

**Are you Coaching or Directing?**

It seems that every season the coaches and parents need more education on soccer.

The time has come that we stop and think about this question:

What do the players hear when they are playing the game?

The coaches should be calling out instructions, corrections and praise,

The parents are actually shouting out criticism and instructions, which will leave the players very confused.

Do the young players actually hear what the parents are yelling at them?

Some coaches believe that every word they scream is vital to the outcome of the game and the players who pay attention to them will succeed. Others bemoan the fact that the players never seem to hear what they are saying. Still others don’t pay much attention at all to a players response like the energizer bunny, they just keep yelling and yelling and yelling.

There is a lot of confusion between parents and coaches also, in which the parents give them instruction before they arrive at the game, then the coach gives the instruction in what they want the player to do on the field before the game. Frequently, their suggestions are completely counter to what the coach would like them to do.

I think the “coach” is actually directing the players when the game is under way.

The direction angle comes at when the players are playing in a game situation you are just directing them in what to do, by helping them along with different words of instruction & motivation.

Here are a few words that you might have heard that are not good things to say.

**Watch him, she’s attacking, go attack her, NO!! Not that side, you’ll lose it, Push up, push up. Pass, Pass, you’ve got to pass sooner, Listen to me and pass when I tell you.**

What do players here? Young players are so focused on the moment that they simply don’t hear the directions from the sideline. Even when they do what they are asked, they are usually just making the right choice, not doing it because the coach said so.

So how do we as coaches, learn to coach, and not direct? There are several things which can help you alter the way you coach.

***Cheer a lot.*** *Make* all your statements a compliment about something they have already done, rather than something they should do next. Constant compliments may not always register, but will keep you from saying the wrong thing.

***Coach on the bench, not from it.*** Give tactical instructions to the players on the bench and then send them in. Take the time to explain it to them and make sure they understand. When the others come off, have a similar talk with them. If you need to get a specific change communicated without a sub, call a responsible player over to the sideline and explain it to them, and let him/her tell the others.

***Teach players to make decisions for themselves.*** Encourage young players to make a decision without thinking about whether it is the right one. Sure, they will make wrong ones- maybe even costly ones. But they will learn faster. In practice, take the time to talk about a decision every once in a while. The more decisions they make on their own, the fewer wrong decisions they will make as a team.

***Teach players to talk to each other***. Unlike calls from the sidelines, young players do a very good job of hearing each other most of the time. Make name calling a part of practice. They must practice letting each other know where they are so that they will do it in the game.

***Set Clear rules for parents.*** At the beginning of the season, lay down the team rules for parents. The staff does the coaching, and parents don’t. My team’s parents are asked at the beginning of the season to let me know if there is something wrong with their daughter/son i.e asthma or they need a break and I’m not seeing it. I know that the parents will watch their own child more closely than I will, and they also know that I don’t want them to tell their child what to do.

Find the quiet parent. Every team will have at least one parent whose personality is such that they can calmly watch anything. Put that parent to work. First they are your accountability partner. He or she should be given the right and responsibility to come to you if you ever cross one of the lines laid out above. They should also be free to talk to other parents for you, allowing you to stay focused on the game.

***Finally if all else******fails****.* Take a roll of duct tape to every game. As every person knows, duct tape can fix any problem, including this one.

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