

COACHING CAROUSEL

Setting the foundation for a new coach-athlete relationship

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Changes occur often throughout life and sport. These transitions may be overwhelming and difficult to surpass, but it is essential to embrace the ending as a shift to a new beginning.

There have been several coaching changes this offseason in professional, college, high school, and club soccer. In today's society, coaching standards are at an all time high. Additionally, fan and athletic administrators' expectations for success are less forgiving than ever before at the collegiate and professional levels. This combination of high coaching standards and pressure to succeed result in more frequent changes as they are either fired, forced to resign, or burn out.

While not all coaching changes are a result of a bad breakup, the transition can leave current players in a state of confusion, frustration, and a loss of team identity. However, a constructive approach to coping with a coaching change is to address it as a new beginning. These new beginnings can bring a sense of excitement, anticipation, and team unity, referred to as the "honeymoon" stage.

During the "honeymoon" stage, the three Cs (closeness, co-orientation, and complementary) of the coach-athlete relationship should start to develop as the building blocks to a positive transition.

- **Closeness** refers to the bond described by the coach and athlete. In a positive relationship, *trust*, *liking*, and *respect* would be words that describe closeness.
- **Co-orientation** transpires when both parties have established common ground, such as mutual goals, values, and expectations.
- **Complementary** is a reflection of the coach and athletes' cooperation and interactions with each other. Maintaining open communication enhances overall satisfaction in the relationship.

Utilizing the three Cs to cultivate positive coach-athlete relationships at a time of change will increase performance achievements. Thus, coaches and players have greater satisfaction and feel more stable as a team. Team stability provides the mutual respect, trust, support, understanding, and clearly defined roles emphasized in a constructive coach-athlete relationship.

By understanding and implementing the three Cs, a strong foundation can be set for a successful coach-athlete relationship. This foundation is crucial to reducing coaching turnover and halting the coaching carousel.