

It's not all about the X's and O's
How to be a successful coach on and
off the pitch

Nebraska Coaches Association Clinic 2017

Jim Gardner

RELATIONSHIPS BUILD TRADITION

From the very beginning I knew that building relationships was the number one key to getting players to perform at their highest level. You will win more games with heart, passion and determination than you ever will with the X's and O's. You will be able to build a team that overcomes adversity, believes in character on and off the field, and play for each other rather than themselves. A wise coach once told me that the best way to build relationships is through open and honest communication. Not just by talking with players...each coach does that, but with nonverbal, written and media to cover all areas of communicating with players.

Some of the way's I use to build relationships are in no particular order and are as follows;

❖ A team motto or saying each year. For the past 25 years our teams at East High have a team saying that is printed on their t-shirts, and sweat shirts that helps to define the season. This helps set the tone for the season and defines the team. Sometimes the players are involved but mostly it is how I see the team being that year. Some of my favorites are.

“Win with humility and lose with grace” John Wooden

“It’s not all about winning it’s about winning it all” Jim Gardner

“Talent wins games, teamwork wins championships” Michael Jordan

“Talent sets the floor, character sets the ceiling” Bill Belichick

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“History has demonstrated that the most notable winner usually encounter heartbreaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats” B.C. Forbes

“We are the rock upon which they are broken” George Patton

“Failing to prepare is failing to prepare” Napoleon

“ Good is the enemy of great...be great! The biggest obstacle to being great is being good. Few people attain greatness because it is so easy to settle for being good enough” Jim Collins

“If there is not struggle there is no progress” Fredrick Douglas

“Vincint que se Vincint - He conquers, who conquers himself” Unknown

“All we expect is all you have” Jim Gardner

“ The harder the conflict the more glories the triumph. What we obtain to cheap, we esteem to lightly; it is dearness only that give everything its values. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow” Thomas Pain

“No let downs not excuses; championships are won one game at a time” Jim Gardner

❖ “If you don’t set goals for yourself, you are doomed to achieve the goals of someone else”

Brian Tracy

I have always been a believer in setting goals personally, individually and as a team. Goals do no good if they are not reviewed and looked at periodically. Each year I have all the players on the varsity, fill out a goal sheet and set their goals both individual and team for the season. They are due the before our first game and then I review them, write down common threads and go over them with each player. One of the hallmarks of setting goals is going over them on the long bus rides we have in Wyoming. Going over goals with 22 players takes time, and a four hour bus ride is a great way to visit about their goals and get to know my players better. Once we have gone over them at the beginning of the season, each player is expected to review their goals at least weekly, and we often ask them how they are doing in regards to accomplishing their goals. We also have a short mid-season meeting to review and revise goals if needed. We set team goals together with coaches and players. Winning so many games, conference championship, state championship, etc.

❖ I love a good joke and I think having a good sense of humor keeps the team close together and sometimes provides relief in tense situations. If you can't laugh at yourself it is hard to laugh with others. I have no problem being the butt of a joke or slightly embarrassing myself with miss pronounced Words or phrases, or even from time to time and odd looking face or behavior. It is fun to laugh with the team and build a culture where laughter helps build a trusting relationship with the players and team. Since I have been an elementary teacher for many years, many of my jokes are geared to that level and even though I get a lot of eye roles and "that was bad coach" I still get a smile every time.

What did the fish say when he ran into the wall....Dam.

What did the mother buffalo say to the baby buffalo when she dropped him off for school...By Son.

How do you catch a unique rabbit...Unique up on it.

❖ No matter who you are, how much success you have had, there are always those behind the scenes that are a large part of who you are and what you do to achieve success. For me the most important person is my wife Lisa. For 25 years team dinners have been a tradition... perhaps the strongest tradition, and for 25 years Lisa has been preparing team dinners at least once a week. We traditionally have spaghetti, but over the years it has grown to having something different almost every week, with the team's favorite being fried tacos. Each varsity player is assigned a food to bring and that helps with cost and with the preparation. It is fun to see the creativity of players and parents with fruit tray's and deserts each year. With my own family, dinner was the most important part of the day, and I believe having dinner with the team as a family before each game, has been a bedrock of our program. Dinner time lasts about a half an hour, and is for visiting, eating and laughter. Once dinner is over we have a pre-game meeting where we game plan for the next day's game, go over character building activities, watch game video and fill out the thunderbird evaluation sheet. Our team dinners are far more than dinners, and what we do during the pre-game meeting is a key component in our success.

❖ Not only do we work to build individual relationships, but we also work to build relationships as a team. One of the areas that I use to do that is through team captains. For many years I have used different methods to pick captains. Picking them myself based on character traits, having the team pick them and a combination of both. They all seem to work and I would also use a hand out with specific attributes of being a team captain to help them understand their responsibilities more. In most ways, I followed the traditional idea of what an how a team captain should behave and lead the team. Recently I have moved towards a leadership council where I have players picked from each grade and at large members too, with total of seven on the council. We meet once a week and work on the skills of leadership. This year we worked with John Wooden's pyramid of success and found it very encouraging and uplifting. We still have team captains for on the field duties, but now we have more players that represent the entire team and we are able to work on building leaders instead of picking them.

❖ Many years ago I had a few parents ask myself and my wife if we would like to go out to dinner after a game... and a new and long lasting tradition was born. It was never a question or a problem for me, and at the time the only answer I had was yes. Since then I have learned that many coaches do not believe in talking to parents once the parent meeting at the beginning of the year is over. For me building relationships with parents in turn helps me with my relationship with my players. To me it is a win-win, and I have found that by building relationships with parents, some of which have become my best friends, has alleviated the talking behind my back and mistrust that parents have of me as a coach. At least two or three times a year a group of parents will organize a place to meet for dinner, at home or a restaurant and we will all meet as a group to visit not only about the game, but any and all topics that come up. I have been coaching soccer for 25 years and when I first started the parents were a bit older than I was, but even after all these years I still have parents that are my age that have daughters playing on the team.

❖ Setting boundaries and communicating with parents at the beginning of the season at our parent player meeting, has helped tremendously to build relationship between myself and our parents. When you have the support and understanding of your parents, you will most likely have the understanding and support of your team. One of the worst things a coach can do, is have an adversarial relationship with parents. Remember they are in most cases the most influential people in your player's lives, and they can lift you up or tear you down, behind the scenes and out in the open. In our player parent meeting we go over many things like travel schedule, practice schedule, expectations, equipment, team philosophy, letter policy, travel rules, etc, but most importantly what the expectations are for them as a parent. I start by letting them know that if they believe there is something morally or ethically wrong that we are doing, or if their child is in danger in any way that it should be brought to our attention immediately. However, things such as playing time, formation, positions, who is on varsity or JV are off limits. If they believe that one of these issues must be discussed we will gladly set up a meeting with our athletic director and principal to discuss the issues.

❖ Probably the strongest tradition we have is our end of the year banquet and the team highlight video that brings the season together and puts it to bed. I believe the banquet is the most important part of the season and puts the finishing touches on the year and more importantly honors our seniors. I dedicate each year to our seniors and thank them for all they have done, which builds a tradition and knowledge that when a player at East high becomes a senior they will be honored no matter the successes or failures along the way. My father-in-law was a cable owner and operator when I started coaching over 30 years ago, and I gleaned a lot from him on how to put highlight videos together. I started doing them as an assistant wrestling coach, and continued when I became the head girls' soccer coach at East High. It is how I capture the season in a video capsule, it helps to build traditions and a culture of play that brings out many of the players strengths and how much fun we have during the season. It also helps me as a coach, as I go back and watch every game again and when I watch the team paly game after game in a short period of time, I gain many valuable insights into how the team plays, how I coach, what works and what needs to be fixed for next year. There has been many a late night candle burned, and hours of watching video and finding the right music, but the result is always a look back on a successful season. The order may change but I always include defensive play and goalkeeping. Tough physical play and funny falls. Great attacking plays and goals. Our practice in the wrestling room and fun things that happened during the year. I finish with a slide show to and video tribute to seniors and they each have a video clip where they talk about what East High soccer has meant to them.

❖ I use video in many ways throughout the season, to build relationships individually and with the team. Many years ago I was at an NSCAA convention and heard for the first time Bill Beswick speak. He was speaking about how he used video to help motivate both individual players as well as the entire English national team. From that moment on I have used video to help motivate and teach my players. The most common use is the breakdown of the game to show at our pre-game dinners. However, I use video during the season with individuals to help build their self-confidence, to help correct common mistakes and to motivate the team before regionals and state. Many times I use movie clips to get a theme across to motivate the team, but I also make my own videos as well. As the season comes to an end there is usually a theme that develops and I try to capture that with a compilation of season highlights, or maybe something like never give up, relentless or what is champion combined with clips of the season or clips I have from other sources.

❖ Faith has been a big factor in building relationships within the team and with players over the years. Many a time, we have had players lead prayers before games or before meals. This year a player from another team was hurt badly and the first thing our team did was get in a circle on the sideline and say a prayer for her, which led to both teams and a team watching in the stands, coming down and praying at midfield after the game.

❖ John Wooden is a big part of our team and our traditions. I think he is the greatest coach of all time and although I can never be like him, I try to pull as many things from him as I can. We spend time and pre-game dinners and before big games reading from his book “A lifetime of observations and reflection's on and off the court” The combination of humility, intensity, calmness, trust, faith, character and the concept of building young lives to me is what coaching is all about. When asked how if he thought the season was a success, John Wooden responded “Ill let you know in twenty years. The rewards you receive from players staying in touch and coming back to see you after they have become successful is far more rewarding then any win or state championship.

❖ What is your role on the team? Being a team is more than who starts the game, it is who comes off the bench, who sits on the bench and how people earn their way on to the bench. From my perspective everyone is as valuable to the team as the person they sit next to anytime anywhere. Everyone has a role to play from the best player to the player that practices more often than they play. I challenge each one of them to know their role and to perform their role to the best of their ability. If they are number one, then they had better play and behave like number one, and if they are number twenty two they had better play a supporting role and be ready when the opportunity presents itself. I came across a great article that a player shared with me a few years ago from Brian Peralta. It explains better than I ever can the role of a bench player and I have used her philosophy ever since.

Goal Setting Guidelines

Set specific goals in measurable and behavioral terms. Scoring 4 goal this season, playing well enough to be selected all state, increasing my defensive skill by practicing 10 minutes after practice every day, improving my communication skills by calling out my team mates name, working harder on my deception skills by practicing at home, are all specific measurable goals. Include a goal that describes what extra effort you will give to improve a player. Running extra sprints after practice, studying set plays at home, or watching game film, are some of the extras that make better players.

Set difficult but realistic goals. The more difficult the goal, the better the performance. However, this relationship is true only when the difficulty of the goal does not exceed the performer's ability.

Set short-range as well as long range goals. Short range goals allow you to see immediate improvements in performance and in this way can increase your motivation. Long range goals keep you focused on your ultimate objective for the end of the season.

Set goals for practice and competition. Setting goals that only relate to competition is a frequently made mistake. This does not mean that setting competitive performance goals are inappropriate; rather it suggests that practice goals should not be forgotten. Common practice goals may include starting practice on time, making five sincere positive statements to teammates during practice, running to and from all drills and achieving various performance standards.

Set POSITIVE goals as opposed to negative goals. Goals can be stated in either positive (e.g. increase the percentage of good shots on goal) or negative terms (e.g. decrease the percentage of bad shots on goal). This positive goal setting procedure helps you focus on success instead of failure.

Identifying target dates for attaining goals. Target dates will help motivate you by reminding you of the urgency of accomplishing your objectives in realistic lengths of time.

Record goals once they have been identified. Over the course of the season it is easy to sometimes forget the goals you have set. That is why there is a goal setting sheet in our program. Put your goals in your locker, tape them to your mirror, put them in a place to remind you throughout the season.

Provide for goals. Your goal setting program will not succeed unless it is supported by those who are important in our life. This would typically include your family, your teammates, your coaches and any other people who will support you during the season.

Goal Sheet

1. Identify specific goal(s) – What extra effort will you give?
 - Short range goals –

 - Long range goals –

 - Extra effort –
2. Set Deadlines
3. List obstacles that might get in the way of accomplishing your goals.
4. Identify people that will help support your in accomplishing your goals.
5. List the skills you will need to achieve your goals.
6. the benefits of achieving your goals.

Team leadership council – Team Captain Representatives.

Characteristics of a team leader

- Competitive, Caring, Courageous.
- Honest and trustworthy
- Of high character.
- Able to communicate with all levels of players and coaches.
- Willing to put team ahead of me.
- Loves practice as much as the games
- Listens, is coachable and shows respect for team mates.
- Not afraid to make mistakes, but learns from them.
- Hard worker.
- Stays away from and hates drama.
- Hold themselves and other accountable.

How to elect our team leadership council.

- Vote for no more than seven players.
- Do not vote for same player more than once.
- Vote for at least one player from each class.
- Remaining three votes may go to any player.

1. Freshmen representative _____

2. Sophomore representative _____

3. Junior representative _____

4. Senior representative _____

5. At Lare representative _____

6. At large representative _____

7. At large representative _____

Parent/Player Meeting 2017- Agenda

Please take a packet and fill out name, address, phone and email list.

- Welcome and introduction of coaches.
- Program history and 2016 expectations.
 - Talent Sets the Floor, Character Sets the Ceiling
- Practice Starts March 16, 3:45 – 6:00 p.m. Practice is mandatory.
- Practice will be at East fields. We will rotate from turf to grass field.
- Must have a physical. No one is allowed to practice without a physical.
- Must have nine practices before you can play in first competition.
- Players must be academically eligible to play.
- Be prepared! Warm Clothes in lockers for cold weather and indoor shoes available at all times. We will have lockers available at Okie Blanchard stadium.
- Need Water bottles at every practice.
- You will need to provide shin guards and cleats.
- Each player is responsible for all equipment checked out including a ball.
- Discipline – drawing cards.
- Referees
- Rumors/Drama
- Fitness is Important and will be stressed, especially in pre-season.
- Schedule – Spring Break
- Communication: Want to hear about problems that affect your child's ability to perform, or that are potentially dangerous to your child's health. If something is morally or ethically wrong please let us know! What we do not want to hear about are things like playing time, positions, and who travels.
- Travel procedures. First meal out. Riding with parents only. Leave together, come home together
- Pre-game meals.
- Team expectations
- Letter policy
- Team gear – fill out order form and
- Concessions.

East High Thunderbirds Program Philosophy

Talent Wins Games Teamwork wins Championships!

We believe that the East High School program will be a positive, competitive and exciting experience for everyone involved. As a coaching staff, we will always expect that you do your best, and put in the effort that is required to be a championship team. Successful programs are a direct result of their athletes learning to give their best efforts, and success cannot be measured in win/loss records, but rather in doing the most with what you have. The commitment to excel must not only be displayed on the soccer field, but in the athlete's academics and off the field activities as well. Soccer is the ultimate team sport and the concept of being a team will strongly be stressed. Athletes will learn that individual sacrifices must be made and individual glory must be given up for the team to be successful. Players must be unselfish and put the team before themselves. Respect for fellow athletes is a necessity for a successful program. Athletes must be well disciplined to have a successful program. We have high expectations of all athletes in our program and expect them to be responsible for their actions. We will pride ourselves in becoming a class program with class athletes.

“Win with humility, lose with grace.”

Thunderbird Program Goals

1. To help each of the athletes involved in the program become the best soccer player she can be.
2. To develop strong TEAM PLAYERS.
3. To develop athletes who demonstrate a strong understanding of what it means to be a disciplined, dedicated, responsible young adult.
1. To demonstrate through hard work and sacrifice that real enjoyment can be obtained with the payoff being, the satisfaction of knowing you have done your best for them.
5. To provide each athlete an opportunity to enjoy playing competitive soccer.
6. To help realize their own potential and understand that each athlete is different, and capable of various levels of play,

“Life’s greatest rewards come as a result of hard work and effort.”

**EAST HIGH SCHOOL
THUNDERBIRD SOCCER TEAM CONCEPTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

1. *PHYSICAL PRACTICE:* There is no substitute for hard work in this program. It is our intent that players participating in this program will understand the value of hard work in achieving goals. Giving the **extra** effort will give us the competitive edge over our opponents.
2. *MENTAL PRACTICE:* Hard work, good technique and desire are only a part of what it takes to achieve success. The **mental edge** is needed. Improved confidence in relaxed concentration is the key. We will work on our mental skills so that we can develop a mental attitude that will give us the **edge**.
3. *CLASS AND SPORTSMANSHIP:* It will be expected that all players in this program will **show the utmost respect for official, opponents, teammates, coaches, facilities, and equipment**. We are representing not only our soccer program, but our school and community as well. We want to project a positive image through our actions both on and off the soccer field. We will avoid showing disgust over an official's call, talking back to officials or opponents, or any other action that might injure our integrity as a team. We hope our conduct will reflect a class organization one we can be proud of.
4. *PLAYER/COACH RELATIONSHIP:* **"When the eagles are silent the parrots begin to jabber"**. Communication is vital to a healthy relationship between players and coaches. The coaches have a great deal of interest in every team member. We will attempt to constantly let players know where they stand in the program and what they need to do to improve. This will hopefully eliminate guessing and misunderstanding, for the players. As coaches we will be interested in each players development not only athletically, but academically as well. Creating a positive atmosphere on our team is a task we will perform to enhance open communication. It is our hope that the players will feel free to talk to us at any time about any questions that they might have.
5. **"Success is simply a matter of luck. Ask any failure."** Being an athlete on this team means more than just showing up to practice and following training rules. An athlete **must give the extra effort** in terms of physical and mental practice. Making yourself a better player means a better team. We are only as strong as our weakest player, do extra to be the best you can be.
6. **"Losers visualize the penalties of failure. Winners visualize the rewards of success."** An athlete must be prepared for anything during a game. Top physical conditioning will beat an opponent more times than ot. Players must take on hard conditioning during a practice as a challenge not a chore. Our goal, is to be the best conditioned athletes in the state.

**EAST HIGH SCHOOL
THUNDERBIRD SOCCER PRACTICE RULES & ECPECTATIONS**

1. **LOMBARDI TIME** for all practices - on the field five minutes before practice begins. Using this time for warm up or improvement of skill.
2. When on the field you are thinking of soccer. Keeping your focus will improve the intensity of practice.
3. Everyone is involved in practice during drills, either performing the drill, shagging or feeding the ball. No one should be standing and visiting.
A GOOD TEAM PLAYER HELP'S OUT TEAMMATES.
4. We make mistakes - **WE NEVER MAKE EXCUSES.**
5. **YOU MUST PLAY EVERY BALL** - A ball should never beat you without you an effort to keep it in play.
6. We feel that skill improvement does not take place during a match, it is during *practice* where you improve your skill. Since your spot on the playing field is earned during practice, you should strive to be a better player when you step off the practice field than when you stepped on.
7. Fundamentals must be sound if you are to become a god soccer player, and we are to become a good **SOCCER TEAM**. Bad habits will not be tolerated and as coaches we will work hard to help you break them. Do not take our persistent reminders as getting down on you as a player, but rather helping you to rememberhow to do the skill right.
8. As a **TEAM** member you must be able to work with anyone on the **TEAM**, therefore, make sure you do drills with all members of the **TEAM**. Choose different partners regularly, building a united **TEAM** begins with you.

THUNDERBIRD AWARDS (LETTER)

1. Each Soccer player must remain out for the entire season.
2. If you have a varsity letter earned and become injured, you must still attend all practices, even if you cannot participate. You are also required to attend all treatment and rehabilitation sessions set up by the coaching staff and or trainer.

1. Provide a positive contribution to the TEAM and East High as determined by the coaching staff.

1. A varsity letter can be earned by obtaining 180 points, or by being recommended by the coaching staff.

- 2 points will be awarded for an effective practice. (only 1 point if tardy)
- 10 points maximum by be earned for each Varsity game.
- 5 points maximum may be earned for each Junior Varsity game.
- 2 points awarded for JV players suiting up for a Varsity game.

ABOVE AND BEYOND - Extra points to be earned

- 20 points for a verified summer weight lifting program.
- 20 points for attending a soccer camp during the summer.
- 10 points for finishing another school sport, club soccer or for a verified lifting program each season.
- 10 points for a 2.5 GPA
- 15 points for a 3.0 GPA
- 20 points for a 3.5 GPA
- 25 points for a 4.0 GPA

❖ Letters will be awarded at the end of the season awards banquet. All athletes must be present at the banquet to receive their letter unless excused by the head coach. Failure to attend the ceremony without notifying the coach prior to the ceremony will result in the athlete not completing the season in good standing. Therefore no letter.

❖ The women's East High Soccer program takes the school athletic code very seriously. We strongly suggest that before signing the school athletic code, you read it very carefully. Any women's soccer player that violates the school athletic code will not be nominated for post season awards.
(All-Conference, All-State or All star game)

East High Post Game Evaluation

How do you feel about today's performance?

If you could play the game over, what would you have done the same? (List both skills & behavior)

If you could play the game over, what would you have done differently? (List both skills & behavior)

After playing and observing the game, what do you think the team could have done differently?

Eight Things I Learned From Sitting the Bench

Because nobody talks about sitting out of the game.

Brianna Peralta

Let's face it: as an athlete, the bench is the last place you want to end up on game day. You have that burning desire to just be on the field where the action happens, but the odds are you will at one point or another be on the bench. As someone who knows what it feels like to be in that position, here are the top eight things that I have learned while sitting on the bench:

1. You have to work a lot harder than the player that's starting.

The truth of it is that the starter is out there for a reason and if you want to be out there, then you have to prove that you want to be there. Sometime that means taking a few extra reps after practice, or asking coach to work with you to get it right. Putting in the extra time will only help you

2. You learn how to be mentally tough.

There may be a time when all of the subs get put in except you, there may be a time during practice that you can't do anything right, there may be a time where you don't feel 100 percent. You will hate yourself for making that error three games ago, you will ask yourself is it even worth it anymore. Whether you know it or not, every hurdle you overcome in that state of mind is mentally building yourself up and in the end, you know that it is worth the blood, sweat and tears because you love the game.

3. You learn how to be the best support system for your team.

On game day, you will be the biggest fan section as well as the loudest. You will cheer them on when they are winning as well as pick them up when they are losing. It is your job to make sure your team is up at all times and in the game.

4. You learn how not to act.

Being on the sidelines you get to observe how everyone playing reacts to different situations. You see the girl who has an attitude and that struck out and is now throwing various object around. You know how bad that looks. Don't be that athlete.

5. You Learn how to be Patient.

I know they say that patience is a virtue, but in the game, it is a major key. Now I know what you're thinking. Slow down...what do you mean "be patient?" What I mean is that you can't hope and pray that girl playing your position makes an error just so you can make a snarky comment about how you can do better than that. You will play eventually, I promise you, but not with those comments.

6. You will get your opportunity to play and you will have nothing to lose.

This is it. This is your shot to play, and when you go in, it will be glorious, because in that moment, you get a chance to prove that you can do it. All the practices you actively participated in and all the time you spent watching and learning from the other girls who are getting the playing time finally paid off. Just know that you have nothing to lose if you mess up, so play with no regrets.

7. You Learn to enjoy the time your there.

You only have a couple of years left to play this sport that you love and when your older, you are not going to remember the games you did or didn't play. You are going to remember the times where you made a team effort to reach and achieve a goal. Like that time you beat your rival in the last minute, or the time you won the state championship. Celebrate team success and don't dwell on the time you didn't play, because you may regret it later.

8. You are still a vital member of the team.

I know it may not seem like it in the moment, but your role on the team is still extremely important. Bench players, on top of the cheering and support, are constantly running around doing a lot of behind the scenes work. You are just as important to your team as the girl out there playing, just in a different way.

So if you're on the bench now, know that no, the world is not going to end because you aren't in the game but, this is your opportunity to play a different role on your team. Hang in there because you will get your shot, but for now go forth and play your role.

