

COACHING 4V4 SOCCER

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4v4 can be misused as a tool. It is not just a matter of putting eight children on a small field and making some random comments. Even with a properly constructed game learning can be left to chance. The following are some ideas, which help to insure that proper learning takes place. In the end though it is the coach's knowledge of the game, the children, the learning process and his role in it that will make the most out of any practice.

Have a clear topic

A correct analysis of the soccer problem must be in mind. This brings into focus certain players at a specific moment in a clear-cut situation.

The starting point leads into the learning point. In small sided games there are numerous restarts. Most of them should lead back into the learning moment. For example, the soccer problem is the sweeper's poor distribution out of the back. The rules of the game are that all throw-ins, kickoffs and corners for his team will restart with a goal kick. The sweeper may dribble or pass out the goal kick. This way the coaching moment will be repeated often giving him many chances to succeed or fail and to learn.

Stay on the topic

When things go wrong outside of the topic ignore it if possible. Fix what you came to fix, don't get distracted.

Freeze the moment

When the problem occurs have the players freeze. Address it with questions about the children's TIC. Was that a good pass? Why did you run there? What could you do better? Ask for solutions. Demonstrate. Begin again. You capture the moment and present them a snapshot. After all a picture is worth a thousand words.

Don't over coach

Experience teaches the coach when to step in. Over coaching kills the game and ruins the fun. Avoid language that the children don't understand or don't need. Slogans and mottos work well. Over coaching hinders the development of concentration. Constant stoppages relieves the pressure that is necessary for developing the proper mentality.

Coach those that need coaching

Mass explanations generally waste time and fall on deaf ears. Addressing comments to the parties involved is much more effective and efficient. After all it's their problem.

Don't argue against success

If a team has just scored a goal don't try to tell them how to do it better. In objective based training it's the result that counts. Wait for the opportunity when the problem presents itself, then it is real.

Ask questions avoid statements

If I say it they tend to doubt it, if they say it, it's true. Get them to tell you what is wrong and how to fix it. They can't argue against themselves. Also, by asking them questions they have to think for the answer as opposed to waiting for it to be given to them. They are an active part of the problem solving.

Coach what is real

If the topic doesn't present itself adjust the game. If it still doesn't then drop the topic. Don't coach a coach's problem; it must be the player's problem. Coach the children that are playing the game, not what is convenient at the moment. Coaching must be relevant to the picture and the problems.

Stand where you can see

If you're interested in the sweeper, stand behind the goal. Try to see the picture from their perspective.

Bring the game to life

The color of the coach. Enthusiasm, humor, emotion and timing all play a part in making the practice enjoyable.

Think of three stages

First, get the game going. Give just enough direction and instruction to start play. Boundaries, goals, any rules specific to the game. They can learn the game by playing the game. This introduction might take a whole practice. Next, what are the big mistakes? Do they understand the soccer problem? Can their present TIC solve it? If it can't, introduce new answers. Finally, by fine tuning you can introduce new demands that require new solutions.

Article courtesy of **Better Soccer, More Fun!**