

Coaching Best Practices

DC Stoddert – Recreational Soccer Program



Spring 2018

- **Plan each session before you get to the field**
 - Develop an overall plan spanning the season to make sure you cover all aspects of the game
 - The current recommendation for each practice session is to sequence activities in a manner referred to as “Whole-Part-Whole”:
 - Start with a small game right away. As players arrive, they jump in & play!
 - Follow with practice activities that break down aspects of the game. Ideally activities should still have game-like elements (“Does it look like soccer?”).
 - End with a scrimmage & minimize your verbal contributions; let the kids play & see if what they focused on earlier shows up in some fashion
- **Arrive early enough to set everything up before players arrive**
 - If you can’t set things up for all activities, can you set up the first activity and determine a simple way to flow to later activities with a minimum of set up time needed?
 - Make sure the practice area is safe and remains safe during your session
- **Greet players as they arrive** & encourage them to play right away – have them play a small game, or at least start passing or juggling
 - Starting practices with a game becomes a lure for players, who soon will really want to show up on time – or early – because they know they’ll be able to play a game straight away
- **Start your session on time.** Always. Even if you just have one player present, get going!
- **Be brief.** The more you say, the less will be absorbed. For each activity, can you describe it simply & clearly and get the players active as soon as possible? Then, as appropriate, additional coaching “in the flow” can supplement the message being given.
- **Make it fun & make it game-like!** Especially for younger players, elements of fantasy or storytelling can augment any activity (“Let’s pretend we are pirates protecting the treasure....”).
- **Bring the energy.** Players will react better and absorb more if you have energy and share it with them. Think about what your “coaching persona” is....what would motivate you as a player to focus and work harder? Are you having fun as well, and can the players see that?
- **Move from one activity to the next smoothly and fluidly.** Manage planned breaks (water breaks, etc.) the same way. Momentum is your ally in keeping the players focused and on-task.
- If you ask players questions (and you should, especially for kids in grades 3 and up), **manage the answers to get to the point you want to make**, and move on. Otherwise you’ll be stuck in a quagmire of raised hands and players, each who want to tell you their thoughts.
- At the end of the session, stop the scrimmage, bring the players together, and **provide a quick wrap up**. This can be as simple as a reminder of what they focused on today (“Remember, today we worked on passing to an open teammate.”), ask if the players had fun, and remind them when the next activity is (whether it is the next game or practice). This time can also serve as a cool-down period.
- **End your session on time.** Always. Respect the players’ families’ time & set a good example.