

The Secret to High Performance? Culture Before Coaching

Article by; Marco Reitsma - Asst. Dir. Coaching & Head Coach, Chargers Soccer Club

High performance in youth soccer isn't built by chasing results. It's built by designing a culture that makes excellence inevitable.

The most progressive academies don't obsess over winning weekends. They obsess over how players train, think, behave, and grow... every single day.

They aim to create environments where:

- Development is the priority, not the scoreboard
- Learning is part of the daily process
- Standards are owned by the players, not enforced by fear
- Players are encouraged to be brave, to take risks, to learn from mistakes

Coaches in these environments are teachers. Designers. They guide. They teach. They protect the culture and help it evolve.

Training is demanding, but also positive and purposeful. Mistakes are seen as part of learning. Players are challenged to understand the game, not just carry out instructions. Responsibility is shared, trust is built over time, and ambition is balanced with humility.

Over time, something powerful happens:

- Players develop faster and grow with confidence.
- Teams become more resilient.
- Success becomes repeatable, not accidental.

The Bottom Line: Systems can be copied. Tactics can be analyzed. But a culture of belief and long-term vision is a competitive advantage that can't be bought. If you build the right environment, the performance will eventually take care of itself.

This is what long-term development can look like.

- ✓ Not shortcuts or catchy phrases.
- ✓ But a clear philosophy, lived daily, from the youngest age group to the top.

So instead of asking:

“How do we win this weekend?”

It may be worth asking:

“What kind of environment are we creating for the next ten years?”

