

# Training and Learning, through the Game

By Aaron Roy, MHYSA Director of Coaching

Many of our world's greatest players today grew up playing in the streets where there aren't any coaches at all. Ronaldinho, Ronaldo, and Del Piero are just a few of the many notables. They used whatever was available to play, i.e. shirts for goals, a chalk outlined goal on a brick wall, a basketball, volleyball, etc. They played with whoever was there. Most times crowded if you could imagine, as front porch to front porch isn't nearly as wide as a soccer field, especially when you have a block full of children AND adults who want to play. The games get intense and the children work on skills at home, hoping to get picked to a team the next time they head out to the block. Why? Because they love the game, and through playing they evolve and see what it takes to "stay on the street."

Through playing the GAME. Remember: no coaches, no running laps or reprimand for mistakes, no tiring and at most times boring drills, no yelling in your ear. The game is pure and keeps them coming back. Those things we must remember of the way good players become **great**. We as coaches should constantly be putting our players in game related situations during training.

Keeping some of that in mind, remember when coaching:

- The match is for the kids, let them play and enjoy it. It is their reward for hard work at training. Use pre-game for strategy and halftime to make adjustments.**
- Pointing fingers and screaming from the sideline during matches is unacceptable. If your players show up to training, and aren't performing and improving in match play, fingers should start pointing your way.**
- After the match, let them go home. Post game speeches are unnecessary.**
- Form your next training agenda soon after the match. Remember, although different activities are incorporated into training, focus on the one most important aspect needing the most improvement. For example: If dribbling is my topic for training, the only reason I would stop any activity during training is to focus and improve upon a dribbling error. Let the rest go.**
- At training, keep your warm-up (NO LAPS) topic related and the activities match related. Quality over quantity. Ask yourself these questions about your training:**
  - A- **Is my agenda progressive and structured to end training on time?**
  - B- **Is training flowing and match related, or do I often have kids standing?**
  - C- **Are the players often put into situations related to today's topic?**
  - D- **Is there a *reasonable* objective in the activity?**
  - E- **Am I correcting mistakes, or allowing a player to properly correct and demonstrate before restarting? Remember, success breeds confidence.**
  - F- **Am I constantly enthusiastic and giving positives when applicable?**
  - G- **Do I abruptly stop an apparently unsuccessful activity, or; do I search for and end on a positive, and then move on?**
  - H- **Last, but definitely not least, are the kids relaxed and having fun?**

Over my short 8 years as a trainer and coach, I've had the opportunity to work side by side with some great coaches who have had different approaches in training. Demir Muftari, Andy Wagstaff and Rick Christensen just to name a few. All have coached teams to state and national championships at the youth and/or high school level. Soccer is their passion as it is mine. I've had great experiences learning from them and my confidence as a coach has skyrocketed. In closing, **learning from other coaches and their experiences as well as your own proves a very important building block in growing as a teacher of the game.**