

Coaching Methodology

Important principles of coaching

- Coaches must understand how habits are formed
- Coaches must possess knowledge on how players learn
- Practice sessions must be highly organized and well planned
- Practices should progress in a logical sequence
- Practices should be performed in relative areas of the field

It should also be stated that "***practice does not make perfect, practice makes permanent***".

This holds true for both good and bad training. The quantity of practices must never be more important than the quality of practices. Keep your sessions simple and clear.

Coaching Organization - Practices should reflect the game. If it doesn't happen in the game, then don't do it in your practice.

The numbers of players involved

Consider how many players you will have for practice. How many players do you need in each drill? Are you working in pairs or small groups? Do you have an odd or even number of players? If you have a player without a partner, improvise the practice to involve him/her or have an assistant or parent work with the player. As the coach, try avoiding having to team up with the odd player. You should be observing and coaching at all times.

Practice Should Be Realistic

Practices should reflect the game. If it doesn't happen in the game, then don't do it in your practice. Players must perform realistically. Practice should develop rapidly to reach a tempo that resembles game speed. If you practice slowly, you will have a slow team. If you practice explosively, you will have an explosive team.

Always use full size goals (age group appropriate) whenever possible in practice.

The Coaching Formula - Make your point and get them playing again as quickly as possible. Players want to play, not stand around.

The key to an effective practice session is simplicity and clarity.

How To Stop And Start Your Practice

Players should be instructed at the beginning on how to stop and restart the practice. While you are observing the practice you will want to select a "teachable moment" to stop the play. Players should "freeze" at the exact moment the play is halted. This will provide the coach a perfect picture to emphasize the coaching points.

Keep your stoppage time to a minimum or you will lose the tempo of the practice.

Conditioned Games

These are usually small-sided games that have restrictions placed upon them. Its purpose is to isolate a specific skill or tactic. Use conditioned play selectively as it can often be unrealistic. Conditioned games need to reflect real game situations and problems. It should be used occasionally and limited to short periods and always concluded with free play.

Observation

Analysis is based on observation. Always coach what you see, do not fabricate situations. Support your observation with facts.

Relative Areas to Coach

If possible, coach in the relevant thirds of the field. Attacking drills should be performed with full size goals and in the attacking third. Practices for midfielders should be rehearsed in the middle third and defending in the defensive third of the field. Players need to "visualize" where they are on the field.

Understanding the Topic

You should have an understanding of the technical and tactical elements of the topic you are teaching. Do your homework. The practice should move from simple to complex.

Be Single Minded

You cannot teach several aspects of the game at one time. Focus on a theme such as the correct use of the push pass and stick with it no matter how many other problems arise. Young children will not retain the information if you clutter the session with too many coaching points.

Selecting Teams and Small Groups

When selecting teams for small-sided games and group drills, do not have the players select. Too often the same player is picked last, which leaves the player with a negative experience.

Ensure Quality Service

This is a very important point, which is often overlooked by coaches. The quality of the service a player receives will have a direct effect on their ability to perform the task at hand.

Proper two handed throw, proper strength/speed of a pass, etc.

Coaching the Practice - Remember when teaching "a picture tells a thousand words".

Describe and demonstrate your topic.

1. What's the topic?
2. Stand back and observe
3. Correct the mistakes
4. Progress to the next level
5. Relate the topic to a game

When to Progress - All practice sessions should have a logical sequence of progression, from simple to complex, with each stage evolving at the correct time.

One of the realities of youth coaching is that coaching time is extremely limited. Coaches often fall into the trap of wanting to do too much in one session. Do not just go through a set time schedule, by progressing from drill to drill every ten minutes or so. Players do not develop this way. Some players improve quickly, while others need more time.

It is of paramount importance that coaches understand how quality technique is developed and implement a coaching regimen to challenge players to a level of technical excellence. To reach a level of technical perfection, the technique must be isolated and performed until it becomes a habit. Three important components are needed to rapidly develop good habits:

1. Repetition
2. Consistent Quality
3. Explosive Movements

Example of how to progress your practice session from simple to complex.

- The basics
- A moving ball
- Passive resistance
- Introduce pressure
- Game related (small-sided game)
- The big picture (full game)

Communication - A coach can communicate in two ways, by showing or by speaking.

The more senses involved in the learning process will increase the chance of player retaining the information.

There are several ways coaches can **visually communicate** information to their players:

- By a physical demonstration (the best approach)
- By using visual aids (chalk boards, instructional videos, game videos, books and hand outs, television)

Do it by speaking

- **Have something of value to say** - don't just talk to hear your own voice. Have something important to say or don't speak at all.
- **Think before you speak** - take a second or two before you respond to a question.
- **Be certain of the meaning of the words** - don't use words you don't understand or players don't understand.
- **Avoid jargon** - don't use words that sound too technical. Keep it short and simple. Do not waste time with lectures.
- **Speak clearly** - don't mumble. Try to vary the volume and tempo of your speech. If you're calming players down, speak softly.
- **Be positive** - keep your comments positive. Try positive reinforcement.
- **Watch the group while speaking** - look directly into your players' eyes when you speak. Make sure that players are paying attention and watching you when you talk. If it's a sunny day, have the sun in your face so the direct sun light does not distract the players.

How Young Players Learn - Provide feedback to players in a positive manner and explain how they can improve upon their mistakes.

To coach effectively you must possess knowledge of how players learn. You should frequently remind yourself of what it is like to live in a child's world. Players are unique psychologically, physically and emotionally and it is important to understand and appreciate the differences between players at various age levels.

Here are some pointers on how players learn and some of the character traits:

Players must have an interest

Before you can improve a player, they must have a desire and an interest to want to participate. As a coach you cannot force a player to be interested, they either are or they are not. With some younger players their parents made the decision for them, to sign up for football. Some of these players simply do not want to be there. Best you can do, as a

coach, is to make football as much fun and enjoyable as possible to spark the interest of the child.

Players should be enthusiastic

Enthusiastic players want to play longer, practice harder and have an open mind when it comes to learning new ideas.

Players should see good examples

Players need good examples in practice. The coach must set high but attainable standards for the team.

Encourage your players to watch professionals play. Players need role models to emulate. Players will learn by watching and copying the skills and habits of their stars.

Players should learn through habit forming practices

Players need to develop good habits. To achieve this, you must have three qualities in every practice. As mentioned earlier, these are repetition, consistent quality and explosive movements. Repetition is vital to engraining the movement until it becomes second nature. Quality assures that the repeated movement is good and that we are not reinforcing bad habits. The movements must be developed as quickly as possible to a speed which simulates match play.

Qualities of a Good Coach - Listen to your players' problems and concerns. Encourage feedback regarding games and training sessions.

Good coaches possess some fundamental qualities. It is not all about win/loss record. Ironically, you can do a great job coaching and still not win. Conversely, you can have a successful record by just having the good fortune of better players. Regardless of the level you are coaching, the game should be a fun and a learning experience for your players.

A Good Coach Must:

- **Be enthusiastic** - Enthusiasm is infectious.
- **Have integrity** - Coach and play by the rules. Set an example of good sportsmanship after every game, regardless of the result. Be honest and upfront with players and parents.
- **Be a good listener** - Listen to your players. Encourage feedback.
- **Set high standards** - A good coach will always challenge their players to higher standards both on and off the field.
- **Be organized** - Good coaches plan ahead and consider all aspects.
- **Be knowledgeable** - You should have knowledge of the basic principles of the game in areas such as skills, tactics, laws of the game, safety, management, nutrition and fitness.

- **Eager to learn** - To continue your development you should obtain a coaching certification, attend clinics, read books, watch videos and talk with other coaches with greater experience. Coaches must be coachable.

STRUCTURE OF A TRAINING SESSION

- **WARM UP** - activities to prepare players physically and mentally for the upcoming session. Where possible the theme of the upcoming session should be incorporated.
- **TECHNICAL / TACTICAL SESSION** - Non-opposed activity working on technique in relation to the theme of the session.
- **SKILL SESSION** - Semi-opposed and fully opposed activity. Practice that provides scenarios where players must decide how and when to apply the technique/s that they have been practicing.
- **SMALL SIDED GAME/S** - Real game situation/s where reduced numbers ensure lots of touches and opportunities to apply practiced techniques.
- **COOL DOWN** - Activities to bring the players back to their resting state (gentle jogging, skipping, walking, simple ball manipulation). Players' physical recovery begins here. Re-hydration and refueling.

"WITHOUT TECHNIQUE THERE IS NO TACTIC"

At all levels you can have all the tactics you want in the world, but if the players can't perform the basic techniques of the game - at speed, on demand, and under pressure - then it doesn't matter what your tactics are; you're not going to be successful. So unless we instill this into our players - especially at those golden ages of learning, 8-12, and then right through to 14 when tactics really start to come to the fore - you have no chance because the players aren't going to be technically good enough.

Modern Coach vs Traditional Coach (see article below)

MODERN COACH

TRADITIONAL COACH

PLAYER-CENTRED

COACH-CENTRED

- The player's innate potential is valued
- Collaborative learning with the coach
- **Players empowered through involvement**

- The player is considered an "Empty vessel"
- The Coach as the font of all wisdom
- **Players are not as engaged**

DEVELOPMENT FIRST

WINNING AT ALL COSTS

- Long term development strategy
- Recognizes the time it takes to develop
- Model with progressive curriculum
- Children are allowed to be children
- Players experience all positions
- All players get a fair chance
- **More rounded, creative players**

- Short term winning all important
- Must have immediate results on the pitch
- The next game is all that matters
- The adult game is forced on children
- Early specialization to win games
- Bigger stronger players get most play
- **Obedient competitors but lacking in flair**

HAS A PLAN

RANDOM TOPICS ONLY RELATED TO WINNING

- A complete Model for Optimal Development
- Age-oriented curriculum
- Step by step approach to coaching
- Covers all topics comprehensively
- **Players can reach their full potential**

- A collection of hints, tips and drills
- Not usually age-appropriate
- Pressured approach to winning
- Topics mainly related to winning
- **Talent is often wasted**

GAME-ORIENTED

DRILLS ORIENTED

- Global Method (Games) for "open" skills
- Integration of technical, tactical, physical and cognitive elements of the game
- Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU)
- Simplified Games at the heart of training
- Exercises for correction after the game
- Greater motivation for players in training
- **Greater transfer to the real game**

- Analytical Method (Drills) for "closed" skills
- Segmentation of each element
- Conditioning using exercises
- Game usually as a reward at the end
- Conditioning drills before the game
- Little motivation for players in training
- **Poor transfer to the real game**

GUIDED DISCOVERY

INSTRUCTIONS

- Active learning
- Dialogue
- Effective questioning
- Deeper learning experience
- Greater retention of learning
- **Greater transfer to the real game**

- Passive Learning
- Monologue
- One-way instructions
- Often counter-productive
- Poor retention of learning
- **Greater transfer to the real game**

