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## **How To Become A Better Soccer Coach**

When coaching youth soccer, we keep hearing about keeping the players and their parents informed about what you expect from them as a coach and what they can expect from you.

But what is it that youth soccer players expect from their coach to develop their skills and grow as great players? It can help you a great deal to know this, as it will determine the success of your training sessions and planning.

### **- Being Sensitive**

Youth players need as much respect as you expect from them as a coach.

They would like you to appreciate their thoughts and views instead of just being told what to do.

Young players like coaches who are kind, tolerant and considerate. A sense of humor is mandatory.

### **- Being Knowledgeable And Authoritative**

Your players want you to be someone who has played the game and has a very good knowledge of it because it makes you more believable to them so that they can look up to you.

They prefer someone who is supportive, but firm.

### **- Being Reactive**

With young players, it is very important to take notice when they do something well but not go overboard with the praise.

If they perform badly, they need you to restore faith in themselves with suggestions of how they can improve rather than be pulled up for it in the presence of their team.

They also enjoy it when you cheer them from the side when they play the game on the field.

### **- Being Dependable**

A coach is expected to coach his team players.

Very young players are happy to leave the decision making to the coach, as they trust him to do the right thing. When they are older, they enjoy being participative.

### **- Being A Good Manager**

Good managers are good organizers and children expect coaches to show this quality when they design their practice sessions.

The coach must make himself accountable for ensuring that the players are at the proper location at the appropriate time.

### **- Being A Good Teacher**

Youth players look up to their coach to teach them and point out when they need to improve.

A coach who is a good teacher will tell his students that it is okay to make mistakes in the learning process.

While coaching youth soccer players, remember individual abilities while setting goals. Showing appreciation wherever due is vital. Youth players need to focus on confidence building and skills, not competition.

## **How To Take Advantage Of The 4 Vs 4 Drills**

As a coach you will always be on the look out for a variety of drills that can be used to develop various soccer skills in your players.

One of the most effective drills are the small-sided games that can be used in your session plans depending on what skill and technique you want your players to practice.

Experts recommend the use of small-sided games especially for youth players, as they are the best way to build technical skills and to understand the nuances of the game. Here is a SSG for immediate practice:

### **- The 4 Vs 4**

This incorporates everything your players would face in a real match, but without the hassles of the learning sessions.

When you use a real game situation, your players will be able to practice passing the ball in various directions.

What the four versus four can achieve cannot be done with three or five players as either there will be one direction less with 3 and one extra with the five, making it confusing.

That is why 4 is the perfect number with one player in the front for the break through, two to provide the width and the fourth to give it depth. So each player is quite sure about what he has to do since he is allotted an individual task.

## **- The Advantages Of The 4 v 4**

You will be able to focus on improving your players’ techniques, as each one will experience maximum number of contacts with the ball.

They will learn the skills of controlling the ball, passing and shooting with it so that they build on their game skill foundation.

Most importantly, your youth players will simply enjoy this game as all participate equally and get the chance to defend and attack.

Each player gets to practice plenty of passes and focus on one touch.

This soccer drill can also be used for conditioning as it involves plenty of movement.

You can also use this drill to assess your players’ fitness levels so that you add exercises that will address specific needs.

Since it promotes learning in a game environment, 4 v 4 ranks among the best soccer training drills.

Because of the size of the team, youth players understand game concepts much better.

## **How To Teach To Kick A Soccer Ball Properly**

One of the main concerns of soccer players is how to kick the soccer ball skillfully since ball control is a big part of skill development in soccer.

Every player must know how to kick the ball long distance so that he is able to reach the exact point he aimed for.

The player needs to use the right part of the top of his foot to handle the ball.

With this, intense practice and strength training will take the ball where he wants it to go.

### **- Using The Foot Properly**

Get your player barefoot and have him seated on the floor, feet planted on the floor. The knees should be within the arms.

Ask him to begin by sending the ball out of the hand gently, letting it go up not more than two feet. The player's toe should be pointed.

Now have him hit the ball with the part of his foot where he ties his laces. The ball must move up straight.

This movement must be repeated for the player to become accustomed to kicking the ball with the laces portion of the feet.



Now observe to see when the player is successful in kicking the ball two consecutive times with the foot. When this happens and there is enough control, the player can get up.

Once standing, get the player to repeat the same action, namely, sending the ball out of his hands but this time let it go up about six feet. Now have him kick the ball with bent knee straight up.

**- Add A Variation**

Bring in a variation by having your player follow the above exercise by introducing a bounce with each kick. The kicking height should be maintained at 6 feet. The whole idea is to learn to control the ball, not display force.

The next step after achieving the above is to get the player to kick the ball to a fellow player. Now, the ball should be struck when it is on a downward path.

He should not allow the ball to go higher than his own height and kick it with a spin. Repeatedly practicing this will bring in control as well as power now.

The entire exercise can be done with shoes and socks on. Your player will find that it is easier to do the exercise. You will have to be patient while teaching your players how to kick a soccer ball as different players learn at different paces.

## **How To Teach Soccer To Kids**

There are some basic skills to start with when you teach soccer to kids. We know, as coaches, that there’s plenty to teach the young soccer player, but here is a must-do list that is the starting point. The others come later.

### **- The Basic Skills**

- Ball Holding Skills involving receiving and shielding
- Attacking skills
- Stealing the ball involving defense

We see a lot of kids have the inborn ability to show good defense and usually need ball holding and attacking skills addressed through training. This is why most coaches begin with ball holding.

There is another reason for this. When your player gets hold of the ball, he must have the ability to retain it in a pressure filled situation. He needs to decide whom to pass the ball while he holds it.

### **- Ball Holding**

This is where the player becomes the recipient of the ball and with the help of his body; he protects the ball from his opponent using various techniques. Another skill here the player must develop is to be agile and strong enough beat the opponent.

Knee bending is a skill to master here. This vital skill comes through plenty of practice sessions and you will be amazed how quickly some players learn.

You can train your players by setting up a three-meter square area with one ball and two players of similar stature. Let them practice ball holding using techniques like pull backs, etc to protect the ball.

Keeping the ball is very important. Your players will probably goof up a lot of passes but keep at it till they get it right.

Your players must master dribbling. Teach them through simple moves and they will learn it quickly. Dribbling will help them bypass their defenders.

### **- Attacking**

Your players must be taught ample ball control so that they know exactly what to do next so that the defender does not get to it.

### **- Defense And Stealing The Ball**

Your player must learn to buy time as well as how to steal the ball. Plenty of footwork exercises and practice can bring him closer to this.

Gaining time is a skill he has to learn so that his team players can support him.

Teaching soccer to kids, an exciting process of ball control is followed by techniques like passing, kicking precisely etc. It can be very satisfying watching your players’ progress to being great soccer heroes!

## **How To Warm Up Your Players The Right Way**

Warming up your players must be fun and lively. You can introduce many variations to the following ideas listed out here:

### **- Jogging**

Have your players jog in a marked off area in the field. Surprise them with instructions, which they must carry out. You can vary this by getting them to copy an action performed by you.

After each variation, have them jog around for a few seconds. The instructions should be given at varying intervals so that they can develop the ability to respond quickly.

### **- Passing Drills**

Have your players stand in a circle with one player in the middle. They can practice passing the ball.

A variation is to have half the players in the middle, with conditions that allow only one touch play, specific side of foot, part of the body at which the ball is thrown etc.

Place three players in a triangle form. Each player must pass the ball and then run between the other players.

You can reduce the size of the triangle and have the player pass, one touch across the other player's body to the other player.

This drill helps them open up, using right and left foot in alternation. One more variation here is to practice volleying where two players take turns to serve the ball to player 3 who volleys it back.

Vary the height of the ball from the ground here, increasing it gradually. This develops quick service.

### **- Tunnel drill**

This drill is best done after some warming up. Group your players with five or six in each group.

Each group must form a tunnel except the one player. To form the tunnel, the players must stand side-by-side bend over forward to place hands on the ground.

When you blow your whistle, the free player sends a ball through the player-tunnel, sprints to the other end and receives it, sends it back via the tunnel and positions himself at the end.

The player at the other end of the tunnel takes a turn now, goes to the other end and joins the tunnel.

Each player gets a chance at receiving the ball and joining the tunnel at the other end. You can make it a contest to measure which group achieves this fastest.

These warm up soccer drills should prove animated and promise a lot of fun while helping in their skill development.

## **How To Make Training Fun And Avoid Players In Getting Bored**

Soccer coaching drills must not be perceived by your players as a boring exercise. They must be encouraged to feel enthusiastic, understand their purpose and come back with renewed excitement each time.

Therefore it is advisable to design your conditioning and game drills in such a way as to make it enjoyable for your players.

Here is one such drill that can raise the spirits of your players:

### **- How To Conduct The Drill**

- You will require four cones. Arrange these in the formation of a square, with each cone in a corner. You might like to use half your field area.

Get your whole team to step into this square. Choose one of the players to be the Messenger. Let this player attempt to tag the team players.

Whoever he tags must hold hands with him and together they must continue the exercise.

When another player joins them, the three must continue doing this, sprinting around the cone square.

Finally, you will have a long chain of players trying to grab players who are free to make them part of this chain.

The entire drill is wonderful as a fitness drill and your players will enjoy themselves hugely, working as a cohesive team.

- Ensure your players never stand still and continue to jog all the time whether or not they are part of the chain.

Generally you will find that the very young players enjoy being on the move while the older ones try to be clever and become stationary.

The idea behind this drill is to keep your players happy with soccer practice.

- You can vary this drill by having two ‘Messengers’ instead of one so that two long chains develop and when there is only one player left to link, both chains can work together to get them to their chain. This is guaranteed fun.

There are plenty of soccer coaching drills that are multipurpose in terms of building fitness, skills and technique and as a coach, incorporating these into your training sessions in a planned manner will help you ensure the development of your team in the proper manner.

There are drills that focus on individual player skills as well as the skills of the team as a whole.

When these are supplemented with small-sided games, the players can practice all their skills in context, making your coaching efforts fruitful.

## **How To Speed Up The Learning Of Your Players**

The crux of soccer coaching is to improve the players’ game through planning coaching.

They must be taught the right things to do, in a way that they can absorb and practice it, all in an effective way.

Where younger players are concerned, this is especially important since they spend a short time at practice. The coach achieves this through small-sided games.

The coach identifies the areas where improvement is needed in both individual players and the team as a whole.

He then plans the appropriate game, which can address these areas. With the right coaching technique, he transfers learning to the players, making soccer meaningful.

Encouraging creativity is one of the biggest aims of the coach to make the game fun, apart from teaching the basic skills of dribbling, ball skills, passing and receiving techniques etc.

Depending on his particular style, the coach can either instruct and control the players and be ready with the answers or he can be supportive, giving suggestions so that the players reason it out logically to reach effective solutions on their own.



### **- The Coach As A Good Organizer**

The player’s learning depends on what kind of training exercises are organized by the coach. If they are the correct ones, they allow the players to improve in the areas they need to.

The coach makes the players understand that it is not just about following the drills learned – it is a question of when to use the right technique during the game.

The intelligent coach allows the game to be the real teacher because it is the game that gives the perfect learning situation.

### **- The Coach As A Good Teacher**

Having put together the correct training exercises, the coach’s job is not done. He has to use the right techniques to transfer learning points to the players depending on their learning style.

The coach’s style of instruction will depend on what he is teaching, the players he is dealing with and his own comfort level when it comes to methods.

He decides whether to allow them to make mistakes or just give them the solutions.

Coaching soccer has been successful when his team is able to play independently without his continuous intervention. They become proficient at making the right decisions when the game is in progress. The right training games are the best way to teach specific playing techniques.

## **How To Improve Your Soccer Coaching Skills**

Soccer coaching tips can be a boon at times when you are wondering whether you are being effective with your team as a coach. Every profession needs refresher courses, and the delicate job of being a soccer coach need not be any different. Here are some great tips to put the life back in your coaching:

### **- Team Involvement In Decision-Making**

Coaches and teams develop together. This is why good coaches involve their teams in the process of making decisions. They never tell them what to do; they interact with the players, allowing them to participate, air their views and get them to write down the learning points. And then, cement them with their own suggestions.

### **- Flexibility**

Preparation is vital. But there must be scope for flexibility in the plan since soccer coaching is all about the ability to improvise and act creatively, using the suitable skill in the game.

The coach’s focus is on positive development. Therefore, in addition to a session plan, the coach needs a contingency plan if the main plan does not pan out the way it is supposed to.

### **- Coaching Style**

Every coach has a style of his own. Even though there are definite things to be taught, the way the coach delivers it can vary from person to person.

As a coach, you will also have a role model who you want to emulate to be successful. The best coaches use an approach that comes naturally to them without sounding stilted when they communicate.

### **- Encouragement Through Praise**

Little praise, especially with the younger players can have far reaching effects. Every little helps. Players must be commended for their attitude and efforts.

If a particular move was performed especially well, it is worthwhile to mention it in glowing terms. The enthusiasm spreads to the other players too.

### **- Bringing The Life Back Into The Session**

It is okay to use cards to prompt you to say the right things during the practice games. This way you will not miss out on the important points you had planned to bring up.

It is valuable to have a teaching goal each week, so that you can revisit it after each practice session to evaluate what has been achieved, helping you plan further.

Apart from the above soccer coaching tips, it always helps to dress for the part. Get yourself that waterproof top you always wanted!

## **How To Coach Young Girls Effectively**

Both boys and girls play soccer. However, while soccer coaching young girls, a coach needs to bear certain points in mind that will help him design his practice sessions for success.

There are some things that work better with girls than boys and vice versa.

You will find that with boys, you need to use powerful motivational methods.

Even during the course of training, there has to be individualized training for the players. Unlike with girls, you don't need to constantly encourage boys in an obvious way.

### ***- Hints For Coaching Girls***

As a coach, know that girls tend to be more oriented to people and so, it is better to take an egalitarian approach with them.

Girls tend to be close as a team, and maintain a healthy relationship with each other. This must be remembered by the coach and encouraged.

In fact, allow them to finish their social interaction with each other before practice begins – you will have a happier team ready for practice.

Once they begin serious practice you can depend on them to concentrate on what you have planned for them.

Since girls tend to form groups, you must watch out for any group that becomes too dominant over the others to hinder practice sessions. Girls also show their bullying by ignoring – so keep your eyes open for that as well.

Another thing with girl players, which you can use positively, is they have a more cohesive attitude. This does not mean they are not competitive; it is just that they tend to stick together with a helpful attitude.

Boys prefer to focus on scoring a goal while girls also like to ensure that they keep possession of the ball!

In terms of strength, girls can, with the right training, be as strong as the boys though there may be slight fluctuations just after puberty. But this evens out soon enough.

You will find it easier to interact with girl players. Also, you need to have training sessions that are of shorter durations than for boys.

In fact, go in for drills that take advantage of their nature – helpful and group oriented rather than one on one competitive ones. You do need them when you have to focus on developing certain skills, however.

In summary, the difference in coaching young girls as compared to boys is in the psychology and the social issues.

## **How To Be Prepared For The Practice Sessions**

As coaches, we know that the success of any practice session lies in adequate preparation, noted down in writing.

### ***- Elements of Preparing For Practice***

It is important for a coach to first decide upon the agenda for the training session, in terms of what he plans to teach and how, where it will happen, and obviously when.

What he plans to teach would deal with techniques or skills being taught.

Where the practice session will take place, is noted down as the specific area of the field.

He would also need to write, why the particular skill is being taught according to its relevance in the game, along with occasions on which it should be applied.

Precisely, how the technique will be carried out is also mentioned in the practice plan.

Now, all this is laid out on the field diagram made by the coach.

This diagram shows the goal box, the penalty box, the end line, and the arcs where the flags are placed, the centerline, and circle.

## - Other Practice Gear You Need

It is better to maintain a checklist of the gear you need to have for practice sessions.

Insist that each player brings his or her own ball. It is worth it. Your players should also carry their own bottle of water when they come.

Organize enough number of cones for various soccer drills, as these will help demarcate areas of play.

Every team must wear practice vests; these will also help in identification when you have your teams playing games. Expert coaches suggest that you actually use goals when you practice, as they give your players a realistic situation.

You would need flags, as these are especially useful in scrimmages. Do not forget that first aid kit and ensure that it has everything you need. Diminishing supplies must be promptly replenished. You will need ice bags, so carry plenty of ice cubes in a cooler.

A list of phone numbers to call, if there is an emergency, would be very handy. Every coach carries a cellular phone these days, so that hardly needs mentioning.

Aside from the above, your practice plan will also include a variety of warm ups. Your players will love it, if you begin a training session with a game, according to the **soccer field diagram** on your agenda.

## **How To Teach The Drills Properly And Make It Fun**

Part of the coaching process, involves soccer instructions from coach to player, so that the practice sessions go smoothly with the minimum fuss and hitch.

This is especially true for very young players.

### **- Instructions For Youth Players**

The coach should advise youth players, to come dressed in clothes and footwear that are suitable to play soccer in.

In rainy weather, players must be advised to come in waterproof clothes and in cold weather, dress warmly.

The coach must inform the parents of these young players to invest in good football shoes with non-slip soles.

Children must carry their own water bottles. Shin pads are also a must.

Most importantly, the coach must be strict about the players being on time for practice, as it can be annoying to have to repeat the same instructions over and over to different groups.

If some children arrive late, they must be adequately explained the importance of being on time, and so must their parents.



## **- Some Instructions To Make Practice Sessions Fun**

The main point here is to keep practice sessions for new skills short. With young children, the show and tell method works effectively. It is important to plan the training properly in advance to avoid wastage of time.

Kids must always be appreciated for the good things they do. The coach must take care, not to run the same routine drills. Children enjoy having fun, and prefer to play games.

So, it is better to incorporate game-type drills that address the skills, they can learn at this stage.

If you have large teams, avoid games that exceed ten minutes in an hour. While making the training plan, lay down the objectives of this session clearly, writing down what skills you plan to teach and how you intend doing it, so that you can refer to it, if necessary.

Also make a note of specific warm up drills; you want to have your players do to get them involved in the practice session. It is important to ensure that the skills you teach are being understood and used on the field.

Good organization goes a long way in ensuring that soccer instructions are adhered to. There is nothing worse than a coach who tries to plan at the time of practice, as he will just end up with a bunch of unruly kids with no direction.

## **How To Assign Player’s Positions**

Teaching your soccer players all about player positions during soccer practice is an important aspect of coaching. You need to assess and assign the appropriate positions to your players on the field.

Of course, you must always encourage your players to try different field positions, as your team will develop flexibility through this. You want your players to be prepared to handle any move on the field during a match.

Apart from your assessment, you should also get the players to explore the positions where they show optimum performance during practice sessions.

With your younger teams, you might or might not include a goalkeeper during practice games, but they definitely need to understand the positions because they will progress to that soccer eleven soon enough.

### ***- Understanding Soccer Positions***

- The goalkeeper, the keeper, or the goalie must have plenty of practice and special drill to develop all the skills needed to be an effective goalkeeper. The individual must be well balanced, physically fit with good grip on the ball. These keepers must have perfect hand-eye sync to be a good at the job.
- Powerful on the field, the outside fullbacks must be chosen based on their ability to defend and attack. The aim of the

outside fullbacks is defending the goal. Equipped with the strength, agility, swiftness, focused attitude, quick decision-making and forcefulness, these players must be able to close down the attackers while providing their full support to the rest of the defenders. They must also be alert to backside runs and aim to win the ball.

- Next comes the sweeper who generally leaves the field last, apart from the goalkeeper. This defenseman must have the ability to position himself at the correct place when necessary. Being confident, strong, enduring, decisive and swift go without saying.
- The center halfback or the stopper is also a defense player, preventing attacks from the center of the field. He needs the same qualities as a sweeper.
- The Center Midfielders are expected to be all around supporters on the field playing both offense and defense. Ball possession skills are a must here.
- The winger or the outside midfielder is similar to the center midfielder but with great ball control and fitness levels.
- The strikers or the forwarders are the goal scorers who work as a team showing great attacking skills, swiftness and strength.

Getting your players familiar with the responsibilities of various soccer positions during soccer practice is the right way to encourage them to realize their abilities.

## **How To Organize A Practice Session**

When you want to run a practice session, you need to do a lot of planning and organizing so that you can teach them some skills or organize drills to get them better at the game.

Particularly with kids, you cannot afford to fumble around or subdue them with boring routines, as they will quickly lose interest and worse still, fail to turn up for the next session!

Also, with youth soccer players, the focus is on skill and technique development according to their growth. The competitiveness comes later.

### **- Getting Ready For A Soccer Routine**

Except when the weather is too bad for outdoor practice, it is best to hold practice sessions outside.

This allows the kids to play in a more practical area that is grassy and lets them practice their dribbling skills. They can also sprint around, practicing on uneven terrain.

But when the weather is too cold to hold practice outdoors, indoor arrangements have to be made.

You can get the kids to practice their basic soccer skills on the smooth indoor surfaces so that they learn ball touches with ease.

Ensure that there are no dangerous materials lying around like shards of glass and other injurious objects that might hurt the players’ feet. Practice goalposts must be fixed firmly. Preferably, the practice area must not be too uneven.

### **- Things You Need**

As far as equipment is concerned you will need enough cones to demarcate practice areas according to your practice plan.

If you have included games involving different teams then you might need uniforms or vests of different colors to recognize them.

You will need plenty of balls for practice and it is a good idea to have the kids each bring their own ball to practice. You will need to carry a whistle to get your team at attention and also to indicate when they should begin or finish a game or activity.

You need a timer to use for drills, games and speed assessment. Don’t forget to carry a basic first aid kit. You can advise the kids to each carry a bottle of water.

It is advisable to appoint an assistant or two particularly when you run a training session, as it will enable you to go according to schedule. In case a child gets hurt, you will have someone else looking after the session while you attend to the hurt child.

## **How To Improve Soccer Skills With Warm Up Drills**

To develop your players’ soccer skills, you don’t have to run the same routine during every practice.

You can make their entire training session very interesting by focusing all the activity you plan for them towards building their skills.

For example, even the warm up session can be something that helps them to improve a skill like touches on the ball, passing receiving, agility, etc.

### **- A Warm Up Drill That Helps Passing/Receiving Skills**

Mark off an area that is 20 x 20 meters. Group your players with one group of players inside this area and the other group outside.

The players outside the area each have a ball and pass it to the players inside the area, who receive the ball from the player and then immediately pass it back.

This happens rapidly for a few minutes and the groups exchange positions, with the outside players going into the area and the inside players taking their place outside.

The variations you can introduce here are instructing the players to return the ball with a single touch, and then move on to two touches.

Specify that they must receive the ball with a particular part of the foot – inside, outside, then the right or left foot.

Another variation is to receive the balls off the air and pass it back. You can have them receive the ball change direction and pass it to another player.

The observations you need to make as a coach include the way the players perform the first touch. They must be alert and be ready to receive the ball. The players must aim at the ball and be in its path.

They must be dexterous with their swift change in direction and pace. Offer your players the tip that instead of sprinting across the person serving the ball, they must do it at an angle since it will enable them turn back and view them.

### ***- A Game Like Warm Up Drill***

This warm up drill develops speed, and ball-trapping soccer skills and is like a real game. You place four players inside a circle whose radius is about 7-8 meters.

All the other players are outside this circle. Four players outside the circle have a ball, which they pass to the players inside.

The players in the circle must keep moving around and be ready to receive the ball, and pass it back to the same player. You can introduce variations to this.

## **How To Evaluate Your Players**

Soccer trainers focus on developing their teams and evaluate them continuously so that further training and practice can be planned.

Through evaluation, coaches can assess the team’s strengths and shortcomings so that they know exactly what needs teaching. Being an ongoing process, the best time to evaluate is during training and matches.

### ***- Evaluation During Free Play***

The idea behind assessing the players during a match or a game is to observe their level of skills and their creativity.

If you have ‘free play’ during your training session, it can let you evaluate them properly since they would play without too many restrictions related to duration and area.

You would give them some basic guidelines to follow, after which they get into the game. This helps them use their creativity and brings out their talent.

It is much better to use game-like situations for assessment as you save a lot of time otherwise spent planning a session. Ultimately, the aim of all those practice drills for skill development is to enable the player play the game. Free play lets you watch your players closely and note the areas that need development.



In addition, you need to check the various moves they use, their decision making abilities, etc. You need to observe both individual player and the team as a whole for a proper assessment.

### **- Using The Results**

You can use the results of your evaluation to tell the players what they did right and where they could consider different options.

For instance, if there was a particular problem where they used a certain solution, you can point out different options to achieve it effectively to the players.

Next comes holding practice sessions where these specific skills are used so that players can perform them in a match.

Break down skill activities in such a way that your players begin with simple moves and gradually advance depending on their skill and fitness level and age.

You must get your suggestions across to your players in such a way that they are able to appreciate and understand the reason why they have to do something.

It is okay to intervene during a game if something important has to be explained to the players since they must apply whatever they learn to the game. Soccer trainers prefer to demonstrate the skills they wish to teach their players.

## **How To Plan And Make Better Practice Sessions**

For a coach, no matter how many soccer training tips he gets, there’s always room for more.

This is because he constantly strives to prepare interesting soccer practice sessions for his team so that they look forward to each session.

Depending on how many training sessions are possible each week, the coach must fit in skills activities, drills, games and fitness routines into his sessions.

Here are some tips that will ensure that training sessions progress as planned:

- The first and foremost tool you need as a coach is a proper plan. It is not enough to just think about what you intend doing.

It is necessary to write it all down, in terms of what you aim to do during the session and how you plan to go about it.

Write down the details of drills you plan to use for skill development, the conditioning drills you want to use, what you would like specific players to work on, etc.

It is good to maintain a record of your practice sessions date wise, so that you can refer back to it whenever you need to.

- Try to include fitness improvement as part of the practice session in the form of games. You do not have to run individual sessions for conditioning and soccer skills.

The game itself keeps your players moving so it is better to introduce many variations to a game or drill so that the fitness and conditioning happen as your players enjoy the game.

- When you include warm up exercises, make sure you use the ball and have your players perform drills that develop their speed and agility.

Just a few minutes of this can benefit them immensely when they play a real game.

- If you train a huge group of players, it will be effective if you include circuit training. Divide your players into small groups and allot an exercise to each group.

After they perform it for a specific time, and rest for a time specified by you, they can move to the next exercise.

Your players will find this fun and you can have them repeat the entire sequence of exercises a couple of times depending on their age and fitness level.

Apart from following the above tips, let your practice sessions be easy to arrange without wasting precious time just setting up.

## **How To Handle Vital Minutes Of The Game**

Among the major soccer tricks is the knowledge of which moments in the game of soccer are the most crucial. Your players need a proper appreciation of this information and also know how to use it to maximum benefit.

### **- Crucial Time During A Match**

When it comes to soccer, the most critical moments are the first five minutes of the first and second half of the game, and when a goal is scored, the two minutes that immediately follow it.

While most of your players would already agree with you about this, do they know how to make use of this time effectively? Help them understand why these moments are considered so crucial.

- The first five minutes after the game begins tend to be used by players to check out the opposing team.

Rather than waste too many precious minutes over this, teach your team to be smart enough to go ahead and try to score, setting the tempo for the match. This will become a big advantage to them in terms of the entire game.

- You must also teach your players the importance of the last five minutes at the end of the first half of the match since it influences how half time will turn out to be.

If your players are aggressive at this time, they can succeed in mentally overpowering the opposing team.

- Next comes the five minutes when the second half of the match begins.

If your players are playing against a team that has spent time resting during half time, your team will be at an advantage if you have taught them to stretch and be ready.

This means your players are ready to go as soon as the second half starts, often leaving the other team unprepared.

The best thing for you, as the coach, to do is to talk to your team players as soon as the interval begins and make them do their stretching and a little bit of running so that they are prepared to tackle the second half of the game with zest.

Advise your players to keep at the game as soon as they score the goal instead of basking in the feeling.

Keep your players well conditioned to face the last five minutes of the match.

These soccer coaching tips will keep your players prepared and ready to win the match.

## **How To Run A Tryout Session**

Tryout soccer sessions are an ideal situation to evaluate and choose your players as you can observe their ability for pace, dexterity and swiftness. There are a variety of tests that you can have your players go through to do this.

It will also give you an idea of their level of commitment, their sense of competition and how intelligently they decide on what to do. These results are best recorded for individual players for later use.

### ***- Evaluation Activities***

If you have a team of players, you can group them and have each group run at their best speed to a spot that is roughly 200 meters away and back.

Now you don't have to have a target speed or time limit, as it is more important to rank your players vis-à-vis the others in the group.

So you will have the five best of the lot, then the top ten, those who are average and those who need to put in some work for further improvement.

Most coaches will run this exercise when their players are fatigued as well as when they are not.

Another good evaluation activity is to arrange a series of cones about 25-30 meters from the start line.

Depending on how many players you have, say if your group has 15 players, then arrange 13 cones.

Now have your players line up at the start line and when you signal the start of the race, your players sprint to the cones and each picks up one and returns to the start line.

The two players who don't get a cone stand aside. For the next round, two more cones are removed and the 13 players sprint to the cones, each picking one and back.

Two more players are out. This goes on until one cone is left. You can rank the players accordingly.

A variation to this exercise is to arrange the cones in a way that you can watch how the players move to reach them.

Yet another variation to the same exercise described above is to do the opposite.

Arrange the cones in a line, and have your players run to the line, touch the cones and come back.

The three players who return first are out. This goes on till just three players are left and thereafter, the players are ranked.

The aim of tryouts soccer sessions is assessment, so that the coach can plan player improvement.

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