Coaching the Youth Player

Posted by STLCoach - 14 Mar 2009 04:52

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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How to make your players feel safe, valued

Posted by STLCoach - 31 Aug 2011 08:06

How to make your players feel safe, valued and part of the team
It doesn't matter how well qualified you are. Or if your players are four or 14.

You won't be able to teach them the most simple of soccer skills if you don't create an environment in which they belong, they are safe and they are valued.

"But", you say, "I am always nice to my kids and they know it's the team that counts."

Sorry, but that may not be enough. You have to attend to your players' emotional needs as systematically and carefully as you teach them to pass, tackle or shoot.

If you don't, all your hard-earned technical knowledge is going to waste as they simply won't be in the right frame of mind to learn anything.

So let's have a look at what you need to do to get your players ready to learn and, hopefully, become great soccer players.

1. They need to feel safe.

Your players have to wear appropriate clothing/footwear and feel comfortable. So make sure their parents don't send them to training in T-shirts when it's freezing cold and don't ask them to them to train or play in very cold or very hot weather. Make sure they always have plenty to drink and give them adequate time to take on fluids.

Making them feel safe also requires that you have team rules that are enforced consistently – no matter who is breaking them – and you keep a sharp eye out for inappropriate behaviour, especially bullying.

Banter must be kept under control and you should never allow "funny" comments about a player's appearance, gender or ability.

To feel safe, your players also need to know that it's OK to fail. There's more on how to give feedback on a player's performance later but for now, just remember that children who are criticised for failure will feel afraid and they won't want to try to do anything new, ever again. And if they don't try new things, they won't learn.

2. They need to feel as though they belong.

One of the main reasons children want to play soccer is to feel as though they are part of a team. They love the feeling of camaraderie, of being wanted, of being special, of "it's us against them" that being in a team generates.

There's a lot you can do to encourage a team mentality in your players (see newsletters 106, 107 and 187 for some ideas) but I've found that having a team dress code is one of the most effective.

Make sure all your players to turn up at training and matches in full team kit and don't allow individuals to wear clothes that mark them out as somehow different or from a more wealthy family than others.

It's also very important to stop cliques developing. If you see the same small group of players standing around chatting or trying to get on the same team every time you play a game, split them up.

3. Make them feel valued.

Perhaps the most simple and effective way to make your players feel valued is to greet them by name when they arrive for practice sessions and matches.

Make the effort to know them as individuals, not just as players. Find out what they like to do outside of soccer, what their interests are, their likes and dislikes. Know the names of their siblings, their pets and ask your players about them when you see them.

The importance of positive feedback

Feedback on performance can also make a player feel valued or, if you get it wrong, make them feel pretty bad about themselves.

So make sure your feedback is always positive. "Well done, that was hard, and you managed it," is music to young ears. When someone does something really well - a pass, shot, tackle or save – stop the play and tell everyone: "That was great work! Exactly how it should be done!"

If a player is getting something wrong, don't stop the game and make everyone watch while you correct them. Take them aside after the session and begin by praising them for making the effort to get it right. Then show them how they could do it better. Then praise them again.

Tip: It is important not to praise your more skilled players for what they do rather than their work rate. If you do, they will come to believe that their success is guaranteed, that all they have to do is turn up and their performance will be good enough. These are the children who start off by being your "best" players but they will stop improving when the going gets tough.

On the other hand, if you praise children who try hard (and praise your high fliers for their effort, not their achievement), your players will work hard regardless of the difficulty of their task. And they won't give up

on match days, either.

Bottom line

If your players feel insecure, isolated and invisible, the work you put into planning your coaching sessions will be largely wasted.

So take the time to work out how you are going to make your players feel secure, part of the team and valued. It will be time well spent!

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How to make your soccer players LISTEN!

Posted by STLCoach - 01 Feb 2012 13:40

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How to make your soccer players LISTEN!
Experienced coaches use a few simple strategies to keep their players focused and attentive during coaching session and the tips below will help you get your messages across more effectively.

But remember that your players are children – not mini adults – and if you are running a midweek coaching session, they've probably been at school all day being forced to sit and listen to their teachers. Once they're out in the fresh air with a goal to shoot at, the last thing they want to do is listen to more lectures.

Tip 1: Keep it short

When you're explaining a game or drill to children, try not to speak for more than 15 seconds and never talk for more than 30 seconds.

Give just one or two instructions, check understanding ("are we all OK with that?"), get into the action quickly, ("right, lets go!") and correct errors as you go along.

Tip 2: Silence is golden

Never start talking until you have your players' complete attention. Make sure balls are left to one side and keep quiet until your players are quiet too. Even if it takes several minutes.

Tip 3: Avoid distractions

Face your players away from other games or activities that are going on around you and don't stand with the sun behind you.

Tip 4: Get down to their level

Don't tower above your players. Get down on one knee if you need to and make eye contact with every player as you speak. Don't wear sunglasses.

Tip 5: A picture is worth a thousand words

Demonstrations are a key part of soccer coaching so show your players what you want them to do.

If you can't do it, find someone who can! Ask for volunteers or get an older or more experienced player to show the others the skill or technique.

Tip 6: Have rules... and apply them

It is essential to have team rules that are discussed and agreed with your players. My number 1 rule is simple: "No talking while I'm talking."

But don't be too quick to apply sanctions – if you do, you'll come across as a sergeant major instead of a coach – but if a quiet word doesn't do the trick you will have to tell the player concerned to sit out until they are ready to listen.

There's nothing to be gained by making a player sit out a game or drill that they didn't really want to do anyway but making talkative players sit out the first few minutes of the end-of-session scrimmage is a powerful deterrent.

Summary

These tips will help you avoid being embarrassed by players who refuse to listen and you should expect and encourage your players to pay attention to what you are saying.

But be lenient with players who are under eight. What you may perceive as discipline problems are really personality tendencies common to that age group: short attention spans, high energy, sociability and an inability to understand detailed explanations. Don't expect six-year-olds to act like 26-year-olds.

And remember that all children come to coaching sessions to have fun and play soccer which, ultimately, is just a game. Taking it too seriously, or making practice too much like school, will result in your players switching off altogether and, in the end, they'll just stop coming.

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How to make your players psychologically strong

Posted by sccysa - 19 Sep 2012 07:43

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How to make your players psychologically strong
Even well-paid, professional football players can suffer from a lack of confidence.
Top strikers, for example Chelsea's Fernando Torres sometimes wonder when, or if, they are ever going to score again and keepers who make a blunder (e.g. England keeper Robert Green in the World Cup finals 2010)
youtu.be/OxspfInbLV8

can get an attack of the jitters every time the ball comes into their penalty area.
Children who play football don't have millions of people watching them but they, too, can easily lose the self-confidence that all football players need in order to perform at their best.
For example:
The ball lands at Mary's feet. She looks around and see team mates running around calling for the ball. "Pass it," shouts the coach. "Shoot!!," yells dad. Confusion results and she loses the ball. "Come on, get a grip!" yells a team mate.
Mary feels like running away and hiding. "Why am I so useless?" she thinks.
Coaches with players like Mary needs to recognise the fragile nature of a child's self-confidence and take steps to boost the self-esteem of their players.

Not instructing players during matches and making sure spectators do the same is a step in the right direction. You should also:

Praise, praise, praise

Praise is like oxygen to a child who is learning new skills. Without it, they will struggle and probably fail. But well-timed and meaningful praise will lift their spirits, boost their self-esteem and give them the confidence to try to learn ever more difficult and challenging skills.

Praise from a significant person such as their coach is especially valued but it has to be sincere and appropriate. A seven-year-old who makes their first pass to a team mate in a match is worthy of "great job, Suzie!" whereas a 10-year-old striker who tamely taps the ball at the opposition keeper will not be helped by the coach shouting "bad luck Joe".

For one thing, there is no such thing as "bad luck" in football. Unless the ball hits a low flying seagull on its way to goal, missing an opportunity to score (or make a tackle or a save) is down to poor technique or faulty decision making, it's never "bad luck".

For another, saying "bad luck" during a match is not helping the player to improve. Much better to use the "feedback sandwich" at an appropriate time after the game or at the next coaching session.

How to make a feedback sandwich

Start with praise, then add a little constructive criticism and top it off with some encouragement. For example:

"Good power in the shot you made in the match on Saturday..."

"But I think you can improve your accuracy. Why not try aiming for the corner of the goal next time?'

"I know you can do it..."

Provide plenty of opportunities to experience success

Success breeds confidence and confidence leads to more success... so it's essential that you give your players plenty of opportunities to succeed.

The best way to do that is set individual short and long-term targets, or goals, that are stretching but achievable.

For example:

"Make one shot on goal in the first half" (to a player who tries to dribble the ball into the back of the net).

"Score 10 goals this season" (to a player that you expect to score at least 15 goals).

"Call for the ball when it comes into your penalty area" (to a quiet goalkeeper).

"Win two tackles in today's game" (to a player who shies away from the physical side of football).

You should also take care to set goals over which the player has as much control as possible (there is nothing as dispiriting as failing to achieve a goal for reasons beyond your control such as poor refereeing, injury or the performance of other players) and which do not rely on winning matches or trophies.

For example, a goal such as "help the team win today's game" is faulty on both counts. The player given that goal may play an excellent game but the team could lose for a number of reasons that the player has no control over.

In coaching sessions, help your new or weaker players succeed by pairing them with more experienced players and adjusting the target outcomes for each activity.

In a tag game, for example, provide safe zones that players can go to to escape the pressure for a few seconds and in today's featured game - Attack v Defence - set the game up so that weaker players play with a stronger team mate.

Conclusion

Making sure ALL your players experience success during coaching sessions, offering praise and constructive criticism plus setting achievable, personal goals can transform the shyest and least confident young player.

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