What other behaviors might you add? With this list in mind, pick about 5 coaching behaviors that are most important for being successful in your sport and then honestly grade yourself on how well you did in each area during your last season. You also might have a colleague grade you if you want another coach’s perspective. From this exercise, you can get a pretty good evaluation of your coaching performance.

If, through this evaluation you identify behaviors you want to improve, set goals for yourself for the upcoming season. If you have a staff of assistants, talk with them and map out how you want to perform as coaches. Also, make sure to build in times throughout the season to review your progress. Don’t wait until the end of the season to make changes in your behavior because by then it may be too late!

Winning (and losing) are realities of being a coach and that is not likely to change any time soon. Nonetheless, evaluating behaviors, as opposed to solely looking at a win-loss record, gives you the chance to make positive and productive changes in areas over which you have control. By identifying and implementing key behaviors, you set the stage for improving your coaching performance.


“Winning isn’t everything, but striving to win is.” Vince Lombardi, Coaching Legend

Everyone wants to win, right? And if you are a “good” coach, you should produce winning teams year after year. Your athletic director expects it, the community counts on it, your team wants it and you can taste it. But what happens when you don’t win? What happens when you have mentally, physically and technically prepared your players, they have competed well, and you still end up on the wrong side of the win-loss column. Sometimes, even given the best of circumstances, the wins do not come as often as you and everyone else want.

Looking back on a “losing” season or a season in which your team failed to live up to expectations can be extremely disappointing and disappointing. For some, it is hard to see beyond the losses when they evaluate their performance as a coach. It is difficult to separate the quality of their coaching behaviors from their team’s performance in competition. Making this separation, though, is important for becoming a successful coach. Just as the greatest athletes set goals other than “winning” to evaluate their performances, coaches need to identify the behaviors associated with being a “great” coach.

So what are the behaviors associated with great coaching? To answer this question, Dr. Sean McCann, Sport Psychologist for the United States Olympic Committee, asked coaches from the 1996 U.S. Olympic Teams to tell him what it took to be a great coach at the Olympic Games. Here are some of their responses:

1. Be stable and organized - be the person who knows what is going on and is in control of the situation.
2. Plan, then plan again, then modify your plan - prepare in all areas (e.g., physical, tactical, mental) and anticipate obstacles your team and athletes might face.
3. When giving feedback, be constructive and end on a positive note - in the long run, your athletes will be more motivated and dedicated when you are positive.
4. Be consistent in behavior, communication, and preparation - it is through consistency that players develop trust in you and your system.
5. Be reliable and dependable, even when tired and overworked - consistency that players develop trust in you and your system.
6. Be confident and act confidently - actions, your team and your assistants will learn that they can count on you.

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7. Be consistent in behavior, communication, and preparation - it is through consistency that players develop trust in you and your system.
8. Set a positive example; show self-discipline and control outbursts - in competitions, emotions run high and can spill over even when not intended. Whether you like it or not, you are a role model. Your actions do matter to your team, your school, your community, and yourself. Be diplomatic and professional in all your interactions.
9. Listen to what each athlete needs - although athletes must learn to work within a coach’s system, great coaches know that motivating athletes is not a one size fits all proposition. Be willing to work within your system to find the most effective way to help each athlete reach his/her potential.
10. Be inspirational and motivational - everyday, give your athletes something positive to think about and work towards.
11. No matter how much pressure you feel, don’t stop caring about people - in the end, the relationships you have with your staff and your players are what being a part of a team is all about.
12. Be competent - be a student of your sport. Seek out every opportunity you can, such as attending coaching clinics or having a mentor, to learn more about the game and increase your skills as a coach.
13. Laugh! Keep your sense of humor - preparing for and competing in top-level competitions is serious business. Even so, making it fun benefits everyone, especially your athletes.

Inside This Issue
Eliminate Fear Before it Eliminates You
The Experts Talk About Winning

(Continued from back page)
Many athletes experience anxiety prior to, during, or after performing. Anxiety comes in a number of forms, with one primary source being fear. Fear is uncomfortable and sometimes athletes try to avoid fearful situations. Although escape might seem like the easiest way out, this behavior does not allow athletes to face and conquer their fears.

Fear is the greatest of all success killers. Fear gets in the way of obtaining goals and being successful. In sports, fear shows itself in several ways:

**Fear of failure.** In sport, success is the goal of every athlete, though some mistakes or failures are inevitable. If athletes focus too much on failure, however, they can become afraid and less likely to try. Fear of failure takes advantage of our defeats and pressures us that we are permanent failures. Fear of failing gives rise to anxiety, stress, and ineffective coaching and athletic performances. A preoccupation and overemphasis on the end results of competition (win-loss) can create a fear that athletes have in not performing well in a game.

Some may have had others may never have had. Athletes who acknowledge and understand their fears increase their chances of dealing with them in effective ways.

**Fear of negative social evaluation.** A second fear that some athletes experience is that your sport performance and/or physical appearance will be evaluated by others. The mere presence of coaches, parents, and teammates may unknowingly influence an athlete’s apprehension or nervousness about performing. Participants with low self-esteem or high social phobic anxiety (concern about having others evaluate their body) may perform poorly or avoid athletic performances altogether because of heightened anxiety or fear.

**Fear of physical or injury danger.** All sports have the potential for injury, though some, such as skiing or gymnastics, pose a higher risk. Ask athletes who have some athletes develop fears associated with being injured or suffering physical harm.

Such fear can increase muscle tension, cause coordination difficulties, disrupt fine motor control, and interrupt athletic focus. For example if a gymnast is fearful of doing a double back flip on her first tumbling pass, she is likely to worry about what might happen if she falls. As a result, she commits to training for fear of not managing (or not managing) your anxiety or fear?

Answers to these questions will give you some ideas about how you respond and will help you develop ways to overcome the fear and reduce it.

4. **Develop a plan.** Learn a broad spectrum of coping strategies and use the ones that are most effective for your athletic performance. Although this list is not exhaustive, it includes techniques that are effective in dealing with fear and anxiety.

- **Admit and acknowledge fears.** Every athlete experiences fear; it is not something to be ashamed of. Athletes experience fear because they respect the risks they are taking with their bodies. Realistic fear can help athletes make smart choices in their performances. So take five minutes to write out the fears or worries that worry you most. When you have identified the fears, it may be helpful to write them down in your journal or other note taking device. Sometimes, when you write these details down, your thoughts are clarified and you can see more clearly what the problem is.

- **Recognize personal and situational factors that can contribute to fear.** You may have had previous fear experiences. Fear is an experience of fear. Your level of self esteem, tendency to take risks, and need for security all play a role in your fear response. In addition, situational factors, such as trying a skill you were previously injured on or going to an arena where you have had a disastrous performance, may activate a fear response. Once you can recognize the factors that contribute to your fear response you can practice ways of countering your feelings and improving your performance.

- **Develop confidence with practice.** One of the most effective ways to control fear is through self confidence. Therefore, practice both your physical skills and your coping strategies until your confidence is high and your performances are automatic (and less likely to be disrupted by fear).

- **What happens to your way to controlling your fears rather than allowing fear to control you!**

- **With some of these tools on your side, you are on your way to controlling your fears than allowing fear to control you!**

**The Experts**

By Karen Cogan, Ph.D., & Scott Martin, Ph.D.

On February 21, 2000, The Center for Sport Psychology hosted a panel discussion with Kevin Blackstone, Frank Kodliah, Carl Chicka, Krista Davey, and Cheryl Santini, to talk about anxiety.

**Goal Setting** - Both coaches and athletes agree that setting physical and mental goals is the foundation for competition, which includes. Not only are goals motivating, day-to-day goals help guide athletes and coaches to trust themselves, each other, and the training philosophy of their team.

The strategy is to develop trust and confidence. This trust is the foundation on which cohesion and confidence are built. Frank Kudlac, head coach of the 6-time USA Gymnastic Champion TWU Pioneers, said that a team’s success depends on having mutual respect, mutual trust, and a shared vision of what is expected of each athlete. As a result, her muscles tense and her range of motion is restricted so that she can not reach up enough with her arms. Now she does not have the height to complete two flips and is more likely to become injured. Her worst fears may become reality.

In this article, we highlight the main ideas and offer strategies for how these ideas can be implemented in your coaching or athletic development.

**Honest** - 1. Admit and acknowledge fears. 2. Develop a plan. 3. Understand personal and situational factors that can contribute to fear. 4. Develop confidence with practice.

**Trust** - 1. Admit and acknowledge fears. 2. Develop a plan. 3. Understand personal and situational factors that can contribute to fear. 4. Develop confidence with practice.

**Fun** - 1. Admit and acknowledge fears. 2. Develop a plan. 3. Understand personal and situational factors that can contribute to fear. 4. Develop confidence with practice.

The Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence thanks all the discussants and attendees for making our first panel discussion a success. For more information on how to implement any of these suggestions or strategies, please contact us at 940-369-SPORT.
Many athletes experience anxiety prior to, during, or after performing. Anxiety comes in a number of forms, with one primary source being fear. Fear is uncomfortable and sometimes athletes try to avoid fearful situations. Although escape might seem like the easiest way out, this behavior does not allow athletes to face and conquer their fears.

Fear is the greatest of all success killers. Fear gets in the way of obtaining goals and being successful. In sports, fear shows itself in several ways:

- **Fear of failure.** In sport, success is the goal of every athlete, though some mistakes or failures are inevitable. If athletes focus too much on failure, however, they can become afraid and less likely to try. Fear of failure takes advantage of our defeats and persuades us that we are permanent failures. Fear of failing gives rise to anxiety, stress, and ineffective coaching and athletic performances. A preoccupation and overemphasis on the end results of competitions (win-loss) can create a fear that athletes have in getting a particular sport. Some may have occurred; others may never have happened. Athletes who acknowledge and understand their fears increase their chances of dealing with them in effective ways.

- **Fear of negative social evaluation.** A successful athlete is that your sport performance and/or physical appearance will be evaluated by others (e.g., press, community). The mere presence of coaches, parents, and teammates may unknowingly influence an athlete’s apprehension or nervousness about performing. Participants with low self-esteem or high social physique anxiety (concern about having others evaluate their body) may perform poorly or avoid athletic performances altogether because of heightened anxiety or fear.

- **Fear of injury or physical danger.** All sports have the potential for injury, though some, such as skiing or gymnastics, pose a higher risk. As a result, some athletes develop fears associated with being injured or suffering physical harm.

### Action Steps to Face Fear

1. **Admit and acknowledge fears.** Every athlete experiences fear; it is not something to be ashamed of. Athletes experience fear because they respect the risks they are taking with their bodies. Realistic fear can help athletes make smart choices in their performances. So take five minutes to write out the fears or worries that are having the most impact on you in your sport. Some may have occurred; others may be new thoughts. Athletes who acknowledge and understand their fears increase their chances of dealing with them in effective ways.

2. **Recognize personal and situational factors that can contribute to fear.** Your own fear builds in part from your fear of failure. Your level of self-esteem, tendency to take risks, and need for security all play a role in your fear response. In addition, situational factors, such as trying a skill you were previously injured on or going to an arena where you once had a disastrous performance, may activate a fear response. Once you can recognize the factors that contribute to your fear response you can practice ways of counteracting your feelings and improving your performances.

3. **Recognize signs and symptoms of your fear response.** Recognize the signs and symptoms of increased activation, anxiety or fear. What body movements or sensations occur during your fear response?

- **What thoughts occur during your fear response?**
- **Compare your best performance to your worst performance.** How did you respond, both physically and mentally, prior to, during and following both? Heat up to find situations (for or not manage) your anxiety or fear? Answers to these questions will give you some ideas about how you respond and what steps you can take to develop ways to overcome the situation.

4. **Develop a plan.** Learn a broad spectrum of coping strategies and use the ones that are most effective for your different stressful situations. For example, if the response is increased worry, then a mental relaxation technique, such as meditation, might be used. If the response is physiological in nature (e.g., muscle tension), then use a technique targeting these physical symptoms, such as progressive muscle relaxation. Although these techniques often require training from a professional, a quick strategy that you can learn right away is the use of cue words, which are words you say to yourself to get the desired response. You can use three cue words to cope with a feared situation: (1) STOP, (2) BREATHE, (3) FOCUS. When you develop fear, say STOP, and if it is getting in the way of your performance say “STOP!” to interrupt the unwanted thoughts and feelings. Then say “STOP!” two more times, a deep breath to help reduce some of the anxiety you feel. Finally say “FOCUS” to turn your attention toward what you want to do. Practicing this approach can help you become more effective in handling fear-related situations.

5. **Develop confidence with practice.** One of the most effective ways to control fear is through self-confidence. Therefore, practice both your physical skills and your coping strategies until your confidence is high and your performances are automatic (and less likely to be disrupted by fear).

With some of these tools on your side, you are on your way to controlling your fears rather than allowing fear to control you!

### Goal Setting - Both coaches and athletes agreed that setting physical and mental goals is essential. Not only are goals motivating, day-to-day goals help guide athletes and coaches to longer-term goals and offer a way to evaluate progress. Krista Davey, 3-time All-Big West soccer star from UNT, believes that a team’s success depends on having mutually agreed-upon goals. “Do anything to improve team cohesion, just not to make sure they are having fun together, but most importantly, to keep them focused on the same goal.” When setting team goals, coaches and athletes need to work together to clarify expectations. Further, it is important to follow-up, evaluate progress, and adapt (if necessary) goals throughout the season. For more information on the SMARTSET program that coaches can use to implement a goal setting program, see the Fall 1999 issue of Performance Excellence.

### Individualized Programs - The more a coaching staff understands the unique needs, strengths, and weaknesses of their athletes, the better they can help each one perform optimally. Even in team sports, success is dependent on a group of individual performances. UNT Track Coach, Carl Sheffield, gets to know his athletes on an individual level to better prepare them for their futures, both in and out of sport. “We talk about their competencies, their character, their commitment. Those are the things we look for in athletes to establish the groundwork to grow from.” A cornerstone of any individualized training programs is respect valuing each athlete as an individual. When coaches demonstrate positive regard for their players, it is likely their respect will be returned to the coaching staff. Having mutual admiration can foster a positive sense of camaraderie, cohesion, and work ethic.

**Fun** - Although fun appears at the end of this list, coaches and athletes use fun to keep in mind that enjoyment is the ultimate goal of and is the foundation for continued athletic participation. Learning to enjoy training and competition helps athletes and coaches focus less on the outcome of a game or match. In addition, it helps them focus on their experience, rather than on what others are doing. Kevin Blackistone, Sports Columnist for the Dallas Morning News stated “winning can overshadow all the things you have to do to get there.” From his perspective, focusing exclusively on a winning outcome blinds an athlete’s focus and over-shadows the joy of improving skills through practice and competition. In order to help make training and competition fun, coaches can be enthusiastic, offer encouragement, and foster team building and cohesion.

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What other behaviors might you add? With this list in mind, pick about 5 coaching behaviors that are most important for being successful in your sport and then honestly grade yourself on how well you did in each area during your last season. You also might have a colleague grade you if you want another coach’s perspective. From this exercise, you can get a pretty good evaluation of your coaching performance.

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Everyone wants to win, right? And if you are a “good” coach, you should produce winning teams year after year. Your athletic director expects it, the community counts on it, your team wants it and you can taste it. But what happens when you don’t win? What happens when you have mentally, physically and technically prepared your players, they have competed well, and you still end up on the wrong side of the win-loss column. Sometimes, even given the best of circumstances, the wins do not come as often as you and everyone else want.

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6. Be confident and act confidently - actions, your team and your assistants will learn that they can count on you.
7. Be creative and innovative and able to adapt to changes that occur in competition - if you’ve anticipated obstacles in your preparation, you are one step ahead. Be willing to change your game plan to fit the realities of the competition that is unfolding in front of you.
8. Set a positive example; show self-discipline and control outbursts - in competitions, emotions run high and can spill over even when not intended. Whether you like it or not, you are a role model. Your actions do matter to your team, your school, your community, and yourself. Be diplomatic and professional in all your interactions.
9. Listen to what each athlete needs - although athletes must learn to work within a coach’s system, great coaches know that motivating athletes is not a one size fits all proposition. Be willing to work within your system to find the most effective way to help each athlete reach his/her potential.
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**Fear of social evaluation.** A second reason why many athletes experience fear is that your sport performance and/or physical appearance will be evaluated by others (e.g., press, community). The mere presence of coaches, parents, and teammates may unknowingly influence an athlete’s apprehension or nervousness about performing. Participants with low self-esteem or high social physique anxiety (concern about having others evaluate their body) may perform poorly or avoid athletic performances altogether because of heightened anxiety or fear.

**Fear of injury or physical danger.** Athletes develop fears associated with being injured or suffering physical harm. Such fear can increase muscle tension, cause coordination difficulties, disrupt fine motor control, and interrupt attentional focus. For example, in gymnastics fear is fearful of doing a double flip on her first tumbling pass, she is likely to worry about avoiding injury, which may happen should she deviate from planned execution of the routine. If the athlete does not have the height to complete two flips and is more likely to become injured. Her worst fears may become reality.

**Action Steps to Face Fear**

1. **Admit and acknowledge fears.** Every athlete experiences fear; it is not something to be ashamed of. Athletes experience fear because they respect the risks they are taking with their bodies. Realistic fear can help athletes make smart choices in their performances. So take five minutes to write out the fears or worries you have in getting better athletic performances. Some may have occurred; others may have never happened. Athletes who acknowledge and understand their fears increase their chances of dealing with them in effective ways.

2. **Recognize personal and situational factors that can contribute to fear.** Your athlete’s race, situation, and experience of fear. Your level of self-esteem, tendency to take risks, and need for security all play a roll in your fear response. In addition, situational factors, such as trying a skill you were previously injured on or going to an arena where you once had a disastrous performance, may activate a fear response. Once you can recognize the factors that contribute to your fear response you can practice ways of countering your fears and improving your performance.

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**What thoughts occur during your fear responses?**

**Compare your best performance to your worst performance.** How did you respond, both physically and mentally, to preparing for and following both? How did it feel? What sensations or emotions for not manage your anxiety or fear? Answers to these questions will give you some ideas about how you respond and will help you develop coping strategies to control fear.

**Goal Setting** - Both coaches and athletes agree that setting physical and mental goals is key to their success. Setting goals is a necessary component of your training plan but most importantly, to keep them focused on the same goal. When setting team goals, coaches and athletes need to work together to clarify expectations. Further, it is important to always have a backup plan, evaluate progress, and adapt (if necessary) goals throughout the season. For more information on the SMARTSET system that coaches can use to implement a goal setting program, refer to the Fall 1999 issue of Performance Excellence.

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Kevin Blackistone, Sports Columnist for the Dallas Morning News stated “winning can overshadow all the things you have to do to get there.” From his perspective, focusing exclusively on a winning outcome blinds an athlete’s focus and over shadows the joy of improving skills through practice and competition. In order to help make training and competition fun, coaches can be enthusiastic, offer encouragement, and foster team building and cohesion.

**The Experts Talk About Winning**

O n February 21, 2000, The Center for Sport Psychology hosted a panel discussion featuring Kevin Blackistone, Frank Kudlac, Carl Kudlac, Krista Davey, and Cheril Santini, to talk about winning. Although each discussant had his/her own approach to training, they all agreed that winning should not be the main focus. Rather, it is the process involved (e.g., training, building team cohesion) that is most rewarding. They also highlighted the importance of a well-balanced approach to sport preparation, which includes proper nutrition and mental preparation.

In this article, we highlight the main ideas discussed and offer strategies for how these ideas can be implemented in your coaching or athletic program.

**Goal Setting** - Both coaches and athletes agree that setting physical and mental goals is key to their success. Setting goals is a necessary component of your training plan but most importantly, to keep them focused on the same goal. When setting team goals, coaches and athletes need to work together to clarify expectations. Further, it is important to always have a backup plan, evaluate progress, and adapt (if necessary) goals throughout the season. For more information on the SMARTSET system that coaches can use to implement a goal setting program, refer to the Fall 1999 issue of Performance Excellence.

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Fear of failure. In sport, success is the goal of every athlete, though some mistakes or failures are inevitable. If athletes focus too much on failure, however, they can become afraid and less likely to try. Fear of failure takes advantage of our fears and perverts us that we are permanent failures. Fear of failing gives rise to anxiety, stress, and ineffective coaching and athletic performances. A preoccupation and overemphasis on the end results of competitions (win-lost) can create a fear which hampers the development of effective athletic performances. As Basketball Coaching Legend Dean Smith noted, “If you make every game life-and-death proposition, you’re going to have problems. For one thing, you’ll be dead a lot.”

Fear of negative social evaluation. A fear many athletes experience is that your sport performance and/or physical appearance will be evaluated by others (e.g., press, community). The mere presence of coaches, parents, and teammates may unknowingly influence an athlete’s apprehension or nervousness about performing. Participants with low self-esteem or high social phobic anxiety (concern about having others evaluate their body) may perform poorly or avoid athletic performances altogether because of heightened anxiety or fear.

Fear of injury or physical danger. All sports have the potential for injury, though some, such as skiing or gymnastics, pose a higher risk. Asking an athlete if some athletes develop fears associated with being injured or suffering physical harm. Such fear can increase muscle tension, cause coordination difficulties, disrupt fine motor control, and interrupt attentional focus. For example if a gymnast is fearful of doing a double back flip on her first tumbling pass, she is likely to worry about whether she may hurt her back. This may result in the execution of all sorts of negative outcomes. As a result, her muscles tense and range of motion is restricted so she can not reach up enough with her arms. She does not have the height to complete two flips and is more likely to become injured. Her worst fears may become reality.

4. Develop a plan. Learn a broad spectrum of coping strategies and use the ones that are most effective for your different situations. For example, if the response is increased worry, then a mental relaxation technique, such as meditation, might be used. If the response is physical in nature (e.g., muscle tension), then use a technique targeting these physical symptoms, such as progressive muscle relaxation. Athletes may develop a list of techniques that are often required training from a professional, a quick strategy that you can learn right away is the use of cue words, which are words that athletes use to re-set themselves in response. You can use three cue words to cope with a feared situation: (1) STOP, (2) BREATHE, (3) FOCUS. When you determine that you feel flustered and it is getting in the way of your performance say “STOP!” to interrupt the unwanted thoughts and feelings. Then say “STOP” to take a deep breath to help reduce some of the anxiety you feel. Finally say “FOCUS” to turn your attention toward what you want to do. Practicing this approach can help you become more effective in handling fearful situations.

5. Develop confidence with practice. One of the most effective ways to control fear is through self-confidence. Therefore, practice both your physical skills and your coping strategies until your confidence is high and your performances are automatic (and less likely to be disrupted by fear).

With some of these tools on your side, you are on your way to controlling your fears rather than allowing fear to control you!

A consensus of the experts agree that every athlete should learn to trust their own abilities. For Cheril Santini, former All-American diver from UNT, believes every athlete’s apprehension or nervousness during a game or match. In addition, it helps them focus on their experience, rather than on what others are doing. Kevin Blackstone, Sports Columnist for the Dallas Morning News stated “winning can overshadow all the things you have to do to get there.” From his perspective, focusing exclusively on a winning outcome blinds an athlete’s focus and over-shadows the joy of improving skills through practice and competition. In order to help make training and competition fun, coaches can be enthusiastic, provide encouragement, and foster team building and cohesion.

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• What thoughts occur during your fear response?
• Compare your best performance to your worst performance. How did you respond, both physically and mentally, prior to your many failures? How can you handle these situations for not manage your anxiety or fear?

Answers to these questions will give you some ideas about how you respond and will help you develop ways to prevent your fear from taking over.

Trust - a positive sense of camaraderie, cohesion, and work ethic. In sport, success is the product of an athlete’s apprehension or nervousness during a game or match. In addition, it helps them focus on their experience, rather than on what others are doing. Kevin Blackstone, Sports Columnist for the Dallas Morning News stated “winning can overshadow all the things you have to do to get there.” From his perspective, focusing exclusively on a winning outcome blinds an athlete’s focus and over-shadows the joy of improving skills through practice and competition. In order to help make training and competition fun, coaches can be enthusiastic, provide encouragement, and foster team building and cohesion.