

# Bad Apples

Ever heard the phrase that “one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch.”?

When you are developing a culture especially in a grass roots environment there are few things harder to deal with as a coach.

It is critical to deal with a player whose negativity spreads to others and is destroying a team culture, these players can and do (often inadvertently) ...

1. Destroy team morale
2. Hurt team performance
3. Create distractions and drama
4. Undermine team leadership
5. Damage team reputation

Before we dive in, it should be noted that we should try and be proactive address issues BEFORE it gets to this point.

The first thing is our team leaders should be addressing this as we go along and highlighting issues and solutions – ***“putting out the fires”***

If we do not have leaders who are capable of dealing with this and seldom will this choice be available in younger groups then we need to train that as well – we need to coach our Team Leaders about leadership and rise above the peer pressure of the “bad apple.” We must teach our players how to hold others accountable.

“If we allow it to happen, then it will happen!”

It is never easy, but here are five steps you can take that will help address the issue of a bad apple on your team

1. Identify the problem.

1. Identify the problem wherever it may be
  2. As a coach, you may not know if it is even going on so it is critical to have a good relationship with your team leaders. Talk to them often. Ask them about the team culture in the locker room or outside of school.
  3. Once you have a clear understanding of the problem, the issue, or the person, you can begin to develop a plan to address it.
2. Address the issue directly.
    1. Once you have identified the problem, it's essential to address it directly with the player – one on one
    2. Never avoid addressing a bad apple. It will always backfire.
    3. Discuss specific instances of negative behavior. Outline the impact that their behavior is having on the team as a whole.
    4. Be firm but fair, and avoid attacking the player personally.
3. Set clear expectations.
    1. Set clear expectations for the player.
    2. Perhaps outline behaviors that are not acceptable.
    3. Ensure the player understands what is expected of them
    4. Be clear about the consequences of failing to meet those expectations.
4. Provide support.
    1. Sometimes, the player may be struggling with personal issues, mental health, family issues, or other challenges.
    2. If this is case then it's crucial to provide support, perhaps connect them with an appropriate higher authority
    3. Show the player that you care about their well-being and are invested in helping them succeed on and off the field.

## 5. Take action.

1. If the player continues to be a problem despite your best efforts, it may be necessary to take more severe action.
2. This might involve, suspending them from the team etc
3. While these decisions can be difficult, they are sometimes necessary to maintain the integrity of the team and ensure that all players are held accountable for their behavior.

**Coaches:** Always remember that your number one job is to build your Team Culture. A bad apple can sabotage your team culture despite your best efforts.