



Appointing Team Captains

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“Our U-14 season starts soon, and I’m wondering how to select a team captain, or maybe to rotate that title from game to game. Any thoughts?”

PCA Response by David Jacobson, PCA Trainer & Senior Marketing Communications and Content Manager

PCA has identified several best practices in:

- The criteria used to name captains
- Specific responsibilities captains are given
- How captains can help establish and maintain your program’s culture.

All are important considerations that can help you succeed this season and beyond, on the field and beyond.

Criteria

Rather than simply awarding the title of captain to your leading scorer or other top performer, choose a “Triple-Impact Competitor,” who is committed to improving self, teammates and the game as a whole. As a coach, introduce the concept of the Triple-Impact Competitor during tryouts and pre-season so that players understand the basis on which you will select captains.

In addition to helping you identify captains, this will inspire players who aspire to captaincy to suddenly pay a bit more attention to helping their teammates. Of course, this improves individual and team performance and can reinforce a strong team culture, which carries rewards far beyond the playing field.

Other factors that can determine whom you name captain include:

- Who works the hardest in pre-season
- Who singularly goes above and beyond your expectations in terms of improving self, teammates or game
- Who might contribute even more to your team due to the psychological boost of being named captain.

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Responsibilities

Captains should complement coaches as arbiters of team culture. Sometimes they may help you focus players' attention when it wanders. Other times they may represent players' points of view on game strategy, practice plans or how to ensure that all players stay aligned toward team goals.

Coaches must find their own comfort level with the captain's level of authority among teammates and take care to understand and cultivate the appropriate level of respect teammates afford to captains. With the right balance, coaches can keep a finger on the pulse of the team through the captains, and captains can voice the players' divergent ideas to coaches without undermining the coaches' authority.

Captains also can lead in a variety of routine ways, such as:

- Leading stretching and warm-up/cool-down sessions
- Communicating with referees
- Organizing off-field activities
- Finding ways to include teammates who are less integrated into the team
- Helping settle disagreements among teammates
- Assigning other routine tasks, such as carrying equipment or preparing practice fields, making sure to take their turn in leading by example.

Establishing and Maintaining Your Program's Culture

Choosing the right captains and charging them with appropriate responsibilities sets them up not just as team leaders but as exemplars for your program. They can proudly represent your team in the broader community, such as booster clubs or school or district administrators.

They can visit the clubs or leagues that feed your program and encourage younger players to continue working on their games so they can someday play for you. And they can return after graduating from your program to share inspiring stories of the past with their successors who are carrying forward the established values, traditions and culture of your program.

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