

## **PLAYER MEETINGS & EVALUATIONS: From Roger**

### **Purpose of Feedback:**

1. Begin a conversation and dialogue.
2. Objective is for person to desire to improve - build a growth mindset in the person.
3. Objective is for person to develop a pathway towards improvement.
4. Goal is for evaluator and person to learn more about each other in the end.
5. Purpose of feedback is to deepen relational equity between player & coach.
6. Successful feedback engages both coach and player in the "process" of growth, positive change, and improvement.

### **How to Manage an Evaluation:**

1. Try to think of yourself and how you respond best to feedback. Then consider your background, generation, and relative experience. Now consider the kid you are evaluating.
2. Try to avoid "you need to" or "you have to" commentary. Good practice when speaking verbally too :)
3. The best and masterclass coaches, Bill Belichick, John Wooden, Joe Erhmann, Brad Stevens, Becky Burleigh - use "suggestions". "I suggest you consider working on your left foot."
4. Build buy in by allowing participation. Create questions. "What do you believe is your best attribute as a player?"
5. Be vulnerable and you'll learn more. "What would make our team better?" "How can I coach you better?"
6. Follow up. The evaluation cannot be "the end" or it should not be the beginning. Be sure to follow up with player (and parent) response, feedback, conversation.
7. Remind each player you may be wrong :). Remind people that others do NOT DEFINE YOU. The scores on a sheet of paper are not your final definition as a soccer player.
8. Follow up. Again, make certain that the player is engaged in an improvement process. Don't accept that "they don't care". This is weak leadership (sorry if I offended but tis a truth). A player does not care - is your WHY. Find out what is at the root of that lack of care.

## **MY MOST RECENT PLAYER FEEDBACK PROCESS:**

**Culture Setting:** Green Light (means acceptance of failure, no tolerance for less than maximal effort).

**Negotiables:** Rules, Goals, Expectations, Style of Play, Schedule, What We Eat, Etc..

### **Non Negotiables:**

Maximal Effort

Grateful Heart Spurred by Honoring Your Creator

Team First – Always (includes the “Team Covenant”)

## **A LOOK INSIDE MY FEEDBACK MECHANISM:**

After years of doing player evaluations this past season I followed this protocol - it's far from perfect and it's only "my authentic". You have to be "your authentic". I share this to help you understand my perspective, possibly to help you shape your feedback mechanism, which is crucial to any leadership model.

## **THE PLAYER MEETING**

**Setting the Scene:** Player arrives at a time previously scheduled. If my other staff teammates have left me a chair nearby, I sit in a chair near the player (not from behind my desk). I don't like my desk (or desks in general) so this is preferred. This may apply to your approach w/ the eval. If you approach feedback as the “distant, above you” *expert*, or as the “*partner*” in the process, it can change how the player responds. Think on it :)

### **I give player the objectives of the feedback:**

**1. We are going to try to reach an agreement today on one improvement code that will best transform you as a player.** This will be the focus. We may disagree on our way there, and the objective is to debate it out and reach an agreement. (Note: Our improvement codes do not have to be soccer (we are development program, and character & person > player; So for example, one team member is working on how she “receives information” from others, several of the agreements became “non-soccer”).

**2. You will tell us what can make ORU soccer better.** You can be honest. You cannot be disrespectful, call names, or cuss. We (coaching staff) can agree or disagree, but we promise to listen and write down your suggestions (one of our staff takes notes - even if illegible).

**3. You will tell us today who you think would be excellent captains for next year.** (if we are in mid-season - *you will tell us today what the captains are doing well*, and one area they are falling short).

**OPENING:** I open the feedback with the following statement (changes per player): "Player XYZ, this season may have been XYZ.... Is that true? (normally player is scared and agrees w/ the coach so then next...). WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME HOW THE SEASON WENT FOR YOU PERSONALLY FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE. TELL ME YOUR STORY.

I coach girls. This often takes a good deal of listening. And normally tissue. I have learned the value in "listening more". **I have "listening more" as my own improvement code.**

Furthermore, we can only play 20 games. Our roster has 40-45 players.

85% of our team roster is "superbly unhappy" with their playing time.

10% of our team roster is "content" with their playing time.

5% of our team roster is "happy" with their playing time.

This is per a survey our team completed in February. So "real data" above.

I then try to shift focus from "outcome" and "results" to "process".

Today I have 24 different "improvement codes" for 29 different players stored in my phone. Players made what was called a "line in sand commitment" to work inside a *process* with an objective in mind that they "*agreed to*". (HINT: There's buy-in because of the agreement, except for the players who lied – some players lie – their dishonesty will render the process false, and will become the next lesson at the next meeting – I expect 100% of the players who were honest to sincerely work inside the process for the next 5 months).

I coached 29 players this Spring at ORU. 5 Players have yet to commit to this process (at the time we last met which is now 3 weeks ago).

They also made a "commitment promise" to engage in the "process" knowing the **outcome** may **not** be achieved.

They were given "permission" to not agree to commit. And they were told as part of their agreement that I would be able to remind, to the point of nagging, them about their "process" until August 1. I must now follow through. It's a "line in the sand" commitment for the coach as well.

Those that have agreed, even today, virtually, check-in 6 days per week and let the staff know if they did anything to work on their "commitment objective". They are reportedly honestly.

### **The hallmarks of this FEEDBACK EVALUATION IN REVIEW:**

- 1. Player Participates**
- 2. Agreement is Reached**
- 3. Honest Debate is Required**
- 4. Hurt Feelings are Allowed** – But hurting each other is not

5. **Commitment is “Line in the Sand”** – no “lukewarm” commitments

(any player using the word “I’ll try” or “I’ll probably” is immediately told that I will not abide by their agreement – 18 players did this – all 18 players had 2 weeks to reconfirm if they “really” wanted to “commit”. Some tried to commit the next day – I did not accept that commitment. I required the player to consider their commitment sincerely, for 2 weeks. I’ll find out next winter if this was a useful strategy).

6. **Permission** – players have permission to “not commit”. Again, we use a “green light” culture mode of being “team”. Green Light gives players the “right” and “freedom” to decide (in games this means they make the decision – not the coach, off the field – they make the decision – not the coach. The only things that are non-negotiable – see above – the top 3)

7. **Engaging in Process** is the real desired outcome (not a better left foot, or faster defender).

8. **Process Changes Us** – Our staff understands that engaging in a process of work, sacrifice, effort, will change us, even we don’t reach the goal. The kids I coach don’t completely understand that. That’s OK.

9. **Celebrate** – if the player genuinely participates in the process I’ve learned various ways to understand if this happened. By the way, none are related to the actual outcome. Some players work VERY HARD – never improve the “improvement code”. So they may spend all summer training on their left foot – and it’s still really bad ☺

Others work very little, and naturally evolve towards an improved player. I don’t celebrate that. I’m happy for it towards the objective of our team so far always sharing the goal to win.

The past 3 years, I simply told players, silently and discreetly, “I’m proud of you” when I understood they’d engaged in the process. How I knew. Insight comes from places we don’t always understand. And I’m convinced it requires humility and a deference to a larger Spirit.

**SIDENOTE:** We don’t usually agree to have college players train their weak foot. We normally ask them “do you think you can make that better now?” It’s a leading question. Trying to get their “agreement” to focus on something else.. So please – if your training younger players, if you want them to be two-footed, I believe you only have a small window ☺