Playing Time: Guidelines for Coaches
Scott Rosberg
scott@proactivecoaching.info
Why This Topic

No bigger issue in team sports
28 Years of parent meetings
Started writing ideas that led to a booklet
Booklet geared toward all three groups. (Great for athlete/parent pre-season meetings)
Today, I will focus on the coaches.
Coaches

Some coaches say, “We just don’t talk with them about playing time.” Why not?

The #1 issue any kid or parent will have. YOU NEED TO TALK WITH THEM ABOUT IT.

They spend 100’s of hours with you in season and out.

Just because you’re not talking about it, doesn’t mean you don’t have a problem.

If you’re not talking about it with them, someone else is – other parents, fans, school board.
Two Important Things to Remember

Why Kids Play

They play because it is FUN, but the fun is in the playing. It is most fun for those who play the most.

The Coach’s Purpose

To provide an opportunity for kids to have a positive experience. For most kids, most positive experiences revolve around their playing time.
Establish and Communicate Your Philosophy

General Athletic/Coaching Philosophy

Sport-Specific Philosophy

Playing Time Philosophy
Your Playing Time Philosophy

Think about the sports and levels at which you coach (JV Volleyball, 5th grade basketball).

What has been your philosophy with regards to playing time for each of these levels and sports?

What challenges have you had implementing those philosophies?
Determining Playing Time

(Based on the Level of Play)

Youth Leagues & Elementary School

Focus on playing time and development, not winning
Work to get ALL kids a good amount of playing time
Younger kids – more equally balanced playing time
Older kids – better players get a bit more p.t., but it should still be balanced.

Make sure you have communicated your philosophy to kids and parents.
Determining Playing Time
(Based on the Level of Play)

Middle/Junior High School

Very similar to youth leagues
Multiple teams (A, B, C) vs. one team
Again, communicate your philosophy.
Determining Playing Time
(Based on the Level of Play)

High School

More complicated, contentious, and testy

Frosh, JV, other lower levels similar to Youth /MS/JH

Winning becomes more important as you get older, but still not #1 goal

Varsity – best players play the most; good players play decent amount; must find minutes for the bottom player

To Swing or not To Swing – Frosh, Soph, Junior, Senior

Cuts
Communicating Playing Time Expectations

Communicate expectations for how kids get playing time

Communicate the role you see kids fulfilling

- Early on, tell them where you see them
- Let them ask questions
- Remind them that it’s early yet.

Ways you can communicate this to them

- Team Meetings
- Individual Meetings
- Write it down (Player Profile Cards)
Addressing the Coach

Parents should not address the coach with playing time concerns before, during, or after a game or practice.

(Unless prior arrangements have been made)
Players Addressing the Coach

Explain the proper way to approach you about PT

Respectful
Right time & place – When & where is that?
Don’t get mad at kids for having the courage to talk to you.

The Meeting

Open and honest – player and coach
Answer questions; Offer suggestions
Be sensitive and compassionate to their situation.
They must feel they did the right thing coming to talk to you
Don’t punish them if they/parents come to talk to you.
Keep trying to find some PT for the kid.
Parents Addressing the Coach

Explain the proper method for approaching you.

Call ahead to set up a meeting (with/without AD).

Again, never approach the coach at a game – too emotional.

Possibly can meet after practice, but only with your permission, and it’s best to call ahead of time.
Parents Addressing the Coach

The Meeting

Be prepared – stats, notes, situations, etc.

Maintain your composure

No sarcasm, smugness, etc. Be professional.

They want the truth. (Tact & sensitivity)

“This is how I see you as a player on this team right now.”

Explain why s/he is where s/he is.

Comparing to Others?? Be careful. Focus on this kid – don’t create divisions on the team.
Parents Addressing the Coach

Coach’s Perspective vs. Parents’ Perspective

Coach – Objective (Sees 5, 6, or 11)

Parent – Emotional (Sees 1 + 4, 1 + 5, 1 + 10)

Be understanding of this dynamic.

Coach perspective and yours in particular.

They want to be listened to.
Getting Kids Some Playing Time

So what are some ways you can try to get kids some playing time in each of the sports you coach?
Getting Kids Some PT

Keep fewer kids per team.

Swing kids

The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Quarter
  Early in the quarter; work in with the best players

Blowouts
  When? – Point differential, time
  How? – One at a time, multiple, en masse
  Work your way up to all of them

* Who starts subbing first – the team leading or the team losing?
Getting Kids Some PT

Cuts

Ultimate playing time determinant – None
Worst/best thing you do
Cutting great kids with little ability; that’s a tough one
Cutting attitude, discipline, commitment, behavior problems
Makes kids work harder
Getting Kids Some PT

Biggest Dilemma

Senior - does everything asked, works hard, great attitude, out for the team all four years, won’t play much due to limited ability

Keep her/him with certain conditions

Continue hard work ethic, good attitude, no complaining

“You probably won’t play much. Can you handle this?”

If handled well reward her/him every chance you get.

If not handled well, you must let her/him go. S/he stopped being the player you kept for the reasons you kept her/him.
Getting Kids Some PT

Be Proactive

Positive, open relationships with players
Let them know why they aren’t playing.
By talking with the players, they may then talk with parents, possibly limiting the number of parent meetings you need to have.
Make sure they know you care and that you understand their dilemma.
A Final Note on Playing Time & Cuts

Playing time/Cuts - powerful dynamic
Deal with them with grace and dignity
Always err on the side of what is right for kids.
Don’t take this lightly, and do not use it to hurt others.

You hold a young person’s joy and an entire program’s success in your hands. Treat this power properly and with great respect.