USYSA Workshop 2012

Understanding Athletes With Disabilities
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A matter of perception...

“Congress acknowledged that society's accumulated myths and fears about disability and disease are as handicapping as are the physical limitations that flow from actual impairment.”

-- William J. Brennan, Jr.
Person first, disability second...

Are we coaching an individual with a disability or a disabled individual?
LOVE WHAT YOUR DOING?
If you have a passion for the game and love teaching it to children, then TOPSoccer holds rewards beyond your wildest dreams.
Common disabilities...

- Developmental Disabilities
  - Autism/PDD, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual Disability
- Muscular Dystrophy
- TBI
- Epilepsy
- Learning Disabilities
- ADHD
- Visual/Hearing Impairment
Typical behavioral responses...

- Running
- Crying
- Avoiding
- Touching
- Hitting
- Screaming
- Non-compliance
- Impulsive
- Spitting
- Aggressive
- Selfish
- Biting
How to deal with it...

• Always expect the unexpected!!
• Be calm, be patient, be direct...not bossy
• Understand the person and the purpose, what is the function of the behavior?
• What is the child communicating?
• Consider what is socially appropriate
• Ask first “what can I change or do differently to elicit a different response”...
How to deal with it...

• Avoid the “special education sympathy syndrome”...person first!
• Sometimes ignore, deflect or redirect...
• Do the unexpected...
• Involve the parents only if necessary
Be proactive...

- Create a positive environment that provides opportunity for success.

- Establish
  - Visual cues, boundaries, routine, constant activity, clear limits and expectations

- Establish a relationship, make eye contact. Check for understanding.

- Reward positive behaviors, celebrate success.
Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Significant impairment in social interaction and communication.
- General need for sensory stimulation.
- Can be aggressive or self-injurious.
- Obsessive-compulsive.
- May lack fear of danger.
- Uneven gross/fine motor skills.
- May appear unresponsive.
Down Syndrome

• Generally very affectionate
• Hearing and vision loss
• Speech/Language delays
• Strong willed and stubborn
• Thrives in routine
• Short attention span, highly distractible
• Don’t often know their own strength.
ADHD

• Impulsive and hyperactive
• Significant lack of focus
• May hear but not process directions
• Can be very pushy and loud

• Avoid confrontation and power struggles
• Keep them moving! Stay one step ahead!
Epilepsy

• Also known as seizure disorder
• Nervous system disorder affecting 2.5 million Americans
• Usually will occur without visual warning
• Individual may “feel” it coming
• Often looks worse than it is...
• Dehydration, lighting, fatigue, stress...
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- Caused by a significant blow to the head or brain.
- Profound confusion, loss of memory, agitation and combativeness, slurred speech, loss of coordination, seizure...
- May lack a “filter”
- May improve over time...
- May significantly impact personality
Muscular Dystrophy

- Genetic disorder which weakens muscles and muscle groups.
- Prevalent in boys
- May cause intellectual disability
- Becomes very physically limiting
Questions?