TOPSoccer 301

Children, Sports and Autism Spectrum Disorder:

• A look at how ASD affects children and impacts the decisions we make as coaches.

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What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

  - Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction.
  - Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities.
  - Symptoms present in early developmental period.
What was Autism Spectrum Disorder?

• Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-4).
  – Autistic disorder.
  – Asperger’s disorder.
  – Pervasive Developmental Disorder- NOS.
  – Childhood Disintegrative Disorder.
What does it *look* like?
What does it *look* like?

- Communication deficits: verbal/nonverbal.
- Deficit in social-emotional reciprocity.
- Overly dependent on routine.
- Highly sensitive to changes in environment.
- Intensely focused on inappropriate items. Fixated interests.
- Concrete views and understandings. Inflexibility.
- Deficits in developing and understanding relationships.
- Hyper or Hypo reactivity to sensory input.
The Reason I Jump
-Autism is not a processing disorder, it is a whole different operating system...
Facts about ASD

- Affects 1 in 88 children and 1 in 54 boys.
- Autism prevalence figures are growing.
- Fastest growing serious DD in the U.S.
- Costs a family $60,000.00 on average annually.
- Receives less than 5% of the research funding of many less prevalent childhood diseases.
- Boys are nearly 5x more likely than girls to have Autism.
- No medical detection or cure for Autism.
Benefits of Physical Activity for Individuals with Autism

- More than half of children with ASD are overweight or at risk.
- Improvement of motor functioning.
- Decrease BMI.
- Increase balance, speed, agility, strength, etc.
- Decrease frequency of negative, self-stimulating behaviors.
- Decrease aggressive and self injurious behaviors.
- Improve attention.
- Develop social skills.
The Game: What is Soccer?

- A competitive game, made difficult by the opponent.
- Has an objective to achieve; to win the game.
- Has rules to follow.
- It is free flowing.
- Player centered. Players must solve the problems presented.
Challenges of Sport in Individuals with Autism

In general...
- Team sports are generally NOT recommended.
- Soccer is the LEAST recommended of all team sports.
- Gross motor skills can be significantly delayed.

Soccer is...
- Too abstract and random.
- Lack routine and repetition.
- Deficits in problem solving skills.
- Require a high degree of social interaction.
- Requires a high degree of verbal and nonverbal communication.
Top Sports Recommended for Individuals with ASD

- Swimming
- Track and Field
- Bowling
- Basketball**
- Golf
- Rock Climbing
- Martial Arts
- Hiking
- Horseback Riding
  - Hippotherapy
- Bike Riding
- Gymnastics
Making it work: Creating an Environment on the Soccer Field

- Consider developmental age, rather than chronological age.
- Mosston’s Slanty Line Concept.
- Break complex skills into smaller tasks with greater organization and reward players regularly.
- Games based with individual goals.
- Work with the child’s tendencies rather than against them.
- How will the physical space affect participation? How can you address this?
- “I” on the prize...
Dr. Muska Mosston’s Slanty Line Theory

Straight Line Approach

Slanty Line
Mosston’s Slanty Line

• Mosston’s slanty-line concept is the belief that all children have a right to participate in activities at their own ability level.
• Children will not continue activities in which they are continually eliminated or wait to take turns.
• Given opportunities, children seek out challenges and take risks.
• Individuals with Autism are the ultimate square pegs, and the problem with pounding a square peg into a round hole is not that the hammering is hard work, it’s that you are destroying the peg.

- Paul Collins
Making it work: Creating an Environment on the Soccer Field

- Must understand each child’s level of severity and unique needs.
- Recognize that behavior is a function of the disability.
- Focus on using soccer as a means to enhance socialization, gross motor skills, attention to task.
- Focus on soccer as a means to decrease negative, stereotypical behaviors associated with ASD.
- Work with families to utilize available adaptive devices.
Making it work: Creating an Environment on the Soccer Field

• Go ahead, plan an activity...
  – Diagram and describe an activity. Include rules and adaptations for your activity.
  – Work as an individual or within a small group.
Making it work: Creating an Environment on the Soccer Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Activity Diagram</th>
<th>Coaching Points</th>
<th>Adaptations</th>
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A child with Autism is not ignoring you, they are simply waiting for you to enter their world.

I am more than Autism.
References

• www.autismfamilyonline.com
• www.autismspeaks.org
• www.psychiatry.org
• www.indyschild.com
• www.autismdigest.com
• www.autisminreallife.com