

Games vs. Drills

With so many kids quitting sport, there are two basic solutions to improving soccer's success rate: Better coaches and a child-friendly training environment.

While the development of coaching expertise evolves slowly over time, the ability of thoughtful adults to structure more enjoyable practices can be achieved in relatively short order.

The following article - and many related pieces - can be found at "Betersoccermorefun.com."

"A coach who accepts the philosophy that players should learn to play soccer by participating in real soccer situations must also accept that this approach has consequences for the manner in which his training sessions are organized." Bert van Lingen, KNVB

One area that the Dutch excel in is insight. Reading and understanding the game is of high importance. So it's not surprising that they would turn this ability on to the different elements of the entire learning process. This insight into the game, who is playing it, who is teaching it, and how it is learned, provides the philosophy behind the Dutch Vision. These four elements are viewed together. They are dependent on and effect one another.

In order to appreciate the structure behind small sided games, an understanding of their philosophy is helpful. A sound philosophy will save time and provide continuity. It will have a consistent structure and include a set of assumptions upon which the decisions are based.

The following are a few of assumptions (A) and the decisions (D) that follow when using small sided games.

A: Soccer is a leisure activity. It is voluntary. Children play soccer because they want to.

D: Enjoyment must be the primary goal of the activity.

A: What they enjoy about the activity will differ. The motivation for

playing will vary among individuals.

D: Emphasize the elements that appeal to the majority of participants.

A: Children play soccer because they enjoy playing soccer.

Winning maybe, scoring goals maybe, being with friends maybe.

D: Playing soccer must be at the center of the activity.

A: Leisure activities may become life long activities. Always keep one eye fixed down the road.

D: Balance the expedient with the long term.

A: Leisure activities can be easily replaced. Soccer is in competition with many other past times.

D: Create an environment that they will want to return to.

A: Children do not spend as much time in an activity as their parents did. The learning process has changed between generations.

D: Coaching must be efficient and effective.

A: Winning is important. Winning is the final objective.

D: Coaching moves children towards this objective.

A: An objective is composed of smaller objectives. These are the proficiencies which must be mastered.

D: Coach specific objectives.

A: Learning is important. Learning is measured by a permanent change in behavior.

D: Coach doing.

A: The children are at the center of the game. Without the players there is no game.

D: The environment is built to the children's needs.

A: The game provides the measure for success. The game embodies principles and structures.

D: Evaluations are made by meeting the needs of the game.

A: Learning is graduated. It takes place over time and increased

resistance.

D: Repeat basic activities and adjust the obstacles.

A: Children learn to play soccer by playing soccer. They don't learn by doing something else.

D: Coach soccer.

A: The coach that does not stay ahead of his players holds back his players. Children will grow, the coach must also.

D: Education in the game, children and methodology is on going.

A: Children don't accept problems that aren't theirs, and sometimes even those that are. "So what, it's not my fault."

D: Get them to take responsibility.

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