# Coaching the Youth Player

Posted by STLCoach - 14 Mar 2009 04:52

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This thread I want to put some ideas I have been exposed to over the last few years about coaching the youth player.

1. As coaches, and adults, we must keep in mind that we are working with kids, kids who want to play soccer. I know this is obvious, but when faced with teaching, or coaching, the most obvious things can take a back seat to results.

Soccer is a game that has an objective.... score more goals than the other team. It is the coach who prepares his players to cope with all situations on the field without freaking out, that will be the most successful. So we coaches are there to teach our players how to cope with the stresses of the game(skills).
So lets start with the coach. Be prepared, patient, and reasonable.
gotta go coach ...so more about this later.

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# Re:Common Failures of  Game Coaches

Posted by STLCoach - 07 Apr 2009 09:54

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Let us start with the negative atmosphere the coach above brings to his events. Players feed on energy. You bring negative energy to the pitch, your players will see it in your verbal and nonverbal communication. This environment causes stress to the players. In the last example the stress is compounded by the unruly parents shouting from the sideline.
Now we have 8-10 year old girls having to cope with the constant negativity from both sides of the field.
Forget about playing soccer, they will not show their imagination, or try anything that might get them yelled at.
Ask these players; Are you having fun? or What one thing would you change about the game?  Most of them will say they want their parents to shut up.
The players will begin to cope with the stress from the negativity.  Some will shut down completely. Some will get angry. Some will cry. None of these coping mechanisms are positive to the player's development. These kids will quit the sport.
**Solution: Eliminate the Circus of Negativity**.  Coach first talk with you parents and ask that only positive comments come out to the players. Before, during, and after the match. Parents should never have anything to say to the referees. Parents should only cheer the other team and show respect to the participants on the field.
*Basically if you have nothing positive to say, say nothing at all.*
Next, the coach does as he asks his parents. Set the example and create the atmosphere of positive energy and calm at your games. Focus on helping your players learn and cope with the game of soccer. Let their minds be free to use their skills, make mistakes, and do their best.
We all have bad days, but lets not take the game from the kids we organized it for.

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# SUBSTIUTIONS

Posted by STLCoach - 15 Apr 2009 09:37

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Substitutions happen all the time. This is the problem in the USA.
It is common practice for a coach to sub a group of players 7-10 minutes after the game has started. Players want to play. I do not even consider a sub for my teams playing 30 minute, or longer, halves until 15-20 minutes into the game. This allows the players on the pitch to learn how to play extended periods of time and the players must figure out how to solve problems on the field. The players on the bench are relaxed because they know when they are going to enter a match and they understand they will play 15-30 minutes at a time without substitution.
Even substituting this way, I still get all the kids in for 30-50 minutes per game.

Because the rules allow unlimited substitutions, coaches are able to affect the match with all the stoppages. It is common for coaches to take a player off the field for a mistake. The player has just learned that any mistake will take them off the field, and now has been set back in their development of coping abilities.

The question is coaches, Is there any game a player 14 years and under plays that is so important?
The answer is NO!!!!!!
Even if you explain the way to fix it, it is better to leave them in the match and let them play it out. You could also call them to the sideline during play, and guide them to some self discovery.
it.
Remember, we want to allow our players to feel the stress of the game of soccer and cope with their skills and game experiences. By allowing the player to make mistakes and continue playing you are helping them feel more comfortable playing soccer. They will learn faster.

This weekend, or your next match, play your players for at least 12-15 minutes before subs. Even under 10-8 year olds. Let them play. Bring a small note book, and take down some notes of their successes and mistakes. Stay calm and seated on the bench. See what happens. If you like you can come out to my games and watch or ask questions about anything we have been discussing here. Look under the schedules for Apostoli 13 girls teams or 10 girls teams.

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## Re:Coaching the Youth Player

Posted by STLCoach - 23 Apr 2009 03:44

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Well how did it go? Did you give the players a chance to play? I know the team we played did not. The U10 girls team subbed 7 players in the first 12 minutes and subbed 1 player in the first 90 seconds!
The older girls team our 13 s played subbed about every 7 minutes. Oh, well.
It is important for the coach to provide the best atmosphere for their players.

***Outcome based*** *programming places its main focus and attention on the results of the competition. The standard for defining excellence is the outcome of the competition so success is measured by the score. Simply stated, the goal of participation is to win. If a win is achieved, the preparation and training methodologies that were employed during the process are considered to be successful and worthy. Players are motivated by focusing on the external rewards of winning the competition in order to obtain the prize.*
***Developmental based*** *programming places its main focus and attention on the learning process. The standard for defining excellence is the improvement the player makes. If the player is acquiring new skills, perfecting behaviors, or increasing understanding, then the program has been a success. Players are motivated by focusing on the acquisition and mastery of necessary skills. The coach, who develops an environment that focuses on skill development, defines success by efforts and improvement rather than outcomes. Jeff Pill*

Which one are you? A Proper Balance between the two is important. Kids 9-10 years old, and older, understand winning is good. **It is up to coaches to teach the players winning through success at soccer skills is better.**

*Sole reliance on the outcome of the competition to provide feedback is detrimental, particularly so when youth sports are involved. Here, due to the complex nature of the competition, particularly in the sport of soccer where outcomes are not always attributed to the relative superiority of one team over the other, results are at times determined by factors outside of the individual player's control. Thus, the athlete who focuses on the extrinsic rewards of competition may become overly discouraged. Jeff Pill*
Most of our players, coaches, and parents have little information on how to play the sport of soccer. Unfortunately, they all understand you kick, boot, or send the ball. *Soccer is about controlling the ball*. It is in the interest of the coach, and player, to bring success to their players through the teaching and celebration of skill.

*Matches should happen about 10 to 15 events per 6 months. Training should be at a 3 to 1 ratio to matches.* When the match does come up encourage keeping the ball skillfully, not just kicking it, let the players learn the game through playing the match without too much direction from the coach.
**For example: U7s playing 4v4, no goal keepers, no positions, absolutely no stationary center backs, and small teams where all players play a majority of the game.**
***This weekend*** go over the foot skills with your players, and tell all players they must dribble the ball and do 1 or 2 moves every time. Can you keep the ball from the other team? The other team will probably just boot the ball back down field, stick to your guns! Talk to your parents and explain the new plan. Talk with your players and explain to them they own their skills. Praise the players for all attempts so they understand it is okay to make mistakes.

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# COACH to Player COMMUNICATION

Posted by STLCoach - 11 May 2009 03:24

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Too often, we as coaches will tell a player what to do and expect it to be done. The problem is, while we might know exactly what we mean, it doesn't mean the player does. I have touched on this before but continue to see examples of poor communication whenever I watch training sessions.

Prior to the start of the season, consider handing out and explaining a glossary of terms. This might seem unnecessary but the reality is, just because we, as coaches, know a term, doesn't mean the players all know the same term or that their understanding of the term is the same as ours.
Once you make sure everyone is on the same page in terms of vocabulary, it will be easier to communicate verbally.

When explaining an activity in a training session, explain what you want done, using terms that all understand and then have one of the players explain it back. Many coaches will repeat the same thing over and over but the truth is, if the players don't understand it the first time, they most likely wont understand it the second or third times either, unless you explain it using different terms. By having a player explain it back to you, it allows them to demonstrate that they really understand what you said and also allows you to realize when they don't understand. This might take an extra minute to have them explain things back to you but it gets made up through improved performance since they have a better understanding of what you want.

Next you will want to demonstrate what you explained. If you are teaching how to shoot with the instep,

this would be the time to demonstrate the technique to them. If you aren't able to demonstrate the technique, use someone else for the demonstration. If you are explaining a new activity, walk the team through the activity so they see exactly how it works. The idea is for them to see a "picture" of how it should work when they do it.

Next, have them go through the process at half speed. Again, this is being done to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Now you are ready to go at full speed.

**Please do not become COACHING NINJAS**.
Coaching ninjas are the coaches that whip coaching terms and words around like a ninja throwing those bloody steel stars. One after another, not even aiming sometimes. Remember, coaching is not about letting everyone in the world hear how many coaching terms you can remember, it is about how well your players can learn the game from you.

I like the **KISS principle, Keep It Simple Stupid!** Always remind yourself coaching is about developing young minds and bodies to the beautiful game.

It might seem using this method will slow down training significantly but the reality is, once the players get used to the process, it allows training sessions to run smoother.

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# Communication and Player Discipline

Posted by STLCoach - 30 Oct 2009 03:31

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How to deal with players who don't listen at practice
First, it is important to tailor your practice to your players' ages.

If the player or players in question are under eight years old, they are probably just exhibiting personality tendencies common to that age group: short attention spans, high energy, sociability, an inability to understand certain detail-oriented explanations, etc.

It has been shown that it is fairly unproductive to attempt to teach players under eight years old the technicalities of soccer such as corner kicks, goalkeeping skills, throw-ins, etc.

At this level, the kids just want to have fun and get touches on the ball. This is why small-sided soccer is so important at this level.

Playing with less players on the field results in more children getting touches on the ball, and consequently, more learning and more development.

For players eight and up who have been playing soccer for at least one previous season and who should be accustomed to how a soccer practice is "run," discipline problems can be treated as such. Unfortunately, these discipline problems can range from not listening to being disrespectful to other players and coaches.

Try not to be too hard on the player who won't listen to you - after all, these kids have been listening to an adult all day at school. At soccer practice, out in the fresh air, the kids may feel compelled to just run around and burn excess energy, which is OK to an extent, but can become detrimental when it's

affecting your ability as a coach to teach the other players important soccer concepts.

Coaching tip: Let your players play a 'match' for a few minutes as soon as they arrive at training. That achieves three things - it allows them to burn off some excess energy, you can discuss how the rest of the session is going to go during the drinks break after the 'match' and it encourages your players to get to practice on time!

You need your players respect, not their friendship. A few coaches have the ability to act like their players' best mate and still manage to earn their players' respect. Some do not. If you are in the latter category, it is important to earn their respect first. Be nice, don't be stern, but be firm.

Never tolerate rude or disrespectful behaviour. This should result in a "time-out" for the player who is acting up. And please make sure you punish the behaviour NOT the child. Make it clear that it is the behaviour that you find unacceptable, not the player.

You also need to be aware that some medical conditions can cause children to behave in seemingly disruptive ways.

Before the season starts, send a letter home to parents describing your coaching philosophy - what you expect from your players and what they should expect from you.

Explain that the first "incident" will result in a time out, the second in sitting out practice and a letter home and the third incident will result in an invitation to their parents to discuss their future with the club.

Examples of good soccer practice behaviour:

Everyone follows all directions given by the coaches and assistant coaches
Everyone does their best
When coaches talk players are still and listen
No-one swears or calls names
Everyone keeps their hands to themself
The most important thing to remember when dealing with ANY young soccer players is that they are at practice mainly to have fun and play the game of soccer which is just that - a game. Taking the game too seriously or making practice too much like school will result in your players becoming disinterested, bored and restless.

Finally, please remember that players do NOT learn by listening to a coach lecture them. In fact this is the best way to make sure the kids tune out and do NOT listen. Let them dribble, shoot, pass and run to their heart's content and they'll come back to practice next week, next month and next year.

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# CHILD PROTECTION THE BASICS

Posted by STLCoach - 05 Nov 2009 06:30

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Child protection: the basics
It's a sad fact that many children are abused sexually, emotionally or physically. Often, the person committing the abuse isn't even aware that what the've done is wrong.

As a soccer coach you are in a unique position to spot any signs of abuse among your children. It is vital, therefore, that you are able to recognise the signs of abuse and know what to do if you suspect anything untoward.

You also have a responsibility not to abuse the children in your care by bullying or criticising them in front of their peers. You must also make sure that you do not expose your children to extremes of weather, leave your children unsupervised, tell them to 'get on with it!' when they have been injured or train them in an over intense way or in a way inappropriate to their age.

All these are forms of child abuse.

Your club should have a Child Welfare Officer (CWO) whose job it is to brief the club coaches about their responsibilities in this area. But if you are either working on your own or within a club that has no CWO you'll have to teach yourself about this important and sensitive subject.

There are a lot of resources and advice available. I strongly advise you to go on a course or - as a minimum - research the subject on the internet because your prime duty is to safeguard the children in your care.

A few tips:

You must:

Treat all players and children with respect and dignity befitting of their age;

Watch your language, tone of voice and where you put your body.
You must not:

Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games including horseplay;

Coach children on your own;

Allow or engage in inappropriate or intrusive touching of any kind;

Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;

Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in "fun";

Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged or unrecorded;

Invade the privacy of children when they are changing, showering or going to the toilet;

Doing things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves. e.g. help with changing;

Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others;

Take children alone on car journeys, however short;

Take children to your home.
As a soccer coach you hold a position of trust and should never put yourself in a situation where that trust might be questioned.

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