

Managing Changing Behaviour

Tilbury Football Club are a Family Club, which has built a reputation based upon inclusion and development of its players, coaches, staff and its Management team both on and off the pitch.

We know football can be an emotional game. Everyone likes to win. And sometimes people can get lost chasing that result. But it's incredibly important to keep your emotions in check.

The Club will create a good, safe and inclusive environment

- Be supportive of our players'
- Engage with our Spectators
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Role modelling good behaviour is key to all of that. After all, how you behave affects your team.

If you're not in control of your emotions, you may see your team mirroring your actions. Shouting, moaning and showing other poor behaviour can also take the fun away from the players. It can make them feel under pressure. If they aren't enjoying it, they might not want to return. And if that happens, how can we help them fall in love with the game?

Being calm, composed and in control of your emotions improves everyone's enjoyment of the game. And that means yours, too. It also allows you to think and observe effectively, allowing you to offer support and praise when necessary.

1. Create a club language

Kids need to understand what the expectations are at your club. Merfyn suggests using language like, "when you're training with us on a Saturday morning, this is what we do...". Or, "when you're wearing the club badge, we expect...". This gives your players a consistent framework.

2. Recognise that better sessions mean fewer problems

Giving your players ownership will make them more invested in your sessions – and less likely to behave poorly. Start with small steps like asking the kids to work out who will play where or giving them 30 seconds to discuss tactics. When your team feel part of a practice, they're less likely to act up.

3. Follow consistent coaching routines

Having a routine creates an excellent learning framework for your team. Make sure you have arrival activities, a clear focus for the session and smooth transitions from one game to the next. Merfyn also suggests spending less time talking to your players as a large group.

4. Set boundaries – and stick to them

You don't need a long, complicated list. Instead, focus on safety, learning and respect. Make these your non-negotiables and communicate them at the start of every session. If any of the three areas is threatened, it's time to intervene.

5. Build in time to chat

It's unrealistic to expect players to just turn up and be ready to listen. This is especially true if you work with a young team. Rather than fighting for quiet, build in time for players to catch up. Remember, they probably haven't seen each other all week.

6. Notice good player behaviour

If an individual demonstrates safety, learning or respect, take the time to notice their effort. This helps to reinforce these desirable behaviours. However, be mindful not to over-praise as, over time, this can make positive feedback mean less. Instead, simply acknowledge your players' actions. For example, say, "You're ready to listen" – rather than "Well done, brilliant, you're ready to listen."

7. Ask the winning team to collect the cones

Merfyn believes collecting the cones shouldn't be considered a 'job'. In fact, the winning team get to do it because it's a privilege. It shows you respect your environment and want to help your mates.

8. Think about copycats

If a player acts up, the rest of your team is watching to see how you handle their behaviour. If you bend the rules, you risk other children becoming 'copycats' and replicating the bad behaviour. Instead, stick to your boundaries. This lets players know that you mean what you say.

9. Be clear about unacceptable behaviour

Recognise that it's not your players who are unacceptable – it's their behaviour. Making a distinction between the person and their actions is crucial. For example, Clara isn't bad, but her behaviour is. Try to make this clear in your communication. For example, "rude language is disrespectful and using it is unacceptable".

10. Remember that the only behaviour you can control is your own

As a coach, you're there to help. But it isn't your job to solve every problem. The tips we've mentioned here are designed to help you manage behaviour. But, at the end of the day, the only reactions you can control are your own