

COACH DEVELOPMENT COURSE · MODULE 1

what stakeholders value most

One of the most important shifts a coach can make is moving from what they think their athletes, parents, and organisation want, to what the evidence says they actually value. These two things are often not the same. Use this reference at your pre-season meeting to align every stakeholder group around shared expectations from the start.

PLAYERS

The five Fs — what young athletes say keeps them in sport

01 Fun

The single most important factor. Not winning — fun. When sport stops being enjoyable, children stop participating. Everything else on this list is a version of fun.

02 Friends

Sport is where many of the most formative friendships of a young person's life are built. The social connection is not a by-product of sport for many children — it is the whole point.

03 Fair Play

Children have a finely tuned sense of fairness. When standards are applied inconsistently or some players are treated differently, children notice. It undermines trust in the environment.

04 Friendly Competition

Children want to be pushed, but in an environment that remains respectful and encouraging. Competitive without toxic. Challenging without crushing.

05 Finish Better Than Started

Development. Improvement. Progress. Children want to feel competent and capable. When they finish a season unable to name what they have learned or how they have grown, the experience has not delivered on its most basic promise.

COACHING IMPLICATION

If you can name one thing you did this session to deliver on each of the five Fs, the session worked.

PARENTS

What families need from the sport environment

■ Safety

Physical and emotional safety for their child. Always. This is not aspirational — it is a baseline obligation.

■ Opportunity

Every child having a genuine chance to participate, develop, and grow, regardless of current ability.

■ Fair Play

Standards applied equally. Good sportsmanship modelled from the top down.

■ Competition

A healthy competitive environment that teaches resilience, teamwork, and perseverance.

■ Development

Progress that is visible, measured, and communicated. When parents can see their child growing in character, confidence, and connection — not just skill — they become your strongest advocates.

COACHING IMPLICATION

Parents who understand what development actually looks like are far easier to work with. Give them the language before they need it.

COACHES

What makes the coaching role sustainable

■ Player Respect

Players who are engaged, responsive, and growing because of the environment the coach creates.

- **Parent Respect**

Parents who trust the process, follow the communication protocols, and raise concerns through the appropriate channels.

- **Club Support**

An organisation that stands behind its coaches: with tools, training, clarity of role, and recognition.

- **Mentorship**

Access to more experienced coaches. The best coaches are always learning from someone ahead of them.

- **Continued Education**

The commitment to keep improving. The coach who believes they already know everything is the most dangerous coach in youth sport.

💡 **COACHING IMPLICATION**

If you are not getting what you need to do your job well, name it. To your club, your mentor, or your peers. A coach who is unsupported cannot build a supported environment.

HOW TO USE THIS

Pre-season meeting

This reference is most effective when shared with athletes and parents together at the first pre-season meeting. The goal is not to lecture — it is to make the shared expectations visible before the season starts.

- 1 **Open with players**

Ask the group: 'What are the two or three things that make sport worth showing up for?' Take answers without editorialising. Then reveal the five Fs. Most groups will have named most of them. That alignment is the starting point.

- 2 **Move to parents**

Share the five things parents value and explain why development — not results — is at the top. Name how you measure it, how you communicate it, and what parents can expect to hear from you across the season.

- 3 **Name your own needs**

Tell your parents and athletes what you need from them to do your job well. Player respect. Parent respect. Communication through the right channels. Coaches who name this early have fewer problems all season.

4

Set the expectations

Use this moment to introduce the Behaviour Standards for each group. Not as a warning — as a shared agreement. 'This is what we've all signed up for.'

AFTER THE MEETING

- Note which stakeholder group asked the most questions — that is usually the group that needs the most clarity.
- If a parent challenged a value or expectation publicly, follow up privately before the next session.
- Return to this card at mid-season. Ask yourself honestly: which of the five Fs did your sessions actually deliver?

COACH REFLECTION

Use these after reviewing each stakeholder section.

- 1 Players:** Which of the five Fs is hardest for you to consistently deliver? What is one session design change that would improve it?

- 2 Parents:** Think of a parent who has been difficult to work with. Which of the five things on the parent list were they not getting? How could you have addressed that earlier?

- 3 Coaches:** Which of the five things on the coach list are you currently missing? Who in your organisation could help you address it?

"The coach who understands what every person in their environment actually needs is the coach who builds an environment every person wants to stay in."