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The Most Effective Way to Communicate While Coaching Athletes

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Lacrosse is one of the fastest growing sports in the world. Field Lacrosse and Box Lacrosse have seen exponential growth over the past decade, although both versions are extremely different. Field Lacrosse is played on a football field with 10 players per team on the field, making it a much more technical game. The 80-second shot clock allows for longer possessions and more time to set up on both offense and defense. Box Lacrosse is played in a hockey rink with 30-second shot clocks and five players per team. Box Lacrosse is all about quick decision-making and creating plays in a small area within a short amount of time. Based on accessibility to hockey rinks and equipment, Box Lacrosse is more popular in Canada, while Field Lacrosse is more popular in the United States. In North Carolina, there is barely any exposure to Box Lacrosse. In this study, 12 Field Lacrosse players were coached in Box Lacrosse over four sessions. Typically, it is easier for a Box Lacrosse player to be good at Field Lacrosse, but hard for a Field player to be good at Box Lacrosse. Field players have the skills, but some lack the quick decision-making that makes a successful Box player. To find out how to help an athlete be a successful Box player, the group of 12 was divided into two teams. Team 1 would only be communicated to while they are in live play. Team 2 would only be communicated to during rest periods on the bench. After three practices, the teams played against each other to see which communication style showed more improvement over

the four sessions. Using prior coaching knowledge, it was predicted that the coaching styles would not affect the improvement of the team, but would help the individual athletes. This prediction was correct. Some athletes responded well to the different communication style, while others on the same team did not. This made the point that coaches need to get to know their athletes to find out what coaching and communication style works best for the individual athlete. Ultimately, it was found that a combination of the two styles is typically the best for the individual athlete, because talking to an athlete during live play is better for decision-making, while talking during a rest period helps teach.

Keywords: lacrosse, field lacrosse, box lacrosse, coaching