



**GRANTS BRAES ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL CLUB  
INCORPORATED**

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**COACHES NEWSLETTER #2**

## "How to Conduct a Soccer Practice"

The question begins with "How do I keep my player's, active, attentive, enthused and other words to that affect. This dilemma is easily resolved by adding more

**A C T I O N** into your practice sessions.

Activity must be one of your main goals when dealing with young players. You must understand that, 'players come to practice to play.' Therefore, any activity that does not involve playing soccer may become disruptive.

Clarify your practice session rules and expectations through individual and team discussions. That is, having the team decide what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior. It's actually fun to have them vote on their own practice session rules. Then you must act firmly, fairly, consistently and matter of factly when their actions go against their own established rules.

Teach less! When players and balls are moving, soccer learning is taking place. When players and balls stop moving, soccer learning stops!

Ask yourself - Does it happen in the game (i.e., drills)?

If the answer is YES -then do it in practice.

If the answer is NO -then don't do it in practice.

Interest in playing soccer needs to be developed. You may be faced with players who are not interested in playing our wonderful game and you must adjust accordingly. Give appropriate attention to the disinterested players but not at the expense of the rest of the team. Then, make the practices so much FUN that the disinterested player may want to join. Remember that when you are working with your players you must be as helpful, understanding and patient as you are with your own children when they are learning other skills in life.

Organize the practice session in such a manner that it becomes apparent it is a rehearsal for the game day routine \*. This can only be accomplished through a consistent, sequential routine\* that allows your players to learn what is expected. It is wise to avoid -- variety. If they are introduced to something different at each practice session this will lead to some confusion and confusion can lead to disinterest.

No Lapse. No Lines. No Lectures! Running around the field may be considered punishment. They already know 'how to' stand in a line. It is a fact that their attention span is less than 15 seconds. You must create a practice environment that minimizes listening/lecture time and maximizes touches with the ball and playing time. In other

words, allow them to play the game of soccer which forces them to make decisions and learn on their own. Allow them to experiment and fail their way to success!

### **Ideas on how to be more organised**

How often have you as a coach asked your players to get in groups of 3's or 4's and you had the players mill around looking for the partners they most want to work with? While this might not seem like much of a time waster over the course of a season the time wasted doing things like this can add up to a significant amount of time.

There are three easy ways to avoid this waste of time. First you can have the groups planned in advance so that instead of telling the players to get into groups of 4's you tell them you want Jim, Sam, Richard and Brent to be one group, Simon, Jack, Hamish and Peter to be a second group etc.. The advantage in doing it this way is you can have certain players working together that you want working together (for example, two forwards who will most likely be playing up front together might be put in the same group to increase their familiarity with each other). The one problem with doing this is that if you are like me, sometimes you have to deviate from your original plan so if the groups are predetermined and one player isn't there, it could cause you to change all of the groups.

The second way to get them into groups quickly is to assign numbers before the activity begins. If there are 16 players and you want 4 groups of 4's have the players line up and count off 1,2,3,4, 1,2,3,4, 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4,. Then all of the 1's are a group, all of the 2's are a group etc. This is a great way to keep the same players from always working together (which is one way to avoid cliques).

The third way to get the players in groups quickly is a numbers game. Tell the players that anytime you call out a number, they have to get into that numbered group right away.

For example, if there are 16 players and the coach calls "3" the players have to get into groups of 3's as quickly as possible. One player will be left out of a group and have them do some type of "fun punishment" such as star jumps or donkey kicks etc. The players will quickly get into groups without regard for who is in their groups and this accomplishes the task quickly and efficiently and avoids the constant grouping with friends. At the beginning of the season play this numbers game as a "competition" and then explain to the players that for the rest of the season any time they hear a number to get into that group quickly.

Any of these three methods are effective in running a more efficient and organized training

## **7 points to healthy coaching**

### **#1 ... HAVE FUN!**

- If you are having fun, the players are surely going to have smiles on their faces!

### **#2 ... BE ORGANIZED**

- Write down your practice plan before practice starts! (Eliminates down time & practice chaos).
- Organize practice as follows: Warm up, Individual Skill Work, Mini Games and end with a scrimmage!
- Setup for the next drill/mini game during the water breaks!
- Organize team parents and assistant coach(es) to help with administrative tasks, practices & discipline problems!

### **#3 ... KEEP IT SIMPLE AND EXCITING!!**

- For youth players "ages 6 - 12", keep the practices and tactics simple and in easy to understand terms!
- When playing mini games and scrimmages at practice, establish names for the teams (ex. Sharks, USA, England, Dinosaurs, etc.) The team name creates unity, competition and brings out the best in your players!
- Use a handful of drills that you & your players enjoy ... no need to spend 15 -20 minutes explaining new drills at each practice!
- Tell the players how long the drill will last or how many goals will win the game. This gives them an objective and keeps them focused on the task at hand!

### **#4 ... DEVELOP A TEAM TO-DO LIST!!**

Once you decide on the team to-do list, jot them down and reinforce them throughout the season ... during practice, before games & at half time! Some examples ...

- When the ball comes to a player, his/her options are passing, dribbling or shooting ... no kicking!
- Quick throw-ins.
- Going to and winning loose balls.
- When the player has the ball in the offensive corner, cross the ball in front of the goal.
- When the player sees his/her teammate has the ball in the offensive corner, position him or herself in front of the goal and wait for the cross.
- Communicate (talk to each other)
- Etc.

#### #5 ... COACH COMMANDMENTS!!!

Before the season begins, communicate to the players & parents ...

- Acceptable and unacceptable behavior!
- What to expect from you! (the coach)
- Your expectations of the players!
- Your expectations of the parents!
- Consequences of actions!  
This way everyone follows the commandments or face the consequences!!

#### #6 ... CRITIQUING PLAYERS!!!

- Always start with a positive comment and finish up with the constructive critique!
- Use specific examples ... Johnny, remember when you kicked the ball 30 yards up the field, that was a powerful kick but were you passing the ball to anyone or was that a shot? Remember, our to-do list says "we don't kick to kick ... we kick to pass or kick to shoot"!

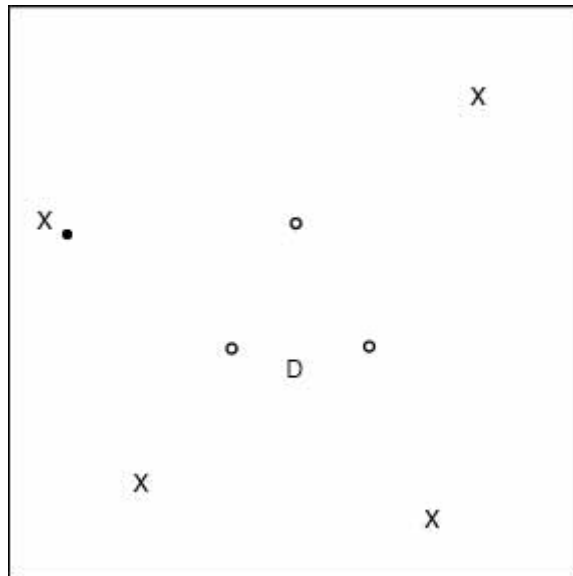
#### #7 GAMES!!!

- Do ... Display good sportsmanship! (You're the role model for your players).
- Do ... Reinforce the team to-do list before the game and during half time!
- Do ... As the game is played, point out situations (to the subs) where players are (and are not) working on the team to-do list! (The game provides great visual pictures and the subs are a captive audience).
- Do ... Use specific game scenarios (and names) when coaching and making changes at half time! (Be positive).
- Don't ... Yell and scream from the sidelines (at players or the Ref).
- Don't ... Try to coach every decision the players are making on the field!
- Do ... Let the kids play and have fun!

**Exercise: Here is an interesting way to work on passing, movement, fitness and looking for the penetrating pass.**

Start with a 15 x 15 yard grid and have a 4 yard equilateral triangle in the middle made up of cones or spheres). There are 5 players in the activity with one being a defender and the other four being on offense. The 4 players try to maintain possession while also looking to score goals by playing the ball through the triangle to their teammates. The defender is NOT allowed inside the triangle so he must be constantly working his way around the triangle trying to cut of the penetrating passes.

**See the diagram below for the set up**



The thing that makes this such an interesting activity is the required movement off the ball by the offensive players. On every pass they are moving in order to get into a better position to either make a penetrating pass or to receive one (as opposed to the norm in possession games when players wait till they receive a ball before thinking what to do next, in this game the players have to be thinking ahead of the passes because it's not good enough to just play the ball through the triangle, a teammate has to be there and receive the ball for it to count.

Play this game for a 5 minute period with each player having a one minute turn on defense. It gets the players working hard, thinking and competing while having fun trying to beat their teammates. The player who gives up the fewest number of goals on defense wins.

There is a tendency in this game for the offensive players to get too close to the triangle which takes away the passing angles (just like in a regular game where they come too close to the middle). This is easy to correct and is a good learning opportunity for the players.