

GAME MANAGEMENT

A Coach's guide for the "GAME" - Oscar DeLemos

The GAME Is for WHOM?

Sometimes in the excitement of a game, we tend to lose sight who the game is for. The game is for the "PLAYERS". Not for the coaches, referees and spectators. Coaches need to provide an environment ; prior to, during and after the game, that will allow the players to be: prepared, creative, able to solve problems, reflective and optimistic . If players are given these opportunities, the game will be an enjoyable experience for them.

The TRAINING SESSION

Here is where the coach does his/her coaching. The coach must be prepared with a training plan for each Training Session. Besides working on the technical part of the game with all the players at each session, consideration should be given to what the coach observed in the previous game and work on some of the challenges that the team encountered. Providing situations on the field and guiding the players to problem solving will better prepare them for the issues that the game may bring them. Allow the players time during the training session for them to play through activities with limited amount of coaching interference. This does not mean coaches are to refrain from coaching points. Coaching points, guided discovery and suggestions are highly recommended, but should be concise and limited. Remember too much coaching can be overwhelming and frustrating for a player.

PRE-GAME

The coach should be the first to the field prior to the game. This will allow the coach time to set up an area for the players to warm-up and prepare for the game. The warm-up readies the players for the game, mentally and physically. A pre-game talk should be brief, positive, enthusiastic, with the coach encouraging the players to utilize what they learned in the previous training sessions.

DURING THE "GAME"

- Many coaches we see.....
- From the first whistle, constantly verbally trying to solve the problems on the field for the players.
 - Pacing up and down the sideline
 - Antagonizing the referees on every so-called "BAD CALL".
 - Showing unsporting like gestures.
 - Making negative comments
- Etc etc etc

'STOP'-----HEY COACH YOUR MISSING A GREAT GAME !!!

How can a coach see if their team is adapting to solving the problems of the game on the field and provide them with guidance and encouragement if he/she resembles the characteristics above?

I think we all should know that answer....."NO, they cannot."

Coach's Check List

1. The coach needs to set the example of sportsmanship for the players and spectators. Players and spectators tend to respond to the coaches actions. Coach needs to remain calm, attentive and respectful.
2. Bring a folding chair, so that you can sit and be able to enjoy and observe the game. It is the player's showcase. Allow yourself to see what the players absorbed from the training sessions. You will be able to recognize if players are responding to the play of the game or if they are struggling. There will be players who will need to be substituted at times so that you can briefly discuss what may be their issues and guiding them to possible solutions. There also will be times that you will need to recognize when players need rest, to recover from the physical aspects of the game.
3. Bring a pad and a pen, so that you can write down the observations of the game that you would like to share with the team. They can be acknowledging their performance and indicating areas that will need more training. This will allow you to plan your theme for your next training sessions.
4. Provide encouragement throughout the game and recognize individual and team accomplishments.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR TEAM IS DOMINATING?

There will be games where you will quickly realize that your team is dominating your opponent. There are many reasons why this may happen. We can have discussion on this all night long, but when the game is on, 'why it happen' is irrelevant, you as a coach will need to make some tactical decisions in this game to allow your team to be challenged and your opponent the opportunity to be competitive. Let's face it, there is NO FUN being hammered, 8,9,19,11.....-0 !. In addition, the team being hammered is not improving themselves tactically, if scoring is too easy. These tactical decisions cannot be presented to players during a game if they have not had the opportunity, during training, to practice them. It may cause confusion and frustration that may lead to an unpleasant experience.

The following are some tactical suggestions for you to consider:

- -Allow players to experience all positions on the field, including Goal Keeping.
- -Change formation to a less defensive one. May allow the opponent more goal scoring chances.
- -3 touch play (create a consequence if they miss)
- -2 touch play (create a consequence if they miss)
- -Everyone plays with their non-dominant foot.
- -A number of passes before a shot can be taken on goal.
- -Every player must touch the ball (including GK) before a shot can be taken on goal.
- -restriction on types of passes (left foot, flighted balls etc.)
- -restrictions on scoring (left or right foot, heading, outside the penalty area, from a corner kick only)

*Note: the coach should not discourage players from scoring.

The coach may choose to adapt several tactical decisions to challenge their team during a game. Sometimes teams will adapt to these challenges with relative ease, in these instances the coach will need to continue to alter his/her tactical decisions so that the team continues to be challenged.

WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOUR TEAM IS BEING DOMINATED?

There will be games where your opponent will be dominating your team. What do you do? I hope that the opposing coach will realize what is happening and will adapt to the situation, however if the coach does not, here are some tactical suggestions for you to consider.....

- Do not Panic
- Do not show frustration or displeasure of what is happening in the game.
 - (your actions may upset the players and inflame the situation)
- Encourage your players to keep playing hard.
- Try to have your team focus on solving one of the problems of the game.
 - Ex. Attackers coming through the middle of the penalty area, beating the defender and scoring.
 - Solution- bring more players back and defend heavily in the middle and force the play outside.
- Having the players attempt to solve some of the issues on the field and not be so concern with the score could be the focus.

HALF TIME

During the limited time the team has at halftime, players should be resting and replenishing with fluids. This is a good time for the coach to briefly recap the first half. Start with what the team has done well, and then with a few areas where you would like to see the team improve in the second half. It is good to ask the players, "How do they think they could improve?" Allow them to think about it, without you always giving them the answers. This will help when they are confronted with the problems live on the field.

SECOND HALF

Continue to follow your coach's checklist, as you did in the first half.

POST GAME

All participants in the game shall compliment each other in a sporting manner, players, coaches and referees. Spectators should compliment the participants also in a sporting manner.

Depending on the age group and complexity of the game, it is encouraged that the players perform a "Cool Down". A low intense activity that will allow them to bring their level of intensity of the game, down.

After the "Cool Down", a similar discussion should take place with the team as the coach did at the half. Focus on what the team did well, bring to their attention, the areas to improve that were discussed at halftime and ask them how they felt they did. Let the players know what you are going to work on in training and send them off.

IN REVIEW.....

The Training Session is where coaches coach and players are allowed to develop. The game is for the players. Allow them to play. The coach should sit and observe the game. This allows the coach to adapt the team tactically to the game. Document how the game was played and share it with the team. Using that information to create the training sessions needed to improve the team. Allow the players to share in the decision-making/ problem solving process. Most of all..... Allow the players to ENJOY THE GAME!