COACHING PHILOSOPHY JIM DEAL

1. I am teaching and enhancing technical and tactical skills as it relates to the game of soccer, but before that, I am a role model and mentor for these young players. Being a coach is much more than simply teaching fundamentals and rules of a game. There are physical and psycho-social aspects of the game which can assist throughout many of life’s lessons. At ages 9-12, self-confidence and motivation are highly influenced by peer attitudes and coach / adult interactions. Coaches must encourage unstructured play and structured competition to address differences in training ages and abilities.

Part of this includes teaching respect:

Why is it important to teach players the respect of the game? So they understand that the game is the best teacher. So they learn to respect the role of the referee, opponents, coaches, fans, their equipment, and nutrition. One of the biggest reasons for teaching respect is to ensure future players continue playing, learning, and loving this game.

1. I have been coaching and evaluating players for a long time. During this time, I see too many individual players who do not know how to play the game when pressure is being applied. They are not composed when the ball is at their feet and look to get rid of it too quickly. They panic under pressure or lack the confidence to keep the ball. I believe we can help young players do a better job keeping their composure under attack with a solid understanding of - A) First Touch, B) Passing, C) Dribbling, D) Finding space, and D) Simple control. We want to develop an understanding that when they possess the ball at their feet, and as pressure is being applied, they know where to look for support. We want them to comfortably know that they can beat the defender with – A) Simple move, B) Change of direction with acceleration, C) First touch away from pressure, and D) Supporting each other for passing. The earlier we can develop the concepts of composure and confidence with the ball at their feet the better chance the player has of being successful. The older they get the harder it becomes to instill this concept. It’s important they understand the technical, tactical, and psychological aspects of defense and be able to apply what they learn from training into the game.
2. As we see success in the skills being developed in training, and carried through to the game environment, we build upon those skills with new skill sets. At ages 8-11 most of what we are encouraging is from the individual player. We spend around 80% of our energy on technical development with 20% spent on tactical themes. As these players become 12-18 years of age we adjust our technical/tactical percentages so that we are working 80% tactical and 20% technical. As we move into the tactical stages, we have to have a complete an individual player as possible; one that can handle the ball at their feet. If this is not being encouraged while young, it becomes difficult for them to focus on the tactical aspects of soccer at the older ages. Players get smarter at they get older on how to defend individually, and as a team.
3. Development versus Winning. We never want to discount winning, but at the same time we don’t want to sacrifice development for winning. Learning to win and lose is a skill set that needs developed same as any other. If coaches succeed at developing complete individual players, the other elements of the game become easier to attain. The ability to breakdown and beat your opponent becomes easier, thus, more wins. What young players do at U8-U12 with regards to winning doesn’t mean anything versus what it will mean at U14-U18. For that reason, we want to encourage and stress the proper skill sets at a young age.
4. Players need to play in order to improve. Nobody improves by sitting on the bench. Instruction, training, and practice is great for repetition, however, nothing instills improvement more than receiving touches during an actual game. Academy and Club programs understand this concept and typically have an A, B, and C team playing within a particular age. Coaches of these teams move players around during the season based on specific circumstances, however, most players that make the A team generally don’t move down and players on the C team typically never get cut. Players are being up based on skill, maturity, and the ability to remain composed and compete. I’m trying to develop these same concepts within the various organizations of which I represent and throughout the age groups of which I coach. No player on a team playing at a high level should ever have a guaranteed roster spot, and I, as a parent, should never be satisfied with my player being on a team where they sit more than they play. If the skill level between players becomes too great, the coach should work with the player and parents in order to develop a plan where the player has the opportunity for further training or find a separate team where the play of that player closely mirrors the play of the other team.

“I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.”

* Albert Einstein