Applied Psychology & Player Development

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Questions to Consider

- What is the purpose of youth soccer?
- Why are you coaching youth soccer?
- Why are the kids playing youth soccer?
What is the purpose of youth soccer?

• Skill Development
• Character Development
• Social Development
• Passion for the Game
Why are you coaching youth soccer?

• Child is playing
• Love of the game
• Enjoy working with children

Coaches’ behavior has an incredible impact on players’ performance and experience
Why are the kids playing youth soccer?

• What kids say about sports....
  – Have fun
  – Get exercise/stay in shape
  – Improve/Learn new skills
  – Do something I am good at
  – Excitement of competition
  – Be a part of a team

  • Ewing & Seefeldt (1989)
Making Connections

Purpose of Youth Soccer

Why kids play?

Why you coach?
Considerations

Do we have realistic goals for our players?

Does our philosophy reflect their age and their physical and psychological maturity?
Developmental Changes to Consider

Physical Changes

Motor Skill Development

Cognitive Development

Psychosocial Development

How will these changes affect your coaching?
Physical Changes (Pre-puberty)

• Differences in skeletal size may vary
  – An 8 year old may have the skeletal size ranging from an average 5 - 11 year old
Physical Changes (Pre-puberty)

- Only minor changes in fitness through training
- No muscle fiber differentiation
  - Best athletes = best sprinters = best distance runners
- No difference in males and females
- Predictability of sport success is nearly impossible
Physical Changes (Pre-puberty)

• Implications for Coaches
  – Recognize mismatches in size
  – Focus on technical exercises in practice and not fitness or strength building
  – Recognize physically what kids can do
  – Don’t judge a book by its cover
Physical Changes (adolescence +)

• As bones grow muscles will start to stretch
• Growth spurts vary

• Implications:
  – Teach your players stretching
  – Understand players may lack coordination during a growth spurt
Players According to Age

• Players 6-9 years old

• Players 9-12 years old

• Players 12 and older
Motor Skill Development

• Fundamental Movement Phase
  – 5-7 year olds

• Specialized Movement Phase
  – Transitional Phase 7-10 years old
  – Application 11-14 years olds
  – Lifelong Utilization 14 and up
Motor Skill Development (5-7)

• Fundamental Movement Phase
  – Balance
  – Movement in Different Directions
  – Learning to Manipulate Object
Motor Skill Development (5-7)

• Implications for Coaches
  – Fun games that get players moving in different ways
    • Freeway Maze
    • Body Part Dribbling
    • Ball Retrieval
    • I Can Do This, Can You?
Motor Skill Development (7-10)

• Transitional Phase
  – Players can combine and apply fundamental movements skills
  – Specialized skills
  – Actively discovering new movements

Coaches:

Allow for a broader range of skills
Cognitive Development

• 5-9 Years Old
• Concrete Operational Stage
  – Thinking is connected to an object
  – ME-Ball to ME/YOU-Ball
• Implications:
  – Work on 1v1 and 2v2; smaller numbers
Psychosocial Development

• 5-9 years old
  – Self-esteem is very important
  – Effort = Ability

Implication for Coach:
  Praise often
  Keep practice fun and engaging
# Summary of 5-9 Year Olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Motor Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Range of sizes</td>
<td>• 5-7 Fundamental phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No muscle differentiation</td>
<td>• 7-10 Transitional Phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No differences in genders</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Psychosocial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Concrete Operational</td>
<td>• Effort=Ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maximize self-esteem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical Development 9-12

- Variations in growth spurts
  - Girls 9-13
  - Boys 11-15
- Weight gains
- Not defined chronologically
Motor Skill Development 9-12

• Transitional Phase 7-10
• Application Phase 11-14
  – Children choose to be soccer players
  – Display proper form, accuracy and skill

Coaches:
Increase awareness of technique
Perfect practice=perfect performance
Cognitive Development 9-12

• Formal Operational Stage
  – Aware of others
  – Recognize results of actions
  – Identify determinants of success
  – Can apply feedback
Cognitive Development 9-12

Coaches

• Get players moving in groups of 2 or more
• Increase decision making opportunities
• Create a solid foundation of basic skills
  – How do to things under pressure
• Activities that are fun, but challenging
Psychosocial Development 9-12

• Social comparison begins
  • Impacts self-esteem
  • Impacts perceptions of success

• Negative and positive self-evaluation

• Begin to separate ability and effort
Psychosocial Development 9-12

Implications for the coach:
Keep activities task oriented: Focus on individual improvement

Get children to start to take responsibility for ball, water etc

Use activities to develop leadership and the children’s voice
### Summary of 9-12 Years Old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Motor Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Variation in growth</td>
<td>• Increased sophistication in movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weight Gains</td>
<td>• Refinement of skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Psychosocially</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reflect on themselves</td>
<td>• Comparison effects:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• View/evaluate others</td>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Self-evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Physical Development 12-18

• Similar to previous ages
• Start to see increase in strengths
• Muscles begin to differentiate

Coaches:

Stretching routine
Fitness with a ball and without
Motor Skill Development 12-18

• Lifelong Utilization Stage Age 14
  – Children begin to reach potential in terms of coordination and performance of skilled movements
  – Factors such a time, money, coaching, equipment and physical and mental limitations affect this stage
Motor Skill Development 12-18

Coaches

Can you correct poor technique?

Can you place them in an environment that builds repetition without sacrificing fun?
Cognitive Development 12-18

- Children see the bigger game
- Understand movement off the ball
- Can think steps ahead of the ball
Psychosocial Development 12-18

- Aware of social environment and place in it
- Seeking identity
  - Critical of themselves
- Effort and ability differentiated
  - Limitations on current ability
- Ego oriented and Task oriented

Definitions of Success
## Overview of Task/Ego Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low Ego</th>
<th>High Ego</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Task</strong></td>
<td>Will not play.</td>
<td>Enjoy playing when they win. Quit if not able to win.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Task</strong></td>
<td>Enjoy playing, but not into competition.</td>
<td>Enjoy playing, but seek to compete.</td>
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Questions to Consider

• Do players understand what I am saying?
• How much information can they process?
• How do comments effect players differently?
• How will my behavior impact the players?
General Training Considerations

• Physical: Does it involve speed, balance flexibility?
• Technical: Does it stretch their comfort on the ball?
• Tactical: Does it involve decision making?
• Am I able to involve as many players as possible?
Reasons for Withdrawal

Ten year retrospective study on competitive youth sport in Canada found that elite competitors listed their main reasons for withdrawal as “too much pressure to perform well, injury, needing time for studying, and the coach.”

Final Note

As a coach our actions can shape and mold a player’s experiences and love for the game.

We can create great players and we can cultivate responsible and respectful young adults.