

## **How to deal with conflict with a coach**

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As athletes who have been competing for many years, there is no doubt that you have faced conflicts with your coaches. It is common to have disputes over practice times, new training techniques, and coaching styles. However, sometimes these small disagreements can escalate into larger problems that cause considerable stress and unnecessary strain. If this happens, there are certain things you can do as athletes to remedy the situation.

### **Meet with your coach one-on-one and discuss the problem**

The best time to do this is not immediately after a confrontation or an argument, but after you have had the chance to reflect on the situation individually and have written a list of your concerns. Focus on core issues and leave out any insignificant or trivial matters. This way, when you do meet with your coach, you will be prepared to do so in a rational and non-confrontational tone and you will be able to clearly express what has been bothering you and why. During the meeting, explain why you're not happy and make suggestions as to how you think you can fix the conflict together. Most coaches will appreciate your honesty and advice and a solution will likely ensue.

### **If the conflict continues or gets worse, you may want to talk to a teammate**

If you are having a problem with your coach, it is likely that other athletes are too. It may not be time to call a team meeting yet, but you can speak with certain teammates whom you deem trustworthy. For example, requesting a confidential meeting with your captain or athlete rep will provide valuable insight and advice. As well, by keeping the conversation private amongst a few individuals, you are ensuring that you do not create a hostile team environment. Similarly, this approach will avoid isolating and angering your coach, which is essential if you want to remain on the team.

### **If your coach remains unresponsive, you can take the matter to your NSO**

With the assistance of your athlete rep, document your situation by writing down your problem as well as the steps you have taken to try to resolve it. Another possible resolution is to take the dispute to SDRCC (Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada) for mediation, where a neutral third party will help you and your coach find a solution together. You're NSO and athlete rep will have more information on this process, or go to <http://www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca> for more details.

### **Make sure that you remain amicable and professional throughout the entire process**

No matter how frustrated and angry you are, do not let those emotions take over. If you want to stay on the team, it is best to keep the lines of communication open – you don't want to alienate yourself from the team, coach or sport. If you feel you can't deal with the situation without getting too emotional it may be time to engage in the help of a spokesperson who can convey your feelings in a more coherent and logical fashion.

For more information on this issue or if you have any questions, please contact the Sport Solution.

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