



PLC Focus of Week: Building Effective Relationships with Your Team

This weekly reflection is offered by Thomas Kostielney, Notre Dame Social Foundations of Coaching student who played sport throughout his youth and high school years.

"Sports are great, and of course, athletes fight their hearts out to win every game, but sports are about more than just the game. The best coaches that I had taught me about things greater than just sports. They taught us life lessons through sports, and these coaches found multiple ways to do it. This worked best when the team was fully comfortable with each other, but also with the coach. It is essential for the coach to facilitate a good relationship with the team and each of the players.

To aid coaches in this task: At the beginning of the season:

- A good way to do this early on is having the coach take an interest in athletes' lives, learning their names, but also what subjects they like, how many siblings they have, what their favorite food is, etc.

Throughout the season:

- Take the time to talk to athletes at the end of practice. As players, we were fully aware of how important everyone's time is, so the fact that the coaches would dedicate some of this time to getting to know us really stuck out. These talks could be about our lives, or it could be about current events and how they



**"There are two ways of
exerting one's strength;
one is pushing down,
the other is pulling up."**

~Booker T. Washington

- related to our lives.
- Take time to talk to each player face-to-face. This works best when there are assistant coaches that can continue to run practice while these talks take place. These talks can be about how the players are helping the team, how they are fitting into their roles, what they can work on, and also how their lives are going. This allows the coach and player to have a bond that uniquely builds character development.

At the end of the season:

- Have an "exit interview" with each player. Ask them what they learned throughout the season and what their goals are for the next season. Ask them what they would plan to do in the off-season to put them in the best place to be ready for the team for next season.
- Invite each player to tell you what motivational style works best for him/her, so that you can know best how to develop each athlete.