

## Decision Making By Players

One of the great things about the game of soccer is that unlike many other sports, decision-making has to be made in the flow of the game as opposed to many of the other sports that have breaks to make adjustments. In football there are time outs and also huddles between plays. In basketball, there are time outs. In baseball, there is time between innings. In tennis there is the time between serves and the time between games. In soccer, other than the halftime break, we don't have these times to discuss tactics during the flow of the game.

Since the beauty of the game is in the natural flow and the importance of the players making adjustments on the fly, it's important as coaches to allow players to learn how to make these decisions on their own.

In training, when an activity hasn't started off perfectly, rather than stopping it right away to correct the problems, as a coach allow them to continue and see if they are able to correct the problem on their own. If they aren't able to correct the problem on their own, at some point a coach will have to step in and make the corrections for them **BUT FIRST**, allow them to try on their own. If every time a player makes a mistake they know the coach will correct it right away, the players will never have to think for themselves. However, if the player knows the coach will give them the opportunity to make mistakes and to correct them without constant intervention, it will allow the players to make decisions and problem solve on their own.

The same concept is true for game coaching as well. The players, who are allowed to take chances, make mistakes and correct the mistakes on their own are the ones who will be better prepared to adjust under pressure. The players who are constantly told what they should be doing are the ones who will be unprepared to make their own decisions.

To some extent, this becomes a short term vs. long-term issue. When a coach is mainly concerned with short term winning they won't be willing to allow mistakes or to allow the time for the players to learn how to think on their own because it might cost their team a goal or a win. When a coach is concerned with long term development, they will be more willing to possibly give up a goal or even have a loss while the players learn to make decisions on their own and learn to think and problem solve.

Not only does the ability to problem solve allow for the long term development of better soccer players, it also will help the players become more successful off the field as well.

As a coach, allow your players the opportunity to make their own decisions and if these decisions are incorrect, allow them the opportunity to correct these decisions rather than feeling you need to do this for them all the time. As a player, try to work things out on your own rather than always looking for the coach to make the decisions for you. However, when you aren't sure how to correct something, don't be afraid to ask your coach for guidance when necessary.