

TOP 10 TIPS

Coaching Minority/ Diverse Ethnicity Athletes By C. Nickson, Ph.D.

#1 Enduring Monuments Require Solid Foundations – Get Real, Stay Real

Build trust through formulating genuine interest and communication. There is no better coach to have than one you can absolutely be real with. In sports and in life, when athletes are able to be themselves, they feel free and perform better. Always listen and be open to their personalities.

#2 We Are Family

Do not forsake the role of family dynamics within the lives of minority athletes. An awareness of the youth's family situation and resources is critical to obtaining the insight needed to develop the youth's motivations and drives in sport. By engaging with family members and being supportive of the family's ideas and expectations for the youth, a coach is better able to assist in managing family pressures that threaten youth sports' performance and well-being.

#3 Same Difference – Be Culturally Sensitive

Be prepared to show respect for a variety of cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs. A good example is scheduling practices around religious service hours or not penalizing a player for missing practice due to cultural and religious dynamics that play a part in their family system. Establishing a team culture of shared values, acceptance, and equal opportunity for self-expression makes a youth feel welcomed and a part of an open and supportive culture.

#4 Their Vision – Your Vision – Our Vision!

Do not dismiss the youth's demonstrations or celebrations of what they value. Rather, assist the youth in navigating through formulating a balanced perspective of their value system instead of diminishing its cultural value or significance.

#5 Some Say Potaato - Some Say Potahto - We All Say French Fries

Be accepting of their vernacular. It is better to teach a more appropriate way than to shame or discredit someone's natural inclination for expression. By accepting a youth's vernacular, you give respect to their personhood and upbringing. This allows for a mutual relationship to be established based on a foundation of human dignity and respect.

#6 This is Who I Am – Respect It, Respect Me & WE will do this!

Speak to the youth with respect and give them a space of authority. Nicknames that contribute to a positive persona of the individual can be an incredible cultural tool empowering youth to perform within their best selves. Consider utilizing nicknames that add value to the individual in all walks of life so the youth is better able to adapt a full working model of themselves within the world and build their future.

#7 Captain, Oh my Captain - "Coach" - "LEADER" & "MOTIVATOR"

Know the youth's grounding and activation techniques. What settles the youth down? What amps them up? What is the youth's trigger point for redirecting their focus or aggression? Knowing these answers is vital to assisting in their ability to self-regulate, as well as the coach's ability to motivate in real time. .

#8 All Hands on Deck – Stormy Seas Abound!

Teach self-compassion and self-control amid mental toughness. Today, minority athletes are experiencing a variety of challenges including academic, social, and relational/family issues among others. Early development coaches have an opportunity to teach life skills with a focus on appropriately utilizing all of one's energies while maintaining a high sense of self. As young athletes continue to grow and experience various pressures, they will be better capable of responding to life challenges due to experiential reinforcement during sport activities.

#9 Are We There Yet? ...Not Quite, But Headed the Right Direction

Attach expectations beyond sports. Sports offer a valuable avenue for interjecting life skill development tools within fun, engaging sport-related activities. While you have the youth's full attention, integrate social skill development tools, future career opportunities that may align with the youth's skill set, and community orientation events. This allows the youth to engage in experiences that stretch their imaginations and visualizations of what can happen!

#10 There is a Much Bigger Game in Play

Maintain an empathetic regard to the holistic nature of the person. Youth sport coaches have to remember to uphold the element of youth development over competitive results. Thus, it is most essential to uphold the person over the athlete. You can achieve this by maintaining an empathetic regard toward the total nature of the person. This is the first position. The second position is sports coach. Both roles involve advocacy. Strongly advocate on the youth's behalf.