

Coaching Overview - Tournaments

Coaches help youth both at practices and tournaments. For information about how a coach can help at practices with training, leading and planning, please see the Effective Practices or the Advanced Practices documents. This page details how a coach can help their team during a tournament.

A coach's main jobs during a tournament are strategy and encouragement. Strategy requires keeping score to know what questions types are left and how many points are between teams, to plan the best route to success. Encouragement is accomplished by knowing the quizzers and how to meet each quizzers' needs.

Scorekeeping

A coach must be able to keep score without difficulty, so that they can quickly adjust their tactic to the ongoing quiz. A coach's accurate records also help verify the Scorekeeper's calculations. Please refer to the Rulebook or the Scorekeeping pages for more details.

Tournament Talk

At the beginning of each tournament, it is wise to have a meeting with the team you are coaching. Discuss what your goals are as a team and each individual's goals. Avoid vague objectives, such as "I want to do well." Make the targets measurable. Do they want to quiz out in three of their quizzes? Do they want to get an answer correct in every quiz? Do they want at least one jump in the whole tournament? Each individual is different and will have different abilities and goals. Together figure out the best way to achieve the aspirations. Be content with who each individual is, yet always push them to do better.

Discuss what factors are important to focus on as a team and for each individual. Perhaps the team had many errors at the last tournament because of jumping too fast. In that case, remind them to jump with control. Maybe some team members got errors because they spat out the wrong answer to a question they actually knew. Remind them to count to three and take a breath before answering. Perhaps a few quizzers need to be pushed to jump faster, so they can get more questions. Find solutions to the issues hindering your team.

Look at your schedule to see which teams you are playing. Consider your team's strengths and weaknesses. Figure out the best strategy for each of the three preliminary quizzes, based on who you are competing against.

Make sure the team members know who the captain and co-captain are. Remind them of any rules that are important or they frequently confuse. You can also give them reminders about your team's procedures for taking team jumping bonus questions, challenging and more (see item 9).

Team meetings are also great times to remind them to drink water. Water is essential to a great performance. One coach rewards his quizzers with a juice box or a small chocolate bar for every 500 ml of water they drink.

Ask members of your team to arrive at the quiz room several minutes prior to their quiz. They should listen to the Quiz Master to get used to their cadence and style. It also helps the team get mentally focused on quizzing and prevents any frantic last minute searches for a quizzer who isn't in the room. Have a prayer time and discuss goals, strategy and reminders for this specific quiz.

Question Count for Legal Quizzes

Each quiz must have a specific number of each question type. To ensure that the quiz is legal, coaches and scorekeepers should track the questions, to know how many of each type have been used. A legal quiz consists of:

- 8-12 Interrogative questions
- 2-7 Multiple Answer questions (can be MA, CRMA or CVRMA)
- 3-5 Reference questions (can be CR, CVR, CRMA, or CVRMA)
- 2-3 Finish questions (can be FTV, F2V, FT or FTN)
- 1-2 Quote questions (can be Q or Q2)
- 2-4 Situation questions (during years that SITs are used)

Note that CVRMA and CRMA questions count as both a REF and a MA question. Some score sheets have a question tracker as a reminder of how many of each type there should be. Towards the end of a quiz, if you have correctly tracked questions, you will be able to predict what types are coming and inform your quizzers to plan a strategy that works with their favorite question type.

Syllable Tracking

You, the coach, may also want to track syllables or other factors. If you record the number of syllables before a quizzer jumps, it can help your team know how to adjust their jumping speed. If the quizzers have been trained at practice to adjust their speed to a specific syllable count, they will be able to adjust to this specific quiz's speed. Counting syllables eliminates vague terms of "faster" or "slower" and gives a consistent and measurable jumping speed.

You could also record the words of each question, the reference, the reason for an error or if the question started with a dreaded "W" (ask an experienced coach or quizzer to explain what jumping on a "W" means). Use the notes to adjust your practices to strengthen the weakest factors of the team's quizzing.

Time Outs

Each team is allowed two one-minute time-outs during a single quiz. Before the quiz started, you may have already set and informed your quizzers of the strategy for this quiz. You can adjust strategy during time-outs, encourage the quizzers and help them deal with the pressures of the quiz. Only the coach or acting captain may call a time-out. Only one time-out can be after question 18. Don't be afraid to use both time-outs before question 18, but remember that you may want to have a time-out to strategize later, possibly during overtime.

Strategy

Strategizing can happen before a quiz, but will need to be adjusted during time-outs. Some strategies include:

- Always jump your speed, but refine and adjust to the quiz.
 - If they are pre-jumping and getting errors, slow them down.
 - If they aren't getting many jumps, recommend they speed up. A specific word or syllable number to jump on will give them a goal.
- Tell the team how many free errors are left.
- Let quizzers know how many of each question type are left.
 - Towards the end of a quiz, you will know which questions need to be included (see item 4 on question count).
 - This will encourage specific quizzers and strategically plan who jumps on which questions. Try combining this idea with the two ideas below.
- Get specific quizzers to jump, in order to get multiple person bonuses. Sometimes those extra 10 points make all the difference!
- Encourage a specific quizzers to answer, in order to get a bonus for quizzing out without error.
 - Both preceding scenarios may involve slowing others down, to give their teammates the best chance to gain a bonus to help the team.
- Substitute quizzers in or out for multiple person bonuses.
- Sub quizzers according to remaining question types.
- Tell quizzers the score, so they can know if a specific placement is possible. Also, help them work out the possible outcomes.
 - On question 20, the score is 120 for Red, 80 for White and you have 70 on Blue. You know you can't get 1st, but can get 2nd. In this type of situation, your team has three options.
 - Sit and have no chance of getting a question right to gain 20 or 30 points.
 - Jump and get it wrong, in which case you will lose 10 points, but will still be in 3rd place and will not have lost your ranking.
 - Jump and get it right, in which case you will get 2nd.

- You have nothing to lose, so encourage your team to jump very quickly and at least give it a shot.
- Another example: on question 20, the score is 130 for Red, 120 for White and your team has 110 on Blue.
 - In this case, you need to push a quizzier who hasn't correctly answered a question yet, to jump, in order to get a multiple person bonus for third, fourth or fifth quizzier in.
 - Another way to win is to have a quizzier quiz out without error and get 10 bonus points that way.
 - A third, but risky, way to win is to slow down and allow team Red to err. Then your team jumps on the toss up and wins. You would need to accurately gauge both teams to know if this will work.
- Other strategies can be determined by doing math, then figuring out possible outcomes and weighing the risks to decide the best choice.
- Combine some of the ideas previously outlined to create new strategies.

Tournament Organization

Each WCD district tournament starts with three preliminary quizzes for every team. The team's placement and scores are used to create team points for each quiz; see the Rulebook for details. The sum of points after the three prelims determines the team's preliminary placement. The top teams automatically go into the Championship bracket. The bottom teams automatically go into the Consolation bracket. The middle teams quiz in the W, X, Y and Z quizzes, to determine their brackets. Generally, a whiteboard is updated with the team's points and ranking. The remaining quizzes in the eliminations section are determined by placement. The tournament schedule shows how teams advance, based on placement.

In a sense your strategy (to get as many points as possible) remains the same in both prelims and eliminations, yet, the extent you are willing to risk errors changes slightly. For example, the score may be 200 for you on Red, 100 for White and 90 for Blue. In the prelims, you want as many points as possible and might jump competitively, even risking an error, to try and get a better score so that your team gets more points. If this was an elimination quiz, there is no chance of the other teams passing you, so you may slow down to reduce your chances of an error and let the other teams compete for their positions. Also note that in similar situations when the score is close and your team's placement is solidified, it is courteous to sit back to allow the other teams to break a close score without overtime. Strategy involves so many factors!

Strategic Team Procedures

A further strategy you may wish to utilize is to have specific team procedures for certain events. Not only will this give quizzers confidence as there is a set rule to follow, but it can also improve team relationships.

Team Jumping Procedures

Team jumping bonuses never count against the team, but there are some steps you can take to ensure that they do count for your team. A helpful idea is to guarantee that your team sits for the entire question. Make it your team's standard routine to eliminate pre-jumps on bonuses by having the team sit back on their seats, with their hands on their knees. This also gives you a visual cue that they realize it is a bonus. Quizzers have five seconds to jump after the question is finished, so to further your chances, you may recommend that everyone thinks about the answer, to be sure of it, for one second. If they are 100% sure of the answer by the second moment, they can jump, otherwise stay sitting. On the third second, if they are reasonably sure of the answer, and it is their specialty question type, they can jump. By the fourth second, if no one else has jumped, the team captain (who generally knows the most) takes it.

Challenging Procedures

Another thing to consider is who brings challenges and when. Both the captain and co-captain are allowed to challenge, so having a procedure for why they challenge, who initiates challenges and who responds to them, will avoid uncertainty and the possibility of communication between team members, which is punishable by a foul. One obvious rule is that anyone who challenges must have read the Rulebook, been trained in challenging and know a significant portion of the text. If your captain and co-captain both specialize in different types of questions, you may recommend that they challenge and respond to challenges within their specialty. A reference quizzer will know how references work to challenge on those, and will also know the verses well enough to challenge on quote questions. An interrogative quizzer will be more in tune to key words and phrases to challenge on MA or INT questions. In what instances does your team feel it is fair and beneficial to challenge? Do they challenge to get more points, or because something is unfair, even if that means challenging against a teammate? Some quizzers feel very strongly that they should challenge to make things fair, even if it is against their own team, but others don't and this can cause conflict on a team.

Each Individual

Possibly the most important thing a coach can do is to encourage and guide their team, to help them grow and perform to the best of their ability. You will need many of the skills previously mentioned to know how to effectively work with your team and encourage them.

Quizzing can be stressful and stress can make it difficult to quiz well. Stress can come from normal quizzing, pressure to jump, pressure to quiz out, from receiving an error or because of the competition and stakes (finals are generally more stressful than prelims). A coach should know their quizzers well, to know how pressure affects them, they should also watch for miniscule signs of stress and call time-outs to help relieve pressure and guide the quizzers. Simply calling a time-out just to dance around and goof off may help to relieve tension. You might need to encourage a quizzer who made an error that that they did their best and tried. You will also need to know how to best influence each quizzer to jump faster or slower, depending on what is needed. Encourage each quizzer to do their best, using the manner of encouragement they respond best to.

To do this, the coach must know how pressures affect them. One coach had a quizzer that stated they hated it when the coach put pressure on them to jump. However, that same coach noticed the only time this quizzer jumped was on question 20, when the coach had said that they would lose the quiz if the quizzer didn't get a jump for a third person bonus. The quizzer said they disliked being pressured, but the coach realized that they performed well under pressure and needed the push. Another quizzer, on the same team actually, quizzed out in almost every quiz during the tournament. But then during the eliminations, when the team either had to be 1st, or get eliminated, this quizzer would err out. After a couple tournaments with the same pattern, the coach recognized that the pressure of needing to win, rather than having a second chance, caused this quizzer to become stressed, jump too fast and err. A quizzer's mental state can make all the difference in their jumping, thought process and answer. Know your quizzers to deal with them and harness their energy in the way suited for them.

Closing

There is a lot involved in coaching: keeping score, mentally adding up points, figuring out possible outcomes, watching your quizzers for signs of stress and watching the other quizzers for jumping speed, all while the quiz progresses, changing rapidly. Coaching takes a lot of work. Coaching takes practice. Strategy takes practice. Strategies can't be taught all at once. Other coaches are a great resource, talk with them!