



Tips For Locker Room Talks

Locker room talks before and after games can be very useful if presented correctly and within the framework of useful information. Too often however coaches expound at length on too many topics and the effort becomes meaningless. By following a few guidelines your locker room talks can have a positive impact on your players and their success.

Pre game talks by coaches are important to focus the players on the contest and to remind them of a couple key points of emphasis for that game. Youth players have a limited attention span for verbal instructions and it is likely that several are primary visual learners making verbal speeches somewhat ineffective. Pre game speeches are not a time to teach a new system nor review systems. These need to be taught in practice. Here are a few suggestions to make the pre game speech work for you;

- Keep it short.
- Highlight one or two points. Any more than that and you will lose their attention
- Highlight something all players can focus on during the game.
- Be yourself; Attempts to copy other coaches will seem hollow to your players.
- Remind them to have fun

Between periods talks are a good time to settle your players, maybe motivate them a bit and make some adjustments. You could ask them what they are seeing on the ice in regards to the opponents systems and ask your players what adjustments they think need to be made. Engaging them in the process helps them to learn to make adjustments easier and eventually on their own during the games. They also need a few minutes to relax before you send them back out for the second or third period.

The post game speeches are equally important to your team, especially for team morale. The contest is over and normally the next activity will be practice. Coaches who spend time after a losing effort lecturing the team and pointing out all of their errors are wasting their time and losing credibility. The players know they lost the game and usually know why. What they need most is a quick comment or two and a pat on the back. They need to get focused on the next event not the past one. A couple ideas include;

- Pump up their tires. Make sure they return to the rink with a smile ready to improve the next day. Mention a couple key areas they need to improve and let them know that as a group they can work on it in practice to get better. Give them hope.
- I have made it a practice to shake hands with each player after every game, win or lose. Sometimes it is just a handshake and quick personal comment about the game. Sometimes I simply smile and nod; silent communication. In any event I want to acknowledge effort. Not every player brings his or her “A” game every day. It is important to tell them that it is OK and they need to work on consistency. At the youth and high school level it is just a game. As players age they will learn to play more consistently.

It is important to use the pre and post game speeches as one of the ways you communicate your overall philosophy about playing hockey. Remember to be yourself and communicate just a couple important points and then move on.

Think carefully about what you are going to say to your team before, during and after the games. Kids want to have fun and get better and it is our job to help them.

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