

Keeping your players engaged

What motivates young people to play sport?

A key aspect of player-centred coaching is knowing what motivates your players. People of all ages engage in sport for many and varied reasons. As a coach it is your job to know these motivating factors and understand each group and player you coach will have slightly different reasons for playing.

Motivation plays a huge role in the ongoing development and engagement of players and will lead to:

- Players having fun and enjoying netball
- An increase in skill, self-esteem and social development
- Players being excited to come to training
- An ongoing commitment to the sport

Ten ways to motivate your players

1. **Make it fun**

The reason players engage in sport is because it is fun. From NetSetGO to the elite levels of the sport players want to have fun. Fun and enjoyment come from the personal satisfaction of achieving goals, receiving recognition, mastering skills and participating in competition.

At training provide fun opportunities that develop players from a skill and decision making perspective. Players also want to play the game so allow time to do this and add challenges (time, scoring, extra defenders, zones etc.) that make it fun but develop important decision making skills.

- Training attendance
- Competition performance outside of wins/losses (eg. Our goal this half is to score 5 goals)
- Fitness

These goals can be focused on during a training session, a match or a season. Importantly the goals should be shared, not simply what you as a coach thinks should happen.

Remember to have goals that can be measured and to provide specific feedback to make players aware of how they are tracking. Invite players to think about what they need to do to ensure they achieve the goals they have set

2. **Recognise achievement**

This ensures players know the coach has noticed their achievement and will motivate them to continue to succeed. It doesn't always have to be aspects of the game that receives recognition from the coach. You might:

- Reinforce positive social behavior
- Highlight players who haven't missed a training session
- Praise a player who has helped support a teammate or coach

3. **Set goals**

Goal setting allows players to strive to achieve success outside of wins or losses. Personal and team goals can include:

- Skill development

4. **Self-motivation**

Creating player awareness of areas to improve allows players to own their development. With excellent coaching and support the player will be motivated to improve as they own the learning they are undertaking. The ability to improve is quite often the greatest motivation a player will have

5. **Provide leadership opportunities**

Providing opportunities for leadership and expecting your athletes to assume appropriate responsibilities are very important. Acknowledging their efforts through leadership motivates further success.

6. *Develop a safe learning environment*

A safe learning environment relates to both the physical and mental aspect of coaching. Training sessions must be planned and ensure safety for all participants. Just as important is that players feel safe from a mental perspective i.e. confident the coach will treat them kindly and with respect, they know they can make mistakes, they know development is just as important as winning

7. *Provide challenges*

Don't underestimate the motivational value of small-sided competitive activities and fun challenges.

8. *Vary your practice programs*

A variety of practice routines and activities will reduce the possibility of boredom. Involving players in the planning process can help get a gauge on what they want and ease the planning burden on the coach. Importantly it isn't necessary to have hundreds of activities. By adding a new rule, an extra defender or changing the size of the area you are playing in can change the dynamics of a game, almost to the point where it is a brand new one.

9. *Be organised*

A carefully planned session increases the coach's confidence and this effort will rub off and help motivate players. Making sure enough equipment is available for the number of participants involved is often underestimated as a motivating factor. Nothing bores or frustrates young people more than waiting in long lines, or watching the more talented athletes dominate if you only have 1 or 2 balls.

10. *Consistency*

Every coach should have their golden rules that all players, parents and club officials know like the back of their hand. Along with these rules there may be consequences for player's actions – both positive and negative. If so be consistent with these so players know where they stand and what is acceptable within the team.

At the same time if you have provided a fun, engaging, safe and challenging environment hopefully you won't need to worry about challenging behavior.