

BETTER OFFENSE, DEFENSE OR TRANSITION

No matter whom you coach, adult or youth players, talented or less talented players, you always strive to make them better players. After a practice you hope the players are able to play better offense, defense or transition faster to be able to play offense or defense sooner. Do you look per practice as to what your objectives are, or do use a certain order to achieve the above mentioned issues?

The answer to this question can be found in the definition of coaching; systematically influencing players with an objective to develop their result. A coach tries to make players better through a well conceived process. Don't offer one topic today and a completely different topic next week. No, the practices need to be related to each other.

A coach uses some kind of plan. This doesn't mean that a coach needs to possess a big book with all kinds of practices/exercises. A coach should be able to describe where he wants to go based on the starting point of his team.

STARTING POINT

Based on the developmental characteristics of his players (age, level, experience and motivation) a coach makes a plan. Working with youth players the coach's objective is to develop the individual qualities of the players. When working with adults the objective is related to the teams result; trying to win the game. With both groups, the coach must think about the best way to achieve these objectives: which team-organization fits the youth players the best, which team-organization do I select with adults to get a better team result, what will the objectives be at the practices and in what order do I offer the exercises?

PLAN

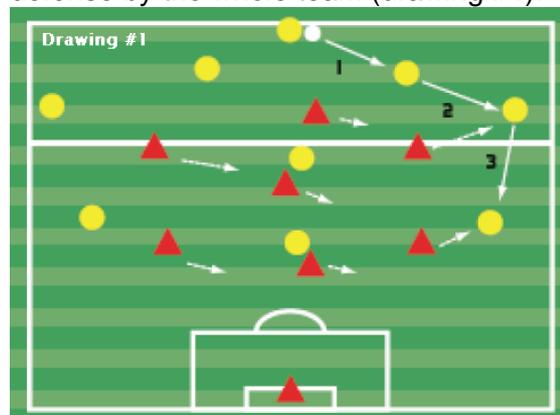
There is a build up in the development of the qualities to attack, defend and to be able to perform the transition. A build up from easy to difficult, from general to specific, from broad to exact, etc. The coach of a U18 team, playing at a high

level, wants to concentrate on defense. Based on the developmental characteristics of his players, also looking at the specific abilities, he decides on a certain team organization. He decides on a 1:4:3:3 formation.

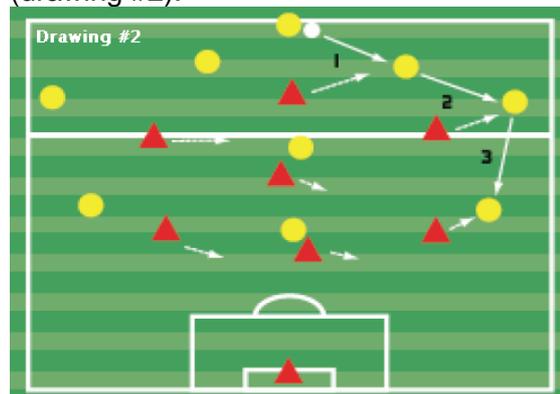
Based on his vision of soccer, he wants to win the ball as soon as possible, preferably on the opponent's half of the field. His players are excellent when their team has the ball, but when the other team has the ball they don't know what to do that well. What steps can the coach take to improve on this problem?

FORWARD DEFENDING

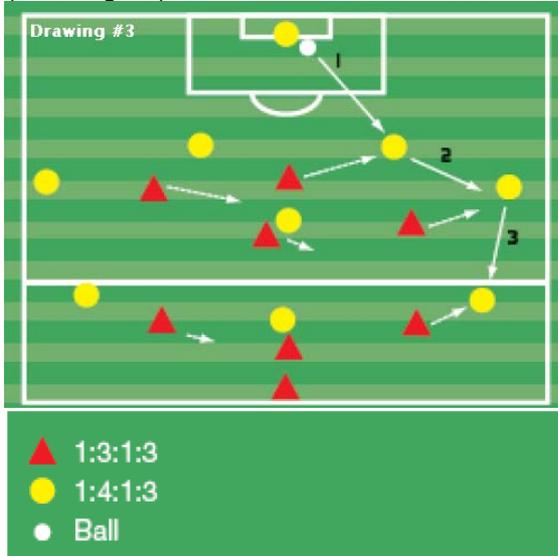
During the pre-season a coach tries to lay a foundation for the style of play of his team. If we want to put pressure on the other team, then that must happen from a compact organized team in which all players know exactly what each should do. The first accent must focus on compact defense by the whole team (drawing #1).



Next, we try to put more pressure on the opposing team and disrupt the build-up from out of the defensive organization (drawing #2).



In the first instance, this happens on your teams own half of the field. Slowly but surely, the defense will move to the opponents half of the field to be able to disrupt the build-up as early as possible (drawing #3).



This is a process that occurs during the whole season and should be perfected as time goes by; one can't realize all this in one or even two practices. Obviously these aren't the methodical steps. It is very well possible that the coach elects to provide more steps and/or offer completely different exercises.

DEVELOPMENT

Each time a coach decides to improve team defense during practice he starts where he left off the last time this part of the game was worked on. This development started during the pre-season. Basically, we are looking at the methodical development over a longer period of time. Of course other factors

influence the planning of the coach such as standings, injuries etc. In youth soccer the development of the team-functions commence with the youngest players, and one can distinguish the various methodical steps in different age categories. The developmental characteristics of children determine the direction of the learning process.



WINNING!

Coaching is more than just preparing a week of practices based on the previous game and focusing on the next game. A coach has to look further than a win or a loss during the weekend game. He also must think about all the games coming up in which his players strive to score more goals than the opponent. This isn't always that simple in the result oriented soccer world, in which the delusion of the day reigns. But this is a great challenge, based on results in the long term; better players that want to win as many games as possible, since that ultimately is the objective in soccer.

PART OF THE FIELD	OBJECTIVE OPPONENT	OBJECTIVE OWN TEAM
Own half	Via sound build-up trying to create chances	Ball-possession opposing team near mid-field; first cover the goal (players close together)
Own half	Via sound build-up trying to create chances, in which the wing-forwards are being used	Ball-possession opposing team near the half-line; from compact organized team put more pressure on opposing team by playing more forward defense
Opponent's half	Build-up from the own defense	Try to disrupt the opposing team's build-up as early as possible and to win the ball