

WHAT IS GOING ON AT TRAININGS?

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John Hannan

Training is the MOST IMPORTANT thing we do in our club for development of our players, teams and coaches. I liken it to going to school. While exams may be the tool to evaluate information gathered, it is the day to day, month to month, year to year, of going to school where learning really takes place. So it is with regular and consistent training over the course of time. The matches are useful to evaluate where a player/team is, but it is the trainings that will ultimately determine where a player will go.

So what goes on at trainings? First, our coaches should be punctual arriving early to set up their 'classroom' for activities that day that will aide learning. Secondly, our coaches are expected to follow a curriculum that is provided to them by the club (at U10 and below) and/or the development of a curriculum they put together using information gathered from previous matches, feedback from other staff coaches and the use of the U.S. Soccer Curriculum as presented by Claudia Reyna, former U.S. Soccer's Youth Technical Director, noting both weekly and seasonal objectives. Also, our club provides curricula resources in the form of the Roadrunner Way, which is a practical guide of activities and our Roadrunners Curriculum Standards, noting yearly objectives and measurement tool that players and teams should strive to attain to. Thirdly, coaches are expected to be engaged and actively teaching, monitoring and holding players to a standard that promotes learning and achievement.

As is true of all humanity, each unique person has their own personality that should be permitted to express itself within the framework of collective objectives. Coaches are no different. So where we hold all coaches to certain expectations, each unique coach will present their 'students' with the information they are trying to get across to them in various ways and within their own personalities. Also understanding that trainings develops coaches, too, and with more and a variety of trainings, they will learn their craft more and be better able to teach it in more meaningful ways.

All that said, players cannot develop if they are not present regularly and consistently over the long term; if they are not actively engaged in their trainings; and if they do not do their 'soccer homework' on their own which provides more time on task and increases their comfort level with the ball. Training 2-3 times a week with their team is not enough time for a player to become proficient at their sport. The team trainings should ignite a truly committed and engaged player to want to spend more time on their own with the ball. With greater technique and insight, players will really learn to love the game and experience the joys that come with it.

Finally, as parents and as a club, we should not merely use matches to evaluate a play, team or coach, but to look deeper at what is happening on a daily basis in team training, in the progress made over time, and in players desire to train on their own. Do not get caught up in the poor model way too many clubs/teams use, namely in that winning = development. Winning is not the difficult part of development, it is the players ability to learn and understand that will serve them well over time.