

COACHING WITHIN A SMALL SIDED GAME (S.S.G)

Educating The Individual, Unit & Team

It should be remembered that all phases of a quality training session should be characterized by action punctuated by occasional intervention.

You, as the coach, may observe that certain patterns repeat themselves in a game, or over the course of a series of games. These patterns are sometimes attacking and sometimes defensive. They can be due to a system of play, a style of play, or breakdown's in technique. The coach may use the method of "Coaching in the Game" to improve these patterns especially when it is difficult to artificially create the environment (e.g. using cones, grids, uneven numbers etc.) The key to this method is the coach who must be able to:

- mentally picture the patterns of play desired
- anticipate it about to happen
- find some "trigger method" to restart the exercise at the point where rehearsal can take place.

"Coaching within the Game" usually involves teams of equal strength and larger numbers (5v5 through 11v11).

Advantages:

- Very realistic.
- Player's enjoy it.
- Facilitates team work and tactical understanding

Disadvantages:

- Demanding on coach's knowledge.
- Exposes poor technique.
- Too much emphasis on competitive aspect diminishes learning.
- Too complex for many coaches and players to analyze.

INTERVENTION

The act of intervening during a training session is the quintessence of coaching. The positive coach will intervene with caution, choosing moments with care. The simplest method is called "freezing play". It involves four steps. With practice the entire process can be completed in less than two minutes [used equally to provide positive feedback to reinforce good habits or negative feedback to improve the level of play, technically or tactically].

PROCESS

STOP, RE-CREATE, REHEARSE & RESTART

• **"STOP".**

The coach stops the action the instant a coaching point needs to be made. This is the coach's judgment call. The coach must be certain that at the exact moment one clear, simple point can assist the players to reach a higher level of development. The coach must ensure that the players will practically freeze in their tracks in order to preserve the picture, which will form the basis of the coaching point.

• **RE-CREATE**

The coach chooses one single coaching point to make. The coach then communicates that point to the player, group of players or team whoever needs to understand it (AUDITORY): The clearest and most effective form of communication in most cases is a physical demonstration (VISUAL). Any verbal communication must be simple, clear, and concrete. The coach must use terms that the players recognize as genuine.

• **REHEARSE**

The coach takes training time to allow the players to run through the proposed solution to the problem (KINESTHETIC).

INTERVENTION CONTINUED....

• RESTART

The coach then restarts the exercise in exactly the same manner and circumstance that led up to the stoppage. This allows the players the chance to confirm and enhance its effectiveness.

The aim is to paint a picture for players as efficiently as possible. This means using the minimum amount of words and time to fix the problem and begin play as quickly and cleanly as possible.

A SMALL SIDED GAME MUST....

- 1) Encourage realism: The players will develop the capacity to overcome the challenge posed by the training session. The design of the session must ensure the usefulness of this capacity, and that it is related to the aim of developing the players'. Do not place a restriction on a game just for the sake of a condition. What is the purpose of the condition? Does it serve its purpose and help develop players? There will be times when the game is slightly artificial but may be necessary to encourage a particular skill. Think carefully as there may be a better condition to use that does not take away players decision making ability.
- 2) Have managed starts and re-starts: To ensure frequency the coach must take charge of how the game is to start, how it should be stopped, and how it is to re-start. The coach cannot completely rely upon the rules of soccer to accomplish these tasks in every case. Therefore the coach manipulates the start point each time to reinforce the desired behavior.
- 3) Be simple: Do not over complicate the game. Too many constraints on the game sacrifice the ability of the game to teach.
- 4) Flow: This is an attempt to describe the feel, intensity, and the focus that characterizes good training sessions. The most common problem is preventing players from getting into the action by talking to them. Some common ingredients of Small Sided Games that flow:
 - Challenges that are tough enough to challenge, but not hard enough to be impossible.
 - Game environment is free from distractions i.e. stray equipment on the field.
 - Clear goals.
 - Immediate feedback from the game.
 - Players feel sense of control over their actions.

Particular techniques or aspects of play can be focused on, within Small Sided Games by conditioning the play. This involves placing a "rule" or restriction on the players'. Examples include:

EMPHASIS

Quality of support and passing
Quality of 1st touch and passing
Quality of shielding and dribbling
Encouraging compact team play
Quality of finishing
Encouraging flank play
Quality of man-man marking
Quality passing to feet
Dribbling/ability to beat a player
Possession (# of passes counts as a goal in addition to scoring in goal)

CONDITION

One-touch maximum
Two-touch maximum
Three-touch minimum
All players must be over half-way line for team to score
Must score with one-touch finish
Can only score from cross
If "your" player scores do 50y sprint
Walking soccer, 2 touch.
Cannot pass forwards

Advantages:

- Coach controls aspect of play.
- Habits are ingrained in players.
- Normally played in game-like situation.

Disadvantages:

- Conditions of game become more important than good soccer.
- Takes away players' decision making and judgment.