Planning and Leading Sports Activities

Introduction

A good sports leader can direct certain sporting situations or sports sessions to help guide and motivate groups of people on skills, regulations and health and safety for example. Sports leadership is how a sports leader achieves their aims of a session or competition.

Successful sports leaders combine good performance and leadership skills. This helps achieve both personal and team goals. Sports leaders possess common factors as well as specific skills and qualities that make them successful in sporting situations. A good sports leader will show leadership qualities through their planning, delivery and evaluation of each sports session.

This unit looks at ways you can prepare for leading a group in a practical sports session. It suggests ways to improve your delivery and looks at how you can evaluate your own performance as a leader once the session has finished.
How you will be assessed

This unit will be assessed by an internal assignment that will be set and marked by the staff at your centre. It may be sampled as well by your centre’s External Verifier as part of Edexcel’s on-going quality procedures. The assignment is designed to allow you to show your understanding of the unit outcomes. These relate to what you should be able to do after completing this unit.

Your assessment could be in the form of:

- video recorded presentations
- case studies
- role plays
- written assignments.

After completing this unit you should be able to achieve the following learning outcomes.

1 Understand the skills, qualities and responsibilities associated with successful sports leadership.
2 Be able to plan and lead an activity session.
3 Be able to review your planning and leadership of sports activities.
4 Be able to assist in the planning and leading of a sports event.
5 Be able to review your planning and leadership of sports events.
5.1 Understand the skills, qualities and responsibilities associated with successful sports leadership

All sports require leaders. Good sports leaders inspire and encourage the team at vital moments in a game and provide a good role model. As an effective sports leader, it is part of your role to develop the performance of each individual in the group. It is also important to encourage cohesion, so that your group of individuals works well as a team.

**Skills**

People who develop and encourage sports at grass roots level, helping coaches and teams, are also sports leaders in their own right. The role of these sports leaders is to develop and encourage young people and adults to participate, and continue to participate in all types of sports. Sports leaders need to possess certain skills to help in leading groups:

- Communication – leaders need to be able to communicate in a variety of ways
- Evaluating each session
- Organising equipment
- Using language so that the group can relate to the leader and understand what it is that is being asked
- Knowledge of the sport
- Target setting
- Structuring activities

**Communication**

If you can communicate at various levels you will be able to bridge the gap between players, other coaches, the opposition and officials. You can communicate:

- using verbal language
Communication skills are essential for any leader to have, develop and use. A sports leader must have a clear voice and a command over the language that dominates the performers in the sport being delivered. Many people are chosen to be a captain or a coach in their sport due to their experience as a player at a very high level. However, although they may have an excellent understanding of the sport, if they cannot communicate effectively they will not be able to pass this knowledge on.

Delivering information effectively is important, but to do this, you must also listen. Listening carefully to performers as they acquire skills may help you to improve the performance of the player. Listening to performers’ experiences of playing may clarify areas of difficulty that you, as a leader, may not be able to see. Communication is a two-way process for the improvement of performance.

- using non-verbal language, such as facial expressions and bodily gestures
- by listening.

**Key points**

Effective communication skills are essential to:

- pass on information about what players must do for each skill
- use appropriate language to direct players to improve performance
- provide further information that helps the organisation of the sport to run smoothly off the training or playing ground.
**Organisation of equipment**

Organisational skills are essential to the sports leader. As a sports leader or member of a coaching team, it will be your responsibility to organise:

- each training session (including facilities and equipment)
- competitions
- paperwork, which may be essential if performers are to compete
- health and safety
- the evaluation of each meeting for the performer and their parents.

**Knowledge**

A good sports leader should have detailed knowledge of the sport that they are involved in. This will help in guiding others through the sport when they experience various situations, whether it be as a sports leader who is performing alongside other players or as a sports leader who guides through coaching.

It is essential that you master the tactical and technical aspects of the sport being delivered, these include:

- a good understanding of its laws and rules
- sport specific knowledge
- knowledge of basic fitness training and health and safety issues
- knowledge of current first aid techniques, and if possible an up-to-date qualification
- basic knowledge of the care and prevention of sports injuries.

As more coaching experience is gained, a personal ‘knowledge bank’ is created. This will help when making decisions. Playing experience is also important – it will give you, as a sports leader, a vision for the game or sport that cannot be taught in a classroom environment. As a performer, you have an understanding of what it is like to be a player and what it is like to be coached – in other words, you will be able to put yourself into another performer’s shoes.
Activity structure
It is obvious that some of the knowledge you will need as a sports leader will be gained through experience. This experience can be specific to the sport, or may be gained through coaching and leading other groups. Some elements of coaching remain the same in any sport for example, planning, preparation, organisation, evaluation and review of the session or programme.

Target setting
It is very important that a leader sets targets that the team or an individual can follow. This should be done in conjunction with the individuals involved, for example, the performer, the coach, the captain, and possibly parents for performers that are under sixteen years of age. These targets should be designed so that they challenge the performer in a realistic manner. They should be aimed at the correct level of the performer or the team, be either specific to the sport, position or the competition. Targets should also have a purpose, such as to improve performance.

Use of language
Effective leaders are usually confident and this can be seen through the language they use. Language can influence how a performer behaves.

Language is a positive tool, and if used well can help:
- demonstrate respect for performers
- develop an understanding of what is being set
- expand the knowledge of the sport
- explain rules and regulations for a sport or organisation/club
- increase self-esteem of others in the group
- show the value of others.

The language should be appropriate for the group, as inappropriate language could offend. The level of the language used should also be set at the appropriate level for the group. For example, it should not be too technical for a group of beginners in a sport, but neither should it be aimed at a level that the group, team or individual feels that they can not understand. The use of appropriate language can enable performers to understand their role.

Evaluation of each session
A good leader always evaluates a session that he or she has led. The evaluation of a session helps to highlight what was successful about the session as well as what was weak.

The evaluation should be carried out soon after the session has been completed so that essential information is not lost for the planning of the following session. All information, whether good or bad, should be used to help the success of the next session. (The evaluation of each session is discussed later in this unit.)
Think about it

Get together with other members of your group. Can you think of an occasion when:

- you had to change your plans when you were leading a session
- you attended a session where the leader had to change his or her plans?

1. Discuss your experiences.
2. Why were the plans changed?
3. How were they changed?
4. Did the changed plan work? If not, why not?

Qualities

A good standard of appearance will gain you the respect of the group. However, it is essential to wear appropriate clothing for the activity that you are involved in, to ensure that you are safe. Wearing baggy clothes or large jewellery that could hinder your movements can be a hazard in some sports. Your appearance as a sports leader is not only dependent on what you are wearing but how you present yourself to your group. For example you need to show your confidence without being a show-off.

Leadership styles

The way you approach specific tasks will determine how effective you are as a leader. Such tasks include planning your activity, delivering it and providing opportunities for feedback. Your success as a sports leader will be measured in terms of your team members achieving a set goal.
Leaders in sport all have different styles. These styles vary because of the personality of the leaders and also because of the demands and requirements of the sport.

There are many different ways that sports leaders can be effective and successful. Different types of leader suit different situations. The table below lists some of the factors that you need to consider when you lead a team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What needs to be done?</td>
<td>How do the group interact as a team?</td>
<td>How are the needs of each individual being met?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does your team benefit from your leadership style?</td>
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Three leadership styles have been identified: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership style</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Does not involve others in the decision making process. Task oriented rather than team oriented</td>
<td>Decision making can be carried out quickly. Effective in team sports with large numbers.</td>
<td>Task becomes leader centred rather than performer centred. May not bring out full potential of individual team members. Can be very inflexible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Involves others in the decision making process. Is interested in the team members as individuals, developing close personal relationships</td>
<td>Less formal approach to leading a team. Team members more likely to develop</td>
<td>Decision making is time consuming, and may not be quick enough under pressure. Problems may occur in teams of large numbers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>Acts as a consultant rather than a decision maker – the initiative is left to others</td>
<td>Flexible approach. Encourages others to take the initiative</td>
<td>Lack of structure to the task. Lack of direction or co-ordination. Risk of poor decision making</td>
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Personality

Sports leaders are usually confident in their approach to the sport that they are involved in. They are also confident about organising others and giving advice and guidance.

Introvert and extrovert personality types

Personalities fall into two categories, extrovert and introvert (for a description of these two personality types, see Unit 4 Preparation for Sport, page 199). There is a strong link between an individual’s personality type and the type of sport he or she is attracted to. Extrovert personalities are often found in team-based sports, where situations are unpredictable and can change quickly. Introvert personalities tend to be found in sports that require low levels of stimulation but require high levels of accuracy in delivery. (This does not mean, however, that introverts only participate in individual sports and extroverts only stay in team game sports.)

Your personality type can be a key factor to success as a sports leader. Your leadership style will be determined by the type of personality you possess – you are likely to lead in a way that suits your personality type. Additionally, the personality types of the individuals you are leading will influence your leadership style.
To be a good team leader, you need to be positive. Leaders need to motivate their teams and a positive approach is the best way to achieve this. Team members feel more comfortable with a leader who is easy to get along with and pleasant to be around. A sense of humour can help to keep players interested and focused during practice sessions and matches. It also helps to ease the tension that can arise from intense sports sessions.

As a sports leader, part of your role will be to impart knowledge and advice to team members. In order to do this, you need to have a positive relationship with your team mates. You also need to be positive about the area of delivery you are commenting upon but remember that this does not mean only offering positive comments. The team will not be able to improve if you concentrate only on their strengths and neglect to highlight weaknesses. Such comments can be put in a positive way, by giving constructive advice and offering solutions.

A further role of a sports leader is to help other performers to achieve their goals. You can directly influence a team member’s performance by discussing it with them. You can also influence performance by being a role model or inspiration in their sport. For example, Pelé (in football) and Steve Redgrave (in rowing) were the world’s best in their sports. Each continues to be an ambassador for his sport, showing great commitment and the positive attitude that is required for all sports.

Leaders can be chosen either by the management structure of the club or by the players and are usually the captain of the team. However, other senior players within the team can also be leaders. For example, Martin Corry was the captain of the English rugby team in the Six Nations in 2006, but the selection of experienced players such as Lawrence Dallaglio and Matt Dawson provided good support, advice and leadership to help Martin Corry.

Remember that as a captain of a team you can be influential as a leader but this may only be on the playing field and not in the area of planning and delivery of a sports session.

**Enthusiasm, motivation, humour, confidence**

Being enthusiastic and motivated is contagious! These qualities rub off on sports performers, other leaders, members of the coaching team and spectators. The coach or sports leader often creates the ‘spark’ that keeps the team members moving and creative. Motivating performers can be very difficult at times but there are a number of ways sports leaders can help this process.

Some of the ways that performers can be motivated are:

- setting challenging but realistic goals for individuals and the team
- measuring targets, so that performers know their achievements
- rewarding performers for their hard work in training and competition
- providing useful feedback at the appropriate times.
A good sports leader will enable a session to have time for laughter. Learning should be a joyful experience and having a good sense of humour is essential. You should create an atmosphere where individuals should be willing to look at their performance and not fear their mistakes. However, it is vitally important not to ridicule any group member or encourage others to do so. Having fun should never be at the expense of a performer’s mistakes!

Confidence is important so that the participants trust in what is being said and what they have been asked to do.

Think about it

In pairs, discuss the sports leaders you have come into contact with.

1. Who have you most admired?
2. Why?
3. With your partner, list the qualities that you think make a strong leader.
4. State why you have listed these qualities for a good leader.

Key point

Some of the key factors to success as a sports leader are:
- the ability to communicate
- a positive attitude
- enthusiasm
- concern for others
- good sense of humour.

Responsibilities

Professional conduct

A sports leader will agree to a series of statements that outline the do’s and don’ts of behaviour during a training session. These do’s and don’ts will be set for all in the group but the sports leader will be expected to follow and reinforce them with experienced performers and newcomers. Examples of professional conduct could be sporting ethics or respecting the rules and regulations of their sport and club.
Health and safety

If sports leaders are to take responsibility for a training session then they are also taking responsibility for the group during that time. They should carry out the necessary checks of the equipment and facility to ensure that all performers are safe during physical activity.

Check equipment at three stages.

1. Before it is set up.
2. Once it has been assembled.
3. Just before it is used.

Check for the following.

1. Damage to the working parts of the equipment.
2. Missing parts of the equipment that could cause damage.
3. Lack of function.

Any damage that you note must be reported immediately. Repair should only be carried out according to the manufacturer’s guidelines, or by a qualified technician. If this is not possible, the equipment must be removed from use.

Insurance

Sports leaders must possess the necessary insurance to participate in a sport as well as lead a training session. Insurance is there to protect both leaders and participants in sport.
Legal obligations

There are various legal requirements which you, as a sports leader, are required to know about. You also have a responsibility to take steps to enforce the legislation. The legislation is found in various Acts passed by Parliament, to ensure the safety of groups of individuals undertaking physical activity.

Child protection

Child protection is becoming an increasing concern for all areas of physical activity. Children need to be protected and clubs have a duty to ensure that policies and training are put in place to encourage this safety. It is recommended that all leaders in the majority of sports carry out sports specific child protection workshops to be fully aware of the issues surrounding coaching and leading performers under the age of 18 years.

Children's Act 1989

This Act concerns any provision of leisure, recreation and play services for children. It affects planning, delivery and management of these services. The Children Act enforces duties that must be carried out by the service providers. These duties include:

- providing care services and supervised activities for children
- publishing adequate information about these services
- reviewing and monitoring these services and consulting with the appropriate bodies (i.e. those bodies that deal with the protection of children)
- ensuring that registration is completed for all day care and supervised activities for children under the age of eight years.

Before a service can be registered, the suitability of the organisation, all its employees and its premises need to be assessed. Organisations can seek help from the Child Protection Unit of the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM). This organisation provides practical recommendations for service providers for children.

Data Protection Act 1998

Any business or organisation that holds personal information or details on staff or individuals using its facilities may be required to register with the Data Protection Registrar. The Data Protection Registrar places the business or the organisation on a public register of data users. It also issues the organisation with a code of practice, which must be adhered to. The code of practice states that:

- information must be kept in a secure location
- information must be accurate and relevant to the needs of the organisation
- if information is requested by an individual about his or her details it must be supplied.
Activity Centre Act (Young Person’s Safety Act) 1995
This Act requires that all facilities providing adventure activities for children under the age of 18 years have a licence. The Act applies to facilities run by local authorities and commercial businesses. It sets strict guidelines about:

- the qualifications staff should hold
- operating procedures and emergency procedures
- appropriate ratio of staff to children participating in any activity.

The licence aims to give assurance that good and safe practice is followed by the organisation holding it. This has had two beneficial results.

- Facilities of this type have gained a good reputation.
- There are now greater opportunities for young people to experience adventure activities.

Equality
All performers are different and each has a variety of needs. However, whatever differences that performers come with they should have the same opportunities to develop and improve in sport. Therefore sports leaders should be working in clubs without prejudice and to eliminate discrimination.