

The National Youth License: 20 Year Reflection & Lessons Learned

Dr. Ron Quinn, Xavier University

Dr. Sheri Huckleberry, Ohio University



Introduction & Purpose

- Created in 1995 as a full residential week by Dr. Tom Fleck, Dr. Ron Quinn, Dr. Dave Carr, Virgil Stringfield & Bill Buren.
- Considered one of the first child-centered coaching courses in the world.
- Orientation includes philosophy of coaching, and overview of Piaget's cognitive development as it relates to coaching children, and an introduction to a game/activity pedagogical approach.



Course Overview

- Age-specific
- Cognitive, psychomotor, and psychosocial aspects.
- Developmentally appropriate activities
- Sessions are video-taped
- Candidate Evaluation

The Game in the Child™

Player Development Model



2010 Candidate Descriptive Statistics

- 24 Courses in 21 States
- 640 Candidates
- 236 Created pre-test logins
- 149 Created post-test logins
- 74 Created both pre-post test surveys
- 78% Caucasian
- 89% Male
- 36 Average Age
- 9 Years coaching experience
- 78% held a coaching license

Coaching Efficacy

- Coaching efficacy dimensions
 - Game strategy efficacy (GSE)
 - Motivation efficacy (ME)
 - Technique efficacy (TE)
 - Character building efficacy (CBE)

Purpose of this study

- The purpose of the two-year post study of NYL candidates was to determine if the coaches Coaching Efficacy had increased, decreased, or stayed the same.

2010 Candidate Post Comments

- Candidate 26: I felt the course provided an excellent insight for the U6-U12 age groups. It allowed me to understand the reasons certain activities are appropriate, and why some are not. It also shed some light on the typical characteristics of each group to allow me to understand the typical capabilities of players and how to best provide an environment to enhance development and fun (personal communication, August 25, 2010).



2010 Candidate Post Comments

- Candidate 29: This course was a fantastic experience, a must for any youth coach and should be mandatory in my opinion for any Academy or select coach as this concept fits the USA culture and provides in my opinion the right approach for our children. I am very pleased with this course, way above expectations. It confirms my coaching approach, sharpened my skills and showed me how to teach soccer in this country (personal communication, August 26, 2010).



2010 Candidate Post Comments

- And Candidate 49 articulated the critical element of this program: This course was fantastic. I already knew the “what” to teach part, but gained a great deal of information on HOW to coach (personal communication, November 9, 2010)!

2012 Candidate Coaching Efficacy Results

- 223 Candidate Responses to the 2-year post survey.
 - Game strategy efficacy (GSE)
 - Motivation efficacy (ME)
 - Technique efficacy (TE)
 - Character building efficacy (CBE)

CES Comparison 2010 to 2012



2012 Research Questions

- Did your coaching practice change?
 - If so, in what way? (N=174)
- What barriers or obstacles did you face implementing the NYL methodology?
(N=163)

Research Questions

- What observations or changes in behavior have you seen with regard to your player's reactions to the NYL methodology? (N=165)
- Have you had the opportunity to share the NYL methodology with other coaches? (N=161)
 - If so, in what way?

Did your coaching practice change?

If so, in what way?

- C1: I am asking more questions, letting them play more, and not stopping as often to coach.
- C33: I have developed a greater appreciation for patience as a coach and remembering that these are children and that our greatest responsibility is to teach them to love the game.
- C61: My practices have changed for the U6-U10 age group because the NYL made me understand the different level of development in this age group: psychomotor, cognitive and psychosocial.

What barriers or obstacles did you face implementing the NYL methodology?

- C20: I coach older age travel teams, U23 amateur adult, high school teams. I found it hard to adjust to younger players.
- C22: My desire to “fix things” sometimes initially got in the way of allowing players to learn from the game, I needed time to learn too.
- C141: I had some resistance from some parents about giving the players the ability to create the game, because they see myself as the coach whose paid to create the practice session for the players and team.

What observations or changes in behavior have you seen with regard to your player's reactions to the NYL methodology?

- C32: The players seem to be more vested in the learning process as they are involved in it rather than just being told what to do or how to do it.
- C41: My players have begun to be more creative in their play, their decision making has me pleasantly surprised at times. I think they are learning and watching more now.

What observations or changes in behavior have you seen with regard to your player's reactions to the NYL methodology?

- C45: They absolutely love it. Our program grows and continues to grow. The method stands all tests. Provide good education and fun, then people will come to you.
- C83: I think they are gaining more confidence, more quickly; fear of failure less impactful on training/game day.

Have you had the opportunity to share the NYL methodology with other coaches?

- C53: I now oversee 230 volunteer coaches and consistently preach the NYL methodology through coaching education sessions, meetings, practice plans and emails.
- C97: My entire coaching staff applies it and has three others that have since earned their NYL. We base our entire club around the principles and see players that many people would have rejected at younger ages coming out later in their developmental stages as stars with great technique, skill, soccer intelligence and most importantly passion for the game.



Additional Candidate Comments(N=76)

- C3: Building a coaching philosophy is critical. There are times when a coach will be tested. If a coach explains their philosophy to parents up front, then it becomes easy to fall back to this to justify tough decisions.
- C24: The best coaching course I've been to for coaching youth players. Not only was the instruction great, the use of psychology in early childhood development was key in understanding why kids could only grasp certain concepts at certain levels. The teaching method of guided discovery has made my coaching so much better IMO. Would recommend this course to anyone who coaches kids at any level. I feel it works for adults as well. I learned so much and will take it again if I continue coaching.

A 12 Year Reflection – 1st Course

- Coach first attended the NYL in 1999
- The course appeared to be run by a unique group of coaches who seemed to be renegades in their thoughts in regards to the approach to teaching youth soccer.
- They were stressing age-appropriate activities that allowed for decision making and the philosophy was that the games were the teacher.

A 12 Year Reflection

- For most, it seemed like too much game playing and too little competition.
- For those who had not studied psychology or who were educators, the theories were unfamiliar to most. It was much to grasp and digest.
- I gained an appreciation for the process and for the younger ones.

A 12 Year Reflection

- The NYL began to open my eyes as to the whys and how's of child development and the experience made me start to re-examine my own coaching.

A 12 Year Reflection

- After taking the NYL course, I lasted only two more years in teaching and coaching and took an earlier retirement. I was burned out, tired of the politics, tired of soccer parents, tired of the bureaucracy, and was tired of being treated like the hired help as a public educator. At the end of the 2001 school year, I retired from teaching, from being a women's athletic director, from coaching club soccer, from coaching high school coaching, and I vowed to never coach soccer again. Never say never.



A 12 Year Reflection – Phase Two

- I decided I would get my personal trainer's certification and began to work with soccer moms who didn't need a trainer, but needed someone to count their reps. I hated it and I hated hearing about their personal problems, their sex lives, their political and religious views and it wasn't fun. I fell into private soccer lessons by accident, as I stepped in for a friend who had soccer students he could no longer fit into his schedule.



A 12 Year Reflection – Phase Two

- I became a personal trainer for kids who specialized in soccer skill development. Soon, the very things I had previously done with my teams began to creep into what I was offering. My relationships with my young students involved life coaching and mentoring and a relationship beyond the hour that we were together. Parents began to seek my advice on everything from behavioral issues, hormonal issues, academic issues and everything else they needed help and guidance with in regards to the healthy development of their child.



A 12 Year Reflection – Phase Two

- For many of my kids, my hour with them is as much therapy with a trusted adult as it is with soccer skills.....and many do not like to share their hour they have with me. For my students, I am their constant ~ as predictable as sunrise and sunset. I am their mentor in helping them navigate through life.

A 12 Year Reflection – Phase Two

- For the younger ones, I help them build their foundation of skills and I build their confidence through allowing them to feel free to try.....and to feel safe if they fail. I allow for them to self-assess/correct and I involve them in the process learning. I set them up in games that I usually make up which allows for them to make decisions. I may be playing 1 vs. 1 against them and as I am pressuring them, I chide them and say, “Now what, Coach....whatcha gonna do?!!” Through their own decision making and experience, they learn to make their own decisions in game-like scenarios and they learn their own capabilities, their strengths and their needs for further development.



A 12 Year Reflection – Phase Two

- I teach children who play in rec or select leagues ~ but not the classic league. They have a desire to be good in soccer, but also enjoy the balance of doing other things in their lives, like piano lessons, participating in other sports, taking family trips in the summer and during holidays, etc. Although a few elite players come to me for tune-ups, much is because of their desire for the attention to the psychological aspect of their game under the guise of knocking the ball around.. I am also busting the myth that kids can only get quality coaching through clubs.



A 12 Year Reflection – Phase Two

- I must give credit to you, Dr. Ron Quinn, and to Dr. Tom Fleck, who helped me find my passion again and to give me the empowerment to take on an entire new demographic.
- Rarely do teachers get to find out the true ripple effect that comes from their teachings.
- Thank you. I'm now a "Professional Paid Play-date!"



Conclusions

- The NYL has staying power.
- Greater time and patience is needed.
- Players become more passionate and take greater ownership of their learning.
- Players are more engaged in practice.
- Coaches are eager to share their experience.
- Parents and other coaches still need to better understand the NYL approach.



USYOUTHSOCCER.ORG