Relating to today's

STUDENT-ATHLETE

BETSY, THE COACHES' COACH
& COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST

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GENERATION Z

Born during or after 1996, the young people we are coaching have never known life without the Internet.

This iGen has been dubbed the first true “digital natives”, and most learned to operate some form of technology before they could form complete sentences.

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WHAT COACHES ARE SAYING...

"My players have such short attention spans."

"So much texting, it's crazy! They text each other when they're in the same room."

"It's like they can't accept criticism...even if it's constructive. They can always cite a reason for failure that absolves them of responsibility."

"There's this constant need for reassurance and validation..."

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The more we know about who our players are, the more effectively we can coach them.

WHO IS GEN Z?

QUICK FACTS ABOUT TODAY'S STUDENT-ATHLETES

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Betsy Butterick | betsybutterick.com

WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING...

"Studies show that constant exposure to screens changes the neural circuitry of developing brains, leading to shorter attention spans, stunted social skills, and a heightened need to multi-task." (The Center for Generational Kinetics)

"Research suggests that their brains have evolved to process more information at faster speeds... but, getting and keeping their attention is a challenge." (National Center for Biotechnology Information)

"Looking at the popular apps, you can see that we are raising a generation now of tremendous visual communicators. It's the most powerful form of communication." (Dr. Pamela Rutledge, Director of the Media Psychology Center)

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52%

CITE 'HONESTY' AS THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY IN LEADERSHIP

Generation Z was raised in a post 9/11 world; an age of school shootings, terrorism, global recession and climate change.
As a result, studies have found that Gen Z is overwhelmingly more realistic than optimistic

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61%

DESIRE A CAREER IN SOCIAL EENTREPRENEURSHIP

Though seemingly autonomous, Generation Z is highly collaborative and loves to co-create. Technology has allowed them to contribute original ideas to the larger collective

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79%

DISPLAY SYMPTOMS OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS WHEN KEPT FROM THEIR PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Generation Z routinely multi-tasks across 5 screens, with 55% of Gen Z spending more than 5 hours per day on their mobile device. (Over twice as long as an average HS practice)

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GEN Z AT A GLANCE

SHORT ATTENTION SPANS, STUNTED SOCIAL SKILLS

SKIM READ & DIGEST BITE-SIZED AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION AT AN INCREDIBLE RATE

VISUAL COMMUNICATORS ACCUSTOMED TO CHAT-BASED FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

HIGHLY EDUCATED, INDUSTRIOUS & COLLABORATIVE

MORE REALISTIC THAN OPTIMISTIC; VALUE HONESTY IN LEADERSHIP

DATA-DRIVEN & ACCUSTOMED TO INSTANT, EXPERT FEEDBACK

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Oh, and one more thing...

EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

MINIMAL EXPERIENCE WITH INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Social media platforms have given Gen Z a high exposure to extrinsic motivation in the form of "likes" and "shares"

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GREAT. NOW WHAT ?

Let's take what we know and talk strategy for connecting with today's student-athlete

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8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

8 SECONDS

This is the attention span of Generation Z.

Your challenge is to communicate in short bursts while making the learning process visual at every opportunity.

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

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Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

8 SECONDS

- Ping-pong speakers (think Prezi)
- Interject questions (Socratic method)
- Specific example (use their names)
- Incorporate movement (individual or team)
- Utilize technology (short video clips)
- Visual representation (modeling or drawing)

8 seconds

Skim Read

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SKIM READ

Gen Z consumes bite-sized chunks of information.

Your challenge is to stick to facts, stats, summaries, tendencies and key points (especially in written communications).

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

SKIM READ

- Bullet points (key points)
- Lists (top 3)
- Infographics (visuals for facts/percentages)
- Prioritize information (most relevant)
- Haiku test (5-7-5)
- Linguistic cues ("here's what you need to know")

8 seconds

Skim Read

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Instant Gratification

CHAT-BASED

Accustomed to chat-based forms of communication.

Your challenge is to operate in their conversational comfort zone while providing opportunities to engage in longer form written and verbal communications.

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

CHAT-BASED

- Utilize technology (individual/group texts)
- Invitations to connect (optional longer format)
- 5-minute meetings (touching base)
- Physical positioning (relatability)
- Conversational comfort (location 3x)
- Letter of Recommendation (larger perspective)

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

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Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

CO-CREATE

Highly educated, industrious, and collaborative.

Your challenge is to find opportunities to co-create with them... to allow for *customization* of their sport experience through having agency in the process.

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

CO-CREATE

- Team rules (propose fair consequences)
- Warm-up drills (individual or class led)
- Meeting schedule (optional vs. mandatory)
- Player's practice (player led practice or drill)
- Individual skill work (what/why/when)
- Pre-game goals (keys to success)
- Drill/scrimmage debrief (teams tell you)
- Community service (they choose)

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

DATA-DRIVEN

Generation Z sifts to find the most relevant data.

Your challenge is to make things immediately relevant - lead with the "why" and illustrate current value in relation to a larger purpose.

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

DATA-DRIVEN

- Lead with the why ("for the sake of what?")
- Support with stats (KPI's, percentages, metrics)
- Connect the dots (compound effect)
- Scale it back (Big picture --> current piece)
- Make it real (recent example illustrating value)
- Customize when appropriate (player specific)

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

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Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

FEEDBACK

Generation Z values honest, immediate feedback.

Your challenge is to use metrics and visuals when possible to give objective feedback* in real-time.

(*While being *calm*, *caring*, and *encouraging*).

four main themes emerged for Generation Z's view of a "great coach." These themes reflected the desire for a coach that:

1) does not yell and remains calm,
2) is caring and encouraging,
3) has knowledge of the sport, and
4) involves the team in decision making.

THE PREFERRED COACHING STYLE OF GENERATION Z ATHLETES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY (GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY)

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8 seconds

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Chat-Based

Co-Create

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Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

FEEDBACK

- Know your audience (most receptive time/tone)
- Framing (what you want based on what they value)
- Be specific! ("Good job" vs "Great pass, [name]")
- Public ovation (Trust Factor - successes and failures)
- Controllables & Uncontrollables (Outside My Boat)
- Connect to larger purpose (strategic value/success)
- Keep the line open (tonality, purpose, presentation)
- Contrasting statements ("Don't ___/Do ___")

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

EXTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED

Disproportionally focused on obtaining peer validation.

Your challenge is to help student-athletes develop an internal drive for success by strategically praising effort and intent; illustrate value separate from "likes".

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

EXTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED

- Validate (when successful)
- Support (acknowledge their effort)
- Challenge (make it safe to fail)
- Reinforce value (their unique contribution)
- Celebrate roles (connect individual to the group)
- Peer-evaluations (accountability to others)
- Peer-acknowledgement (platform for recognition)

8 seconds

Skim Read

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Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

INSTANT GRATIFICATION

Generation Z is used to getting what they want.
NOW!
(Google, Amazon Prime, YouTube)

Your challenge is to help student-athletes practice working towards a desired outcome over time, while keeping them engaged and informed.

8 seconds

Skim Read

Chat-Based

Co-Create

Data-Driven

Feedback

Extrinsically Motivated

Instant Gratification

INSTANT GRATIFICATION

- Now & Later (what can they do today for tomorrow?)
- Scheduled feedback (weekly forms)
- Progress towards goals (individual & team metrics)
- Controllables & Uncontrollables (Outside My Boat)
- Yoga/Meditation (intentional breath work)
- Diversity (innovation = engagement)

practicing your skills

COACHES CHALLENGE

Let's see what you come up with to meet the coaching challenges of Generation Z

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THANK YOU

As you experiment with some of the ideas you heard today, take time to share with fellow coaches about what worked, what didn't, and what's next.

Good luck, Coaches!

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"Relating to Today's Student-Athlete: Effectively Coaching Gen Z" digital course

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Thank you!

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