

## Commitments - Together



A commitment can be the solution.

### Determined together and lived together

A handshake and horse-trading is a done deal. Anyone who does not abide by such straightforward arrangements is soon out of the game. Be he a farmer or a cattle trader. And in sport? There, too, agreements must be made and kept. It is also a matter of honour and trust.

#### Talk about "commitments"

There are many problematic situations in training where a commitment could be the solution. Ten case studies show when and how to aim for mutually agreed arrangements.

#### Cross-blade - pay attention

Situation:

For years there has been a good atmosphere in the youth squad. But one athlete is disrupting practice. She is passive, does not keep appointments, expresses herself negatively.

Reflection:

Everybody wants to be noticed. Disruptive actions often serve to attract attention and gain attention. The athlete's disruptive behavior could serve as a basis to talk about behavior, training diligence, and commitment as a group and take consistent action.

Commitment

The coach takes advantage of a well-attended practice and confronts the youth squad with some "disciplinary issues" from his perspective. Together, core values for training and competition are now discussed and behaviours before, during and after training are written down in a memorandum of understanding.

Further consequence:

Such a declaration of intent brings new momentum and more security into the sports operation. The group develops a new sense of belonging. Taking over a training sequence (e.g. run-in) as another measure lets "troublemakers" slip into the skin of the coach.

#### Alcoholism - Determine course of action

Situation:

Before an interschool game tournament, the physical education teacher discovers two vocational

students drinking a carton of beer in the restaurant early in the morning. She confronts the apprentices and tells them to report to the physical education staff in the teacher's lounge before the tournament.

Situation

Reflection:

The vocational school's rules state that "the possession, sale, or consumption of addictive drugs or other substances that impair performance is prohibited." Although the offense occurred before school hours, alcohol has been shown to impair performance and concentration.

Commitment:

The PE teacher discusses the case in the teaching staff. They decide to work out a universal procedure for such and similar cases, as this problem has occurred several times before. "What do we expect from the students? And how can we counter the misbehavior?" For example, depending on the degree of the offense, misbehaving vocational students can be expelled from the school tournament or refereed or lettered in the tournament. If necessary, employers and parents should be notified of the situation.

Further consequence:

On a second level, an additional commitment can be worked out with students on how students are to conduct themselves at school events.

## **Newcomer - Learning about customs and traditions**

Situation:

At the beginning of the second half of the season, a player from another nation and culture joins the football team. It quickly becomes apparent that he is not comfortable and has trouble making friends.

Reflection:

Playing sports together can have a bonding and integrating effect across all language and cultural barriers. Newcomers want to fit in, feel accepted and belong. To do this, they need someone to teach them the customs and unwritten rules of conduct.

Commitment:

The captain recognizes the situation and discusses this with the coach. Together they come to the conclusion that the new player should be assigned a "godfather" to facilitate his entry into the group. In conversation with the newcomer, the idea arises that he should tell the team something from the sport of his homeland and its manners.

Further consequence:

Trust is not given. Trust is earned. Regular practice with elements of carrying. Letting go, being held, or other team-building forms foster trust in each other.

## **Overreaction - Anchoring Fairness**

Situation:

The handball player does not want to accept a penalized infraction. She is upset and verbally insults the referee. The referee then sends her off the court.

## Reflection:

Handball is a physical game and full of emotion. However, fair behavior toward teammates, opponents, referees, and spectators is important and a necessary part of any athletic practice. Players who cannot control their emotions and accept decisions do not only harm themselves but also the whole team (weakening, penalty, exclusion), the club and the sport (viewing, image).

## Commitment:

A group consisting of the club president, the coaches and the players' council agree on a fairness statement on how club members have to behave on the pitch (club charter). This is communicated in the team sections, throughout the club and externally (posters, club organ).

## Further consequence:

Off the field (training, preparation) each team has its own laws. For example, a national league team acts according to different guidelines than the senior team. Complementary to the club charata, all teams work out their additional codes of conduct.

## **Individual fighters - maintain rituals**

### Situation:

A floorball team is in a losing spiral. The coach notices that each player is fighting too much for himself and not thinking enough about the team.

### Reflection:

Team spirit is a crucial factor in team sports. The feeling of "we belong together" does not always happen on its own and can be influenced. Rituals are suitable for strengthening group dynamics and team spirit. Young people are creative enough to develop their own rituals independently. The trainer does not need to intervene. If it hardens, however, the formation of rituals should be supported with suggestions.

### Commitment:

In conversation with the players, the coach discusses how certain rituals before and in the game but also in training can have a positive effect on team spirit, concentration and game play. The team works out three rituals that can be used to strengthen team spirit depending on the game situation. The coach suggests a fourth one that she believes is important.

### Further consequence:

The trainer and the spectators can also have an influence on the game, sometimes to disruptive effect. Arrangements with the coach (substitutions, time-outs) and spectators (not interfering, positive shout-outs) can have a positive effect on players.

## **Camp Rules - Shared Decision**

### Situation:

The youth section of the athletics club is going on a week-long training camp.

### Reflection:

Special occasions and training camps leave a lasting impression and are very popular with young people. However, for them to have a lasting impact (physically, mentally and emotionally), they need to be well prepared. The various ambitions and ideas have to be reconciled: The trainer wants optimal training conditions, the young people are looking for fun, variety and adventure, the

parents want to be sure that nothing will happen to their children.

## Commitment:

The coach invites the registered youngsters and their parents to an evening of talks. He informs them where the journey is going and what the goal of the training camp is. In a joint discussion, the individual views on the training sessions, the social programme, the rules of conduct in the camp, the means of travel, the financing, etc. are compiled. The rules of conduct are formulated as a commitment and adopted by the young people and their parents.

## Further consequence:

What if boundaries are crossed or camp rules are not followed at camp? Stating individual expectations and defining a common set of expectations provide clarity on this.

## **Exploitation - looking instead of looking away**

### Situation:

There had long been rumors in the community of sexual activity by the physical education teacher in class and in the locker room. After evidence was provided, he was immediately relieved of teaching duties.

### Reflection:

Sexual exploitation begins where a person seeks sexual arousal and gratification without being able to count on the free consent of the other person or where a relationship of dependence is exploited to do so. Assaults are never a one-time thing and must never be excused. The law clarifies what happens when sexual exploitation occurs.

### Commitment:

The school board will take action on its own. In cooperation with the teaching staff, parents and community representatives, a school code "We are looking" is developed, which determines the behaviour of the teaching staff and their cooperation with the students. By signing the defined guiding principles, all teaching staff undertake to comply with the code. In the community, information about the new measures is provided through panel events and advertising measures (community newspaper, posters).

### Further consequence:

Since sexual exploitation is not a private matter, teachers' associations but also sports clubs and federations are asked to take a clear stand in order to thereby give their teachers, coaches and athletes support.

## **Rowdies - Clear rejection of violence**

### Situation:

During home games, riots regularly occur in the fan blocks and, after the end of the game, riots outside the stadium.

### Reflection:

Fans are part of the sport and are important for the clubs. However, violent spectators have no place in the stadium. In their function as role models, athletes are required to take a clear stance when incidents occur, because the principles of fair play and respect should apply equally to players and spectators. Agreed rules of conduct and play serve to distinguish between accepted

aggression and undesirable aggression. Boundary transgressions are to be sanctioned.

#### Commitment:

Club leaders develop a series of measures to reduce the propensity for violence. In a round of discussions with representatives of the supporters' clubs, the club board and the players' council, commitments are formulated on how the players are to behave on the field, towards the fans and how the fans are to behave towards each other. Among other things, it is decided that the team will thank the fans at the end of the match, regardless of whether the team wins or loses. In an advertising campaign (regional television, posters), individual players commit themselves to non-violent sport.

#### Further consequence:

In the prevention of violence, the associations - whether at cantonal or Swiss level - are also called upon. With socio-educational projects (e.g. fair play campaigns, cooperation with fan projects), they can support positive fan behaviour, act as "peacemakers" and strive for coordination and effective measures.

### **Drinking and addictive substances - moderate role models**

#### Situation:

The members of the gymnastics club meet regularly after training in their regular pub. The youth leader and the head gymnast is the partly excessive consumption of alcohol and cigarettes a thorn in the eye.

#### Reflection:

The sport (-club) is not an addiction and stimulant free zone. For this very reason, a constructive approach is necessary. Questionable rituals that promote the consumption of stimulants and addictive substances are to be questioned and replaced by other rituals. Leaders who cultivate a measured approach to legal addictive substances act as models for (younger) colleagues and play an important role as guides.

#### Commitment:

The men's squad has a direct influence on the (consumption) behaviour of the participants of the youth squad and on new members. The head gymnast discusses in the men's squad the problem of the young people's imitation effect. Together they formulate a declaration of intent that the first thing to be ordered in the regular pub is always a non-alcoholic drink and that there will be no smoking in the presence of young people.

#### Further consequence:

In cooperation with the regular pub, a club-owned, non-alcoholic drink is created, which is given away at a special price (cheaper than alcohol). Furthermore, the entire club with all its squads participates in the national competition "Sport smoke-free".

### **Doping - We are clean**

#### Situation:

The Olympics have exposed some doping abuses. A group of competitive junior athletes are disappointed by this and are addressing the issue.

## Reflection:

Doping is a violation of the sporting principle of fair play, and it is so in both elite and amateur sport. It is a cheat on oneself (damaging to health), on the team members (possible exclusion), on the opponent, on the club, sponsor and on the spectators.

## Commitment:

The junior athletes agree together that they want to reach the top in their sport without doping and start the project "We are clean!" In it, they sign, for example, that they will place long-term health above short-term success, not take doping substances and other drugs to enhance performance, discuss the doping regulations and list with the coach and club doctor, and create an ideal training plan (including recovery phases and healing processes in the event of injuries).

## Further consequence:

From the club's own project comes the idea to participate in the national campaign "cool and clean".

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