

How a Head Coach Can Use Practice Observation

While the ultimate in mentorship would be having the time energy and desire to help beginning coaches across all strata of youth sports we realize that this is unrealistic. If the opportunity arises where you as a head coach have a chance to mentor a young coach outside of your organization, please take it and run with it. For example if there is a coach at the local Jr. HS who is just starting a basketball team or a track team and has very little experience it would be great if you could go to their practice and observe them and meet regularly to discuss progress... But, we are going to be a bit more practical with our approach here today. Let's talk about how and why a Head Coach might want to use practice observation within his / her own team:

1. First, as a head coach you have a distinct vision of what you want your team to accomplish. Likely they include the following goals:

1. Teamwork
2. Trust
3. Confidence
4. Communication and
5. Consistency

(You may notice that "winning" is not on this list but the most experienced coaches in this room will recognize these factors as the ones that lead to winning consistently) If these qualities exist on a team year after year, the team will survive the occasional player drought, or occasionally more athletically gifted opponents, to post winning seasons year after year.

2. Having assistants who can use your system to implement your goals is the highest level of practicality.

*Assign a portion of your practice to your assistants and let them go
Observe this section and offer feedback*

3. Empower the Assistant(s)

*An empowered assistant leads to increased confidence in the staff by the athletes.
This consistency of the message, helps the athlete "buy into" the program.*

An empowered assistant is much more likely to communicate and work within the system. This reduces the inherent desire of assistants to "freelance" and try out their own material without you knowing about it. This can wreak havoc in a football team for example...

4. Team Vs. Dictator

In a true team, no one piece of the puzzle is so important that without it the machine fails to function.

This Team approach leads to autonomy in all the individuals where they are able to carry on despite any distraction.

