

FOOTBALL



HELP DESK

'Helping Coaches Helping Kids'

INCENTIVE TRAINING

Incentive Training is a term I picked up from Coach Larry Gombos. And while I have been fortunate over the years to have teams that required very little discipline, I am certain that the disciplinary methods we use are probably responsible for this fact. Some of these may seem harsh and I would be quick to respond that discipline should not only be harsh but swift and consistent as well. So long as you are consistent in your application of discipline and you don't use tactics that can harm or demean your players, I think you are on the right track. As a parent I would much rather see my son being physically pushed to his limits than to see a coach grab his facemask and scream at him and tell him that he is the reason our team can't move the football on offense or he is the reason the other team scored. I don't use everything you will read in this article but I have used most of these ideas or variations of them and I can assure you that they are extremely effective. In fact many of them will only be used once or twice in an entire season because once your players have a 'healthy fear' of the consequences to their actions, they learn very quickly to buck up & tow the line.

HARD TIME

I have always used 'Hard Time w/ Coach JJ' after practice to deal with issues like school discipline, bad grades, disrespecting mom or sometimes even practice discipline. In 10 years of coaching, I have only had 1 player do hard time more than once and it was NOT for the same reason. Hard Time never ends without snot and tears all over their face and uncontrollable sobbing. Of course, due to the nature of the punishment, every kid who does Hard Time is totally fine within 10 minutes and quite often off playing with their buddies while I discuss things with mom or dad. I should also point out that my 'hard time kids' are the first to run up and give me a hug anytime I see them outside football.

Hard Time is physically demanding drills done in rapid succession until the player can no longer perform and then we push them a little farther until the exercise is painful. We switch exercises often because we want them to last long enough that they remember this ordeal. The whole time, I am in their ear telling them what they did and why it was wrong. I explain how we are a team and if they can no longer play for us, we will carry on without them. But I also explain to them how disappointed I will be because I love them and I want them to be part of our team, part of our 'family' but we cannot and will not tolerate them to continue doing whatever it was that got us 'here'. I will admit that I have cried right along with the player sometimes as I watch the pain and I watch the recognition in their eyes that we care about them and they have let us down.

ROLL THE FIELD

Rolling the field will sound sadistic to anyone who focuses on the fact that a player might 'toss their cookies' during this exercise. However, I would ask that everyone remember how many times as children we would spin in place with the sole purpose of getting too dizzy to stand up or so dizzy that we would hurl. We thought it was funny back then but of course we did it by choice in those instances. Rolling the field is not done with the intention of throwing up (although it does happen). Rolling the field is done because the degree of difficulty forces a player to think twice before disrupting practice a second time.

Rolling the field is exactly what it sounds like. Players lie down on their side and roll over and over down the field. It is extremely difficult to roll in a straight line with shoulder pads on because of how much larger they are when compared to the feet at the other end of your body. Usually a coach must walk along with the offending party and constantly correct his direction or he will end up rolling in circles. This is a great opportunity to talk to the player in much the same way as we talk to them during 'hard time'.

RUN A LAP HOLDING HANDS

This one is a specific punishment for a specific type of disruption. Fighting on the team can destroy chemistry and timing and teamwork. Fighting is encouraged by some Neanderthal coaches as a way to find the heart of a team. I cannot vouch for this at the upper levels of the sport but in youth football, I can assure you there is NO PLACE on our team for guys who cannot get along with one another. Grab-assing and horseplay are treated the same way because quite often this is how a fight starts. One guy thinks he is being funny and the other guy doesn't. Before you know it, they are going to war.

So anytime we catch this type of behavior, the offending parties have 2 options. They can turn in their gear on the spot or they can run a lap together, holding hands the entire way. This is especially effective if you practice where there are other teams because as they pass the other teams, they will get some catcalls or laughter to help remind them how they never want to do this again. I remarked earlier how I don't believe in demeaning a player and I want to point out that this is as close as I get. But considering that the alternative is to put them off the team entirely, I think this is a much better alternative.

Both of these are my interpretations of ideas I got from a great coach who I would pay to have coach my boys. Dave Potter of the Durham Eagles.

GODZILLA RUNS

Godzilla is a 4" PVC pipe 3 feet long and capped on both ends. It is filled with 10 pounds of rocks and nails. It is painted green and covered with helmet stickers. We will bring 2 of these pipes to practice every day.

If a player is late to practice, he does a Godzilla Run.

Practice stops, the late player picks up Godzilla and stands before the team. The team does 10 pushups and at every rep they thank the late player by name. The late player responds, "you're welcome" at every rep. When finished he takes a lap carrying Godzilla raised over his head. When mom sees this for the first time she freaks and never again waits for Oprah to end before scurrying off to practice.

As a matter of fact 99% of our players get to practice early everyday.

If a player is out of line and needs discipline we just point to Godzilla laying in the grass and off he goes (without the pushups).

If a kid is way out of line and he has multiple Godzilla Runs in the same practice then at the end of practice we award Godzilla a helmet sticker in that players honor. If a player gets more than one helmet sticker on Godzilla during the season then the whole team each does a Godzilla Run while that player watches.

We do not give helmet awards to players ... only Godzilla.

We can also use Godzilla Runs as incentive to focus better. Obviously, this is not something we do early in the year but once the players know the proper techniques and the level of effort we expect, then they are fair game.

If a player uses poor technique during tackling drills ... Godzilla.

If a player uses poor technique during blocking drills ... Godzilla.

If a player shows poor effort at any time during practice ... Godzilla.

When we end practice with conditioning drills, players take turns running one leg with Godzilla. Some fight over it to show how studly they are. Typically these are kids that never have to do Godzilla Runs for disciplinary reasons.

The above is my interpretation of something called Godzilla Drills that is used by Coach Mike Mahoney of the Denver Titans.

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