7-10-year-olds... what are they like?

Posted by STLCoach - 08 Jan 2013 08:59

Seven to 10-year-olds... what are they like?
It's vital that you pitch your coaching sessions at the correct level.

If you deliver a session that is too easy or difficult for your players, they will quickly become bored and/or frustrated. And bored, frustrated children are not having fun!

And having to deal with a dozen or so dissatisfied "customers" is not going to make the session much fun for you either.

This article describes the physical and mental characteristics of players in the seven to 10-year-old age range - essential knowledge if you are to plan age-appropriate coaching sessions and keep your customers satisfied!

Children in the seven to 10-year-old age range:
Have a limited attention span. They will listen to you for longer than four to six-year-olds but you still need to use simple games and drills and play activities for a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes.
Seek out adult approval - so be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you their skills. They need reassurance. If you are dismissive or off-hand with them, they won't have the confidence to try new things.
Are able to take another's perspective - they now have a sense of how others are feeling. This means you need to consciously treat all your players in exactly the same way. If you don't, your players will think you have favourites.
Can pace themselves - many seven to 10-year-olds have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible.
Are still unable to think abstractly - most children in this age group cannot conceive anything they cannot see or touch. For example, "space" is an abstract concept. It does not have physical form and you can't touch it. It follows that you are unlikely to be able to teach techniques such as the through pass or zonal defending to children in this age group. So put that tactics board away!
Much prefer playing to watching - keep everyone active and do not use drills that involve children standing in lines for more than a few seconds.
Are more co-operative than six-year-olds - they tend to play well in pairs so 2v2 games are popular. But it's a good idea to set up the pairs yourself. If you ask players to pair up by themselves, a) it can take a very long time and b) there will be personality problems.
Have less active imaginations than players at U6 level - seven to 10-year-olds still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that six-year-olds enjoyed will not be appreciated by this group. So games that require your players to imagine they are pirates or elephants may not work so well any more.
Begin to become aware of peer perception - a social order is beginning to develop. Be sensitive to this.
Begin to show competitive tendencies and they will keep score. So you should use coaching games that have winners and losers. But continue to minimise the importance of the result on match days.
Still don't have very efficient cooling systems - you still need to plan for frequent breaks during your training sessions.
If you bear these limitations in mind when planning coaching sessions for seven to 10-year-olds, both you and your players will have a great time!

==========