

NATHANIEL WHITE

I have a deep passion for coaching, player development & education, I have a distinct philosophy on how to achieve development & results. I am very keen on continuing my own education as a coach & enjoy taking the time to learn other coaches philosophies. Managing the environment is a high priority to me ensuring I always maintain a professional fun learning environment.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

There are layers to my coaching philosophy dependent upon the age & scene where our coaching takes place. I believe as coaches we are either in the results business, the development business or the inclusion business. Of course these areas will often crossover & be apparent in most training sessions & games played at all ages. However, there should be a leading focus & priority on one of these areas in our work with players & coaches alike.

THE RESULTS BUSINESS

The Chelsea team of the 2016/17 season is my idea of how soccer should be played. I think the 3-4-3 formation will be the most common formation used in the future. Utilizing a play making central defender in a robust back three. Hard working central midfield pair with energetic wide men who can do 90 minutes end to end. With two very attacking minded strikers & my personal addition would be with a false nine dropping into channels & turning at every opportunity.

I ensure my teams have a full understanding of different defensive strategies, including low blocks, high press & setting engagement lines.

With the ball I like my teams to forward penetrative passes breaking lines & turning the oppositions defense with well weighted slotted passes on the ground. Also working targeted key delivery zones into the second six-yard box. I do also enjoy a possession based game but only when we have the goals we need & feel we can then defend through that possession.

THE DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS

5-11yrs

95% of primary neural pathways are developed in this age bracket which is our prime window of opportunity to develop our players Agility, Balance & Coordination (ABC's). However, it is equally important to ensure we also develop a love for the game as well as their technical ability. This puts us into a somewhat difficult situation as the best way of founding neural pathways is through repetition, but repetition can become boring, especially to youngsters with very short attention spans. So we are tasked as coaches of this age group with creating fun repetitive training sessions that are diverse. Developing the **FUND**amental

ABC's involving a ball as much as possible. First touch, short passing & dribbling are key techniques that must be apparent in the sessions of the players.

The defining difference between technique & skill is opposition, good technical ability becomes good skill when players are able to deliver those techniques when opposed. By age 11 our players should be skillful in their application of their first touch, short passing & dribbling whilst under opposition pressure.

I firmly believe that at these ages opportunities to implement their techniques learnt in games is key to their development. As coaches of this age group we shoulder a large responsibility to ensure we encourage our young players to play without the fear of making mistakes. Rotating player's positions in games to increase their experience of soccer is also important to their development. Undoubtedly there will be occasions where young players mistakes in matches will cost the team their desired match score lines. We must keep in mind at this age we are very much in the fun & development business & not the match winning business. For me winning matches should never take priority over young player development opportunities.

Playing time in matches should be divided up equally game by game for this age group.

12-16yrs

This is an exciting & really fun age to coach as we move towards 11 a side football. The increase in pitch size & strength of the players now requires our priority of technical development to move to driven passes, driven lofted passes, crossing, shooting & heading. Our training sessions must include repetitive game variable opportunities to practice these techniques. Now is the age where we really get to implement our playing style & philosophy. I like to see these age groups playing out from the back & playing through the thirds unless there is an opportunity to counter attack. And focused on scoring goals through desired delivery zones. Keeping the ball on the floor & feeling free to express themselves without the weight of expectation of match results. We must be willing to sacrifice some score lines for the in game development promoting their good techniques into skills.

There is a lot happening with kids at this age & we must be very aware of the physical changes they undergo. Overuse injuries can be very problematic to kids in this age group, especially the ones going through growth spurts. We also need to be patient with ones who are smaller in stature & are awaiting their growth spurts. Players with good technical ability that are small in stature & struggle to compete should not have their development opportunities taken away from them.

We can now start to identify players positions they are going to be most efficient in, helping them to understand their roles & responsibilities in their positions & how it relates to their team as a whole. I still think that a bit a positional rotation is good at these ages. Preferably in relation to their preferred most efficient positions. For example, it is good for wingers to play as full backs & vice versa & it can be beneficial for center backs to play as defensive holding midfielders. Learning other team mate's roles & experiencing what is required of them can really aid a player's soccer smarts.

Of the four corners of development Psychological, Physical, Technical & Social, the latter is very important to these age groups. Training sessions should be as fun & as social as possible

without impeding on the player's development in the other three corners. We are still very much in the business of developing a love for the game as well as their abilities.

Match playing time should be equal amongst players over the course of a season favoring a squad rotation that maximizes playing time in individual in games.

17-21yrs

Highly competitive & speed of play is needed with our final youth development age group. Players in this age bracket are usually still playing because they intend to do so at a competitive level & enjoy winning matches. Training sessions should almost always include the structures of phases of play, functional practices & 8v8/9v9 small sided games using 11 a-side goals.

Now is the age to really perfect skills in high intensity training sessions almost always using some form of opposition. Opposition & competition is what this age group really enjoy, as coaches of this age group our training sessions must be planned meticulously. Competitive skillful players will certainly push the limits of what they can get away with in order to succeed. Our players will often now have physical bodies that can really fool us into believing they are fully developed. As physically developed as they may be, often they will be lacking in emotional & psychological maturity. Our coaching must turn to one more of man management & player education rather than technical skill development. Undoubtedly our players are not going to be the best they can be yet in terms of their technical skill & we will continuously be addressing it in our training sessions. But hopefully with the great work done in the years leading up to this age we will be free to address the psychological, emotional & educational needs of our players.

Players in this age group will need to know their individual roles & responsibilities in relation to a number of different formations & their own personal skill set. Phases of play are a fantastic structure for this education to take place. Team strategies dependent on opposition teams will be a large part of the player's education, including knowing when to play long to expose space & when to play short to maintain possession & to create space to exploit. Small tactical details such as body position & timing of runs will be of huge benefit to our young player's careers & must feature heavily in one to one's with the player.

Now we get to focus on winning matches! Learning how to achieve match day results & how to win games is something that will be received with maximum interest & increased motivation.

Match playing time is now dependent on the requirements to win matches, but always be aware that building confidence in a player is usually predicated on match success which is dependent on match opportunities.

THE INCLUSION BUSINESS

Playing football is not just for high level athletes with the desire to win matches. Football is a fun game to play recreationally & a great vehicle for socializing & fitness. When coaching recreational sessions, we can be as creative & as inventive as we like to maximize the fun of our participants. Keeping in mind that our participants have come to play & not to be coached our coaching interventions must be as minimal as possible only occurring when the fun starts to lag. Most recreational players still want the structure; organization & enthusiasm coaches can provide. As well as the pitches & equipment to have an enjoyable kick around.

It is important for the coach to maintain a safe, carefree & enjoyable session where any forms of over competitiveness & pressure from participants is quickly quelled. It can be difficult to run these sessions with vastly differing abilities & inconsistent numbers. Sessions must be flexible with progressions that can accommodate all comers as best as possible. Maintaining some sort of age restriction will be needed to ensure fun, safety & sociability.

The wonderful thing about football is that it is for all people at all ages from all walks of life to enjoy.

COACH EDUCATION

I am very fortunate to have spent a number of years working for The Football Association (English national governing body). Where I was heavily trained in coach education & generic tutor training. In my time there I learnt a lot on how to structure coach education sessions that take place in both the classroom & on the field.

I like to run Prezi or power point presentations in the class room that encourage group participation. Quality content is of paramount importance but it's also important that a learning group can also share & interact with each other to achieve peer to peer learning.

On field coaching master classes with age appropriate teams are great for coach observation & Q&A. Other times it can be very beneficial to run coach participation sessions where the coaches get to coach each other & play & receive feedback. One of the most beneficial things for me as a coach was having the opportunity to have myself filmed whilst coaching a session & watching it back whilst on my "A" license.

I have a simplistic three tier structure I stick to for coach education;

1 - Club infrastructure

2 - Session structures

3 - Coaching interventions

Our sessions we run are dependent on club infrastructure, i.e. field space, equipment, number of players. After that the main body of our work is around session structuring. Ensuring that our practices make sense & are full effective. No amount of quality verbal instruction will help if the practices are not structured properly. The final tier is the coaching interventions themselves, identifying problems & how best to communicate, resolve & educate. These group sessions are combined with one to one coach mentoring sessions at both practices and games. With immediate post session & game feedback sessions & take away notes.

There are a number of different ways to go when it comes to coach education. Some like to develop strict curriculums that must be adhered to. For me generally I like to set in place clear structures on how we should work first & then set parameters for coaches to work within. Encouraging a coaches thought process & developing their own sessions that fit our philosophy & are within our parameters of development.