

Designing a Practice Session

PRIOR TO THE SESSION

- 1.) What are the objectives of the session?
 - a) Pick one main objective (KISS – Keep It Short and Simple)
 - b) Teach one option, then when the players achieve that option, add another choice.
- 2.) How does it happen in the game?
- 3.) Where does it occur on the field?
- 4.) In how much space does it occur in a game?
- 5) Which players are involved?
 - a) Which player from your team?
 - b) Which opposing players?
- 6) Why does it occur?
 - a) What are the most likely exceptions to the rule?
 - b) Why is it important?
- 7) What is your best coaching position?
- 8) What kind of warm-up will lead to this activity?
- 9) How will you start and restart the exercise in order to get plenty of repetitions of the targeted action?

Now you have enough information to design a practice session to achieve your Targets. Depending on the level of players and how close your team is to the target to begin with, you will determine how realistic you want to begin. You must develop it to the point where it will look like a section of the game - proper support players, a proper number of opponents who have a goal of some sort to play against.

DURING THE SESSION

An Example of an Evaluation

- 1) Does the coach set about things in a confident and authoritative manner?
- 2) Do the players get straight into the session or does the coach slow things down with lengthy explanations?
- 3) Is the warm-up appropriate? Is it simple? Can the players actually do it as described?
- 4) Key Factors: The example given is for training the center forward for attacks on goal.
 - a) Good contact on the ball
 - b) The follow through - Low for the low shots
 - c) The accuracy
- 5) Where - In the penalty area and beyond it (about 15-20 yards from goal). The area in practice is about 35 yards wide. Wider than that and the center forward will be looking for passes more than shooting opportunities.

- 6) What players are involved? (Not dealing with crosses here)
- a) The Center-forward
 - b) The people who give him the ball: one or more midfielders and the outside strikers.
 - c) The opponents: stopper and sweeper, goalkeeper, defending midfielders who are trying to win the ball and get out of their half of the field in a controlled way without giving the ball away.
- 7) Why?
- a) This is the culmination of one aspect of our attacking tactics: when play is built through the middle of midfield, not developed over the wings.
 - b) There are very few times when it would be wise for the center forward to pass up a chance to score. No major exceptions.
 - c) It is unimportant if our team doesn't typically develop attacks through the middle of the field. We will assume that we can. Therefore this will increase our chances of scoring at the end if we can move through this area.
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EXERCISES FOR THE SESSION

- 1) Pure technique practice:
- a) With opposition.
 - b) Develop it with partial opposition.
 - c) Develop it further with equal #'s opposition.
- 2) Functional training for the center-forward versus two center-backs and a goalkeeper, with service coming from an unopposed midfielder - around the top of the penalty area.
- 3) Develop it by adding more numbers.
We may use two center forwards for all these - either the "2" in a 4-4-2 or the center forward and an attacking midfielder.
- 4) Develop it into an even numbered small-sided game.
*Condition the teams to play with a free central defender
- 5) Develop it into a larger game.
- 6) Coaching position: off to the side.
- 7) When stopping for teaching point, Freeze the exact situation, then restart the game from there.
- *Psychology Aspect: Just because player progresses and improves in one area (i.e. 1 v 1, or 2 v 2), don't assume he will do so 8 v 8 or 11 v 11!