

NEBRASKA COACHES ASSOCIATION COACHING CLINIC

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BUILDING TEAM CHEMISTRY WITHIN YOUR TEAM/BALANCING LIFE AS A COACH AND LIFE AT HOME

I want to start by saying that the only reason I feel I've received some awards over the past few years is due to the fact that I was lucky enough to coach some phenomenal players along with some AMAZING assistant coaches. I realize there are far more experienced and knowledgeable coaches out there, I was just in the right place at the right time to coach some of the teams I've been fortunate enough to coach. That being said, I think we do some things within our program on and off the court that really build team chemistry and help to contribute to our success.

At Lafayette, we're blessed to have girls come in every year that have played years of club and already know the basic skills. And while we definitely drill them and focus on skill work...one place I think we really make a difference is getting the kids to work together, understand their roles on the team, and have fun playing the game.

BUILDING TEAM CHEMISTRY, HERE ARE SOME THINGS WE DO:

1st Summer Open Gym or 1st Day of Camp

One of the first things we do at the 1st summer open gym or 1st day of camp is to pair up an older player with each freshman for pepper drills/get to know you questions. One of our goals is for the incoming freshman to feel a part of our program ASAP.

Team Overnight

Varsity only the first Friday/Saturday after tryouts.....crazy relays, goal setting for the year, lots of together time. All 4 coaches are at the overnight and contribute to the activities. We wait to vote on captains until after our team overnight as leaders tend to emerge at that event.

2-5 Minute Conversation

After we determine what roles on the team are going to look like, we have a short conversation with each player to let them know exactly where they stand. We share what we think they are doing well and things they can work on. The player also gets an opportunity to ask questions. Best to do this within first few weeks if possible. Communication is key! We had 9 seniors and NO DRAMA this past season and a big part of that is each player knew their role on the team.

Big/Little Sister

We match up an upperclassman with a younger player and do 3 or 4 gift/note exchanges during the year. This program is run by our Freshman coach. Some examples of gifts or exchanges:

- **sit with B/L on bus and come up with a high 5—must do the high 5 when getting off bus
- **bring your B/L a healthy snack before a game
- **Draw your B/L as a superhero (existing or made up) and tell her what her superpowers are (what's she really good at)
- **Come up with a cheer for your B/L that you can use during a game
- **Write a poem or a rap about your B/L (you only have to perform this to them)
- **Write your B/L a note telling them what you admire about them

Lancer Olympic Day

On the second Saturday after tryouts we bring in all of the girls in the program and have them preset in “teams/countries” and do several games, relays, cheers with them. It usually lasts 3 hours. All 4 coaches are there and contribute to the activities. Teams are intermixed with Freshman, JV, and Varsity players.

Sand Queens Tourney

During a week day in September (whenever the schedule will allow) instead of an indoor practice we go to a sand court and have the kids already put into teams. The kids pick team names, have outfits (team colors), and of course a great cheer. We have 4 teams and play a round robin tourney, plus playoffs. Food, drinks, etc. are brought by the girls. Run primarily by our varsity assistant coach. Teams are intermixed with Freshman, JV, and Varsity players. We give wacky prizes to each team at the end of the tournament.

Dollar Store Gift exchange at State

We took the team to the dollar store and they were given the name of one other girl on the team (kind of like a secret santa) and they bought one gift for that teammate. When the girls were all done shopping, the girls exchanged their gifts on the bus after giving an explanation why they bought their gift for that particular teammate. Run primarily by our varsity assistant coach.

T-Shirt Color Theme Days at Practice

All girls/coaches in the program wear the same color to practice on certain days (ex.: Monday=Yellow). Captains can set the theme days for the year.

Out of Town Tournaments

If you go to an out of town tournament, give the kids an experience besides just playing volleyball. Is there something fun to do in that city? Is there a college match you can attend the night you arrive? If you're just in the hotel, do they have a conference room that you could do some teambuilding/relays....even if it's something as simple as Pictionary? Players will often times remember the experience more than the result of the tournament.

T-shirt before Playoffs start

In the week before our playoffs start, we buy the girls some kind of shirt (dri-fit the last few years) with our theme or something meaningful on it. This seems to give them a pep in their step before we enter some of the most important matches of the year. You want them confident! If they look good, they'll probably feel good. Must budget for this ahead of time.

These activities take lots of work, but I am lucky enough to have some of the BEST assistant coaches in the business to work with! They are as invested in our program as much as I am. It's important to find good people that you can trust and that care about the kids to work with!

QUESTIONS?

BALANCING LIFE AS A COACH AND LIFE AT HOME:

****My Story**

****Very important to find a spouse who will share duties at home and not make you feel guilty**

--All have feeling of letting spouse down

--Being a coach's spouse and raising a family is one of the hardest jobs

--Understand and be sensitive to spouse's point of view

****Switch gears from coach to parent—when you get home, BE PRESENT. Drive around block a few times if needed. It's better to be present/alert with your kids for a shorter amount of time than to be there longer, but be a zombie.**

****Get some quality time with children each day, even if it's only 5-10 minutes in the morning or at bedtime.**

****Just like coaching a team, you can't do it all—there's always something to work on and you have to prioritize the important things to work on. Same as a parent/spouse—you will not be able to do it all. You must prioritize the important things and communicate clearly. (ex: I will be at parent/teacher conferences, but I can't make the soccer game).**

****Kirsten Bernthal Booth once asked what she wanted for her birthday—"TIME". There's not enough time in the day to do everything as a coach and mom she wants to do. You must prioritize and realize you won't finish it all. Find ways to get chunks of time—get someone to pick up the kids from school, have someone cook for your family one or 2 days a week or order in—it's worth paying to get more time.**

**Communicate clearly, so expectations don't get confused.

--"When Dad is the Coach, this is what it looks like"

**Sunday family "staff meeting" to plan the week. No surprises of staying later for practice or not knowing about a family event that week.

--Also helpful to cook meals on Sunday for the week. Leftovers is a way of life at our house.

**Treat yourself like an athlete

--Prioritize sleep, eat right

--Have assistant coaches or team take ownership of some duties (stats, film, scouting, etc.)

WHEN KIDS ARE OLDER:

**When kids get into activities and youth sports, it's important to have a network. Find team friends, carpools are key. Clearly communicate with your children that you won't make every game, but there is a difference between don't want to be there and can't be there.

**Have chores/jobs posted around the house so the kids clearly know their responsibilities for the day/week.

**I am told the "mommy guilt" was worse when kids are little. Praying that's true and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

**Schedule at least 1 or 2 sit down dinners per week.

CLOSING

**Have at least 1 night a week that is "off limits" for volleyball. After practice and you are home—no phone calls, film, scouting, practice planning, etc. Your family can't feel like second fiddle every night.

**Some coaches bring family/kids to be part of the team—it's good for players to see you in that light. Blend the team as part of your family. We've been blessed with lots of babysitters!

**Chaos is normal. Live in the moments when it's amazing and worth it—both as a parent and as a coach.

**We're losing too many quality coaches due to the demands of the job. I hope some of this helps and if you have other great idea's, please contact me—I'd love to hear them!!

**QUESTIONS?

MY MAIN TEAM AFTER WE WON THE STATE CHAMPIONSHIP IN 2016

