

Player Burnout and Dropout

Mike Singleton, Director of Coaching for Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, started out explaining the affects of Burnout. Burnout is the emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. A player will show signs of negative responses to others and low self esteem. Players participate in soccer to have fun, to do something they are good at, stay in shape and improve their skills. The reasons they drop out is because they choose to participate in another activity, they lack the talent, it is no longer fun or they dislike the coach. 70-75% of all youth sport players quit by the age 16.

Burnout is caused by physical, social/interpersonal and psychological factors. A player might become injured, be over trained, overscheduled, have problems in personal life, experience a lack of development as a player, pressure to win. All of these factors can cause the game to no longer be fun. It is important to check in with players as a coach when they seem to be down in practice. Ask them, "How are you?" This does not imply that something is wrong with them, while showing that you care how they are doing.

Contributing factors to Burnout include coaching styles and parent-athlete relationships. A coach might put too much emphasis on winning, substitute whenever a player makes a mistake (telling the player that it is not okay to make mistakes) or make friendship conditional on performance. A parent might compare their own child to others, yell at all players from the sidelines or put extra stress on performances. These too can cause a game to no longer be fun for the player. Mike Singleton offered some cures to there Burnout factors: coaching environment and parent education. Coaches are to set short term and attainable goals, listen, let players have a say in practice, allow laughter, focus on player emotions and ask questions of players. Parents need to be informed of the coaches expectations, encouraged to keep open communication, involve them in practices, observe the interactions between parent and child, ask them why their child plays and let them know your concerns.

Lastly, Mike suggested that if a player seems to be experiencing burnout. Encourage them to take time off, whether it be selected days off or a short period. As a coach watch for this on your team. If you are tired the players are probably tired. TAKE TIME OFF. Maintain communication with the player during this period and discuss the situation with the parents. Most importantly, listen to your players problems.