

The Drop-Out Factor

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USYOUTHSOCCER.ORG

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70% of children in the United States leave organized sports by the age of 13, never to return to play again. (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004)

Why do you suppose this the case?

We will examine these two questions

1. Why do they quit?
2. What can we do to keep them playing?

Various research identified common reasons for drop-out

- *Lack of fun*
- *Over-emphasis on winning*
- *Fear of making mistakes, criticism*
- *Lack of playing time*
- *Boredom – inactivity or rigidness of training sessions or matches*

Is it Work or Play?



Who are Responsible for These Factors?

The Youth Players

or

The Adults (Coaches and Parents)



We must change our approach

 7 out of 10

players **QUIT** organized sports by the age of 13



Lack of Fun

They came to play.

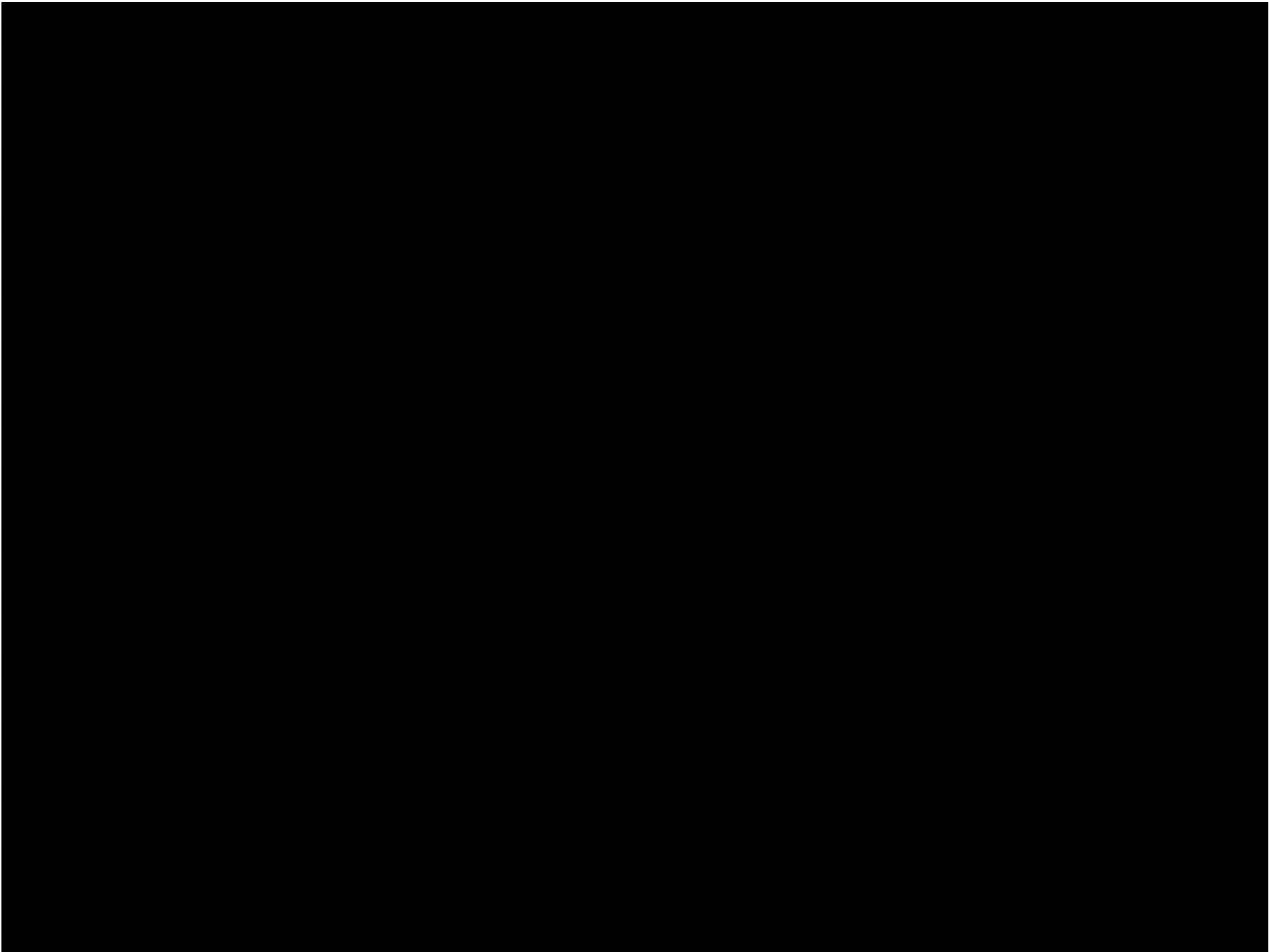
Are they playing or drilling?



Drills

- Static
- Regimented
- Fixed lines
- Boring
- No freedom of thought





We've spent our day, patiently sitting and
listening.....



And it is now time to play!!!



Game Like Activities

- Dynamic
- Unstructured
- Free movement
- Fun
- Decision making by players





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Over-Emphasis on Winning

- Are we letting them own the game and play for the love of the game? Effort is completely within their control but match results are not. The game as a powerful learning tool
- Do the players have the freedom to make their own decisions or are they simply following marching orders?
- Can players experiment or are they directed to play safely, thus smothering creativity?
- Are “specialists” or physical attributes being relied upon?
- Is our focus Short-term or Long-term? Communicating a long-term focus to the players will put them at ease to enjoy the sport with a learner’s mindset

Fear of Mistakes

- Do we encourage exploration and risk-taking even if this could result in conceding a goal?
- Do we value and praise creativity and effort regardless of the outcome?
- Are we refraining from being a GPS coach, hijacking the game?
- Are we mindful of the tone of our voice and non-verbal cues? More than 80% of communication occurs without words!
- What is the car-ride home like? Criticism leads to feelings of incompetence, reduction in confidence, and loss of interest

Failure ??????

“They don’t need our help to prevent failure.

They need us to help them overcome the fear of failure.”

John O’Sullivan – *Changing the Game*



Playing Time

"All of us do not have equal talent but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents." John F. Kennedy

- Are we getting and keeping everyone playing within various roles during matches regardless of a player's current level of ability or the score of a match?
- Providing equal play time for all players reduces fear of mistakes and increases confidence and willingness to take risks
- Players with minimal play time will feel rejected, incompetent, and disconnected from the sport
- Are players being provided equal opportunities to improve their skills?
- Are players playing or standing / waiting in line at training sessions?
- Games of Inclusion – no Elimination



Boredom

- Do we refrain from Lines, Laps, and Lectures?
- Activities or Drills?
- Rote or Varied Repetition?
- Player-Centered or Coach-Centered?
- Do we facilitate plenty of uninterrupted free-play / deliberate play?



Tuesday Soccer Practice.

Deliberate Play (Jean Cote)

“This refers to activities such as backyard soccer or street basketball that allow children to experiment with the rules and tactics while playing. These activities are intrinsically motivating, provide immediate gratification, and are specifically designed to maximize enjoyment.”

Deliberate play ignites the “flame.”





The Flame

- The child must be allowed to light the flame. Deliberate play in the early years feeds the flame, makes it fun, and develops a love for the sport.
- The child with this burning flame will become more mentally engaged and committed to a sport in adolescence.

Jean Cote

How they learned to play

Experimentation – “I’d play in the streets with my friends and when I got home, I played with my brother.”



Exploration – “I play like a child. I think about myself on a small field, or in the street. I see myself with the ball in the same way as I am now. I have not changed at all. You must remember that soccer is a game to have fun and you play for that.”



Deliberate Play for Soccer

- Activity such as street soccer
- Small-sided
- No adult involvement required
- Enjoyable
- Flexible
- No “real intention” of improving performance

THE SOLUTION

Shifting the mindset of American youth coaches and parents so that a lifelong love of the beautiful game can grow within our soccer-playing youngsters on their terms



COACHING RENAISSANCE

- Commander becomes Facilitator – The autocratic approach has been associated with decreased motivation and dropout
- Telling replaced by Asking
- Less is actually More
- Controlling shifts to Creating the environment, stepping back, and allowing them to play

“We all have a built-in, natural learning capability that is actually disrupted by instruction” Sir John Whitmore

Soccer Parent Movement

- Parents included in the coaching education process
- Y-Clinics, staff development sessions
- Newsletters, Social media pages, club website
- D.O.C. Educator Role - at training sessions and matches on the parent touchline to explain, answer questions, and gauge learning



Fun and the Lifelong Love

- Can we facilitate a training environment that resembles Street Soccer?
- Do we infuse Cote's Deliberate Play into the framework of our training programs?
- Are we able to create activities that deliver the magic of Pick-up Games?
- Can we incorporate Futsal into our programs?

Conclusion

- 70% of youth players drop-out by age 13
- Adults (Coaches and Parents) have much to do with this
- Return the game to its rightful owners
- Deliberate Play will light the Flame
- Player-Centered, Inclusion, Stress-Free
- Parent Education
- **FUN**

Discussion

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