

SOCCER THE GAME OF LIFE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COACHING

Soccer is a game for life. It is the most popular and fascinating sport played worldwide. Most humans like to play with the ball and play soccer. But there is a tremendous difference between “playing with the ball” and playing the game of soccer. Although “playing with the ball” may be entertaining and serves the purpose on maintaining some sort of physical fitness, most of those who only play with the ball are missing the real joy of the game. Learning the technical and tactical characteristics of the sports allows players to perform better and then to enjoy the activity more. Soccer like many other sports is an ever changing activity and players must be up to date.

If we, the old guard soccer enthusiasts, try to play the game the way we played it when we were young, we will be totally lost. Although soccer is “the simplest game” it has evolved through the years. Even the rules (Laws) have been subjected to significant modifications. Nowadays soccer is faster, more elaborated and dependant on proper strategies. For example, in the “good old days” we had more time to “trap” the ball and then think about the next course of action. Today trapping has lost its importance. If players try to trap the ball they will probably loose it to an opponent. Furthermore since soccer has evolved from a contact sport to a collision sport, players must adapt to those circumstances. Today soccer is a game of physical and mental speed. Modern soccer is a game of anticipation, a game of triangulation and quick diagonal passing. Those tactical components must be learned to become an effective player. Coaching soccer make the learning easier.

The main objectives of coaching soccer include:

- Ensuring player safety
- Placing education and character development *before* wins
- Teaching beyond the "X's and O's" to teach players to think independently during games
- Teaching athletes to master soccer
- Educating players to improve performance and instill the love for soccer
- Educating players to abide by a code of Honoring the Game
- Instilling the concept of pride, and the satisfaction of a job well done.

Coaching doesn't mean being soft or just being satisfied with everyone just having fun. Coaching is not a source of empty, unearned praise. Contrarily, coaching is education designed to prepare winners on the field of play and in life, winners who win with class and effort, winners who respect the opponents and worship the game.

Coaching as some old timers fear does not encroach on the ingenuity of the individual players. On the contrary coaching by enhancing learning of proper techniques and tactics assists the creativity of the players.

FIFA has realized the importance of coaching as an educational and managerial component of the game that it is now so indispensable to the progress of soccer. Therefore and after more that 100 yeas of silence, FIFA introduced the coach in the Laws of the Game.

Long time ago USASA realized the importance of training our coaches. For that reason the USASA coaching License course was introduced. This is a license tailored to our adult soccer population. In Region III, the USASA coaching course has been offered since the mid 1990's in selected areas with great success. The results have been absolutely fantastic: better players, better teams, decreased violence, more enjoyment, more players attracted to the game.

We hope that in the near future every State Association in our region will offer the course. It is fun, it is great, and it works.

For more information concerning the course contact:

Dr J.C. Meeroff
Chairman USASA Region III Committee
drmeeroff@aol.com