

Seasoned Coaches Lessons Learned (Recorded during Confab at 15 Oct 11 Coaches Training)

Overall Lessons

LESSON: To ensure teams, especially those with new members, understand and appreciate what OOTM is all about take them to the spontaneous events at TJ or Harper Park and/or take them to another region's competition so they can see what they can expect on competition day.

LESSON: To ensure the team understands how they earned the score they did review the score sheet with them immediately after competition. Then ask what they could have done differently.

LESSON: To ensure the team continues to work hard toward their long term solution continually ask them "what's working and what's not working."

LESSON: If your team should advance to worlds make sure you have emergency sheets on not only the students but on the chaperones, as well, in the event a chaperone gets sick.

LESSON: For coordinators, suggest a monthly meeting with interested coaches to discuss concerns/frustrations and answer questions.

LESSON: For coordinators, ensure students are made aware of OOTM during the last month of the school year by sending a flyer home or by hosting an OOTM information night before school lets out.

LESSON: To keep teams together for better long term performance teams should include students which are all in the same grade.

LESSON: To ensure a wider set of ideas for solving the long term problem include students from several grades when developing teams.

LESSON: To encourage a wide range of long term problem solutions encourage students to use methods they employ when solving spontaneous problems.

LESSON: To minimize coach and team frustration both coach and team need to have the same long-term goal, i.e. to win, to have fun, to socialize, etc.

LESSON: To ensure students understand the true meaning of “unsportsmanship like conduct” coaches should not comment about another team’s props, performance, solution, etc.

LESSON: To ensure students are not exposed to other’s unsportsmanship like conduct coaches should not leave teams alone while in the waiting area prior to the long-term problem competition.

LESSON: To ensure team stays on track coaches should spearhead a “mid-season” or holiday get together to reinforce expectations, progress (or lack thereof), etc.

LESSON: To ensure students are prepared for the unexpected on competition day coaches should plant disruptions, i.e. loud noises, tape recorder failures, etc. so that the team learns to react to the unexpected.

LESSON: To ensure “no outside assistance” emphasize to the team that they should not discuss their problem or solution at school or with their parents, family, anyone else. Advise parents they are not to suggest ANYTHING and that the team will take an outside assistance penalty.

LESSON: To ensure expectations are met team should establish team rules and revisit those rules throughout the season.

LESSON: To ensure teams gel at the start of the meeting have a spontaneous problem first on meeting day. This forces them to work together and set the tone for the rest of the meeting.

LESSON: To ensure hungry students are not distracted by their hunger serve a small snack prior to the meeting starting.

LESSON: When students start to lose interest in solving the long-term problem or when things appear to become “too difficult” for them take a spontaneous problem break.

LESSON: To help students understand that all ideas are good ideas encourage them to say, “I have another idea,” rather than “I have a better idea.” This will ensure even the shiest students participate and provide suggestions.

LESSON: To ensure your team is not penalized for any infraction continually review the problem requirements with them, especially if you are going to the next level of competition.

LESSON: To ensure your team understand how they are doing videotape their long term solution as early as possible so they can work on correcting what they perceive as deficiencies.

LESSON: To ensure your team stays on track ensure they stick to their established timeline to completion.

LESSON: To ensure students understand that having a “long term” problem is not an unusual task have them to ask their parents to describe a long term problem in which they were involved, what resources they had to use and how they kept track of their progress. This really helps them understand that things often take longer the expected and show them that what they are doing is actually preparing them for the “real world.”

LESSON: To ensure full team commitment make sure parents know and understand the OOTM requirements. If needed, have the parents sign “contracts” to make sure they don’t make family plans which conflict with OOTM. Emphasize to parents and students that OOTM takes more time than most anticipate. The requirements should include info about the state and world competitions.

LESSON: To ensure team members understand and appreciate each other’s talents conduct a spontaneous exercise where each student identifies the other student’s strengths/talents.

LESSON: To maintain order at meetings ask your favorite teacher what he/she does to maintain order in her classroom.

LESSON: To manage expectations should your team advance to state or world competitions tell your team that they will get fewer and fewer “stickie” comments and that there is more scrutiny as team advance.

LESSON: An avenue for possible OOTM funding is the PTA. If your PTA is not currently a supporter of OOTM ask to be allowed to make a presentation to the PTA so they can consider making OOTM a PTA program and thereby provide financial assistance.

LESSON: To ensure your team is working with the most up-to-date info about the long-term problem check clarifications at least weekly even after regional competition if you are headed for the state competition. Also, have the team members revisit the problem and program guidance throughout the season to ensure they stay on track.

LESSON: To ensure your team earns the maximum number of style points remind them that style equates to “wow” and makes judges take notice.

LESSON: If possible, create a spontaneous reference shelf in the school’s library.

LESSON: To ensure students can explain their ideas fully teach them the concept and benefits of marketing.

LESSON: To ensure team stays on track assign a “team captain” and “team secretary” every time the group meets. These two will facilitate and record the meeting, respectively.

LESSON: To ensure all team members understand inappropriate behavior for meetings have them make a list of the worst behavior imaginable before they create rules for their team.

LESSON: To excite members start each team meeting with a short spontaneous.

LESSON: To enable team members to know each other better start each meeting with an “ice breaker.” This also helps students develop their impromptu skills.

LESSON: To build confidence in team members have team members recognize each other’s skills.

LESSON: When team members get stuck when working on their long term problem turn the challenge into a spontaneous problem, i.e. what are the ways to....?

LESSON: To change it up a bit get out of the house and go to another place, such as library, community center, driveway, etc. for a weekly meeting.

LESSON: To ensure team members understand that every problem has nuances tell them it is OK to read and reread the problem many times. They can change the solution but not the problem.

LESSON: To ensure support to your OOTM team keep team members’ parents informed.

LESSON: To ensure team is responsible for their own solution make sure they take their own notes.

LESSON: For program coordinators, emphasize OOTM provides a “lot of bang for the buck” given the low fees associated with OOTM as compared with travel soccer, etc.

LESSON: To ensure each student’s ideas are considered by the team encourage the team members to “market” their ideas, i.e. explain to the team why his/her idea is a good one. The skill of persuasion is a very valuable one later in life.

LESSON: To ensure team members understand how their teammates view them have team members write (anonymously) the strengths and weaknesses of fellow team mates and share them with each team member.

Spontaneous Lessons

LESSON: To ensure every student is properly prepared for answering spontaneous allow all team members to participate during spontaneous practice. As the competition draws nearer go with just the 5 team members the team has identified for each type of problem and ask the two who are “sitting out” to judge the spontaneous responses.

LESSON: If students can't decide which five should participate on what spontaneous teams pulls names out of a hat.

LESSON: To ensure students are the best they can be in spontaneous ensure team parents understand what spontaneous problems are and ask them to practice verbal spontaneous while in the car, during dinner, etc.

LESSON: To ensure the best students are on the correct spontaneous teams give each student a score for their answers to every spontaneous problem and keep track of those scores so they can form the spontaneous teams with the strongest players. Additionally, have team members openly critique each other after every spontaneous. **DANGER:** This open critique methodology could stifle participation if team members fear open criticism. Additionally, one of the premises of OOTM is that students are free to express their ideas and suggestions without fear of criticism, so this lesson learned might run contrary to OOTM.

LESSON: To ensure students understand and appreciate what creative spontaneous answers are highlight some the team has made after the spontaneous is over.

LESSON: To ensure the team “stays on track” during spontaneous recommend team consider appointing an “organizer.”

LESSON: To keep spontaneous “fresh” have each team member bring a spontaneous problem to a meeting. This also makes them

realize how much work a coach goes through to organize spontaneous for each meeting.

LESSON: To ensure spontaneous moves on employ the use of a “talking stick.”

LESSON: To include variety in spontaneous practice problems try to play games such as Doodletales, Think Its, Squint, Wacky Words and Braingle. Many of these can be purchased at mindware.com. Also, suggest checking out the website for Destination Imagination, a program which is similar to OOTM. Destination Imagination also uses spontaneous problems in their competition.

LESSON: To ensure you have spontaneous problem supplies on-hand put together a box with the most commonly used spontaneous items and add to it week after week. This box can be used year after year and over time it will become well stocked.

LESSON: To help refocus a team when team members get boisterous while working on the long term problem solution take a spontaneous problem break.

