

Analyzing Performance – Feedback and Video Skills

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Analyzing Performance Evaluation Criteria
Confidently demonstrates accurate technical and strategic/tactical knowledge in conversations
Is comfortable searching out the answers when they don't have the knowledge
Watches, listens and asks questions of athletes before giving own feedback (2-way)
Positions coach boat correctly to enable best use of observation & communication
Times communication interjections appropriately
Simplifies delivery of clear and specific information
Can give positive and negative feedback effectively
Can tailor feedback to individual's athlete's needs
Can create rapport with athletes, and a positive learning environment
Facilitates individual and team goals and keeps athletes accountable
If using video, shoots "watchable" video that is relevant to the day's goals. Keeps video to an appropriately short length.

Analyzing an athlete's performance, then being able to communicate your analysis to the athlete either on-water or later on-land is a skill that makes the difference between being a good coach and being an expert coach. This module will cover:

- Your priorities as a coach before you start performance analysis
- Getting the information you need to make an analysis
- Best practices for giving feedback on water
- Best practices for giving feedback on land
- Giving negative feedback
- Training vs. Regatta feedback
- Using video as an analytical tool

Pre-analysis coach priorities

Safety

The absolute, no-questions-asked, first priority as a coach is to ensure your athletes have a safe environment in which to practice their skills and compete during competitions. Safety means making sure your athletes feel safe enough on the water that they will be relaxed enough to listen and understand what you are saying, and not so distracted with their own well-being.

Other modules cover how specifically to provide a safe environment so we won't go over that here, just remember that even though it may not seem like it, safety is the first step to giving good performance feedback.

Drills

Providing a functional working environment is the second step in preparing to give good performance feedback. The coach's second priority is to ensure drills are running smoothly and athletes are being allowed enough time to get used to the drill before giving performance feedback.

Learning

The environment is safe and the drill is running smoothly. With the athletes engaged in the drill, the coach can now begin work on their third priority: performance analysis and giving feedback to individuals and the group as a whole.

Getting the information you need to make an analysis

Most coaches enter race coaching with some form of racing or performance sailing background themselves, and should therefore have some technical experience to share with athletes. As coaches we are 'students of the game', and are therefore constantly adding to our experience base from new sources such as:

- CYA Technical manuals and courses (Singlehanded, Doublehanded, Skiff and Opti)
- Mentor coaches
- Other experienced/established senior coaches and athletes
- High performance clinics with guest expert coaches
- New knowledge gained (or reinforced) in your own racing
- Class websites and Youtube
- Your own athletes and training group
- Other athletes and training groups through observation
- Your club members and parents (many of whom were former racers themselves)

There are bound to be other sources. The important thing here is to realize we need to be confident in our own tested base of knowledge, but also be humble enough to know when you don't know the

answer so you can tell your athletes *“I don’t know, but I’ll find out”*. By sourcing out and delivering accurate and relevant feedback your credibility and effectiveness as a coach is greatly enhanced.

Best practices for giving feedback on water

You’ve set up the drill, the athletes are engaged, and you’ve got the base of knowledge. Each coach is encouraged to develop their own on-water style, however below are a few proven best practices for observing your athletes work and giving performance feedback on-water.

- ***Position your coach boat for what you want to observe***

Start line acceleration is best viewed from behind, while distance from the start line is best viewed sighting between start marks. Hiking position can be viewed from behind (hiking form) or the side (fore-aft positioning). Leech profile is best viewed from behind while slot is best viewed from aft and slightly to leeward.

Know what you want to observe and position yourself accordingly. Needless to say, get close enough to see what you need to see while making sure you stay out of the way of the athletes.

- ***Position your coach boat so athletes can receive your feedback***

The position that allows the athlete to see and hear you best with the fewest distractions is **alongside to windward with both coach boat and sailboat pointing in the same direction and moving very little**. With a RIB, athletes can hold on to the coach boat and stop for greatest clarity. Sight may be just as important as sound in delivering information. The windier it gets, the closer you need to get to your athletes so that they can hear you.



Ideal coach boat position for feedback

- ***Know when to give feedback***

Clear, short and precise feedback should be ideally given when the athlete is free of immediate other boats and sailing straight-line. Pulling the athlete out of a drill or grabbing them at the end of a race allows opportunity for greater explanation on your part and concentration on theirs.

- ***Know how much feedback to give***

When giving feedback limit yourself to one, maximum two points, then give the athlete time to work on your points before the next set of feedback.

- ***Know what type of feedback to give***

With experience, good coaches can quickly prioritize what is and what isn’t important to talk about: When it’s the right time to ask a question vs. tell an answer; when it’s appropriate to be firm vs. listen and be supportive; when to talk about technical points and when to focus on other points such as teamwork. Good coaches also stick to the task at hand, giving feedback that is relevant to the drill being practiced.

- ***Give specific feedback***

“Your tacks look great” is nice for the athlete to hear, but isn’t much use if they want to confirm why they were tacking well that day, or what they can improve. There’s nothing wrong with giving encouragement – it’s very important – but giving feedback needs to be specific for athletes to reinforce good habits or change weak ones.

- ***Get the athletes involved***

As coaches we have a tendency to want to give the athletes all the answers. But if we provide all the answers we are not giving the athletes the opportunity to be creative, to figure out problems for themselves, or to take responsibility for their training.

The best coaches allow their athletes to take an active role in feedback by asking their athletes questions. By soliciting 2-way feedback, coaches are helping to develop athletes that think for themselves. 2-way feedback also helps build rapport between the coach and athlete and should be encouraged between athletes as well so that they can help each other learn.

- ***Record feedback for later***

There’s a lot to juggle in an on-water practice or race situation and often not enough time to do everything. Recording feedback with wetnotes or a camcorder for a later debrief or performance review is important, although takes a back seat to safety, running the drills, and giving on-water feedback.

Best practices for giving feedback on land – The Debrief

The debrief is an excellent opportunity to reinforce things done well and learn from things done not-so-well on the water. Again, each coach is encouraged to find their own style for debriefs, but below are some proven best practices when giving debriefs.

- ***Set a firm debrief time and location***

After a good session on the water, athletes get on shore, relax, move at their own pace and to their own set of priorities. That’s fine, but the coach needs to set a firm time and location for the debrief, otherwise you could be waiting for hours while athletes trickle in. It’s a simple and obvious point, but one many coaches are not clear or firm enough about.

- ***Select an appropriate debrief location***

Regardless of the place you choose, make sure it’s quiet and free of distractions and comfortable for coach and athletes – there is nothing more annoying than having debriefs interrupted or athletes distracted.

- ***Control length of debrief***

This one will depend on your style and the preferences of the group, but usually if the debrief goes longer than say, 30 minutes, people will start losing attention, especially after a long days’ sailing. There’s usually too much information to debrief in a good amount of time, so be selective in picking out the most relevant information (and video clips – more on that later). If everything’s been said in the first 5 minutes, that’s still a good debrief.

- ***Involve your athletes***

This is a key to good debriefs. Telling the answers to your athletes is ok and often necessary, but getting the athletes to participate in the discussion is critical for their learning and growth. Athletes also need to be aware that it is their responsibility, just as much as the coaches', to bring intelligent questions and feedback to the debrief.

- ***Keep athletes accountable to Goals***

One of the main purposes of a debrief is to check in on group and individual goals. Setting goals at the beginning of the session helps focus the individual and group to work on a specific skill set. Evaluating the goals at the end of the session tells the group or individual how well they managed to stay on task and more important, how well they are progressing in learning the skill set. If you set goals but do not evaluate them they become meaningless, so be sure to add goal evaluation to your debriefs.

- ***Keep the debrief on-topic***

Similarly, you chose the drills for the day to train a specific set of skills. Hopefully it will be those skill sets that you are focusing on in the debrief. If you were running starting drills all day but the main topic in the debrief is tacking, perhaps you or the group is getting off-topic.

Giving negative feedback

Regular performance feedback is necessary, expected, and appreciated by your athletes. Confirmations of what they are doing well as well as suggestions for improvements of a technical nature (i.e. their sailing) are rarely taken personally if you deliver them with genuine care for your athlete's improvement and positive well being. Usually this simply requires a reasonable balance between confirmations and corrections and was formerly taught in the CYA Level 3 program as the "Feedback Sandwich" – putting a suggestion for improvement between two positive confirmations.

All well and good, but what if there is a negative feedback of a non-technical, more personal nature it will be important to:

- Get to the point and be clear about the problem without sending mixed messages
- Be assertive about expectations and how you view the situation
- Confirm facts and listen to the other person's version of events
- If the situation dictates, work together to find a mutual solution

Giving negative feedback in these circumstances where the stakes are higher can be daunting, but good coaches address an important issue in a clear, assertive fashion before the issue turns into a major problem. For more information on giving negative feedback, refer to your NCCP "Managing Conflict" resource manuals.

Training vs. Regatta feedback

Most of the information presented so far relates to both training and regatta feedback. However, there are some significant differences at regattas that need adaptations to be made by the coach. Specifically:

- 1) The schedule is not controlled by the coach and there may be less available time
- 2) Coaches are limited by the S.I.s on where they can go, and when they can give feedback
- 3) Athletes under stress may not behave the same way they do in practice

Coaches who understand these differences will:

- A) Understand that supporting athletes to be prepared and on-time to race takes priority over briefings, debriefings and coach feedback
- B) Read the S.I.s to abide by coach limitations and focus on shorter and clearer messaging
- C) Understand the difference between athletes making mistakes due to nervousness vs. actual technical/tactical mistakes, and select relevant feedback.

Using video as an analytical tool

Coaches find that providing strong, lasting images for athletes to remember helps them visualize and problem solve during debriefs. The downside to video (and stills) is that it can easily become a distraction. On-water, coaches need to be careful that video and stills extras aren't taking away from their core priorities of safety, drill set-up, and giving on-water feedback. On land, coaches need to be careful that video and stills aren't replacing needed 2-way communication during debriefs.

10 tips for shooting and debriefing good video:

- Focus on safety, setting up the drill and giving feedback to your athletes before shooting video.
- Avoid the zoom button to reduce shaky footage.
- Focus on one thing at a time. Switching from subject to subject doesn't allow the viewer to get oriented and is generally choppy & confusing.
- See the whole skill through to allow the viewer to see the whole skill in its entirety and all the extra details that make them faster.
- Stay close to your subject – you will be unable to debrief any film shot from a distance.
- Keep a stable platform while shooting – driving fast or launching off waves while filming is dangerous and will not provide any viewable film.
- Different camera angles show different things – experiment with different angles.
- Talking over the film provides timely reminders during debriefs and allows the athlete to take the video home to review again. Be aware of language and negative comments.
- Be aware that some people do not like to be filmed. Ask if unsure.
- Know your gear. How to operate it, maintain it, and hook it up to different viewing devices.
- Keep video debriefs to the point. Know what you want to talk about, then debrief clips not the entire film. Fast forward through irrelevant film. Know that discussion of clips, and rewinding of clips to re-view important parts can double film debrief time, so plan accordingly.

Conclusion

In this module we have focused on analyzing an athlete's performance, then being able to communicate your analysis to the athlete either on-water or later on-land. We have also covered coach priorities before feedback, acquiring new information to get more detailed feedback, giving negative feedback,

feedback adaptations during regattas and using video and still photos as analytical tools. Coaches are encouraged to incorporate these performance analysis and feedback skills into their personal coaching style and are also encouraged to submit additions and updates to this module as they gain experience.

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