

COACHES SHOULD SIT DOWN

Article #1 – John Hannan (Jan. 2015)

Why are most of our coaches sitting down during matches and not standing, pacing the touchline and yelling out instructions?

Claudia Reyna, arguably our country's top American field player ever produced and former U.S. Soccer's Youth Technical Director, charged with the responsibility of making and implementing recommendations for the betterment of the game particularly when it comes to coaches and players, wrote an article titled 'Coaches Should Sit Down' (April/ 2011). For me, it was just a confirmation of what the better coaches already do and what the better clubs already recommend.

Trainings are the time for coaches to assert their personality and expectations on their players, but matches are the appropriate time to evaluate their impact and allow players to take the lead in their own play. As is often said, "The game belongs to the players". And I add, 'the trainings belong to the coach'.

As adults, we know our human brains do not allow us to concentrate fully on two things at once. I cannot have an in depth conversation with another person while trying to sort out what I am going to cook for dinner. I can only be fully engaged in one thought or the other, but not both. If I try for both, I will not be fully engaged in either.

A coach should not be running the touchline and constantly yelling during games. Way too many poor coaches do this and typical of American sports, try to control and manipulate every action and decision on the field, those coaches are not doing the job they should be doing, namely assessing and evaluating players and their team.

Even more importantly, we need to think about how our coaching habits impact our player's ability to focus on their own play. If we are up constantly yelling, how can players be expected to be fully engaged in the game? Do we really think children can concentrate on the many challenges and constant adjustments they will need to make in a match, while a coach, or parent, is yelling out commands, that are often too late and or just incomplete information?

So does this mean coaches should just sit there and say nothing? No. But it does mean that they should be selective and concise in the information they provide. Use the natural breaks in the game to provide meaningful information/feedback (i.e. halftime, stoppages in play ...). This does not give permission for the coaches to become disengaged in the game by texting, calling, et cetera but rather to be fully engaged and using that information to better prepare the players and team for future matches both in the short and long term. .

Coaches should sit down and really watch the game and parents should do the same. Parents should refrain from sideline coaching but should provide positive encouragement. Your kids, our players and teams, deserve the right to play in an atmosphere that encourages learning and exploration and NOT being told what to do and how to do it. That is for trainings and even then within a teaching manner.