

The greatest characteristic of a soccer player is his 'Coachability'

Coachability.

What a weird word:

Is this player coachable?

Want to listen and learn?

Why waste time on an uncooperative individual?

Very often we give too much importance to talent. Clearly it's important but, considering that no one is perfect, even the talented players have to get better and be at the service of the team.

What can you teach to players who don't want to listen, don't want to learn and don't want to cooperate?

Every team I have coached in my life, boys or girls, men or women, always have the same constant characteristic. They always have one 'virus'. When they have two, I call it a 'cancer'.

Viruses, are talented players who are always late, very often absent because they prefer to play on another teams, don't listen to the coaches, never accept constructive criticism or corrections, never try to get better, always look away when you talk with them, never say "Hi, coach.", coming or going away from the field and, in his or her opinion, never makes mistakes. The others have to win the ball back. The others go back and defend. They are the stars. Even more if he or she are the keepers.

If you have 1 on your team, you can cure it (the team not the virus), but if you have 2 of them, and you don't do anything, your team has to die.

Arrigo Sacchi always said that the greatest characteristic of a champion is 'humility'. How can we not agree with this?

So, if you have a 'virus' or worse, a 'cancer' on your team, and you do have it, (if you say no, you're just pretending not to see it), I strongly suggest to eliminate them before they, he or she, infects the whole team.

This having been said, lets go back to 'Coachability' and see what makes an athlete an individual with whom it's a pleasure to work.

In my notes I wrote:

Athletic ability.

Technical ability.

Ability to make team mates better.

Ability to make an impact on the team.

Being a winner.

Athletic ability

A soccer player, at any age or sex, has to be fit! Continuously going back and forth, in suggesting, defending, supporting, pressing and not being exhausted after 10 minutes of this. How many players like this do we have on our teams? Not too many!

This means that a 'Coachable' player works by himself. Runs every day 20/30 minutes. Does the 'shuttle', 5/10/15/20/25 yards (back and forth) in less than 35 seconds. 5 times, with a minute rest each time.

Sprint 10 yards, 5 times back and forth, in less than 11 seconds. 5 times with 30 seconds rest, every time.

Speed ladders, the following exercises 4 times each, plus sprinting through 6 cones set in a zigzag path, 10 yards apart:

Fast sprint through the steps, raising the knees high.

Jump with the feet together every step, without flex the legs or touching the heels to the ground.

Jump inside and outside skipping one step every time, legs straight, without touching the heels on the ground.

Fast steps from the side. Left in, right in, left out, right out, go next step, repeat.

As I said, at the end of the latter, put 6 cones 10 yards apart and sprint in a zigzag through them left and right every time after the above exercises. Jog gently back to the letter and restart.

Technical ability

Even Ronaldinho, can improve his touch so, all the 'coachable' players, have to do foot work for handling the ball with their feet like they are able to do with their hands! 50/60% of the players, if not more, are unable to juggle. You don't believe me? Try the next practice and see how many of your players are able to juggle 10 times consecutively with both feet. This is unacceptable. I've seen hundreds of practices. How much time is dedicated to juggling? None!

Why? Because the 'spoiled' kids get frustrated, not being able to do it! And their parents too! They need to have fun, not get better and try to become soccer players. So let them play, have fun, and never learn anything.

The Ability to make your team mate better.

Did you ever play tennis with someone that is 'horrible'(that means, never sends a ball back)? If yes, you know that it makes you look 'horrible' too. But when we play tennis with someone really good, who send balls with the right power, with the right rebound, we just put the racket there, and the ball goes back as if we were Agassi!

It's the same in soccer. A "Coachable" player makes good passes in the space and makes the teammate's job, very easy. They almost don't even need to control the ball but just follow it. Communications like 'man on', 'turn', or 'go', gives them a confidence like having 2 pairs of eyes. One in front and one behind. We have to be their eyes behind!

Give them a good assist so they have only to push the ball in the net with their foot or their head.

Support them in going in to the right spot so they can reach you with an easy pass, instead of forcing them to dribble, because no one is unmarked, and probably loose the ball.

The ability to make an impact on the team

The 'Coachable' players, when they have the ball, on rotation, are the play makers. They have to be the leaders. On rotation, all the players carry the team on their shoulders. Clearly this depends a lot on their individual characters. For some it's more natural to do this, but if only 2 or 3 players do this, when they are not there, the team will collapse without their guidance.

Being a winner

Please don't misunderstand me. I don't want to put a lot of emphasis on winning. To do our best is already a 'victory' independent of the score. But this, very often, generates the opposing misunderstanding.

Because we don't put the correct emphasis on winning, little by little, it becomes unimportant.

The meaning of every game, soccer in particular, is to win the game. If we take away the 'deep meaning' of a competition, we negate the existence of the competition itself. I repeat: a soccer

game is a competition between 2 teams that act in order to win the game. Too often, the absence of this attitude is the excuse not to make the maximum effort for reaching the final goal. That goal is to win the game. Not at any cost, but fighting in trying!

Coachability.

Lets all try to look more for this aspect, when we have to judge and choose soccer players at the try-outs. We need to talk with them, not only look at them. Do they have good skills? Very good. Now look to see if you can work with him or her. In trying to make them REAL soccer players, it's fundamental for the coaches, that the players are - coachable.