



Season Planning

As with all sports, the Special Olympics bocce coach develops a coaching philosophy. The coach's philosophy needs to be consistent with the Special Olympics philosophy, which is that quality training and opportunities for fair and equitable competition are guaranteed for each athlete. However, successful coaches include having fun along with acquiring sport-specific skills and knowledge in the program's objectives for the athletes on the team.

Developing a Seasonal Plan

Bocce would be considered a predominantly "non-winter" sport, as it is usually played outdoors. There is no reason, however, if you had the appropriate facilities and the weather allowed it, why bocce could not be played year-round. Once you have established a season when the most influential factor (the weather) is favorable, planning for the season can take place.

Other factors to take into account are:

- ♦ Availability of training venue
- ♦ Maintenance of training venue
- ♦ Transport needs
- ♦ Replacement equipment needed
- ♦ Number of volunteers available

Pre-training Planning

This can take place well before the season starts.

1. Pre-season training
 - ♦ Muscle toning, etc.
2. Confirmation of return of last year's athletes
 - ♦ Contact all players to confirm that they are returning this season.
3. Introduction to the sport for new athletes/volunteers/assistant coaches
 - ♦ Ensure that all administration requirements are carried out and that new participants know when and where training will start.
4. Train-the-trainers up-skilling where necessary
 - ♦ Identify any training needs of coaches and contact local coordinator to arrange.
5. Season's competitions and events
 - ♦ Look over the competitions and events that are planned for the year and identify ones that your squad will attend.
6. Minimum eight-week training planning dates set if necessary
 - ♦ Establish when you feel the season's training should commence, taking into account when the first competition occurs in relation to the initial starting date you have chosen.
7. Skills assessments carried out
 - ♦ Carry out appropriate skills assessments to identify up-skilling needs of players.
8. Meeting with all participants to share season's plans
 - ♦ Call a meeting of all participants (players/volunteers/coaches/parents/caregivers) and advise what your proposed season looks like and adjust if necessary.
9. Enjoy the season's activities



In Season Planning

- ♦ Use skills assessments to identify each athlete's skill level and to record each athlete's progress throughout the season.
- ♦ Design an eight-week training program.
- ♦ Plan and modify each session according to what needs to be accomplished.
- ♦ Emphasize conditioning as skill is learned.
- ♦ Develop skills by progressively increasing difficulty.

Preparing for a Competition

When taking an athlete or team to competition a coach should always ensure that the following occurs:

Before the competition

1. Athlete medicals are up to date.
2. Rules are understood by athletes and coaching staff.
3. Entry forms are completed correctly.
4. Athletes have appropriate team uniform or other suitable clothing.

At the competition

1. Athletes are registered and names are spelled correctly.
2. Athletes and coaching staff know the layout of the facility.
3. Athletes and coaching staff are aware of start times and numbers of playing courts.
4. Athletes arrive at their court prior to the start and have completed warm-ups, etc.
5. Athletes display appropriate court etiquette.
6. Athletes are given appropriate encouragement for effort and talent displayed.
7. Athletes follow a cool-down regime (this is a good time to evaluate the game just played).
8. Identify things that went well during play and things that may need to be worked on at the next practice.

After the competition

1. Athletes' families/caregivers are advised of the results of the competition.
2. Athletes' families/caregivers are advised of anything they need to be aware of following the day's event.
3. At next practice, re-evaluate the event and report results to those who didn't attend.



Essential Components of Planning a Bocce Training Session

Each training session should contain the same essential elements. The amount of time spent on each element will depend on the following factors:

1. Goal of the training session. Ensure that everyone knows what the session's goals are and have had input into setting them.
2. The time of season the session is in. More skills practice is provided earlier in the season. In comparison, more competition experience is provided later in the season.
3. Skill level of your athletes. More practice of previously taught skills is needed for lower ability athletes.
4. Number of coaches. The more coaches present and the more quality one-to-one instruction offered, the more improvement seen.
5. Total amount of training time available. More time is spent on new skills in a 2-hour session than in a 90-minute session.

The following elements should be included in an athlete's daily training program. Please refer to the noted sections in each area for more in-depth information and guidance on these topics.

- ♦ Warm-ups
- ♦ Previously taught skills
- ♦ New skills
- ♦ Competition experience
- ♦ Feedback on performance

The final step in planning a training session is designing what the athlete is actually going to do. When planning a training session, remember that the progression through the key components of the session should allow for a gradual buildup of physical activity.

- ♦ Easy to difficult
- ♦ Slow to fast
- ♦ Known to unknown
- ♦ General to specific
- ♦ Start to finish

If you have decided to establish a bocce league, much of your training will revolve around each week's league sessions. Training can take place before, during and after league play. Before league play, you can work on teaching about equipment needed to play and have a warm-up period. During league play you can observe the athletes' actions and style, making comments regarding what they are doing incorrectly and praising them for what they do correctly, (i.e., "Way to follow through" or "Good judgment"). Instructions in scoring, the etiquette of bocce and sportsmanship can be also be accomplished. After league play, you can work on new skills or work with athletes on improving previously learned skills. A recommend training plan is outlined below.