

ELITE COACHES' PERCEPTIONS ON TEAM DYNAMICS WHEN INJURY OCCURS

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What happens within a team when a player gets injured?

- A. Roles on the team change, which can be perceived as either an opportunity or a threat by other athletes
- B. Interpersonal tensions emerge amongst team members
- C. There is a general feeling of unsettledness



As a coach, how can I manage my team during this time?

“The better that I can manage my response, likely the better the team is going to manage their response.”

1. Try to have a stoic reaction at the time of injury. Coaches felt that they were often the biggest factor in how a team responded to an injury event – athletes tend to mirror their coach.

2. Once things have settled, it is important to keep the injured athlete involved with the group. Often, this athlete takes on coaching responsibilities such as taking statistics, filming practice, or leading a group if they are physically able.

3. Maintain open communication with all members of the group. This includes the injured athlete, all team members, coaching staff, and team medical staff.

4. Increase the social support given to all team members. Coaches felt that it was important to ‘check in’ with athletes more often when a player on the team is injured.

“I think that there are likely a variety of different responses. Of course, one person’s misfortune is definitely somebody else’s new found opportunity.”

“I think the most important thing is just having constant conversations with that athlete and the team, and the other athletes that are affected so that they’re not surprised and have a clear picture of what’s happening.”

5. Keep the same plan moving forward: maintain the same practice plans, style of play, and long-term season goals.

6. Maintain a team culture that prioritizes “we” over “me”. Keep emphasizing that the team supersedes its individual members.