

COACHING NOTES FROM COACHING CULTURE



EPISODE 82 STRATEGIES TO HELP PLAYERS RECOVER FROM THEIR MISTAKES

Listen to Geno Auriemma, head women's basketball coach at the University of Connecticut, discuss his player's body language [HERE](#).

Is there more to correcting a player's body language, or mistake response, than simply putting them on the bench?

Players don't know what they don't know.

Too often we assume that it's the player's responsibility figure out how to respond productively to their mistakes, but we don't take the time to teach them the mental skills to do that.

Sometimes players believe that a negative response is how to show that they care, when in fact, they often damage their team in the process.

Research indicates that a child's inner dialogue is shaped by the voices they hear most frequently and most intensely.

A Mental Health Discussion

We started with a discussion about what you would do if a teammate or close friend was being verbally / emotionally abused by their significant other. We introduced that discussion using this video from Steve Harvey's series, *Heroes Among Us*.

The focus of the conversation was on **WHY** this behavior is unacceptable. Players would never allow their friends to be talked to in the same way that many of them speak to themselves following their mistakes. We referred to this degrading self-talk as The Voice of the Abuser.

Developing a Failure Recovery System

Sue Enquist, 11-time national championship coach for UCLA Softball, developed a mistake recovery routine for her players. After each mistake they would

- Own the Moment
- Pat the Chest
- Call the Number of Outs

She expected this response to every mistake in games, and also designed challenging drills to force them to practice their mistake response.

You can view her full presentation from *What Drives Winning* [HERE](#).

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Key Quote - “Failure recovery is the key to sustained excellence.”

Developing a Failure Recovery System normalizes mistakes - it acknowledges that mistakes are inevitable, but we are prepared for them.

Mistake response is 100% under the control of the individual athlete regardless of their personality.

The Three Parts of the Individual Mistake Response

1. Acknowledge the mistake
2. A ritual that symbolizes the break between what happened to what is about to happen
 - A Physical Response (tighten the ponytail, throw the grass, punch your leg, etc)
 - A Mental Ritual (a script repeated internally after each mistake)
3. Refocus on “what’s important now”
 - Communicate something you control going into the next play
 - Give reminders about what happens next
 - Animate with a surge of energy in the next play

Eye contact and acknowledging your teammates taking responsibility for a mistake is an opportunity for connection and affirmation before the next play.

Once players have been taught a mistake recovery system they should be held accountable to that the same way as any other expectation in your program.

Failure is Feedback - Not a Verdict

Coaches must encourage players to view their mistakes as opportunities to learn, particularly in how they reflect on their performance. Mistakes should be embraced as something that can help players get better.

Be intentional in your language, and be willing to model a response to your own mistakes. A frequent phrase our players hear in practice from me is, “That was bad coaching.”

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Coaches can model their own learning process by sharing

- A decision you made that didn't work
- What you learned from that situation
- What you will do moving forward with that knowledge

Checkout [Episode 28 of the Coaching Culture Podcast](#) with Trevor Reagan from Train Ugly to learn more about the science of learning and the value of making mistakes.

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