



Gameday Coaching Best Practices

Development Teams Coaching Clinic

Food For Thought

- The players are learning with or without your help! A lot of coaches behave as a **parent** might on the other sideline and either “cheer lead” or “commentate” and as a result when they do speak it has less impact on the players behaviour. The players hear constant noise from the sideline (or what we call verbal diarrhea) and so understandably they drown it out so they can actually focus on playing. Classic things you hear coach shouting “Run” and guess what they were going to run anyway. “Dribble” and the payer is already dribbling, “Shoot” and so on! Try just stepping back and sitting down and not talking for a while and a huge pressure will be lifted! The players can do all that without you telling them! Doing is how they learn, making decisions for themselves is the most important part of the learning process on gameday so if you are stealing that away from them by shouting at them what to do in those moments then you are hindering their learning (which hopefully is the exact opposite of what you are trying to do). So relax, talk less, and focus your eyes on some specific things that you can address. Let them play. Less is more!
- The job of the coach on gameday is to ensure you create an environment where the players feel safe and supported so they can enjoy the game and to enhance the learning outcomes. To do that you simply need to narrow your focus and that of the team. Cliches come to mind such as “We cannot fix everything” and “Rome wasn’t built in a day”. So a coach must be strategic, have a plan, and create an environment where the players are crystal clear on what the coach is identifying as the learning objective(s). They must then pay special attention collectively to try to execute those objectives amongst all the other things that are also going on during the game. No different from how education is tackled in schools we don’t learn all subjects simultaneously – we block it and tackle one thing at a time ie Maths first period, English second period and so on.
- Pregame is key to outline a focus (relating to a recent training session and guided by the age appropriate curriculum). Clarify any measures you might use eg for possession the number of consecutive passes without losing the ball
- During game is key to reinforce that focus in your interventions – first step is getting the players to TRY to execute the plan. The first thing you should be looking for is that there is an intent there, and an awareness in their decision making of the objective. Initially reminding the team “What are we focussing on”
- Half Time is an opportunity to review and come up with a plan to improve, and for players to discuss the challenges they had in the first half. Use Visual aids(tactics board or cones on the ground to represent players) or recreate scenarios with players and walk through them as you talk about it. Walk and Talk. Lots of players learn visually and just talking to them without pictures is useless! Make sure you feedback on measures or stats if taking them.
- Second half is the opportunity to demonstrate those learnings from the first half and hopefully improve.
- Full Time is when you assess their progress and try to highlight all the positive things they did around the objective. Its ok to identify an area that they did not do so well on with respect to the objective. You may also want to acknowledge strength in another area. Sandwich the negative between positives! Referencing a good example eg the est play fo the game! Is a good idea!

THE LOOK AND FEEL

- As a Coach what sort of **game day environment** do you want to create?



Positive



Be Positive and supportive - Varied Coaching Styles – Q&A, Guided, Command. Praise players that try to execute objectives even if they are unsuccessful – they tried which is all you want to see. Reward the proper intent with Praise! Once players realise that all you want them to do is TRY to execute a game plan or objective then they will actually buy in especially if you are generous with praise – they will want that! Then you have an effective team capable of collective thinking and collaboration which is the foundation for growth.

Ownership



LET THE PLAYERS MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS.

Give Players Ownership – During Play don't commentate, Let them make decisions and make mistakes. Pre-Game, Half Time allow them to discuss, ask questions, problem solve (Group discussions). TIMING OF INTERVENTION (Pre decision, during, post)

Light



The atmosphere around gameday should feel light and excited energy. Allow them their time (Efficiency of Coaches Words, calculated timing & limited duration of when you speak to the group). Lengthy speeches will clutter them and just create confusion and overthinking and a “heavy” atmosphere which leads to negative thinking.

Clear



Focus – Performance or Task Focused rather than Result focused. Set Simple objective(s) for the game based on training theme and focus your eye and comments towards supporting the players achieve success in this theme. Review during and after the game. In every game there should be some developmental outcome that they are trying to achieve.

COACHES GAMEDAY CHECKLIST

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

Best
Practices

What to Coach

Objectives always same – have fun! Encourage individuals!

- Freedom to play and enjoy! Try their individual skills. They love to dribble and score goals and some are learning also the joy and benefit of passing to escape “the pack”!

When to Coach

Prompts during defending, encourage during attacking moments!

- Before - during restart such as opponents GK – Who can go and steal the ball?
- During Play – Don’t coach the player on the ball. But its ok to remind others to help!
- After Play – Give positive Feedback after a play even if they tried and failed – we want them to try again!

How to Coach

Positive!

- Positive, try to find a positive in every players game.
- Example – that was a great dribble – maybe next time you will get a chance to shoot!

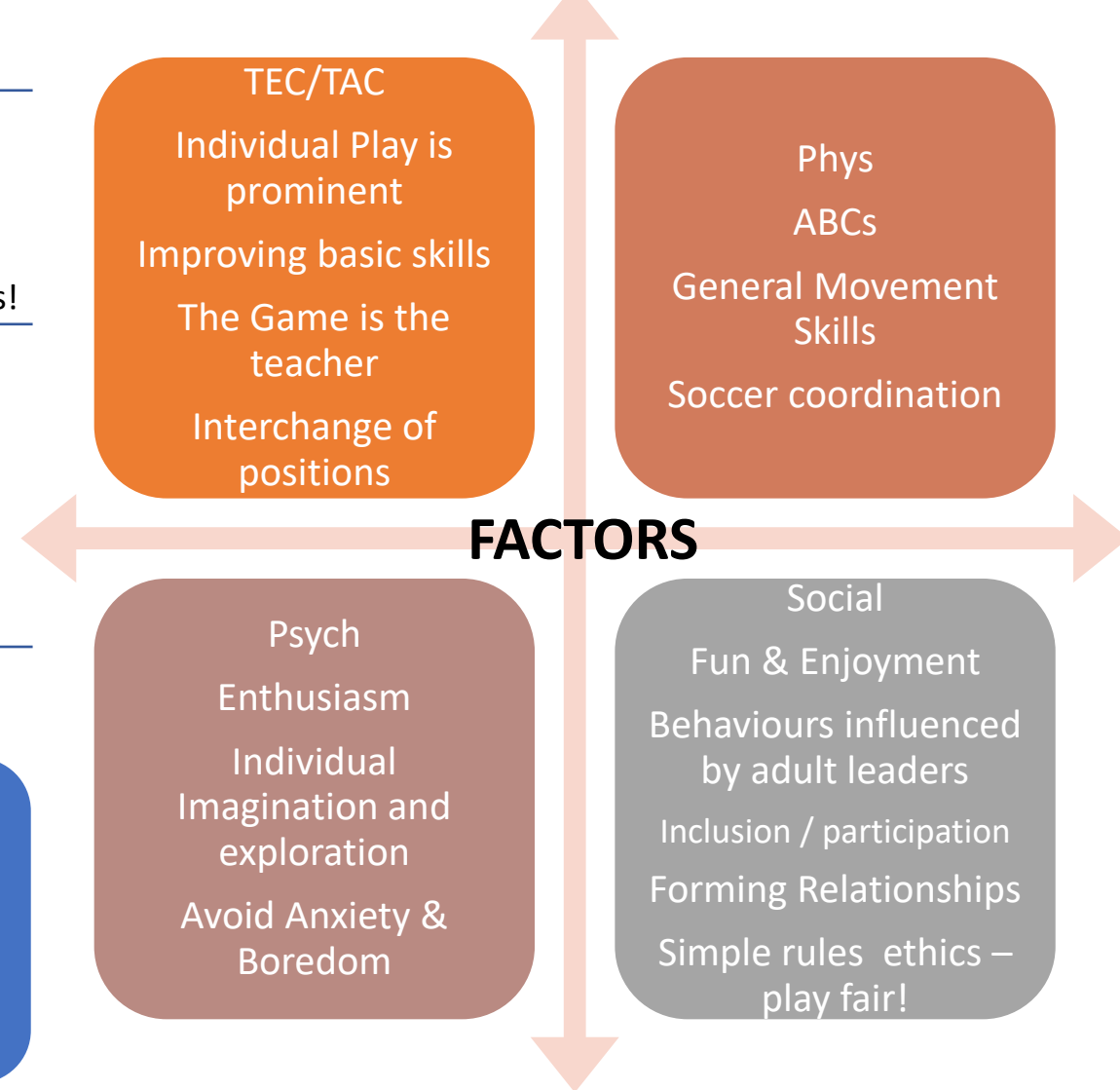
TRIGGER WORDS

U8 is all about intent to try to execute a technique in a game – dribble/shoot/pass;

Defending – go get it, steal the ball, keep going, don’t give up

Attacking – encourage dribbling, ask the players what else they can do?

Who can be a helper?



Under 8 – What do they need?

Best Practices

What to Coach

Objectives are focussed on individual skills, simple team ideas

- Still allow them the freedom to experiment with their developing individual skills. They love to dribble and score goals and should now also be passing!
- Focus on how the players work together in pairs in attack (matadors) and defending

When to Coach

Avoid coaching their decisions! Triggers to refocus/prompt support!

- During Play – Avoid or Limit coaching the player on the ball. But its ok to remind others to help! Use Trigger Words
- After Play – Give positive Feedback with detail, eg great pass to space

How to Coach

Positive with detail, and what else questions!

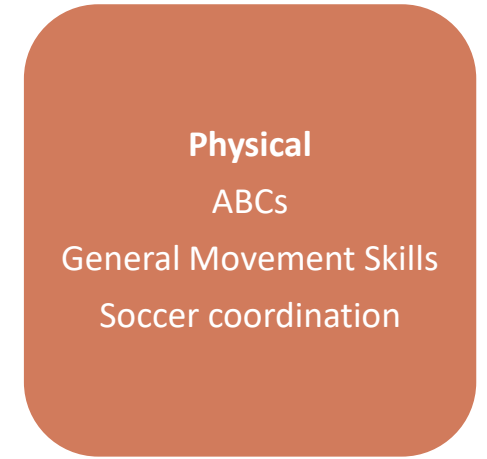
- Highlight Positives based on specific objectives, Example – that was a great decision to dribble – maybe next time you will beat him/her!

TRIGGER WORDS

U9 is all about learning to work in pairs, but allowing the individual to grow also;

Defending – Recover, squeeze, tight together. Pressure, Don't give up. No Turns once attacker if faced backwards. Support

Attacking – On ball - Head Up, When do you pass, Around ball – support alongside, support in front, Away from ball- spread Out, play wide to feet or space



FACTORS

Under 9 – What do they need?

Best Practices

What to Coach

Focus: More Specific Objectives relating to group and team play!

- Still allow them the freedom to experiment with their developing individual skills. They love to dribble and score goals and should now also be passing short and long!
- Focus on how the players work together in pairs in attack (matadors) and defending
- Expect to see players on ball taking space, and playing back or sideways when they cannot play forward. In Defence expect to see a Tight Team (compact front to side back to back 12 yards between players). All players except forward recovering behind ball.

When to Coach

Mostly After plays have finished – ask questions!

- During Play – Avoid coaching the player on the ball. But its ok to remind others to help! Use Trigger Words (eg Support alongside). Away from the ball coach positioning can COMMAND.
- After Play – Give positive Feedback with detail, eg great pass to space.

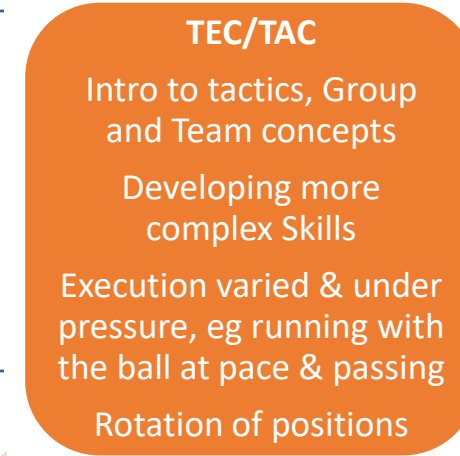
How to Coach

Positive but Look to challenge players to think, demand a little more!

- Highlight Positives based on specific objectives, Example – that was a great decision to dribble – maybe next time you can go around them on the outside!
- DEMAND – have to first make clear expectations eg which players recover behind ball, if a players is not executing then can encourage them first and then prompt them with commands

TRIGGER WORDS

Player has responsibility to team & making tactical decisions
Defending – recover, pressure, use your body, be aggressive. Groups stop turns & stop split.
Marking goal side & ball side. Attacking – triangles, play forward and support back or sideways to play forward. Tease them in. Over Around thru!



FACTORS

Under 11 – What do they need?

Best Practices



Gameday Coaching Best Practices

Game Day Objectives

What to Coach

Choosing Game Day Objectives

- Note that the following slides give some ideas on how to translate the tactical curriculum into age appropriate game day learning objectives or outcomes! For more details refer to the Paradise Way and the Club Curriculum. And the more specific you can get based on something you worked on in training the better! Also provided are examples of measures or stats, but you may come up with your own!
- Of course you can choose a technical skill execution as an objective for any age group ie dribbling. Really these are the simplest as essentially what you are looking for is an intent to take opportunities to execute the right skill. So for example as long as a player is trying to dribble when 1v1 then that is all you can ask, their choice of technique and/or their technical capability will determine their success. You can coach choice of technique on gamedays however poor execution can only be addressed over time!
 - As you move to each older age groups when using technical game objectives the decision making aspect should get more and more focus ie when and where to dribble, which type of pass?
- You will observe that the younger ages there are less objectives that are appropriate, understanding that technical objectives for individuals are more important than tactical concepts.
- Pick a game objective (s) and then for tactical objectives choose one or multiple aspects from the age specific list to focus on within that

Age Appropriate Game Objectives

U7 - One Game Objective

- Individual Technique based objectives

U8 - One Game Objective

- Primary - Individual Technique based objectives
- Secondary - Basic Team Tactical Objectives

U9 – One or Two Game Objective(s)

- Individual Technical Objectives
- Group/Team Tactical Objectives

U11– One – Three Game Objective(s)

- Primary – Group/Team Tactical Objectives
- Secondary – Individual Technical Objectives
- Player Specific Objectives

Think about the Key Milestones for your age Group when deciding on game objectives and which aspects or details within that are appropriate to focus on

Attacking On and Around the Ball Objectives

Gameday Objective	U7	U8	U9	U11
<p>Today we are going to focus on....</p> <p>“Keeping how two players can keep Possession of the ball”</p>	<p>Pairs Possession (Pass to Escape – is about choosing to pass sometimes)</p> <p>Measure: How many passes per shift</p>	<p>Pairs Possession (Pass to Escape– is about choosing to pass sometimes)</p> <p>Measure: How many passes per shift</p> <p>How many passes backwards</p>	<p>Pairs Possession (Pass to Release – is about recognising the right timing to pass)</p> <p>Measure: How many times we create and use 2v1</p>	<p>Pairs Possession (Pass to tease – is about passing and moving to receive back progress)</p>
<p>Today we are going to focus on....</p> <p>“Close Support and Combination to play forwards”</p>			<p>Group Attacking Combination Play (how to help player with the ball)</p> <p>Measure: How many times we leave a player with the ball isolated with no helpers</p>	<p>Group Attacking Combination Play</p> <p>Wall Passes, 3rd Man Runs, overlaps</p> <p>Measure: how many wall passes etc</p>
			<p>Group Attacking Support (3 players creating triangles)</p> <p>Measure: how many times 3 players in a triangle can combine ie 1 to 2 and 2 to 3</p>	<p>Group Attacking Support - Break a line & support</p> <p>Measure: How many passes to forwards feet</p>

Attacking Away from the Ball Objectives

Gameday Objective	U7	U8	U9	U11
Today we are going to focus on.... “Creating Space as a Team”	Spread out from the player with the ball Measure: How many times we pass	Create space - Spread out from the pack to escape Measure: How many times we pass	Create Width /Depth Playing sideways to go forwards Measure: sideways passes using alongside support	Create Width /Depth Playing Back to go forward Measure: backwards passes using underneath support
Today we are going to focus on.... “Team Attacking - Playing around the sides of our opponent”			Using Flank Areas – Playing around to feet and to space Measure: how many times we pass the ball in the flanks	USING FLANK AREAS Switching play to opposite side Measure: how many times we switch to the opposite side Measure: How many times we are able to play to right back but attack on the left side
Today we are going to focus on.... “Team Attacking - Playing Over and Through our opponent”			Using Central Areas – Forward runs for through balls Measure: Passes through the middle area to feet Measure: Passes through middle to space	USING CENTRAL - Over Over in behind Who?, OVER to target and support Measure: how many balls over top of their defence into space that we get on the end of Measure: how many balls past their midfield that we get to players feet

Defending Game Objectives

Gameday Objective	U7	U8	U9	U11
Today we are going to focus on.... “Defending in Pairs”	Pairs 1 st Defender – hungry to “go to the ball” Measure: how many times we forget to pressure the ball	Pairs 1 st defender – hungry to tackle and “steal the ball” Measure: How many times we steal the ball (lose balls or tackles)	Pairs 1 st defender – “nearest player pressuring the ball” Pairs 1 st defender – “clearing the ball” Measure: How many times we tackle to steal the ball	Pairs 1 st defender – “jockeying” Pairs 1 st defender – “denying forward passes” Pairs 1 st defender – “clearing the ball”
		Pairs 2 nd defender “doubling up”	Pairs 2 nd defender “Cover” ready to support (double up or recovery behind the ball) Measure: How many times second def regains the ball	Pairs 2 nd defender “Cover against the dribble and deal with the pass”
Today we are going to focus on.... “Group Defending”			Groups Defensive shape – 2 nd defenders behind the ball Measure: Stop player playing forwards in our half	GROUPS Pressuring, Covering STOP THE TURN, STOP THE SPLIT Measure: how many times an attacker turns in middle third Measure: How many times they pass to their forward
			Groups Regaining Measure: How many times we regain possession within 7 seconds	Groups forcing play, prepare to Intercept FRONT FOOT DEFENDING Measure: How many interceptions
Today we are going to focus on.... “Team Defending”			Team – Marking Measure: How many times sneaky guys receive the ball behind us	Team – Marking & Tracking Dangerous players (ahead of the ball) Measure: how many breakaways they have
		Team Compactness Squeeze together to defend	Team Compactness between ball and goal Measure: how many times a player runs with the ball from their retreat line all the way to our goal	TEAM Compactness Def Structure - logical spacing on the field (front to back & Side to side) Measure: players receiving an turning between our MF and Def
			TEAM – Recovery	TEAM – Jockey/Delay and Getting goal side

Refer to Curriculum for the details

TACTIC	U8	U9
PAIRS ATTACKING ON & AROUND THE BALL Possession	<p>The ESCAPE– Whether to Pass - dribble vs pass (up against lots of defenders)</p> <p>Alongside Support – the helper</p>	<p>The RELEASE - 2v1 Whether to dribble or pass, recognition or situation and awareness of option alongside.</p> <p>2v1 pass to release player - When do you pass - Committing the defender, use of disguise</p> <p>Supporting behind the defenders back</p>

- For a U9 Coach where game objective is possession;
- Should have an awareness of what they should know already from U8 and then focus on the information for the U9 age. So that would be;
- The RELEASE - 2v1 Whether to dribble or pass, recognition or situation and awareness of option alongside.
- 2v1 pass to release player - When do you pass - Committing the defender, use of disguise
- Supporting behind the defenders back

Under 9 Sample – Appropriate Game Objectives

- Technical Objective Examples;
 - Passing (Short /Medium) or Ball Mastery (control or first touch), or one of the Progression with the Ball skills (ie one of ; **dribbling**, turning, running with the ball), Finishing , Individual Defending
- Example: Coach wants to pick one of the above Game Objectives which is dribbling!
- “Today we are going to focus on..... Dribbling in the game.
- We want you to look for opportunities to..... dribble and use your dribbling skills that you worked on in training.
- Try to count how many times you can..... beat your player and get an end result eg a pass, or a shot.”

Under 9 Sample - Appropriate Game Objectives

- Tactical Objective Examples;
 - Pairs Defending (1st & 2nd Defender)
 - Group Defending (Pressuring & Regaining or Shape)
 - Team Defending (One of Recovery / Compactness / Marking)
 - Attacking On & Around the Ball (One of **Possession** / Combination Play / Support)
 - Team Width - Attacking Away from the Ball (Creating and Using Width Around)
 - Team Depth - Attacking Away from the Ball (Create Depth / Use Through & Over)
- Example:
 - “Today we are going to focus on..... Keeping possession of the ball.
 - We want you to look for opportunities to Help the player with the ball and find ways to keep the ball away from the other team
 - Try to count how many times you can.....make passes without the other team getting the ball. We are going to measure this on the bench too”



Gameday Coaching
Best Practices

Coaching Interventions

How & When to Coach

The Warm Up – GAMEDAY



U11 Warm Up should start to resemble proper Warm Up;

- Game related movements
- Ball Touches
- Dynamic Stretching
- ABC/Sprint Warm Up
- Sprints



TRAINING FORMAT GUIDE

Introduction to Stretching

During the U10 year stretching can start to be introduced as at the beginning of the outdoor season. 3 or 4 very simple dynamic stretches mixed into ball work.



Pre Game

- PLAYERS ARRIVAL – Kick Off minus 20 to 30 minutes
- TEAM MEETING (5 mins) – Kick Off minus 20 minutes
 - This can be done before the warm up if all players are arrived on time or after the warm up
 - Identify Simple objectives based on a training theme... and referring to curriculum and age appropriate themes and milestones. Agree on specific measures if possible.
- WARM UP (10 mins) - Kick Off minus 10 to 15 minutes
 - Moving/Touch ball (dribble pass), Game related movements, for U11 intro dynamic stretching. Mental focus on game. Sharp explosive movements at end.
- FREE TIME (2 mins)
 - Meeting/Warm up should not run right up until kick off time, there should be a a minute or two to rest get a drink and have some conversation amongst themselves.

Pre Game

Assign roles for coaches eg Assistant coach to organise line ups and substitutions and rotations so that Head Coach can focus on the soccer! Are there any stats or measures you want a coach to record? Do you want them to watch how a specific individual is doing in certain moments. Managing Bench behaviour (tidy, orderly and focussed bench is what we want). The more of these that the Head Coach can delegate the better! Who is running the warm up? Delegate individual chats pre/post game or half time with players on an as needed basis (eg last game Suzie was disrespectful to the ref so you may want to remind her about improving on that.

In Game

- POSITIVE ALWAYS - After a play - Praise Players for attempting to do the right thing. Overpraise where players show an intent to execute the specific game objectives
- USE TRIGGERS - Defending “Pressure” “recover” “No turns”. Attacking “Head Up” “When do you Pass” “Pass to Feet/space”
- AVOID DECISION COACHING– Try to give feedback after play has finished. During a play Allow the player on the ball to make decisions ask when and how questions only. Ask other players Trigger Questions “who is helping/supporting”

In Game

- During play step back and Talk with the players on the bench to focus their eyes and minds, ask them questions, get them thinking. Ask them to count or measure a metric relating to the objective. For example if possession was the objective ask them to count how many seconds we keep it each time we win the ball, and see what the record was.
- Coach over the game in generals talking to the team eg Rather than “Jonny pressure the ball” you can say “Who can pressure the ball”. If Jonny did not respond in the moment you might ask after the play “ Jonny were you the closest to the ball....so next time can you be the one to pressure”. Also use trigger words that the players are familiar with from training such as “Recover” etc. Refer to the PSC technical documents for technical language and standardised trigger words.
- Don’t be afraid to Address general/organisational issues if they are glaring eg you may be working on an attacking theme however as a coach you can still coach to ensure for example Marking on throw-ins or corners or recovery when losing the ball however try to limit how much you talk about issues unrelated to your theme. The more you do will take away from the overall impact of what you are saying. And how the players filter your communication and respond to you.
- Acknowledge and praise the positives, Over Praise related to the objective, over emphasise those moments
- Include details when praising (eg Rather than “Well Played Alex” you can say “Alex I love the way your turned away from the defender to keep the ball safe”)
- Never say Never! Avoid hard and fast rules! Eg Coaching a defender to play it up the line every time they receive from a goal kick or sayinf never pass it back to your GK or never pass across your goal, Don’t dribble back there! Making wrong decisions is ra very important part of the learning process. By trial and error risk and reward they should develop an intelligence for making future decisions and overtime you can help them identify those errors and come up with solutions and the correct decisions but they need to understand why those right decisions are right and the consequences for wrong decisions and the game will teach them that! Allow players to make wrong decisions but watch out for them and if it’s a repeated error related to your game objectives then right after the play has finished talk to them about it. For example “ Jonny..... that was a powerful shot from the half way line! Almost scored! But you gave the ball away....what could you do next time instead of shooting from far away” so you start with a little positive and rather than tell him what to do ask him what he is gong to do...so he is buying in to the idea.

Half Time Breakdown

- First check and agree with the referee how long they are allowing for half time (normally should be 5 mins minimum)
- Free time – 1-2 mins
 - First players hydrate and free to talk,
 - Coach(s) can speak to individual players that need encouragement or detail
- Coaches Words - 2-3 mins
 - Refer to Objectives (feedback on stats) Choose one positive example from first half
 - Identify challenges
 - Ask players questions how they can achieve more success in their objectives—give them ownership
- Free Time / Preparation time - 1 min

FORMATIONS/SUBSTITUTIONS & ROTATIONS

- Positional Rotations: Backs to Fronts & Left to Right, GK
- Reduce the number of shifts increasing length : progressively condition players for U13 2x35 minute halves with limited subs.
 - also less management for development coach

Recommended Shift Length

Option to let them stay on for double shifts;

- U7/8/9s = 5 to 10 min shifts (Metro shifts 5 mins)
- U11s = 10 to 20 min shifts (Metro shifts 10 mins)

Ideal Game Day Roster
6 players = 2 lines of 3 plus GK



Under 7 Subs and Rotations

All players
attack and
all players
defend,
total
freedom



CREATE BALANCED LINES

- OPTION 1 – Subs every 5 mins with shift changes = 20 mins per line
- OPTION 2 - Subs at 10, 20, 30, 40
- Where there are 4 players in a line then the GK must be rotated every 5 mins.
- Where a line has 3 players then the other line provides the fillers that play Gk during their rest.
- No positions but rotate which player drops to receive the ball from GK (the Goalie Helper) and the other two provide support either side, next GK someone else drop to receive it.

Ideal Game Day Roster

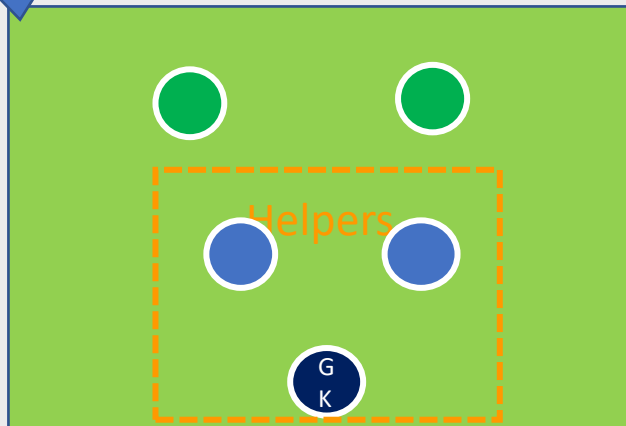
8 players = 2 lines of 4 plus GK



Under 8 / 9 Subs and Rotations

Introduce concept of
one or two GK
Helpers that receive
ball from GK.

All players
attack and
all players
defend,
total
freedom



CREATE BALANCED LINES

- OPTION 1 – Subs every 5 mins with shift changes = 25 mins per line
- OPTION 2 - Subs at 10, 20, 30, 40 45 using break after 5 mins to rotate positions.
- Where there are 5 players in a lineup then the GK must be rotated every 5 mins.
- Where a lineup has 4 players then the other line provides the fillers that play Gk during their rest.
- 7 players or less – ensure all players are rotated and play GK, and as a GK helper during each game.

Ideal Game Day Roster

12 players = 2 lines of 6 plus GK



CREATE BALANCED LINES

OPTION 1: Subs at 10 20 30 40 50 for six 10 minute shifts = 30 mins per line

OPTION 2: Subs at 20, 40 and 50 mins gives 2 lineups a 20 minute and 10 minute shift each = 30 mins per line

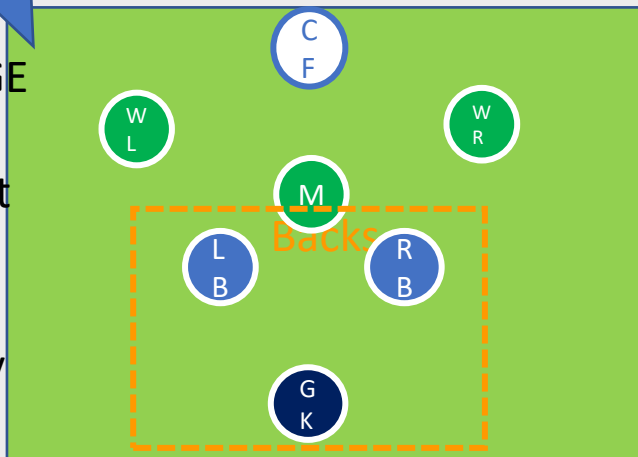
Managing Large Squads

- 13 or 14 players - creates 2 lineups of 7 players.
 - In three shifts the players can play 3 out of the 4 roles (GK, D, M, F)
- 12 players - creates 2 lineups of 6 players. The GK role will be played by a filler from the other lineup. For each shift designate 3 players as backs and ensure that over the 3 shifts everyone had a turn playing the role of Backs.
- Players can be rotated from left to right side during play on a stoppage, throw or goal kick!
- Note another approach is that players experience the different positions over multiple games and in any given game may only play in one or two roles ie def and Mid one game and then in the next mid and forward. As long as it is rotated and balanced a throughout the weekend

Define positions and rotate players between front and back roles.

U11 subs

INTERCHANGE through all positions, not a rigid formation, players freely rotate during free play.



Under 11 Preferred Formation – GK-2-3-1

At this age positions become more relevant to the 11v11

Blue players – Defenders - classed as backs

Green players - Midfielders (central Mid and wide players classed Fronts).

White - We introduce a Forward!

When Defending All green players expected to recover behind the ball and defend together with the blues .

When Attacking 3 Backs expected to remain behind the ball when we attack, if one ventures forward then they must be covered by a partner

Forward once the ball goes past them to back press or occupy biggest space to receive on transition

Rotation - For development purposes its still important to rotate them.

