

METHODOLOGY / THEORY OF COACHING

WHAT IS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT?

The concept of player development is essential to the long-term growth and improvement of the player. Player development demands that “the player is central” to all decisions made regarding practices and games. The coach who believes in player development will ensure that the following objectives are met:

- Games and activities that are age appropriate. The child wants to participate in because they are fun and enjoyable.
- Players being exposed to playing all positions.
- Every player has a ball for practice.
- Activities designed to maximize the number of touches on the ball by each player.
- Rules and field size modified for players according to their age group and abilities.
- Equipment modified for players according to their age group and abilities.
- Activities designed to promote decision-making. (Not just doing drills).
- De-emphasize winning/losing. We do not need to keep standings, statistics, etc.
- The game is already in each child; we as coaches need to create an environment to unlock the game within each child to reach his or her full soccer potential.



ROLE OF THE COACH

Coaches take on many roles when leading a team. However, youth coaches need to understand their role within the overall player development process. Inexperienced coaches often identify with coaches of older aged teams where the priority and objectives for that age group may be different. Coaches who understand the player development process and the differences that exist between age and ability characteristics are more likely to positively influence and effect the development of the player.

The role of the youth coach based upon principles of player development is:

As a Facilitator

- Set up the conditions and environment for learning.
- Players need to receive positive feedback from the coach.
- Coaches must be enthusiastic about what they are doing.
- Practices should be conducted in the "spirit" of enjoyment and learning.
- Activities need to be geared towards the players achieving success, with success measured by FUN.



As a Positive Role Model

- Demonstrate respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators, and opposing coaches.
- To have a responsibility to the game itself.

As one who understands who they are coaching

- Children are not defined by chronological age only.
- Each child matures and develops at his/her own pace.
- Treat each child as an individual.
- Recognize that their needs are different and they participate for different reasons. Some may be there because their older brother and sister play and it's expected in the family. Some may play because a parent is a frustrated athlete and wants to live through his/her child. Some may play because all their friends do, and they want to be with them. Others may play because they actually enjoy the sport.

COMPONENTS OF COACHING SOCCER

Technique (receiving, dribbling, passing, shooting, heading,)

- Technique is the most important component, because it is the introduction of the player to the ball. And, the game will always boil down to individual ball mastery.
- Activities should be with the ball, should be FUN and game-like. Learning takes place through self-discovery.

Psychology

- The development of a positive attitude about all aspects of the game.

Tactics (player's decisions)

- Activities should promote decision-making.

Fitness

- Appropriately organized activities and small-sided games will provide players with the necessary physical requirements to meet the demands of their game. There is no need have players do any unnecessary running without a ball in recreational practices.



"TRUTHS" ABOUT CHILDREN AND SPORTS

The four underlying concepts provide a number of truths about children and sports that have been identified in other research.

- Fun is pivotal; if it's not "fun," young people will not play a sport.
- Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun. It is more important than winning, even among the best athletes.
- Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self-competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others).
- The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to self-knowledge.

PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH COACHING

- All activities should be age appropriate.
- Give clear, concise brief instructions and correct information.
- There should be a flow of simple to complex activities that is appropriate for the ability of the players and the topic of the practice.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate practice area.
- All activities should promote decision-making.
- All practices should finish with a small-sided scrimmage.



AGE GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

Before we are able to effectively coach the children that have been entrusted to our care, we need to understand the characteristics of whom we are developing. It is imperative that you understand that when you are dealing with children, that you take the time to comprehend where they are currently in their own development. To understand the following information better, it is recommended that you attend a National Youth or State Youth Course in your area.

U6

From a physical perspective (psychomotor), children in this age group perform activities at full speed. Then they need frequent rests and then they go again. Movements such as running, hopping, skipping and maintaining balance are not fully developed at this age.

From a mental perspective (cognitive), they have a short attention span, can only perform one task at a time and only if its given with basic instructions. They don't have a clear understanding of the team concept and tactics are useless. Everything revolves around themselves and the ball.

From a social (psychosocial) standpoint the children need to feel secure in practice and in games. The coach needs to be sensitive in selecting activities that allow social interaction with the other players in their group. They are easily bruised psychologically. Elimination games are highly discouraged. They will also tend to exaggerate their accomplishments-let them.

U8

This is the stage where players begin to understand the concept of passing to a teammate.

From a physical standpoint they still lack a sense of pace and tend to exert themselves hard and then drop. They are now starting to develop some physical confidence in themselves and they are still into running, climbing, rolling and jumping.

From a mental perspective they feel if they tried hard then they performed well (regardless of the activity's outcome). They are beginning to show a limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time.

From a social perspective they have a great need for approval from adults and like to show off individual skills. Negative comments carry great weight. Their playmates start to emerge and they will start to move towards small groups. They want everyone to like them at this age. You should be positive with everything that you do.

U10

Children at this age are typically in grades 4 and 5 and may have been playing soccer for half of their life.

From a physical standpoint they gain a lot of strength, endurance and power during this period. Some children will grow faster than others and can approach 5 feet and weigh upwards of 80 lbs. or more. Be aware of the differences and how you match them up with each other during activities.

From a mental perspective they have the ability to remember and follow complex instructions, which enables them to solve higher-level problems. They will begin to think in advance and anticipate actions or ball movements.

From a social perspective players will begin to initiate play on their own and are becoming more serious about their soccer. Peer group belonging and pressure generated by peers becomes more significant. The need to belong becomes important.

U12

Children at this age are on the edge of childhood and adolescence. It can present a multitude of problems, but also an abundance of potential.

From a physical standpoint strength and power become a major factor in their performance. Their muscles mature and they realize how much more they can do on the field. Their coordination significantly improves and it shows up in the execution of child's technical ability. From a mental perspective the educators refer to the U12 as the fertile period for learning. They can sequence thoughts and perform complex tasks. A coach can expect his players to understand the game and use teammates to solve problems. They are usually eager to learn.

From a social perspective whether a child enters puberty early or late is significant. Girls tend to form cliques while boys take a more broad approach to team relationships. The manner in which they feel about themselves can determine how they relate to their teammates. Sometimes popularity influences self-esteem.