

Paige Stapp

I was North Pole High School's Tennis Team captain for two years. During one of those years some girls on my tennis team wanted a different uniform. Other girls were not thrilled with the idea, especially since the cost of sports is high and now they would have to pay to replace a perfectly good uniform. This became a heated controversy among the girls, and was affecting our team spirit. I decided to talk to the team members individually. I listened to each person's perspective and looked into a few ideas. I felt it really helped them to be carefully listened to so that they were included and felt like they were an important part of the decision.

It was true that we already had our uniform, but it wasn't perfect. Since we play tennis it is required to hold at least one extra ball in your pocket when you're playing. Our team shorts had overly tight pockets that squeezed the ball against our legs and weren't very comfortable. Another thing was that our shorts were white so they got dirty easily.

I thought that if I could find better shorts with the right pockets, and not in white then my teammates might be more willing to change, since that would be a significant improvement. I found shorts online that were red, so still in our school's colors. They were inexpensive, and had big pockets that could easily fit three balls in while running.

When I showed the team the shorts I had found online, and how much better they would be for tennis, they all agreed with the change. I think the key was first listening to each person so they felt part of the decision, and secondly finding a good compromise. In this case it worked out relatively easy. I know this doesn't sound like a very important issue but it really increased our team spirit and made many of the group members feel that their opinions were valued.