

6. PEOPLE MAKING IT HAPPEN

DELIVERING A POSITIVE
SPORTS EXPERIENCE
TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

The most important resource in junior sport is the people who provide the infrastructure for the delivery of activities, and set the social atmosphere around sport. They include

- young people
- parents* and carers*
- school teachers
- coaches*
- officials*
- administrators
- other volunteers.

What they do is important because the quality and quantity of their involvement has an enormous impact on the sport experience for young people.

Codes of Behaviour (see Resources) have been developed for the important roles in junior sport, and these should be adopted by all sports.

Young People

To enjoy their sport, young people should be able to

- experience skilled and sensitive leadership through their coaches, officials and administrators
- have input into how sport is provided for them
- participate in an inclusive, positive and caring environment where they are not exposed to physical or verbal abuse from other young people, their parents/carers or sport providers.

To promote their life-long involvement, young people should also be encouraged to take on volunteer roles (eg coach, official).

All participants should be given a copy of the Code of Behaviour for Players so they know what is expected of them. Also displaying a poster of the Code will help remind everyone of their obligations.

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION, 2003 Junior Sport Guidelines

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Responsibilities of young people

All young people have a responsibility to practice fair play by

- participating fairly and safely and in the spirit of the rules
- co-operating with coaches, officials, team mates and opponents
- accepting decisions without dissent
- acknowledging good performance by teammates and opponents.

6.1 Strategies for Young People

- Follow the advice in the *Code of Behaviour* and *Play by the Rules* (see Resources).
- Respect the rights and worth of all participants whatever their gender, ability, cultural background etc.
- Always play fair and acknowledge others' good play.
- Do not provoke or use physical or verbal abuse against anyone.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are a major influence on a young person's initial involvement in sport. Their support is important, and their opinions and actions play a large part in choosing

- which sport/s young people will be involved in
- how much time will be devoted to it
- whether young people continue their participation.

Many parents appreciate the benefits of junior sport and actively support it by taking on roles in administration, officiating and coaching as well as the parental roles such as "taxi-driver".

Other parents feel they are unable to get involved. However, involvement can be rewarding for parents, and is important in keeping young people participating.

Administrators can motivate parents to help by

- letting them know their active interest is valued, and is vital to their children's participation
- involving them in planning, and attending social functions
- educating them about the sport
- acknowledging the critical role played by their informal and less tangible support (eg, emotional support and encouragement).

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Parents make a difference to the way sport is delivered and can assist best by

- being a good role model
- asking the sport provider how they can contribute to their children's participation, and to the team or other players
- understanding and accepting the role of sport for their children and their motivations for involvement
- accepting wins and losses graciously, following the Codes of Behaviour.

6.2 Strategies for Parents and Carers

- Follow the advice in the *Code of Behaviour*.
- Take an active role by contributing to your child's sports participation.
- Look for opportunities to promote fairness, safety and respect for all (coaches, officials, team mates and other teams).
- Focus on your children's and team's efforts rather than winning or losing.
- Make it clear that the interests of your children are more important than winning.
- Recognise that young people play sport for fun, friendship and personal achievement.
- Send children ready for safe participation with protective equipment (eg mouth guards, head gear, hats and water bottles).

School Teachers

School teachers, and in particular, physical education teachers frequently provide young people with their first experiences in sport.

Teachers can provide valuable support by

- promoting the benefits of sport
- giving young people and parents information on local sport opportunities
- forming school – community links for mutual benefit (see Guideline 5)
- undertake professional development to better allow them to assist all young people and particularly those with disabilities and special needs, and from Indigenous and CLD backgrounds.

6.3 Strategies for School Teachers

- Promote the benefits of sport and encourage young people to be involved.
- Provide young people and their parents/carers with information on sport in the local area.
- Form links with clubs to increase opportunities for young people to participate and progress in sport.
- Update knowledge and skills through professional development particularly for special groups (eg disabilities and CLD backgrounds).

Coaches

Quality coaching is vital in sport so young people receive the best possible education and experience from their sports participation.

The coach fills many roles including leader, psychologist, friend, teacher, personnel manager, administrator and role model. Important aspects of coaches' behaviour are set out in the Code of Behaviour.

Guideline 6 - People Making It Happen

The multi-faceted role of a coach means they need to develop a wide range of competencies.

Teaching sports skills

The most identifiable role of the coach is helping to educate young people in

- the fundamentals of physical and technical skills and strategies,
- concepts and attitudes that influence their psychological growth and social skills.

Details are covered in *Guideline 7 Quality Coaching*.

Organisation

Organising effective sport requires careful planning and covers

- seasonal programs and individual sessions based on the sequential development of basic skills, physical fitness and strategies (see *Guideline 7*).
- the management of each session, use of space and time, and what equipment and facilities are needed.
- managing the potential safety hazards in the sport and integrating risk management procedures into training and competition. (See *Guideline 8 Making Sport Safe*.)

Communication

Good communication underpins many roles of the coach in dealing with young people, parents/carers, officials, administrators, the media etc.

6.4(1) Strategies for Coaches - Communication

- Give praise, positive feedback, reinforcement and encouragement after mistakes and achievements.
- Motivate (do and say things that make young people feel accepted and successful).
- Be a good listener.
- Counsel (where a young person does not act appropriately or violates rules).
- Resolve conflicts and defuse difficult situations.

Setting an example

Coaches should always act as a role model by displaying high standards of behaviour and modelling the ethical and social values they want young people to develop.

They should also be seen to treat young people fairly and consistently.

6.4(2) Strategies for Coaches – Setting an example

- Display control and respect for all involved (opponents, other coaches, umpires, administrators, parents and spectators).
- Develop team respect for the ability of all participants including opponents as well as for the judgment of officials and opposing coaches.
- Work with others, especially officials, to show young people how they should behave.
- Speak to all participants using inclusive and respectful language.
- Be a positive role model with regard to lifestyle factors (eg no smoking or alcohol use in front of participants).

Developing a coaching philosophy

For young people to have positive sport experiences, their coaches must

- know why they coach
- know why young people participate and let this guide their actions
- consider the opinions of others
- develop and maintain a set of personal standards for operating as a coach.

6.4(3) Strategies for Coaches – Developing a Coaching Philosophy

- Discuss with other coaches reasons for coaching
- Reflect on the things that bring satisfaction in coaching.
- Ask a mentor to assist in self-development.

Officials

The educational role of officials is important in the development of junior sport participants. Their essential tasks can be grouped into two broad roles

- rule management (game safety and fairness)
- rule education (athlete development and sportsmanship).

Through their management of rules and procedures, officials provide a safe and secure environment to protect players from physical injury and mental abuse. This contributes to player satisfaction, enjoyment and commitment.

Officiating is a highly complex task because rules fall into two categories

- the *written* (public) rules specific to each sport
- the *unwritten* (private) rules that reflect value systems and fairness within specific sports.

Through experience, young people learn how to play within these rules. Progress through the sport ranks depends on their ability to meet performance demands and social behaviour expectations.

Officials play a key role in teaching participants how to play *within* the acceptable range of rules rather than simply to play *by* the rules.

Officials educate young people about acceptable behaviour, and the concept of fairness. In some sports, skilled referees spend a lot of time in direct communication with players offering encouragement and advice.

6.5 Strategies for Officials

- Be guided by the Code of Behaviour for Officials.
- Inspect facility, equipment, etc for safety.
- Regulate the conduct of competition and explain rules to help participants understand how the rules apply to competition situations.
- Caution participants before incurring an infraction in an effort to change their behaviour.
- Acknowledge participants when they demonstrate good behaviour.
- Be fair, consistent, and positive in your interactions with everyone.
- Control negative reaction and comments from spectators.
- Set a good example through your actions and words.
- Know what is expected of you and keep up to date with the latest trends and safety practices.

Administrators

Effective leadership and management skills are essential for every organisation. Administrators play a primary role in the management of the sport, recruiting volunteers, training all personnel and ensuring leadership succession.

Management

Administrators are essential in sport because they handle general organisation or specific components of the sport (eg managing a team),

Important management roles are to

- manage the financial, physical and human resources of the sport
- plan and implement the program and events
- market the sport
- provide position descriptions for all significant roles

Guideline 6 - People Making It Happen

- establish and maintain communication with other stakeholders for the best provision of junior sport within their region
- modify Codes of Behaviour to suit the sport, and give copies to everyone involved
- assist with promoting appropriate values and behaviours in parents and carers and other people involved in the club
- provide opportunities for sport providers, parents/carers and other to increase their knowledge and skills.

6.6 (1) Strategies for Administrators – Management

- Obtain Codes of Behaviour and modify for relevance to your sport, have them displayed, and see that everyone receives a copy.
- Plan and monitor risk management making sure all policies (eg child protection, responsible alcohol use) are communicated and actioned
- Actively target potential volunteers for recruitment and involvement.
- Look for opportunities to recognise volunteers' contribution (eg at functions, competitions etc) and with awards, certificates, gifts etc
- Conduct an audit of parent/carers skills.
- Acknowledge parents' input (eg in newsletters, at award presentations etc).
- Develop partnerships with, and maximise the contribution of others (eg parents and schools).

Working with volunteers

Sport is heavily dependent on volunteers, however, recruiting and retaining volunteers can be difficult. To make it a positive experience for volunteers they should be

- recognised for their contribution to junior sport in public ways and
- supported in their work with training and resources so they can carry out their role with efficiency and personal satisfaction.

6.6 (2) Strategies for Administrators - Volunteers

- Promote opportunities for volunteers so they are aware how they could help.
- Extend junior sport participation to include volunteering opportunities.
- Establish links with high schools and train students to assist primary school students.
- Provide volunteers with training and resources.
- Develop a mentoring system where experienced volunteers guide new recruits.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to build partnerships.

Training Personnel

Sport has a high turnover of personnel making effective training important. Reduce the loss of information and skills when personnel leave an organisation by providing

- procedures manuals and
- a back-up person for each role so staff/volunteers can learn from someone already in the role.

Formal training programs for all roles in sport are becoming more sophisticated as they include more coverage of socio-emotional aspects of involvement in addition to the essential information on functional delivery.

A range of different delivery methods, including online training, caters best for the diverse training needs of personnel.

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6.6 (3) Strategies for Administrators - Training Personnel

- Provide training/accreditation for personnel and back-up personnel if possible.
- Document procedures to use in training new personnel.
- When conducting training, document the date, course content, and who completed the training.
- Encourage all personnel to increase their skills through training, accreditation and updating.
- When offering formal training
 - keep prices low
 - offer convenient packages (time, location, modules)
 - provide necessary resources
 - use a mixed delivery mode (lecture, workshop, practical sessions) including web-based options.
 - use assessment as a learning tool as well as motivation to learn
 - provide update opportunities
 - include mentoring, self-reflection, peer-support etc.

Nurture potential leaders by making sure they have successful and satisfying leadership experiences, especially junior volunteers.

Provide leadership training and resources but be careful not to over-manage or control sport leaders.

Job satisfaction includes feelings of competency, autonomy and responsibility, so allow leaders to experience these feelings and let them lead – don't force them to be followers!

6.6 (4) Strategies for Administrators - Leadership Succession

- Give young people experience in organisation, administration, umpiring, coaching etc.
- Develop a mentoring system where experienced leaders assist others.
- Provide resources for leaders to extend their skills.
- Provide incentives for involvement in leadership roles (eg letters for CV from club president).
- Recognise the work of leaders at formal functions.

Leadership Succession

Effective leadership is crucial for rewarding sport experiences for young people. Current coaches, officials and administrators need to plan for leadership succession.

As well as current staff and volunteers, include young people in planning. Benefits are twofold, eg

- junior sport volunteers benefit by learning valuable life skills including citizenship and positive social behaviour.
- the sport benefits because some young people will continue their involvement in sport as coaches, officials etc. as adults.

Having strategies in place takes advantage of the window of opportunity while young people are still participating to encourage them into leadership roles.

Volunteers

Volunteers are important in sport acting as coaches, officials and administrators. They work to benefit others, often putting back into sport, after having been a participant.

The delivery of junior sport would not be possible without the continuing commitment of volunteers in all roles and at all levels of competition.

Volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that sport is conducted in a safe and fair manner.

Volunteering can be a satisfying way for young people to extend their involvement in sport.

6.7 Strategies for Volunteers

- Abide by the Codes of Behaviour for all roles in which you are acting.
- Take up opportunities to increase your knowledge and skills through training and practical experience.
- Act as a mentor assisting others to increase their skills.
- Build partnerships with other volunteers.

Key Message

People in many roles contribute to the total sports experience for young people. In different ways they

- make sport accessible and provide a safe and enjoyable environment for activity with friends
- teach them sports skills
- pass on an appreciation of attitudes leading to a healthy lifestyle
- teach them important life lessons such as playing fair, and coping with winning and losing.

Most importantly, a positive experience is required for young people to maintain a life time commitment to sport.

Key Points - People Making It Happen

- Many people are involved in the delivery of junior sport including young people, parents, coaches, officials, administrators and other volunteers.
- Young people should be encouraged to assist in providing their sport.
- Parents/carers are a primary influence on a young person's participation and are an important source of volunteer assistance.
- Coaches need to be multi-skilled and competent in communicating, planning and organising. They must also set a good and consistent example as a role model.
- Officials maintain order and safety during competition. They are also educators, teaching young people the rules of the game.
- Administrators provide leadership and management (eg working with volunteers, training personnel and ensuring leadership succession).
- The role of volunteers is important to sport delivery and must be supported.
- Many roles are needed to provide a quality sport experience and motivate young people to
 - ◇ make a long-term commitment to sport
 - ◇ pursue their goals in sport.

Further Reading

Briefing Papers

- 5 *Physical Activity Pedagogy for Junior Sport*
- 8 *Preparation of Personnel Responsible for Junior Sport Delivery*

Case Studies

1. **Basketball Skill Development Recognition Program** illustrates a strategy to get more officials into the sport by offering traineeships to players 16-19 years.
2. **Good Sport Monitor** illustrates how to get parents involved, and offers a strategy to prevent undesirable behaviour of parents at matches.
3. **CAPS** illustrates a leadership program for young people to encourage them to be volunteers

Resources

Codes of Behaviour Australian Sports Commission

Play by the Rules www.playbytherules.net.au

Volunteer Management Program and Club/ Association Management Program Resources
Australian Sports Commission

Australian Drug Foundation www.adf.org.au

Keeping sport fun and safe – Codes of behaviour for user-friendly junior sport clubs State Government Victoria, Department of Victorian Communities

1. **Basketball Skill Development Recognition Program**

In 2002 eight officials, 16 to 19 years, took up traineeships with the Bendigo Sports and Entertainment Group (BSEG) to lift the level of referee employment. Most were referees and/or players.

The training packages provided nationally accredited qualifications and were fully funded in

- Certificate II in Sport (Officiating)
- Certificate III in Sport (Officiating)
- Certificate IV in Sport and Recreation.

Referees in these programs are recognised as new employees and during the program

- become part-time trainees
- complete timesheets
- receive the accredited training as part of their employment conditions.

The Program takes 12 – 18 months to complete.

Key outcomes for the program include

- improved service from qualified, skilled staff
- opportunity of a part-time traineeship gaining a nationally accredited qualification provided free.

2. **Good Sport Monitor**

The **Good Sport Monitor** (GSM) is a program aimed at developing a national approach to improving environments in which junior sport occurs.

The GSM involves practical strategies and a series of educational resources to assist sports providers identify and address negative issues in junior sport.

The resources

- Provide an educational experience for administrators, officials, participants, parents and spectators regarding appropriate behaviours in junior sport.
- Ensure appropriate junior sport protocols are established and adhered to.
- Increase the awareness and support the provision of safe and nurturing environments for junior participants.
- Assist sports identify constitutional requirements for clubs to provide a safe environment for junior sport participants.
- Pilot appropriate intervention and compliance strategies for sports.

The **GSM** is an initiative of the ASC and Sport and Recreation ACT.

3. CAPS

Challenge, Achievement, and Pathways in Sport (CAPS) is a leadership program for young people aged 14 to 20 years. It was developed by the ASC.

The aim is the development of leadership skills through a range of volunteer roles in sport clubs, specially coaching, officiating, and administration.

The club benefits and so do the young volunteers.

Schools also benefit when CAPS participants do some of their work for clubs within the school environment (eg supervising activities for school students as part of their school program).

Clubs provide a supervisor to oversee the CAPS participant in

- identifying suitable work opportunities and
- assisting in the planning, conduct and evaluation of activities.

Volunteer hours are accrued and certificates presented in recognition for work completed.