



Flipped class room/self study

# Developing difference makers

*adaptable players that successfully adjust to the constantly changing challenges and opportunities*



# INTRODUCTION

The game of soccer in North-America has often become very predictable and mechanical. Whereas there is no shortage of skilled players, there appears to be a real lack of difference makers, players that can turn a game on its head with one surprising move or ingenious thought.

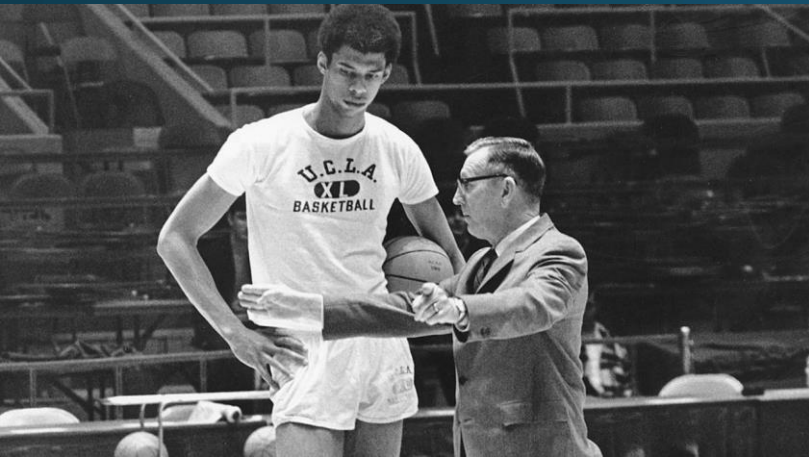


- The players that do show creativity in Major League Soccer are generally players from South America, Central America or Europe.
- Coaches focus on stifling defensive schemes, creativity and innovation is sorely lacking.
- Creativity is undervalued in daily coaching practice.
- With creativity and innovation often comes chaos as it is unpredictable. The issue of coaches' ability to deal with the “messiness” (pun intended) is critical.
- The game of soccer is predominantly very mechanical, even at the youth level

To illustrate the need for creativity and innovation to perform an attacking scheme that is unpredictable and therefore difficult to defend, I am quoting John Wooden (1997), a legendary college basketball coach:

“I feel that the offense should not be so stereotyped that the players are forced to follow such a set pattern that their individual initiative and freedom of movement are limited too severely. There should be enough options and freedom of movement to eliminate any possibility of the defense or you yourself knowing exactly what each player is going to do.

As any offense that becomes too mechanical can invariably be more easily defended, flexibility is essential”. John Wooden (October 14, 1910 – June 4, 2010)



Research tip: find and investigate some soccer coaches that promote(d) creativity, starting with Johan Cruyff



## Game centered approach promotes engagement and creativity

When a game-centered approach is used, the player becomes an active participant in the learning process. Harvey, Cope and Jones (2016), take the reader into a game-centered approach for learning with the emphasis on effective questioning within that framework. These researchers content that open-ended questions will engage the learner, the player, the student while questions with yes and no answers will not

## Skill and creativity development can strengthen each other

Rasmussen and Østergaard (2016) set out to show that skill optimization and creativity do not necessarily contradict each other. They identified the Creative Soccer Platform (CSP) to create practice activities that promote the development of creativity. The CSP platform shows coaches that skill and creativity development can have a symbiotic relationship and strengthen each other.

Reflect: how do you see the relationship between skill & creativity?



# ENVIRONMENT IS KEY FOR CREATIVITY DEVELOPMENT

Do you think that lack of street soccer has affected creativity in soccer?

Creativity can only be developed in environments that allow this. Unstructured play or semi-structured play (as in Teaching Games for Understanding platform) are rich environments for the development of creativity. Shifting best practice more to that approach can be beneficial.

Reflect: what are possible reasons that make it difficult to create environments mentioned below?

Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez (2009) show that changing established coaching practice is not without challenge and problems. Learning to create environments with unstructured and semi-structured play takes time and getting used to.



# Freedom

## to play

What are your feelings and thoughts looking at the below statements?



- Is needed to allow players to develop creativity.
- Is a philosophy that encourages players to skillfully play out of difficult situations.
- At the youth (development level) it should be a given that players have freedom to play in all situations.
- Helps to develop skill and confidence in young players when guided properly.
- Will make the game more enjoyable to play and watch

The **current game**, even at the highest level, has become quite **mechanical** and therefore **predictable**. The need for developing players that make a decisive impact on games, difference makers, is imminent.

Research: Who is John Cartwright? What book did he write? What is his main premise in this book?



Cartwright (1988), asks in despair: “Where is the individual?” “Where is the player who can beat an opponent and, in a single instant of individual magic, destroy the best-laid plans and strategies of the most formidable of defences?” Cartwright (1988) stresses that often players receive the ball in an area with space and instead of exploiting that space they pass to a player that is covered who then plays it to another player that is covered. “Dribbling requires bravery,” says Cartwright.



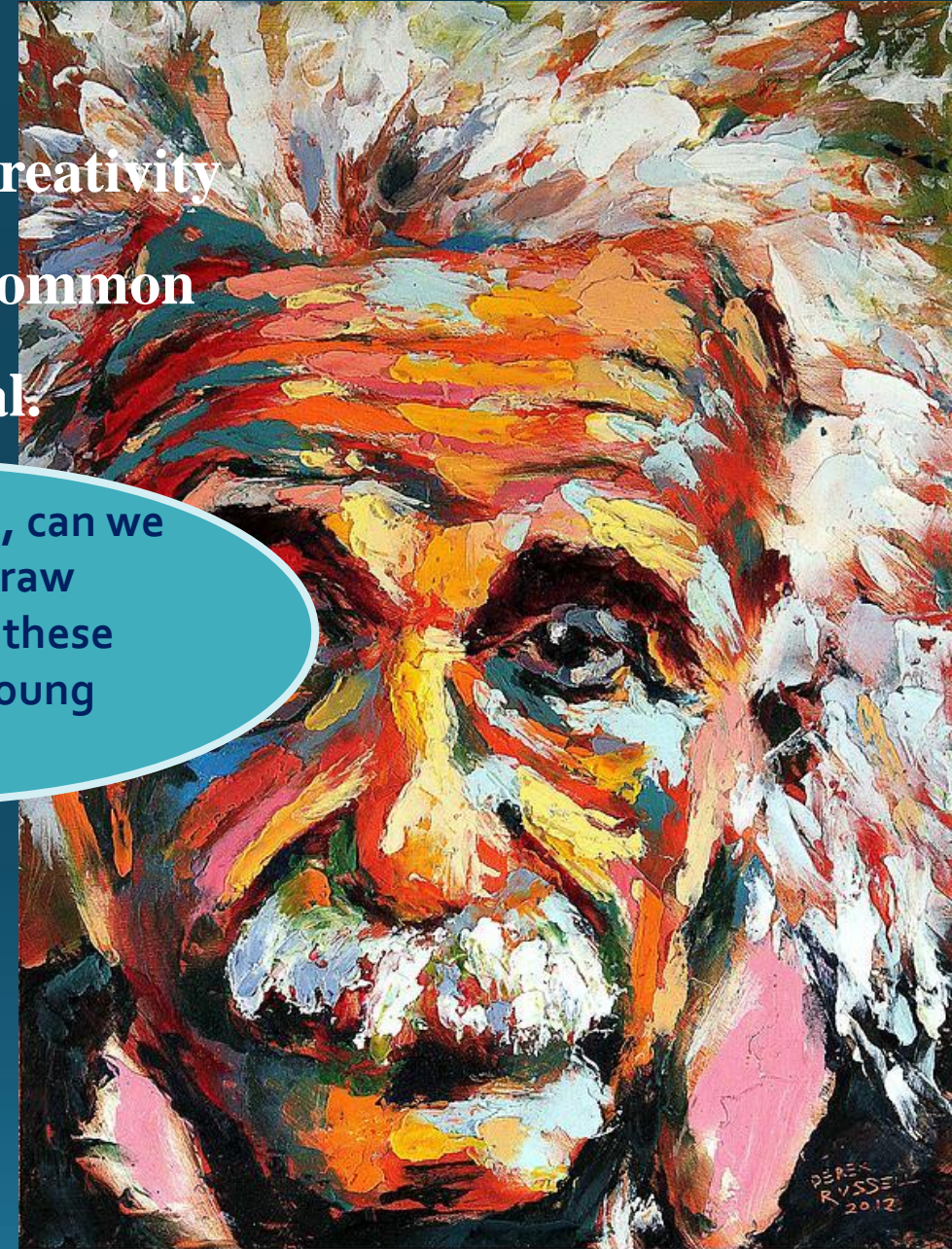
Abdulla and Cramond (2017) found that creativity can be developed. Several studies indicated common characteristics of the creative individual.



How, as coaches, can we appeal to, draw out/promote, these qualities in young players?

Some key characteristics may be:

- adventurous
- alert
- autonomous
- curious
- imaginative
- resourceful
- self-confident
- enthusiastic
- motivated
- flexible

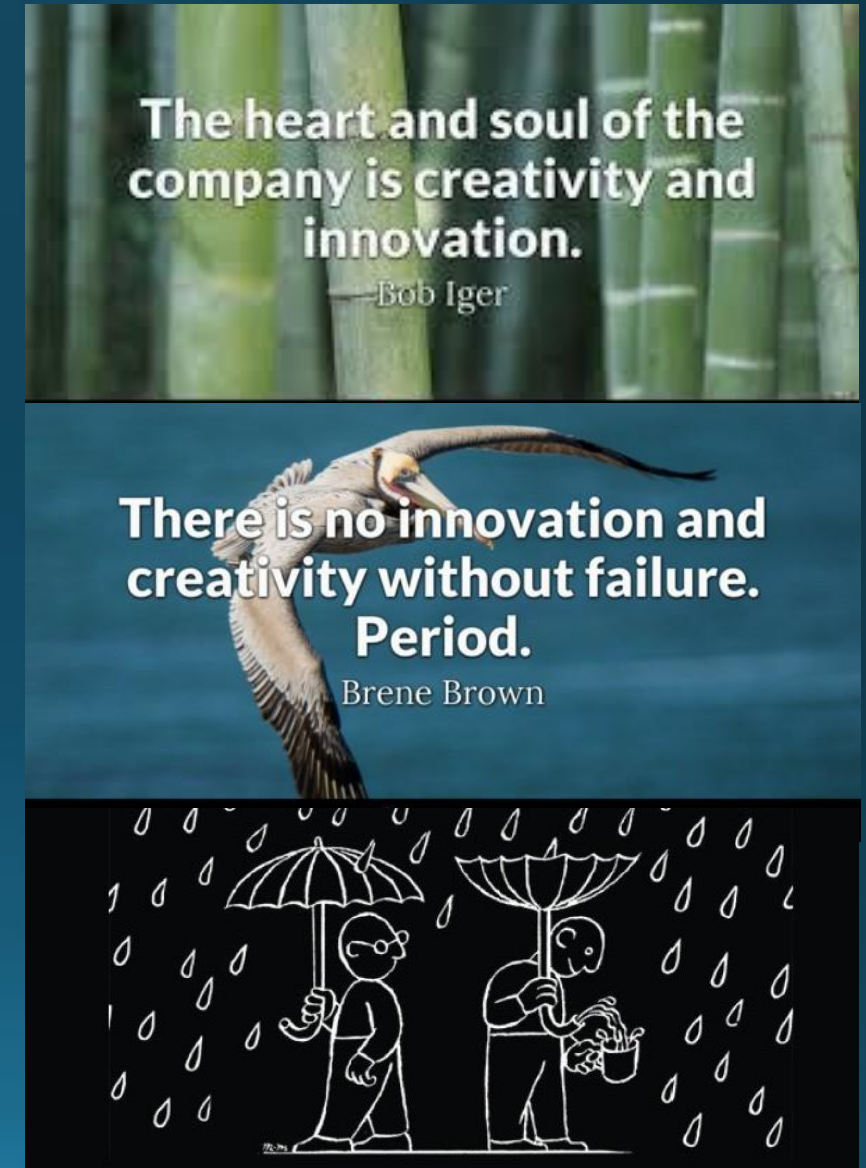


“CREATIVITY IS INTELLIGENCE  
HAVING FUN.” - Albert Einstein



# Transfer of creativity to other life domains

The study by Bowers et al. (2014) clearly indicates that *transfer of creativity to other life domains is imminent*. This seems to make perfect sense as with the development of creativity within one domain a person also develops the characteristics of a creative person as described by Abdulla and Cramond (2017), which then can be applied to other domains. Santos, Jiménez, Sampaio and Leite (2017) point out however that a certain level of expertise is needed for a player to be creative. The same would hold true for any transfer of creativity to other life domains. Only domains in which the person has adequate expertise will bring out the creativity of the person in that area. *Another indication that development of expertise and creativity go hand in hand.*





# RESEARCH: VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES ON CREATIVITY

*listen to & watch some  
different perspectives on  
creativity*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywlhJ2goiGE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6unnLOsXHxM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMpdPrm6Ul4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEusrD8g-dM>

Copy and paste  
links into your  
browser and find  
some different  
perspectives on  
creativity; find  
others as well

What  
commonalities  
did you find  
when listening  
to people talk  
about creativity?





# ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

What's your take  
away from this  
research?

Kaufman and Gregoire (2015) post that the fundamental function of play is the contribution to the growth of a flexible brain, one that is primed for creativity and problem solving. In imaginative play children can freely use their imagination and make something out of nothing.

Coutinho, Mesquita, Davids, Fonseca and Côté (2016) investigated the effect of structured and unstructured activities on acquisition of skill. . Even though the outcome of the study seems unsurprising, the recommendation to consider the creation of a more flexible environment within specific practice pulls the discussion out of black and white thinking and emphasizes that structured activities can or must have a degree of freedom.

Tactical creativity, as defined by Memmert et al. (2010), entails unusual, rare, novel and flexible decision making in complex game situations. The highly creative players spent more total time in training, but especially in play. The study showed that both deliberate practice and unstructured play-like involvement have crucial roles to play in the development of creativity.

Rasmussen and Østergaard (2016) show that skill optimization and creativity do not necessarily contradict each other. They identified the need to create practice activities that promote the development of creativity and the Creative Soccer Platform may be the answer.

Bigelow, Mooney & Hall (2001) suggest creating this more flexible environment by giving some time of each practice to the kids, meaning that they organize, play and police their own game without adult intervention.



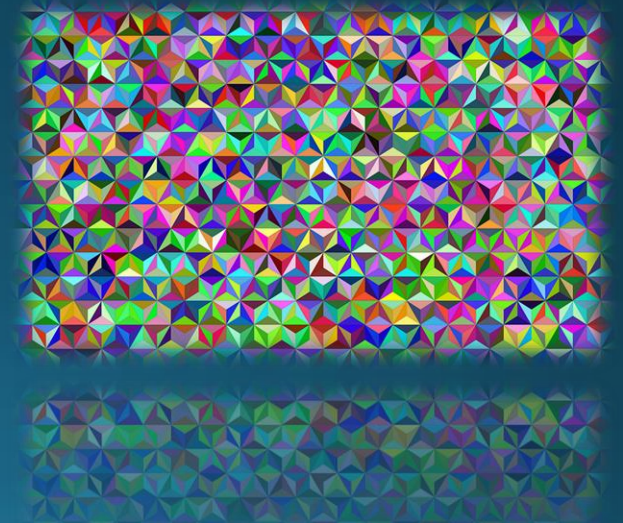
# REPETITION WITHOUT REPETITION (Bernstein)

Coaches often like to create training sessions that are a succession of repetition drills. But as Magill (2012) quotes Bernstein's optimal view of optimal practice conditions in his presentation; the concept of "repetition without repetition."

The processes of practice...consists in the gradual success of a search for optimal motor solutions to the appropriate problems. Because of this, practice, when properly undertaken, does not consist in repeating the means of solution of a motor problem time after time, but in the process of solving this problem again and again by techniques which we changed and perfected from repetition to repetition.

*When searching for optimal motor solutions players will also come up with novel and original solutions which, in return, leads to creativity!*

Do you incorporate repetition without repetition in your training and if so how?



Copy and paste in your browser for simple explanation



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVt-LBQGogo>

# MORE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT

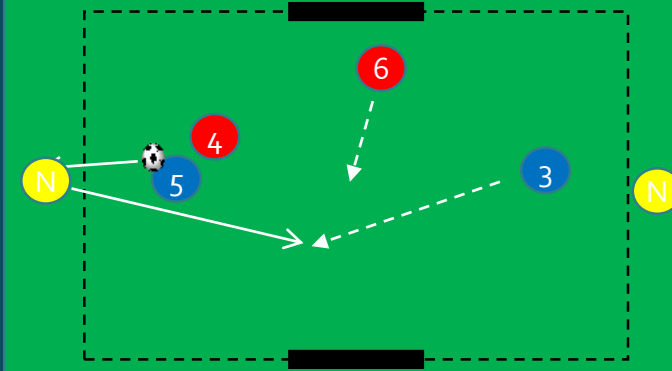
There has been valuable research conducted on the positive influence of an **attention broadening approach** on the development of creativity in sports. Rasmussen and Østergaard (2016) talk of horizontal thinking which supports the generation of new categories of ideas. **Horizontal thinking** increases cognitive flexibility as it integrates existing knowledge to aid the creative process. It **breaks with usual patterns of thought and action**. Horizontal thinking will best emerge in a **task focused approach**, a situation where players solve a certain problem (the task). Positive pedagogy, according to Light and Harvey (2017), **encourages exploration and making mistakes** which can lead to novel solutions to posed soccer problems. As per Abdulla and Cramond (2017), an environment that offers opportunities for creativity (it is OK to come up with different and unusual solutions) and is **psychologically safe, while promoting autonomy in an athlete centered methodology**, will have a positive effect on development of creativity. All the above studies indicate that the allowance of a broader focus relates positively to the emergence of creativity.

## Synopsis

- Allow for mistakes
- Encourage exploration, novel solutions
- Have no (minimal) pre-conceived notions (e.g. this is what it must look like).
- Promote player autonomy.
- Make it player centered.
- Ask open ended questions

# SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The key practical implication of Memmert's study (2007) is that **creativity is trainable**. By giving less tactical instruction, allowing more flexible outcomes to problems posed in specific (complex) game forms (conditioned games), more implicit and **discovery learning could take place promoting creativity**. Torrents et al. (2016) concluded that in games with numerical disadvantage players tend to be more exploratory and creative as was deduced from their behaviours in 4 vs 5 and especially 4 vs 7 games. In these situations, players have more affordances to explore and be creative, especially when the practice tasks promote varied and flexible behaviour. On the other hand, a numerical advantage appears to produce a game that is less exploratory and less varied.



## Sample exercise

- Exploration
- Player centered
- Game based
- Flexible solutions
- Allowance for mistakes

*Here, in the graphic, B5 recognizes a dead end towards goal and looks to quickly switch the play from neutral to neutral. Defenders now must adjust which may open up opportunity to the net.*

Directional game 2 v 2 (3 v 3), with 2 neutrals on the outside.

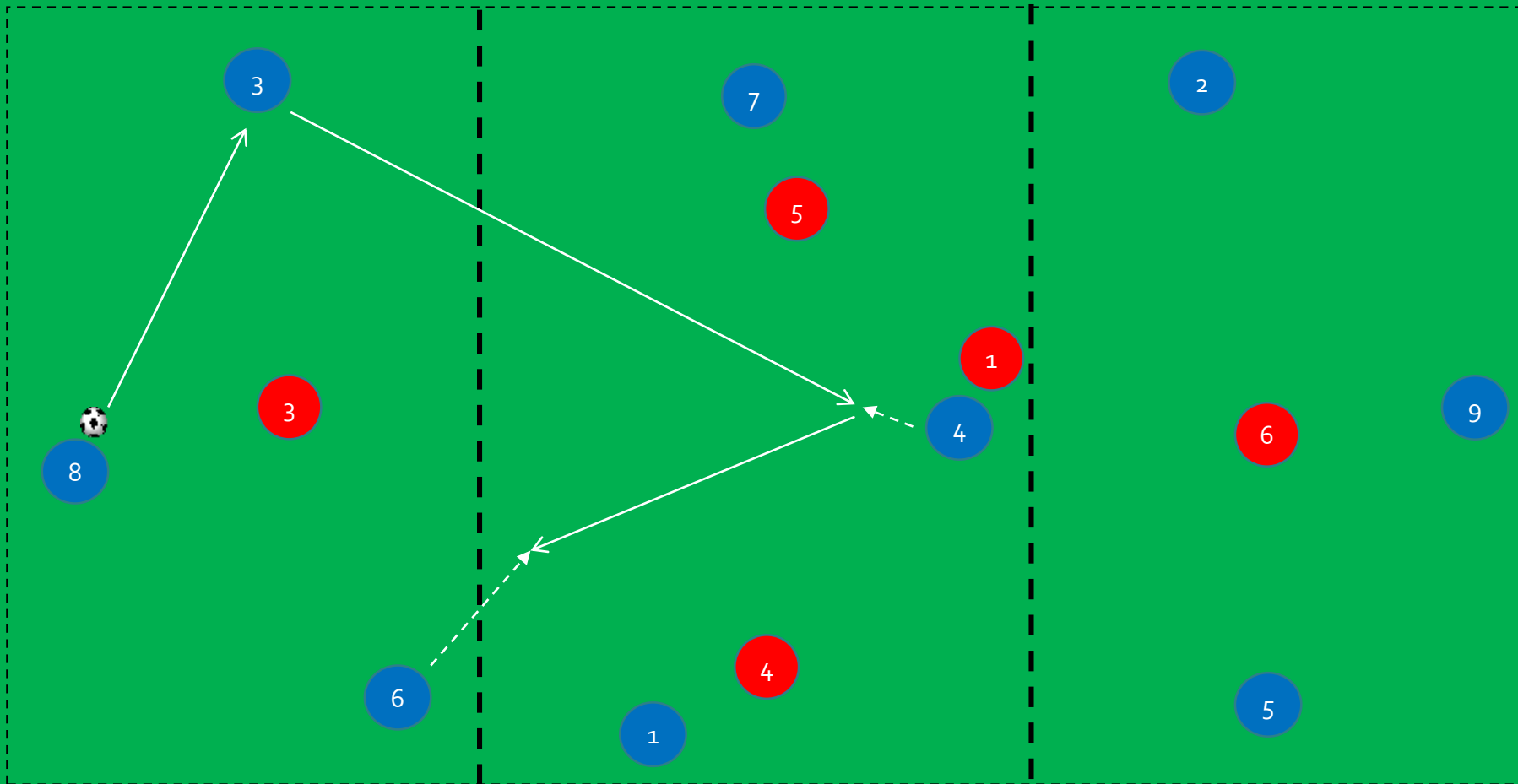
Team can score 2 points by scoring on goal. Team scores 1 point when switching ball from 1 neutral to the other.

Players have to recognize what best route is to score.

Defensive team also has to adjust constantly to defend the goal or the switch.



# Build up through midfield, creating overloads



1. Create 3 zones of 16 x 10, 16 x 14 and 16 x 10; 3 v 1 in the end zones and 3 v 3 in the middle zone (midfield).
2. Three players keep possession against one defender while they are looking to play into midfield; once played in, one player links up to create 4 v 3. The four play through the three defenders to get into the other end zone, where the game continues in the opposite direction.

*Notes: keys are timely movement and body position when receiving*

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**Multiple ways to solve the problem**

# REGULATORY FOCUS – PROMOTION VERSUS PREVENTION

Memmert, Hutterman and Orliczek (2013) investigated the effects of a promotion versus a prevention focus on the production of more original, flexible and adequate solutions. They showed that a **focus on aspirations, promotion focus, stimulates the production of more creative solutions**. Regulatory focus has a **personal** (some people tend to take more risk) as well as a **situational** component. The situational component applies to the circumstances or environment that is created. It is important and exciting to know that **we can create an environment where risk taking is encouraged, thus bringing out more of a promotion focus and consequently more creativity**. Positive pedagogy encourages exploration and making mistakes for athletes to reflect and learn from and therefore helps athletes to be in more of a promotion mode (Light and Harvey, 2017). Key elements are that it is learner-centered, discovery-based learning. This same kind of discovery learning is promoted through platforms like Game Sense (Pill 2012), TGfU (Teaching Games for Understanding) and others. Together with a questioning approach this kind of discovery learning promotes the fostering of game appreciation and development of intelligent decision makers.

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# Questioning as a powerful teaching/reflection tool

Harvey, Cope and Jones (2016), take the reader into a game centered approach for learning with the emphasis on effective questioning within that frame work. They argue that questioning is often ineffective because of the closed nature of the question. The model they describe allows teaching/coaching to shift the emphasis from memorization to **participation (in the learning process), provided the questions are open ended and trigger reflection in the learner**. A game-centered approach and effective questioning within that frame work will contribute to the development of creativity. Discussing the method of TGfU, Harvey, Cushion and Massa-Gonzalez (2010) emphasize that at the heart of TGfU is the use of questioning opposed to just telling players what to do. **Southampton**, English Premier League club, developed the “Southampton Way” as a development philosophy (retrieved from internet May 5, 2015) and in the section on communication **they rank listening and questioning as the number one and number two priority**. Light and Harvey (2017), investigating **positive pedagogy**, emphasize that in positive pedagogy exploration is encouraged, making mistakes is something for athletes to reflect on and learn from. Positive pedagogy assumes that there are more answers to posed questions and challenges. It is interesting that even at the highest level, the Rugby All-Blacks, this holistic approach to learning has been adopted. Positive pedagogy comes with its challenges as many coaches are “programmed” to instruct, correct and intervene constantly, so to make a shift to this approach takes time and commitment.



Do you ask a lot  
of questions in  
your daily best  
coaching  
practice?

REFLECTION

What type of  
questions?  
Could they have more  
than one answer?



# POSITIVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN QUESTIONING APPROACH, MOTIVATION AND CREATIVITY DEVELOPMENT

Asking effective questions can also take the form of **guided discovery**. Putting players in the right kind of games that appeal to them and pose problems that they solve is another form of asking questions. Pill (2012) describes the Game Sense approach and poses that skill is technique and game context and **most skill is best developed in the context of the game**. Skill is therefore the evidence of thinking players. It comes from the understanding that soccer is a dynamic game, **guided discovery will promote players to reflect and self-learn about the game** if the coach is able to create the right game that speaks to the player and invites the discovery. Memmert (2015) points out that **restrictive instructions will obstruct players from coming up with novel and creative solutions**. A study of coaches' experiences with Game Sense (Light, 2004) pose that coaches find that **Game Sense coaching is a way of training that players enjoy which has a positive effect on motivation while also allowing for expression and creativity**.



**Reflection:**  
Does it motivate you  
when you figure things  
out yourself?

# PLAYER CENTERED APPROACH

Williams and Hodges (2005) found that often a more **hands-off, less prescriptive, way** is preferable as players can learn through a game-based approach and develop into smarter players.

**More random** over variable practice, **more small-sided-games** opposed to grid practice, will induce **discovery learning** and will also contribute to players being **more motivated** for practice.

Players will feel more **engaged** and take charge of their own learning. Pill (2012) also emphasizes that a game-based approach is more attractive and motivating for young players.

**Teachers/coaches become more facilitators** in this approach and empower the learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Harvey, Cope & Jones, 2016). Deliberate play can be as predictive of expertise as deliberate practice. This would include game based learning (Hambrick, MacNamara, Campitelli, Ullen & Mosing, 2016). **Positive pedagogy considers more the long-term learning opposed to fixing the problem immediately** to get the desired results in the next game, again allowing players/learners time and space for reflection (Light and Harvey, 2017) . To encourage creativity, Auger and Woodman (2016) argue that managers (coaches) must develop job positions that offer **autonomy** (player centered) and **ambitious goals (complex tasks)**.



Thinking back to when you were a player.

What kind of practices did you enjoy the most?

Do you think that enjoyment is connected to learning?

Why and how?



Discussion takes place in professional sports if it is just about winning or if teams have a responsibility to entertain, to emphasize attack and creativity. That discussion is for another project, but in working with young athletes there can be no mistaken that kids play a sport, in this instance soccer, to have fun, be challenged and improve, spend time with friends, express themselves and exercise. Playing to win is wrought in there somewhere as well, but the desperate need to win is more of an adult creation. When adults get a hold of a kids' game, winning becomes suddenly much more important and winning now also reflects on the skill of the coach. **Taking risk in a game becomes something that gets frowned upon.** Parents and coaches alike, encouraging young players to kick the ball off the field when under a bit of pressure, are not doing them any favors. **An opportunity to come up with a creative solution to a soccer problem has been lost.**

# RISK AND REWARD

## High risk

- Allowing players to play free
- Playing with risk and creativity
- Letting players play (dribble) out of difficult situations
- Playing (training) young high potential players with older teams
- Taking players on all over the field

## High reward

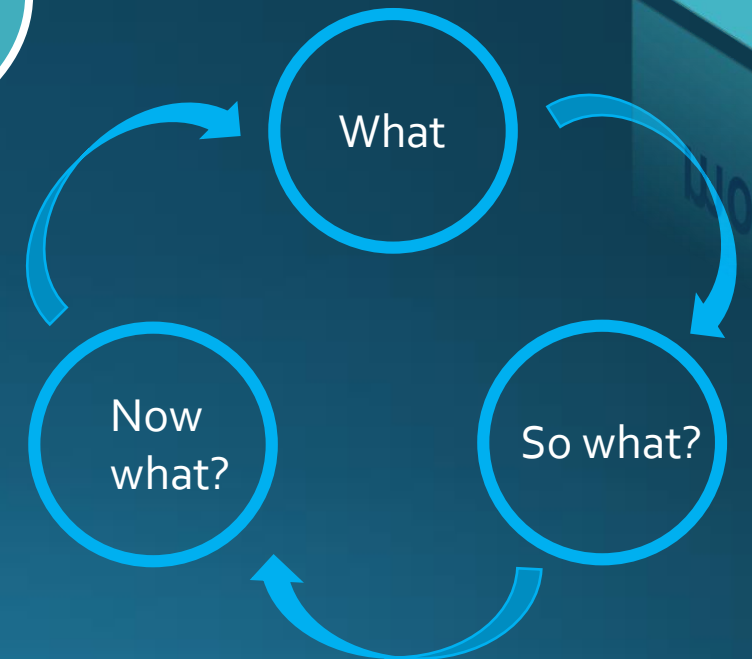
- Players become confident
- Skillful/creative players emerge
- Players learn to solve the most difficult problems
- Provides accurate stress for players that are ready for it
- Creates a dynamic game

### Reflection:

**Do you like your teams to play with risk? Why? Why not?**

## Reflect on this flipped class room workshop

- Has any of the information changed some of your thinking?
- What are the main take-aways for you?
- Did any of the research surprise you?
- What things did you completely disagree with?
- Will any of this affect your daily best coaching practice?



Rolfe's  
reflection  
model

## *Credits*

*Various pictures retrieved from internet*

*Various pictures retrieved from internet*