

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY SPORT LEADERS

# The 7 Mistakes Most Community Coaches Make

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And what exceptional coaches do differently to build better athletes, stronger teams and lasting impact.

# Coaching is more than running drills.

At community level, the role of a coach extends far beyond the session plan. Coaches shape confidence, standards, belonging and the way young athletes experience sport.

The best coaches are not always the loudest, the most experienced, or the most decorated. They are the ones who understand people, communicate clearly and create environments where athletes can grow.

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**Better coaching begins with better awareness.**

APEX COACHING PRINCIPLE



## MISTAKE ONE

# Coaching the activity, not the athlete.

Many coaches become so focused on getting through the session that they miss the individual standing in front of them. Athletes do not all learn, respond or grow in the same way.

### WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They observe first, then adapt. They notice confidence levels, communication styles and emotional cues before deciding how to coach the skill.

### LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**People do not remember every drill. They remember how your coaching made them feel.**



## MISTAKE TWO



# Mistaking a plan for a purpose.

A tidy session plan is useful, but it is not the same as having a coaching purpose. If the athletes do not understand why the session matters, engagement quickly drops.

### WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They define one clear outcome for the session and connect every activity back to that outcome in simple language athletes can understand.

### LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**Clarity creates buy-in. Buy-in creates effort.**



MISTAKE THREE

# Talking too much, teaching too little.

Community coaches often over-explain because they care. But long explanations reduce energy, overload young athletes and leave less time for meaningful practice.

WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They keep instructions short, show the key point visually, then let athletes move, try, adjust and learn through repetition.

LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**The goal is not to sound knowledgeable.  
The goal is to help athletes understand.**



## MISTAKE FOUR



# Correcting everything, connecting with no one.

Athletes need feedback, but constant correction can make them hesitant, dependent and afraid to make mistakes. Development requires challenge and psychological safety.

### WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They balance correction with encouragement, ask reflective questions and help athletes recognise progress as well as problems.

### LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**Feedback lands best when the relationship can carry it.**



## MISTAKE FIVE



# Ignoring the environment you create.

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The quality of a program is not defined only by drills or results. It is defined by the standards, routines and behaviours athletes experience every week.

### WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They intentionally build an environment that feels organised, positive and consistent — where effort, respect and learning are visible expectations.

### LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**Culture is not what you say once. It is what athletes experience repeatedly.**



## MISTAKE SIX



# **Believing experience alone makes you better.**

Years in the role do not automatically create growth. Without reflection, feedback and professional learning, even committed coaches can repeat the same habits for years.

### WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They stay curious. They seek feedback, invest in their development and remain willing to challenge the way they have always done things.

### LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**Experience becomes expertise only when it is examined.**



# Measuring success only by the scoreboard.

Winning matters, but at community level it is not the only measure that matters. If athletes are improving, returning, contributing and enjoying the journey, your coaching is working.

## WHAT GREAT COACHES DO INSTEAD

They define success more broadly: growth, resilience, teamwork, decision-making, confidence and connection to the sport.

## LEADERSHIP INSIGHT

**The strongest programs develop people as well as performers.**



# Three questions better coaches ask every week.

Improvement does not begin with a new drill book. It begins with more intentional thinking before, during and after every session.

01

## What do my athletes need?

Start with the people, not just the program.

02

## What am I reinforcing?

Your habits teach as loudly as your words.

03

## What can I improve?

Great coaches stay in development themselves.



# Choose one change. Make it visible.

You do not need to rebuild your entire coaching approach overnight. Pick one mistake from this guide, turn it into one action, and practise it with intent this week.

## TRY THIS

At your next session, ask yourself: What will my athletes experience today because I am their coach?

## FINAL THOUGHT

**Better coaches create better experiences.  
Better experiences keep more people in sport.**



LEAD BETTER. COACH BETTER. DEVELOP PEOPLE.



# The next generation of community sport deserves better coaching.

APEX Coach Development Academy is helping coaches, clubs and sporting organisations build stronger leaders at every level of the game.

APEX LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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