



BETTER ATHLETES
BETTER PEOPLE



What to do when your best player has the worst attitude

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.

"I have not been able to find anything in particular about coaching the best player with the worst attitude. If you have anything to help it would be greatly appreciated."

PCA Response by Casey Miller, PCA Business Development & Marketing Manager, Assistant High School Basketball Coach

It can be an incredibly frustrating situation if your best player has a bad attitude. She could bring your team down by having her bad attitude rub off on teammates, even though she could help you on the scoreboard. It might feel easy to let her get away with a bad attitude, if she's helping you win, but you'd be doing your team a disservice in the long run.

The first place I would start is why. Why does she have a bad attitude? It depends on what level you're coaching, but let's take high school for example. There are a myriad of things that could be causing a player to have a bad attitude: Problems at home with family member; Issues with school; A girlfriend or boyfriend break up; Trouble with authority figures; understanding why the bad attitude exists will help you develop trust with that player.

If trust is developed with the player early on about things other than just the sport, she will respect you more later when discipline is needed. Try offering to rebound for this player before or after practice. Ask how her school day was. Try to engage with this (and ideally all) player to get to know her better as a person, not just as a basketball player. Connecting with players on a personal level earns trust.

At PCA we encourage coaches and parents to reinforce the positive when they see it. When that player shows a good attitude, really praise her to show her attention for doing something well. Also, consider having a calm conversation outside of practice or games to make the player aware that a bad attitude brings down teammates and can hurt on the scoreboard. Hopefully this will encourage her to improve her attitude for the team's sake.

Finally, when this player acts out, she should face the same consequences other players face, if they are disrespectful. Just because she is the best player doesn't mean she should get away with more. Make an effort to treat all players fairly, and they will respect you more.

Bad attitudes can be very draining as a coach, but if you first try to better understand why this attitude exists, it will hopefully allow you to empathize with that player. Developing a relationship outside of the sport and earning trust from players will make it easier to provide feedback on their attitude. If you can get this player to see how her attitude impacts the team (positively and negatively), you will have taught her a life lesson that transcends basketball.

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