



Murph's Memo : Volume 1 May 2, 2009

Progression Can Improve Finishing

Most of our teams are coming up on having played 4 games and all still in a good position to make the playoffs. Obviously, I would like all our teams to make the playoffs and a high percentage to win their championship. This experience is beneficial as it can be drawn on at a later date. But I have not joined OSS to help coaches train players to win Superliga. My one and only goal is to provide the environment for every player who wishes to play at the high school level has the fundamental skills and confidence to do so. This could be viewed as a long process and high expectations but a number of our players are at present high school players (U16 boys and girls). I view the age groups in the club this way; our U-14 players are next year's freshmen, U-13 freshmen 2011, U-12 freshmen 2012 and so on. It is with this in mind why I write this, our players must be technically very good in order to play creative entertaining soccer and play at the high school level. Technique, the player's ability to manipulate the ball both under pressure and in space, is the basis for everything else in the game (United States Soccer Federation). I have been watching training sessions this week and speaking with coaches. Some teams have been working on finishing and that is quite alright. My questions would be : is this due to missed opportunities or not creating them. Limited possession elsewhere on the field creates limited opportunities. If your team is having a hard time creating chances: 1- be patient, 2- work on possession and organization, this will create the chances, eventually.

Young players (and pros) miss chances and encouragement works better then criticism they know they should have done better. Putting players in a position to score is difficult but once in that situation **TECHNIQUE**, quality and confidence should win out. The best way to improve the previous three factors is for the players to train in game like situations. Finishing sessions, like all other sessions, need to progress and include pressure, intensity, challenge and success. Most importantly, all the players need to be worked into the session. I have seen exercises this week that focus on the two strikers which is good but from where I was standing to many other players standing and not involved physically or mentally. In my opinion **I have not seen enough progression, intensity and challenges** for our players tactically.

Here are some corrections that I would make:

- The players don't always receive the ball facing the opponent's goal, especially forwards. Receive ball with back to goal then he/she sets up striking partner.
- Introduce defender(s) with limited pressure, as forwards become more successful, increase defenders pressure on forwards.
- Add central offensive midfield player and 2 defenders. Attackers must now work to create space and make runs in front of and behind the central defenders. Midfield player can also be set up to shoot on goal.
- Add two wide offensive players and a third defender. Attackers now working to be aware of how they help keep possession set up midfield and spread defense. Runs are now made in front, behind and between defenders.
- Add another central midfield player, a fourth defender and one defensive midfield player. You now have a 4-2 offensive formation and a 4-1 defensive formation (12 players). Working on keeping possession to stretch the defense with attackers making the same runs and also setting up other players.

Remember each time you add a player(s) increase the size of the grid and the strikers must start further away from goal.

Remember tactics are not and should not be introduced to our players until they are U-12 until then it should be 1v1. All of the above is not for our U-12 teams to achieve again it's progression and working from **Simple to Complex**. We seem to be doing a good job with warming players up and stretching. We must always include simple technical exercises to get the players focused and get some good touches in. This is good for any topic but especially finishing when you need a good touch quickly. While they warm up you can explain the topic.

I hope all the teams had a good weekend of soccer and you as coaches saw some improvement for your hard work. If you would like me to run the session above please feel free to get in touch. Thanks for the free time you put in to the players.

Coach Murph