



Murph's Memo : Volume 2 May 17, 2009

Game Day Coaching

As I was looking over an old magazine (NSCAA Soccer Journal Sept-Oct 07) I came across this article, after reading it thought it may help emphasize our role as we head to Nashua on May 23rd. This is not the whole article; I have used some of the author's ideas, added my own and created the article below.

A Tournament provides three to five games over a short period are a test of a player's physical and mental abilities. As coaches we are under the same conditions and it is our emotions that we must control. The players are looking for us to stay calm and give them coaching points to improve their performance. Shouting continuously at players, berating players and challenging the refs calls only loses the trust the players have in your coaching abilities. Each game gives us the opportunity to observe how effective our training sessions have been especially those worked on the week before. In the tournament environment it allows us to pick out consistent problems within our team over a short period of time. This is why taking notes during the game is important, not only for training topics but to help keep your emotions in check. By watching the game objectively, calmly and not result driven you will be better able to help the players. As a coach your primary consideration should be continuous player development. Try not to get caught up in the frenzied excitement of winning the tournament. Doing so could cause your team to indulge itself in risk free kick the ball hard and chase philosophy, which may win games short term but harm the long-term development and enjoyment of players.

One of the benefits with teams staying in the hotel is having a central meeting place, all the players are accounted for, leave together and you can go over directions with parents. It is important that you allow time to warm up, remember that with most tournaments space is limited. Don't change your normal routine for warm up; adjust it according to the space available. Instead of one line have two or a double line one behind the other for dynamic stretching. No matter what your routine is it should increase in intensity as game time gets closer. If the only space is two pitches over from your pitch, have a parent or coach watch, then call your cell 5 minutes before the previous game is over. Leave the players bags with the parent or coach and as you jog back the players pick up the bags. Keeping the same routine on game day gets the players focused. Racing across the pitch while the other team is ready to go increases nervousness. The 5-minute phone call allows you to tell the players the starting line up and give simple, clear instructions. Three instructions are good for young players; don't overload them.

When the game commences, the first ten minutes should be used to observe as much as possible and allow the players to find a rhythm to the game. If you are over coaching here it will be very difficult to control your emotions later. You will not be objective in your observations and as a result miss opportunities to provide the proper coaching points and training topics. You may also miss a great game that the children really enjoyed. Points to consider here:

- 1) Are the players attempting to carry out your instructions?
- 2) Are they maintaining their basic shape as they move up and down the pitch.

As the game progresses it is important we don't over coach by telling the players what to do and were to go continuously. It will be too much information and by the second game they will have completely stopped listening to you. When the player is subbed out let them get a drink and then give him/her some verbal and visual instruction. Have the other subs involved also. "Begin with a positive statement, give them feedback as to what they may have done better, and then end with an encouraging comment. This form of communication is called the **feedback sandwich** designed to improve the play while keeping self-esteem and confidence intact". The subs should stand together on the sidelines close enough to the coach so that he/she can speak to them about the game. Active observation will develop the children's understanding of the game and foster team spirit. Throughout the game it is essential the coach remain positive with the players despite any frustrations, especially the first game and throughout the weekend. Negative comments don't encourage players and will affect not only their enjoyment but also everyone related to the team. You are a role model like it or not the choice is whether to be a positive or negative one.

During half time let the players get a drink, rest and compose themselves. Instructions can be a combination of what the team is doing well and look to improve upon. You could address the strength and weakness of the other team with a view to encourage problem solving. Be careful not to overload the players with too much information especially the younger players focusing on the team is probable sufficient. All players should get the opportunity to start games over the weekend ensuring that the weaker players develop and retain a healthy degree of confidence. This should be happening already with our U-14 and especially with our teams below that.

At the end of the game it is very important that you find a space to allow the players to cool down and do some static stretching. While they are stretching this is an opportunity to give some post-game feedback based on the successes and weaknesses of the game. It is important to send the players away with positive comments and a smile. The perfect team performance that we work for will rarely occur, be realistic and celebrate the smaller success. Remember the game is the best teacher and it should be **FUN !!**.

The following list is taken from the article all of our coaches know most of it but just in case you forgot one.

The most effective youth coaches :

DO

Remain positive
Guide players
Have a substitution policy
Speak to substituted players
Vary positions
Coach players without the ball
Respect opponents
Accept decisions calmly
Enjoy themselves
Keep things in perspective

DON'T

Become negative
Command players without explanation
Substitute without thought or reason
Presume players know how they performed
"Pigeon" hole players
Coach players in possession
Berate officials or players
Blame anyone for events on the field
Let frustrations show
Measure achievements solely by results

Have a great Tournament Weekend !!
Coach Murph