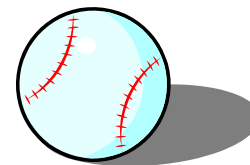


YOUTHFIRST

COACHES LEARNING ABOUT YOUTH SPORTS



Grade 7 & 8



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Arousal Management
- Think on These Things
- Baseball Drills
- Facts About Teenagers

AROUSAL MANAGEMENT

An athlete's arousal level has a direct effect on their performance. However, there is not one level of arousal that is ideal for all athletes, all sports, or all of the situations one will encounter in a particular sporting event. Different athletes will achieve optimal arousal through different means, and each athlete will require a specific level of arousal to maximize their performance. In addition, athletes will require different levels of arousal to best perform various skills within their sport.

For example, a basketball player will require a low level of arousal when they are shooting free throws. They should have no anxiety when stepping up to the line to knock down some crucial shots. Their confidence should be high, and because of the closed environment, their focus can be significantly narrowed from what it would be in a 'live' ball situation. A basketball player on offence will need a higher arousal level, as the situation requires them to be more active, yet they still must be able to run the desired offence effectively. A basketball player's arousal level will increase even more once they are asked to play defense.

If an athlete's arousal level is too high for the given event they may become too anxious and begin to worry too much about the results rather than focus on the required task. Muscles also tense up as anxiety increases,

thus making precision movements more difficult to perform. For example trying to make a long put when over-aroused will often lead to poor results. On the other hand, if an athlete's arousal level is too low, they may lack the energy to perform a task, which requires the large muscle groups; for example, making the try-saving tackle in a rugby game. Some techniques that will help athletes control their arousal levels are:

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** athletes undergo a series of mental exercises that will eventually lead to total body relaxation
- **Short Version of PMR:** used to immediately control relaxation and arousal levels for specific situations
- **Reading Your Body:** the athlete will learn to recognize cues which inform them of readiness for competition
- **Alternative Relaxation Methods:** athletes are able to relax the body and focus their attention to breathing cues, imagery cues, etc.
- **Pre-Competition Pump Up:** used to raise arousal levels to desired performance levels

THINK ON THESE THINGS

"MOST PEOPLE RUN A RACE TO SEE WHO IS FASTEST. I RUN A RACE TO SEE WHO HAS THE MOST GUTS."

-Steve Prefontaine

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

Middle schoolers are being exposed to more and more bad influences and as coaches we should be aware of these influences and try our hardest to be Good examples.

Here are some results of the Andover Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

Percent of high school students who have smoked a cigarette: 31

Percent of high school students who drank alcohol in the past month: 46

Percent of high school students who are sexually active: 27

Percent of middle school students who have smoked a cigarette: 19

Percent of middle school students who have tried alcohol: 38

Percent of middle school students who have considered suicide: 2

These are some results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which was given to town students in grades 6 through 12 last spring.

The 100-question survey was designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and paid for by the state Department of Education.

It asked students questions in these categories: tobacco; alcohol and illegal drugs; sex, sexually transmitted diseases and unintentional pregnancy; unhealthy diets, eating disorders and physical activity; suicide attempts; fights and weapons; drunk driving; and use of seatbelts and helmets.



"Pressure is nothing more than the shadow of great opportunity."

-Michael Johnson

BASEBALL DRILL: BASE RUNNING

WOLVERINE

Always end a group session of practice with base running drills. This is one of our finest.

1) Start all the players at home. Swing the bat run through first base as if it was a double, then hustle back to the base. At this point the next batter goes. They wait at first base until all are done.

2) Lead off first, dive back to base as in a pick off. Then lead off again, coach says go run towards second picking up the third base coach 1/2 way to second as he waves you around to third. As you pass second pick up ball. When the run-

ner takes off to second the next runner leads and dives back to first.

3) When all players are at third, we lead off into foul ground and dive back to third getting used to the proper length lead. Then we will lead again and tag up. The coach says tag, you hustle back to third and pick up the ball as the coach says go you hustle to home plate and the next players takes their lead.

Do this 2 to 3 times and the kids really get the feel for their leads and the way different coaches coach bases

BASEBALL DRILL: BAT SPEED

Donut bat

1.) Put a weighted donut on your regular baseball bat and hit eight baseballs. (overload)

2.) Hit eight baseballs with a fungo bat. (under load)

3.) Hit eight baseballs with your regular bat.

Conduct this drill in a soft toss situation and do 2 sets 2-3 times a week. Over the course of 4 to 6 weeks you should see a positive increase in bat speed.