HARTSELLE UNITED FUTBOL CLUB

Coaching Philosophy

ABSTRACT
The guide to coaching principles that are core to the foundation of Hartselle United Futbol Club.

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"Football is a game of feelings and intelligence."

"Coaching is taking a player where they can't take themself"

"A great pianist doesn't run around the piano or do push-ups with his fingers. To be great, he plays piano"

~ Jose Mourinho

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BACKGROUND

It is rare these days that there are pickup soccer games in backyards or at local parks with no supervision. This less structured free play has been replaced with a formalized approach to coaching with an emphasis on winning. This approach has a direct impact on soccer at the youth level.

In order for players to learn and enjoy playing, there needs to be a healthy balance between structured and non-structured play.

At the youth and junior levels, a set of fundamental principles should be considered by every soccer coach – instruct players in formalized settings and create environments to allow the game to teach players to experience the game.

The primary principles is that youth soccer players require a certain amount of uninterrupted play, which allows them to experiment, developing their identity as a player, and with that success and failure.

A coach's long term goal is to prepare a player successfully to recognize and solve the challenges of a game on their own, with an emphasis on fundamentals. It is vital that all coaches approach soccer with this in mind.

COACHING METHODOLOGY

Regardless of your own specific coaching style, we believe there are basic concepts and characteristics that are foundational to effective teaching of the game and developing players.

When developing and executing appropriate and effective training sessions it is helpful to consider the following concepts:

1. *Context*: How does this technique or decision fit into the match model and how are they affected by particular situations occurring in the game?
2. *Contrast*: How does this technique or decision directly opposed to another movement or decision that occurs in the game?
3. *Recurring themes*: How to identify, recognize, and act on consistent patterns that occur in every game?
4. *Spontaneity*: Movement and decisions with the ball that are more "felt" rather than processed Intellectually.

Some common characteristics of any effective coaching style include but are not limited to the following considerations:

1. The method and style helps the players win their game, find success, and solve the problems that they are experiencing in the game.
2. All players want to play without interruption.
3. The coach considers and respects the rhythm of play when looking to make a coaching intervention, looking for ways to coach without interrupting the rhythm of the game and to

make any coaching interventions as non-invasive as possible.

4. Is the coach able to anticipate the problems as they develop on the field, or is he/she only addressing only the result?
5. The guidance that the coach provides prepares the players to be successful at their current level as well as the next level/age group.

COACHING METHODS

1. Coaching within the flow of the game: This is successful with players whose technique allows them to process and play at the same time. The coach provides clear, brief instruction to individuals or small groups of players as the ball is moving. This is not an ongoing monologue, but comments at a critical time to influence play. The caution here is not to let this become just noise.
2. Coaching the individual player as the game continues: Here a coach stops an individual player to make a coaching point but does not stop the activity. While the coach interacts with the player, his team plays "a man down". Obviously the interaction must be brief and concise to get the player back into the activity.
3. Coach at natural stoppages: This is when the coach addresses groups of players when the game is still. Water breaks, change overs etc... While being brief and concise is always important, here it's important to focus on a problem that is fresh in the players mind.
4. Allow the conditions of the activity to coach the theme: Here the conditions of the activity provide the problem for the players to solve.

Two important considerations in any method or style:

➢ Does the information regardless of its delivery, make sense and help the player solve the short termand long term problems that they encounter in the game

➢ Are the players given sufficient time and opportunity to experience soccer and solve problems on their own?

THE GAME – WHAT IS SOCCER?

Before beginning to coach it's important that coaches understand how the various elements of the game might influence a player's behavior in training and competition. These game elements are found in all levels of soccer, from the beginning player to the seasoned player.

1. It's a competitive game made difficult by the opponent

2. It has an objective to achieve, to win games.
3. It has rules to follow and a field to play on.
4. It is free flowing no time outs or stoppages for coaching.
5. Players must solve the problems presented in the game, not the coach.

THE GAME IS THE BEST TEACHER

The best teacher is the game. Coaches who create a game-like environment during training sessions have found a key to success. How do games help the coach to teach?

1. The game presents the problems for the players to solve.
2. Using games in training creates realism.
3. Players are motivated and challenged to learn through the game.

USING SMALL SIDED GAMES TO TEACH

The use of small-sided games creates the right environment for player development by allowing players to develop creatively by encouraging them to respond to the problem**s** presented by the game. Small-sided gams encompass all components of the game I.e. technique, tactics, fitness, and psychology, and provide a highly economical way to train players.

Small sided games accentuate these areas of player development:

1. *Skill development: number of touches on the ball is increased*
2. *Tactical development: decision making is expanded*
3. *Game understanding: positional play is greatly expanded*
4. *Intuitive development: transitional play is increased and becomes automatic.*

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The concept of player development is essential to the long term growth and improvement of the player. Player development demands that the player is central to all decisions made regarding training and competition. The coach who believes in player development will ensure that the following objectives are met:

1. Games and activities are designed to maximize the number of touches on the ball by each player.
2. Training sessions are designed to improve a players technical abilities and their tactical application.
3. Competition is the main ingredient within the practice and helps to motivate and challenge the player.
4. Educates players to develop an appreciation of the game, their teammates, opponents, and coaches.

ROLE OF A COACH

Youth coaches need to understand their roles are within the overall player development process. Coaches who understand the player development process and the differences that exist between age and ability characteristics are more likely to positively influence and affect the development of a player.

Coaches serve as a Facilitator:

➢ Players need to receive positive feedback.
➢ Practice should be conducted in the spirit of learning.
➢ Activities need to be geared toward achieving success.

Coaches need to have understanding of who they are coaching:

➢ Recognize that players are not defined by chronological age only. They mature and develop at their own pace.
➢ Treat each person as an individual.
➢ Recognize that their needs are different, personalities and temperaments are different, and are unique in how the coach responds to each player.

WHAT INFORMATION DO WE GIVE PLAYERS WHEN COACHING?

1. Provide clearly defined goals.
2. Provide information in a logical progression simple to complex – general to specific.
3. Feedback about performance: Should be specific and address what is happening in game and in practice.
4. Corrections – addressing the group as well as the individual.

HOW TO TEACH

1. What are you going to coach?
2. Why are you going to do it?
3. Where does it belong in the full game?
4. Explain the rules of the activity.
5. Explain why you are doing this.
6. Is my coaching having an effect on the game, the practice, and the players?
7. Identify the specific problems: is it technical, tactical, or psychological?
8. Put into large game: always make practice as realistic to the game as possible.
9. Ask questions that make the player think to allow them to develop their understanding of the problem. Avoid yes or no questions.

PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

The game will tell you what the team needs to practice. The game and training have a reciprocal effect. The game indicates what we need to train for and in training we prepare for the game. - THE CYCLE OF DEVELOPMENT

TACTICS

Tactics are the where, when, and why of soccer. Soccer is a team sport that allows each player to impose their personality into the game. The free flowing characteristics of soccer provides players numerous opportunities to make instant decisions while attacking or defending.

1. Short Term Planning: It is the coach's responsibility to select and implement a system of play that is conducive to the abilities of the team. Each team member should have a good working knowledge of how the team plans to attack and defend as a unit.
2. Team Strategy: The coach is also responsible to map out the long range goals of the team. As a team, what are we trying to accomplish?
3. Player Decisions: The player's behavior is based on the situation and the actions of the opponent. These decisions are based upon being in possession of the ball, the opponent having possession or the time of transition between both actions.

GAME ANALYSIS

The game provides for both player and coach countless opportunities for development. Players improve their performance through competition due to the unlimited number of technical and tactical situations that must be repeatedly solved throughout the game. For the coach, these observable situations are also the source of our practice content as they are the "soccer problems" that the players confront, but cannot solve during the game.

The coach must analyze the game carefully observing the players as they carry out their tasks within the four components of the game – Psychological, Physical, Tactical, and Technical.

Attitude (Psychological)

1. Competitiveness – Do the players come prepared to play, compete, and battle?
2. Mental toughness – Are the players able to play when the conditions aren't ideal and things aren't going their way?
3. Commitment to high standards – Do the players attempt to execute the ideas they have been presented in training? Do they attempt to perform at their highest level?
4. Concentration – Do the players stay focused on the game from the opening to the final whistle?

Physical

1. Speed of action – Do the players have the ability to process the information from the game and choose the appropriate response quickly?
2. Technical Speed – Do the players have the ability to manipulate the ball at speed and maintain control?

Defending (tactical)

1. Do players recognize when to become the pressuring defender?
2. Do they achieve a good starting position early?

3. Do they know when to close off passing lanes first and then pressure?
4. Is pressure applied at speed, but in control?
5. When they step in, are they confident and decisive?

Covering defenders:

1. Are they supporting the pressuring player or ball watching?
2. Do they have the right distance from the pressuring player?
3. Can they maintain vision of the ball and their marking assignment?
4. Do they recognize when to track players?
5. Do they communicate to the pressuring player?

Team play:

1. *Does the team play as a unit?*
2. *Are the key players taking responsibility for defensively organizing the team?*
3. *Is the team strategy effective and appropriate for the game?*
4. *Is the strategy being applied correctly in the different thirds of the field?*

Attacking (tactical)

Player on ball:

1. Is the first touch positive?
2. Is the choice of penetration correct given the situation and position on the field?
3. Is decision and action carried out quickly?
4. Can they play under pressure of an opponent?

Supporting players:

1. Can they make space for themselves?
2. Do they know how to lose a marking player?
3. Do they recognize pressure and make an effort to play out of it?
4. Do they position themselves at the appropriate distance to give support?
5. Do players know when to play in front of ball and when to play behind it?
6. Do they communicate with the player in possession?

Unbalancing attackers:

1. Do they take the responsibility to push forward and create length for team shape?
2. Do they move in an attempt to get free or draw opponents into poor defending positions?
3. Do they look to get behind the defense?

4. Can they make space for themselves and others by making runs off the ball and by getting into spots that force choices upon the defenders?
5. Can they hold the ball and wait for supporting players to move forward joining in attack?

Team Play

1. Is the strategy effective in the different thirds of the field?
2. Are the key players taking responsibility for dictating the rhythm of the game? Are they recognizing the weaknesses of the opponent and taking advantage of it?

Technical Analysis

1. Are the players demonstrating proper technique successfully in the game?
2. What is the quality of their passing?
3. Is the choice of pass appropriate – long/short - to feet or space?
4. What is the quality of receiving pass?
5. Do they keep control?
6. Do they receive the ball into space away from pressure?
7. Quality of dribbling?
8. Do they shield to keep possession?
9. Do they beat opponents on the dribble?

*** This list is in no way exhaustive.

Analyzing the game and learning to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of individual, group, and team performances is a significant part of coaching. Carefully constructed, well organized training sessions that clearly address these observed weaknesses will have a major positive effect on the players.

The two most important questions that any coach should ask:

1. *Does my training have a positive effect on the players helping them to solve the observed problem from the game?*
2. *Does my training transfer to the game?*