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Coaching Style

■ The Gift of Better Performance

Christmas is right around the corner. Inside this month's issue is an insert for our very popular book, "Read This Book Tonight to Help You Win Tomorrow." With over 6,000 copies sold, many of you have purchased a single copy - now is a great time to get your entire team copies with our exclusive multi-copy discounts - only \$12 per copy when you order 20 or more. The book makes a great gift idea for the coach or athlete on your shopping list.

■ Remember the 2-6-2 Rule When Making Changes

On a team of ten, when making changes you can expect the following on average: two members will oppose changes. Two members will embrace changes. Six will take a 'wait and see' approach.

Strategy: Don't worry about trying to sway the two who are resistant right away. Work with the two who are on board and give them the resources they need to make the changes work more effectively. Their enthusiasm will have a carry over effect, first to the middle group and then to those who are not pleased with the changes made.

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Rivera Monitors Locker Room

Carolina Panthers Coach Ron Rivera has a unique way to keep the pulse of his team: he monitors morale in the locker room: He's in there all the time. The locker room is a place head coaches usually avoid. Coaches may keep an open-door policy in their offices, encouraging players to come to them with any problems. But usually, head coaches keep their time in the locker room to a minimum.

Rivera used to act like this, too. As an ex-player, he considered the locker room to be the players' domain. That's until he decided that to better understand his football team, he had to start hanging out with them as much as possible.

In between practice sessions or team meetings, Rivera can usually be found sitting at a locker and shooting the breeze with his players. Topics of conversation can range from politics, music and movies to relationship advice.

"Unless you are exposed to them there, when they let their hair down, you won't get to know them," Rivera said. "You learn that guys like Greg Olsen are some of the greatest communicators. He has an opinion on everything."

Rivera's constant presence in the Panthers locker room has created a slightly different dynamic, players say. Defensive end Charles Johnson said the Panthers now employ an informal alert system to warn their teammates when someone is playing music that their coach may not like. (Rivera insists on "positive workplace environment music," while his players prefer listening to Drake.)

But players say Rivera mostly blends

in. "He's in there so much that it's not like 'Oh, coach is in there,'" line-backer Luke Kuechly said. "He's just in there."

Rivera decided to take up residence in the locker room after seeking advice from fighter pilots. *To promote honesty among his team, they told the Panthers coach he should "remove rank" when addressing subordinates.* This is a strategy that fighter pilots have long adhered to when commanding officers ask pilots for advice.

Rivera was so taken with this idea that he took a bunch of players to dinner at Del Frisco's Steak House in 2013 and asked them to open up about what they thought of the team. The players didn't hold back. "This guy was an a—, this coach was a jerk," Rivera remembers the players saying. The coach shot back: "I'm blown away. All of this happened? You guys should have told me!"

Nobody wanted to be "the snitch" by telling their coach what was going on in the locker room, the players told him. So Rivera decided he would just have to find out for himself.

He has since become so focused on integrating himself into his players' workspace that he set up a second office, closer to the locker room. He now visits the training room, the cafeteria and the locker room to interact with players.

Rivera wants to create a culture of total honesty with his players and has even discussed disciplinary measures

See Rivera, page 4...

Creating an Ice Mentality Using Perspective

He's the guy who will boot that winning field goal with no time remaining or the gal who will sink that birdie putt on the 18th hole to pull out a tournament. You want them handling the ball with time running out because you know he will make the "clutch" free throw. "Ice" is the term accurately describing the mind set of this player. This athlete reacts to crucial game situations with an aggressive rather than defensive attitude. He thrives on challenges, and never hides from them. This "money player" knows when to play hard and when to let things "flow."

Recommendation: Three steps you can take to develop the "iceman" mentality in your players: 1. Start by teaching new skills under conditions

where there is little pressure to perform. You don't want your athletes "trying too hard" when implementing new strategies. Once skills are acquired, practice executing them under game like conditions. 2. Show players how to keep the so-called "life and death" situations in proper perspective. In most circumstances, competitions are not composed on any one "do or die" situation, but rather many small challenges. The player who can regroup and refocus after making a mistake will be the most successful in the long run. The attitude that "everything depends on this game or play" is simply not the case. 3. All athletes experience a feeling of excitement before a competition. The best athletes know how to channel this excitement into championship performances. One way to do this is to have your athletes play the game against an imaginary opponent in their mind.

Example: Legendary Minnesota

Viking coach Fran Tarkenton said he mentally rehearsed every move the opposing defense would make the week before he played them. Then he would visualize strategies to counteract any situation the defense lined up with. These same techniques can help with your players, regardless of what sport you play or the level of competition.

P.S. After a big loss, some athletes take it really hard. One way to alleviate the self-induced pressure is to say to that player: "Picture yourself being someplace six months from tonight. Who are you with? Does this loss still seem that important? Has our life been changed by this one event? Do the people around you seem to be affected by what happened tonight?"

This exercise can help the player put things in proper perspective and find peace of mind.

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Championship Performance is published monthly (12 times a year).
Subscription rate is \$99.

The purpose and express goal of **Championship Performance** is to help coaches attain the highest levels of success.

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Parents and the Playing Time Issue

Situation: A player's parents want to know why it is fair to bring up a freshman or sophomore to play in front of their daughter, who is a senior and has worked hard and had a good attitude. What is the best way to handle this?"

High School coach Lisa Christiansen says the best way to handle this situation is to prevent it from happening.

"In my pre-season meeting with players and parents, I explain that excellence is the goal for our program and that a player's age rarely influences my playing time decisions.

I explain the Double-Goal Coaching model, where the first goal is winning, and the second, and more-important goal is life lessons through sports. I encourage them to be "Second-Goal Parents," who look at the big picture

and understand the roles that they and the coaches play in teaching lessons that will lead to success in life beyond sports.

If you have not explained your playing-time criteria and you are now facing these questions about "fairness," you may need to have some difficult conversations. You will need to explain your criteria, emphasizing a meritocracy.

Be prepared to specify the measures you are judging, such as statistics, effort in practice, or team chemistry, and be able to provide a mix of examples illustrating where the player meets or exceeds your criteria and where she falls short. Avoid direct comparisons between the senior in question and any of her teammates."

Getting Over a Tough Loss

Note: The following report is addressed directly to athletes.

A loss can sometimes have a lingering affect on athletes and coaches. You can start to question your ability and allow mistakes to haunt you, depleting your confidence.

If you allow it, losses can zap your motivation and prevent you from achieving your goals.

Getting over a loss quickly is a hallmark characteristic of championship teams and elite successful athletes.

But what is the best way to move on after a big loss? The answer is to focus on how to improve instead of beating yourself up over the past.

Example: Florida State University football just faced this dilemma after a devastating loss to Georgia Tech. In the final play of the game, the Yellow Jackets blocked a field goal attempt and ran the ball back for the tie-breaking touchdown.

The FSU loss was their first of the season and may have significant ramifications for their run at the national championship.

FSU head coach Jimbo Fisher was asked what they would do differently to prepare for next week's contest. Fisher said his team would get right back on the horse and move forward. Often when you relive losses, it can build into more losses.

FISHER: "Line up and play the same way we did last week. We're going to do nothing different. We're going to play and not let one loss become two. We're going to work our butts off and practice hard."

In response to how his team would get over the loss, Fisher is not in panic mode, nor does he want his team to panic. You can't turn back time

and erase the loss, so it is full speed ahead, prepare for the next team and get back to work.

FISHER: "There ain't any magical dust you are going to throw on them or magical words you are going to say. You have to make your mind up that you are going to play. Athletics is about one thing, doing. Desire is great, dreams are great, goals are great. **Commitment is the key.**

You have to be committed all the way in to do what you are going to do. We lost one game, the sky is not falling."

Recommendation: To move past a loss, athletes can ask themselves two basic questions:

1) *What can I do about the loss?*
If you do not own a time machine, the answer is NOTHING! You can't change it, so stop wasting the mental energy ruminating about the loss.

2) *What will I do after the loss?* Remind yourself that this is an opportunity to learn and get better. What were the appropriate lessons to change for future games? Then it is time to get back to work. Like Coach Fisher said, "Commit all the way in to do what you are going to do."

The key is to think about how you will learn and grow instead of dwelling on the past and the mistakes you might of made.

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Winning Ways

■ Tips from the Best Free Throw Shooter

In her WNBA career, Elena Delle Donne has shot nearly 94 percent from the foul line. The first thing Delle Donne does when shooting a free throw is look for the dot—sometimes it's a nail—that marks the middle of the free-throw line. She lines up her right foot with the dot. After she bounces the ball three times, she places her index finger on the ball's air pinhole. She bends her knees slightly and makes an L-shape with her shooting arm. She switched up her shooting style in high school by reducing her motion to as few movements as possible.

"From there I just lift and flick, and a little bit of ankle pop," Delle Donne said. "There's one more thing: I actually just tell myself, '*It's going in, - every single time.*'"

Deb Leusink, an assistant coach for the Northwestern College, shot 95.8% and once hit 133 consecutive free throws. She said Delle Donne's technique fits her theory on free-throw shooting "I would say two things: Have the same routine every time you step to the line, and reps," Leusink said. "You've got to get reps."

Note: Also, practice free throws and penalty kicks when athletes are tired toward the end of practice, technique when they are fresh.

■ Mets Rally Around the Championship Belt

The New York Mets are in the World Series. After each win during the regular and post season, they had a unique way to celebrate. They would put on a World Wrestling Federation "Championship Belt" to the MVP for the game. This post game ritual helped keep the team both loose and motivated.

6 Principles of Teaching that Relate to Coaching

Coaches can learn a great deal from principles of learning being used by effective teachers. The following lists several teaching techniques that can be applied by the coaching profession.

1. Time on task. You must determine if all players, especially substitutes are staying “on task” during practice. Classroom research indicates the more a student participates in class, the greater the opportunity to learn and have the knowledge stick.

Structure practice schedules to assure greater participation by everyone. Then ask yourself, have I clearly stated long-term and short term goals for this practice?

2. Stating the objectives. Athletes will learn faster and retain the information longer if they understand how the specific skill being taught relates to the overall improvement of themselves and the team. Frequently explain to athletes why practice is organized the way it is, the daily goals, the rationales for each unit of practice.

3. Transfer theory. Effective teachers like to tie in or “hook” all new concepts to the knowledge already

absorbed in the long-term memory. This “hook in” facilitates the learning and absorption of new concepts.

Example: A female basketball player was having difficulty flexing the knees and hips prior to leaping for a rebound. The coach had her practice jumping rope as a knowledge base onto which to “hook” the skill that needed improvement.

4. Sequential teaching. Teaching theory has strongly validated the holistic approach to learning, i.e. you start by introducing the overall concept of the specific skill and then you teach it through sequential steps.

Take the teaching of hurdles in track as an example. Have the best hurdler on the team show the others how to take a few hurdles and then have others try to copy the technique over just one hurdle. This same approach can be used for any new mechanical technique.

5. Questioning technique. This is a complex technique, but here is one simple example: Every coach should expect players to learn everything about their specific position. The

coach can then pose the question: “What is the left tackle supposed to do on this play?” The question should be directed to all the tackles with no names mentioned. This kind of approach forces all the tackles to think. This simple concept may add a few minutes to a practice session, but the results will be well worth it.

6. Varied teaching resources. The effective teacher utilizes all the available teaching materials: textbooks, reference material, video, audio tape, overhead etc.

The use of varied materials and approaches enable the teacher to reach every kind of student: visual learners, auditory learners, reading learners, etc. The coach who confines himself to one means of communication will limit his opportunities to reach everyone.

Rivera in the Locker Room, cont.

with some of the more brutally frank members of his team, who he calls “unfiltered.”

Like everyone else on the team, Rivera likes to engage in the locker-room repartee. But his players aren’t afraid to tell him when his jokes fall flat. “Coach thinks he’s funny,” said linebacker Thomas Davis. “But the good thing is, when it’s not funny we get to tell him and we’re able to tell him he’s not funny because of the relationship we have with him. It’s not a dictatorship.”

Davis said Rivera has created a “comfortable, no-judgment zone” and there are few rules governing behavior in the locker room. “It’s a bunch of guys,” said Rivera. “Sometimes in that locker room, it’s not politically correct.”

Rivera said he tries to avoid music with racial slurs or anything that glorifies domestic violence, adding that players have begun policing themselves on the matter.

As much as his time in the locker room has given Rivera a better handle

on his team, players have another theory about why he spends so much time there. “I think he just misses it,” said Kuechly. “He played and misses it. He just wants to be in the locker room.”

Rivera doesn’t disagree: “Oh, I do miss it. I miss the camaraderie. But I also realized you have to be in the locker room. I have a vested interest in what goes on there.”

Excerpted from a Wall St. Journal report by Kevin Clark www.wsj.com
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Performance Profiling Improves Goal Setting

Performance Profiling (PP) helps athletes identify key areas of performance that need to be developed. Specifically, during phase one, key characteristics of what it takes to be successful are identified by coaches, athletes and possibly a sport psychologist. The process includes clearly identifying roles and goals for both the team and individuals. Athletes will then self-rate each level of performance from a tactical, physical, and psychological perspective to focus on key areas where they need to improve. Lastly, a process is developed to help achieve said goals.

A mental skills consultant (MSC) worked with an elite junior European hockey team to achieve the following aims: a) Avoid vague goals such as ‘do my best’ or “be a good teammate”.

- b) Set goals that are specific and measurable.
- c) Set long term outcome goals (win a championship) combined with short term performance and process goals.
- d) Set individual goals that mesh well with team goals.
- e) Involve all team members in establishing goals and monitor their progress.

The *Performance Profiling* system was used as a foundation for all further group discussions as it related to goal setting and role clarification.

At a pre-season meeting with the MSC, coaches and athletes, players came up with strategies they felt were vital to reach their primary outcome goal of winning a championship. The most commonly mentioned were “training hard”, “mental toughness” and “creating a good team spirit.” They came up with the following list of behaviors they would have to exhibit to reach accomplish their top 3 goals.

They were as follows: • No absences to practice or work-outs. • Giving one’s all to the very last whistle. • Testing one’s limitations through tough conditioning, which is measured. • Team members will not be abandoned when things are not going well. • Appropriate use of humor (no embarrassing or mocking of team members.) • Practice self-sacrifice (on and off the ice). • Support and encourage by recognizing teammate effort, not just outcomes in practice.

Role Clarifying. Roles were determined based on practice evaluation by the coach of each line and the (PP) done by the athletes. Each athlete had some input on their role based on which line they were on. Using the PP, the players were challenged to think about their own playing style. The key question they had to answer was, “*What kind of player am I?*” During the season, four monthly meetings were held where previous performance goals were evaluated. Based on the circumstances, some goals were adjusted. These meetings also included discussions on the roles and responsibilities of the players with the head coach.

Reflections on Program: The players based their goals on the Performance Profile results, which listed their strengths and weakness. Players were asked to set between 3 and 6 goals for themselves. The coach evaluated the goals. The findings were shared with the rest of the players in their line group to give teammates a chance to comment and add input. To integrate the personal goals with the outcome goals of possibly winning a championship, players were challenged with the following questions: “How can I succeed in my career to the best of my ability?”; “How can I fulfill team expectations while working towards my individual goals?”; and “How do I want to be remembered as a hockey player?”

Example: In one of the team discussions of goals and roles during the season, the idea of how individual strengths impacted overall group performance was brought up. Specifically, the team discussed how each line group was meant to function as a seamless collection of individuals that molded their best strengths for the good of the team. As the season went on, players discussed among themselves without coach guidance how their role within their lines were doing.

Head Coach on the PP Goal Program: “I kept emphasizing throughout the year how the team goals had to take precedent over the individual goals if the player self goals were interfering with team collaboration, interaction and decision making on the ice.”

Example: During one exercise, players with more dominant personalities were divided from the players who were quieter. A discussion was initiated on the topic, “Are all players equal?” This gave the chance for the more dominant players to consider how the less dominant and more quiet players contribute to the group and need to have a voice as well.

Another question that came up was, “How can the dominant players better interact with their quieter teammates and how can they get their quieter teammates more involved?” This topic helped bring the team closer together in the middle of the season.

Excerpted from *The Sport Psychologist Journal*.
Volume 26/Number 4 December 2012.
www.humankinetics.com

“

Sometimes adversity is what you need to face in order to become successful.

”

Zig Zigler, Motivational Speaker

Arians Yells - Keeps Players Respect

Arizona Cardinals Head Coach Bruce Arians likes yelling at people. The other week, he yelled at his team about jumping off-sides in practice and holding on passing drills.

This is not uncommon. Yelling is as old as coaching itself. What's rare is how Arians makes it all better.

"I'll mess up on the practice field and he'll scream at me," said defensive back Tyrann Mathieu. "Then he'll find me before meetings start - he'll give me a hug, tell me it's all good and ask how my family is."

Players are fine being yelled at by Arians due to what can only be described as a cure-all cocktail of hugs, butt-pats and "attaboys."

"As long as they know that you care about them," Arians said, "you can call them anything."

Cardinals players admit that this is a bold strategy. Yelling at a bunch of NFL players is an easy way for coaches to lose a locker room. There's a delicate balance, especially for a team stacked with veterans like Arizona.

Cardinals general manager Steve Keim said Arians has "the unusual gift to put these guys under a tremendous amount of pressure during the week, coach them hard, then hug them and give them subliminal confidence."

Arians starts putting his psychological ploy in place during the spring, when coaches tell players that they're going to be yelled at but shouldn't take it personally.

"Yelling is all about instruction," Arians said. "To yell at someone because you're mad at them or because something didn't work, that's not real good."

Arians said he walks through the facility after practice to make sure every issue that may have arisen during practice is put to bed. "You'll walk through and say, 'That was a hell of an effort!' or put your arm around a guy and say 'You have the talent, your brain is getting in the way,'" he said.

Similar stories of Arians putting out fires are told throughout the Cardinals locker room. Keim said one of Arians's most brilliant moves is **yelling at the team's star players to establish that he has no favorites.**

"He'll scream at all-pro Larry Fitzgerald for running the wrong route," Keim said. "Then he'll find [rookie] David Johnson when he's fumbled the kickoff and put his arm around him."

There is another theory on why no one takes the yelling to heart: Arians *isn't afraid to own up when he's the one who has made a mistake.*

During a practice this year, Arians berated one player for holding a wide receiver during practice. The player told his coach that he was innocent and said tape of the play would vindicate him. When Arians put the film on in a team meeting later that day, the player in question was proved right.

Incidents like this are rare in coaching circles, Keim said. "It's humility mixed with a tremendous amount of confidence. It's kind of an odd combination," he said.

■ Peak Performance Bullet

■ Mentally Recover from Injuries

While injured, athletes often anguish over whether the teammates who fill their role will take away their starting jobs. Most athletes will not admit this publicly, but while they want the team to be successful, they don't want their replacement to be *too* successful. This conflict of emotion can lead to a silent guilt in the injured player, who really wants to be supportive (and be supported) during this difficult time.

Injured athletes also agonize over the question of, "*Will I be as good as I was before I was hurt?*" In the case of season-ending injuries, this question may not be answered for a year or more.

Finally, once athletes recover and return to the field, one of the most difficult tests is not thinking about the possibility of being re-injured during practice and games. Trying to go all out and not be distracted by thoughts of getting hurt again really tests an athlete's focus and concentration.

Unfortunately, while teams are usually good at providing necessary physical rehabilitation, many times the mental rehabilitation needed to deal with and overcome injuries is often overlooked or neglected. The same mental toughness that is a foundation of a player's successes may be underutilized during the rehabilitation period.

Recommendation: Attempt to keep a positive outlook, meeting rehab goals and treating the rehabilitation process as a different athletic challenge is often overlooked. Coaches, teammates, family, sport psychologists and other athletes who have come back from similar injuries all can be valuable assets to injured athletes. Encourage players who have been through similar experiences to be their "sounding board" to vent to and offer advice on how to get back to form quickly.

Team Building Methods from a Family Therapist

Championship Performance interviewed Toni Zimmerman, an expert on family therapy, on ideas how to build team unity.

Team building is a continual process and is different each year. What are some good ways to get team building started in a positive direction.

Before the start of the new season, have team members write down a list of every thing that has helped build team unity in their past experience. Then have players list issues or things that have really gotten in the way of team unity.

On a chalkboard, have a coach draw a line down the middle and list the positives on one side and the negatives on the other.

Involve the team by asking them about their past experiences when team unity has been a problem or you felt frustrated by it and times you felt like things were going really great.

Let the team members define what team unity is for themselves. Create an operational definition of things that work and don't work.

An example of a negative might be that team unity was destroyed when there was gossip, separate coalitions or cliques on a team. It might have been a team where a few members are kept on the outside of the circle.

After the list is completed, start at the top and address the issues raised. Take gossip, for example. The coach should ask the players "how can we stop this from happening?" or "how can we keep certain cliques out of this team?"

One idea might be to establish a team policy about player interaction. If a conflict occurs between two people, they should try to resolve it first between themselves. There may be a need to go to the coach.

The coach can then decide if the situation is important enough to talk about

openly to the entire team. Otherwise drop it and move on.

On the positive side, there could be a team policy to always encourage and point out the best in somebody instead of picking on their faults.

When team members have input in making up their own rules and team philosophy, based on what they have experienced, they are far more likely to carry through with them. When you involve the team in trying to build team unity, you make it a very overt process. Trying to follow a certain five step team building plan usually won't work because each group of individuals is different every year. But if certain procedures have worked in the past, certainly stick with them.

When should the team review how things are going? Have another major meeting in two months to see what has been working or not. Point out what has gone right. For example someone might say, "Man, I really thought it worked great when we took time to review the high points of the presentation, even after we lost the bid. We pointed out who did well in a losing effort. That built up team unity.

Re-visit that original chart frequently. Ask: "How are we doing in our weak areas? Are we keeping them under control? Where do we need to improve?"

Can you describe one or two exercises that all teams can use to build up team unity, especially at the start of the season.

Gather in a room in a circle and have each player tell one unique thing about themselves that no one else would know. Do this exercise twice a month so you get to know sides of a person that you wouldn't otherwise.

This brings out the personal side of people - they aren't just player X or Y, but there are other aspects of their personality they feel comfortable in sharing. These are great icebreakers

at the beginning of the year to do at meetings throughout the year.

Here is a variation on the same exercise. Find out all you can about the person sitting next to you and then you introduce that person to the team. This one is best done at the very start of the season. It can be a really fun way to get to know one another.

What are some ways to handle "problem" players that don't seem to fit in?

I compare the situation to family therapy. In families, there is a tendency to give everyone an assigned role - the hero, the mischievous one, the smart one, the whiny one. It's important to keep away from putting people in really defined boxes. You don't want to reduce people to a cliché. Instead get to know the person as far more than a one dimensional characterization.

If someone is on the outside of the "circle" and doesn't seem to blend in, get the team to brainstorm. If they aren't part of our family, how can we bring them in?

One idea is to give them another job or role. *Ideas include asking them to mentor team members, or getting them to assist a staff member with an upcoming project.* Come up with creative ways to help them blend in. These are involvement devices that help that player feel he or she is part of the team. The mistake that we make with people who don't fit in is to push people farther and farther outside the circle so they don't bother us anymore. This only causes further alienation.

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Cutting Edge Virtual Reality Simulation Training

Virtual reality technology is one of the fastest growing industries. No longer just the talk of science fiction, virtual reality allows users who slip on a headset to find themselves immersed in a three-dimensional world unlike their own.

The uses for this technology have centered on the video game field, but several companies are taking the experience to a different field.

STRIVR Labs has developed a system it believes will help train athletes. (*Championship Performance has no affiliation with this company*).

Ryan Burns has experienced the power of virtual reality technology. As the backup quarterback at Stanford, Burns knows he could hear his named called at any given moment. That's why practice is so crucial, especially for someone who has a limited game experience under his belt.

With that in mind, Burns works out in the school's virtual reality room twice a week for 20 to 30 minutes at a time: "You're literally seeing everything that the quarterback is seeing as if you were on the field," Burns said while describing of the experience. "You can look around and see who is behind you and to the right and left of you. It all just feels real."

Now that they have the technology working, the next step is selling coaches on the process: "One of the things that you know is that coaches are a different breed and if you do something that slows them down — you're out," inventor Derek Belch explained. "The challenges are to convince the coaches to be a little bit more forward thinking and, 'Hey, this is how we do it and this is what you

have to do to change.'"

According to Belch, 11 teams currently use STRIVR Labs technology, including those in the NFL as well as seven college programs. And the training technology isn't limited to just football.

STRIVR Labs plans to expand its presence into the NBA, WNBA and NHL. Since the technology is still relatively new, Belch doesn't want to reveal too many trade secrets, saying their process is unique.

"We use a 360-degree camera and we've come up with the most — it's a very complicated process on the back-end. On the front-end — we've simplified it as much as we can for the teams," Belch said.

But one thing that's for certain is that STRIVR Labs technology isn't a video game simulator — something Belch said doesn't work when it comes to training athletes.

"They don't have the desired effect on the brain to make it cognitively enough to really work for an athlete. And as a matter of fact, you can start developing or reacting off of false cues that don't happen in the real world," he said.

STRIVR uses real video, which allows not only the athlete, but coaches to get a first-hand look at the entire process.

"It's predominantly for the athlete, but from a coaching standpoint — the coach can see how the athlete is looking around and they can watch how their body moves relative to what they are looking at so the coach," Belch said. "We're really kind of taking film

watching to the next level."

Belch says the technology allows coaches to see exactly what their quarterbacks see from their point of view. It allows them to help point out things and make corrections from a different perspective.

The players are embracing the technology as well. "It really just helps out with the quarterback's game," Burns said. "Seeing what we would be seeing if we were actually playing, but we didn't have time to get a whole team together. It's great."

Burns said Stanford's offense features multiple checks and audibles and the virtual reality technology allows him to go through his responsibilities in game-like environment. The system also updates with the latest blitz packages, giving the quarterbacks a preview of what they might see during a game.

"I'm the backup quarterback and I've only had like six snaps from the line of scrimmage in a real game, so it really gives us backups — people who don't play as much — the opportunity to get more experience without to be able to play with the team more often," Burns explains.

Belch admits it helps to have a generation that has grown up on video games, smart phones and tablets.

"All of these young kids say they are visual learners and we tell the coaches all the time that if you don't do this, then you are not teaching in your player's language," he said. "This is how they learn now."

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