

Topic: Recommendations for Running Tryouts

Objective: To provide coaches with a process for running tryouts

Discussion:

Each coach knows what skill sets they are looking for when constructing a team...or adding to an existing team. The best way to see the skills sets players bring to the game is to see them play the game. The game can show you all of the skill sets you want to see, and how they help or challenge the player in the game.

Watching players in the game, we break down what we see into 4 categories: Physical, Technical, Tactical, and Psychological. Physical is speed, strength, coordination, stamina, quickness, etc. Technical is foot skills, first touch, quality of strike and passing skills. Tactical is awareness and quality of interaction between players. Psychological is how the player deals with successes and challenges in the game.

To best see these skills, it is recommended that you engage the players in a progression of games. Start with a small number on each side on a small pitch, and increase in the number of players per side and the size of the pitch as you go. You will notice that the movement through these different sized games will show different aspects of the players' abilities in the game.

As you observe the players, rate them in each category on a scale of 1-5...then at the end make a combined score.

Action:

1. Warm the players up in whatever manner you are comfortable with.
2. Start with small side games. Take the number of players present, and split them up into multiple games of 3v3 or 4v4. If the numbers don't work out perfectly, then add a "plus 1" to one or more of the small games. These games should be played on field sizes that are about 25x20...plus or minus based on the age of the players. Also, they can go to small goals on each end line, or to just score by possessing the ball across the end line. This sized game will give you the most opportunity to observe many of the technical and small sided tactical skills of your players.
3. Next, move to 5v5 games, and apply the same process if the numbers don't match. Increase the pitch size as needed. Have an goal at the end of each side. This sized game will allow you to see more of the tactical skills of the players, and also show more of their physical skills...as the pitch is larger and enables speed to have more of an impact.
4. Next, move to the full size of the game you are playing, and have them play on the regulation size pitch. If you only play 6v6...then don't worry about adding a third activity size.
5. You may want to add an additional shooting skills evaluation, as there are many times in smaller sided games that you can't see how many of the players strike a ball for power.

Tips:

~ ensure that you move your attention between the games enough to observe all of the players

~ get help, and have at least one other person to review the players and provide you input...which you can consider as you wish, but it will give you a more rounded picture

~ shift the players around in their teams, so that you can see the players interact. It's amazing how differently players show themselves in different situations.

~ don't let them go until you have seen what you want to see. Feel free to manipulate player combinations to see all that you need to see.

Take aways:

~ The best way to evaluate players is to see them play the game

~ Evaluate the players based on physical, technical, tactical and psychological skill sets

~ Use a progression of small sided games to full sided games to help evaluate the players...using just one or the other can lead to missing aspects of some players

~ Ensure you see enough of each player to evaluate them in each area.

~ It's usually easy to identify the players with the top skills sets, and the lowest skill sets. However, the players in the middle need the most attention to ensure you properly identify which ones will and won't make the team.