

A “REAL” COACH REACTS TO WHAT HE SEES

Following is a practical example. Let's say that during a team's practice, defending is the main objective. That seemed to be a problem during the game. The cooperation between the defenders and the midfielders on their own half of the field wasn't performed well. The opposing team had a few good chances to score because several players were unmarked. This must change! During the practice you notice that right from the start the team you are coaching can carry out the tasks without any problems. This is somewhat strange. During the game opposing players were unmarked very often and now during practice the team plays defense with ease. Obviously the opposite is also possible; the opponent gets chance after chance. At that moment you perhaps may doubt the abilities of the players. How do you tackle this problem as a coach?



CREATE AN OBJECTIVE; A GOAL

First of all you must formulate an objective: to improve defense on your teams own half of the field through good cooperation between the defenders and the midfielders, to ensure that the opposing team can't create any scoring chances. To achieve this you can choose a game in which the attackers (numbers up) play against the defenders (numbers down). (See drawing # 1). Of course there are many other exercises that can be used, but in this exercise you force the defenders to work together, because they have a player less on the field. Secondly you must observe to see if learning is taking place. In this observation you must use the objective as the starting point. In this case, it means the following: Are the defenders and midfielders successful in stopping the opposing team from scoring? If they indeed are successful the coach could easily say that the objective has been reached. As the coach you should ask yourself if the players have been stimulated to work together as a unit. Is the opposing team ever able to create chances? Is the composition of the team

good? Are they strong enough? Or is the attacking team so weak that the defending team isn't challenged? Are they playing at a tempo that is too low (ball circulation)? Is the passing up to par (in front of the teammate, to the correct leg)? Are they opening up enough (explosive, right moment)? You can think of even more questions.

NO SET SOLUTION

Based on the above mentioned questions you must pay some attention to the opposing team. You could coach the opponents to move the ball faster from one wing to the other wing. Use the field-switch pass as a tool (drawing # 2). Now the defensive team is forced to work well together to disrupt the build-up and to stop the other team from scoring. Whatever you, as the coach, see, determines your actions as a coach. Another example: the opposing team scores many goals during this exercise. You could decide to add a player so it becomes an 8v8 situation (see drawing #3). Next, you coach the midfielders and defenders (own team). The defenders and midfielders must force

the other team to play to the outside. That is where the pressure is put upon the player with the ball. If all 8 players execute this correctly, then the next exercise could be 8v7.

THE “REAL” COACH

When should the coach make coaching comments or instructions and/or adjust the exercise? You can't give a fixed solution for this problem. Whatever a coach sees determines his actions. If he diagnoses that the players (own team and opposing team) don't show what is needed to reach the objective, then he steps in. Then we can see the “real” coach and not somebody who works on the basis of exercises from a book and/or somebody just copying another coach. Besides that, the coach must always take into consideration the developmental characteristics of the players (age, level of play, motivation).

The exercises used in this article can be used with U13/14 players. When working with older players, depending on their level of play, one must define the objectives more detailed and one should go into the subject deeper.

