect. Conditioning as punishment gives it a negative association that may have a negative effect on the attitude towards conditioning and a negative effect on the lifelong commitment towards exercise. Effective coaches should seek ways to make conditioning a positive experience. This presentation will look at methods to make conditioning positive with athletes seeking to do more conditioning for improvement and as a source of pride.

To examine the use of positive and negative conditioning, high school and middle school coaches (N = 321) were surveyed on their use of conditioning as punishment. Forty-one percent indicated they would never use conditioning as punishment. Thirty-nine percent indicated they would sometimes use conditioning as a punishment. Twenty percent indicated they use conditioning as a punishment on a regular basis.

Positive conditioning is reflected in many of the National Coaching Standards developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE). An appropriate coaching perspective focuses on maximizing the positive benefits of sports (standard 1), developing positive values gained through the sport experience (standard 2), providing a positive learning environment (standard 19), using appropriate instructional strategies (standard 23), and using appropriate and effective motivational techniques (standard 26).

The challenge for coaches is to seek positive ways to make conditioning both fun and something to be valued. This presentation will look at the implementation of successful positive conditioning methods that will improve the effectiveness of coaching methods.