

# Chapter 13

## Odds and Ends

This last chapter represents what I experience as I'm driving home from many of the coaching courses that I have given. It's the 20/20 hindsight of "Oh, I should have said..." or "I should have covered..." or "...would have been a much better explanation." Even after spending 16 hours together you always feel like you left something out. So, in an effort to be as complete as possible here is a recap of some of the earlier ideas along with a few new ones as well.

### Coaching tips

- Arrive at practice with a written lesson plan in hand. It should include the basic organization of each activity. The progression of the activities and what are the key coaching points that you'll be looking for.
- Start practices with REALLY small games. Your players rarely arrive for practice at the same time. Chances are it will be individually or in small car pool groups. Have small games, i.e. 2v2 mini tournaments, four square, 1v2 w/no teams or slam set up so that the first ones there can start playing while the others arrive. Then feed the new arrivals in as substitutes until there are enough to start another game. It serves as a reward for the early birds and begins the warm up by getting them moving and out of the school mind set and into the soccer one.
- A few suggestions for laying out the fields.
  - Laying down the first line of discs keep your eyes on a stationary object in the distance. Have a set distance in mind how far you want to go and find a multiple of that distance, i.e. 24 yards can be divided by 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 or 12-yard increments. The number you choose will determine the distance between the discs. Using too many discs can be as bad as too using too few.
  - Pace off and count by your set number. Set a disc down every time you get to your number using the same hand. If you switch hands the line will zig-zag behind you.
  - When you reach the end of the line look back and ask yourself, "will that distance work with this group?" If not make an adjustment. If you've been counting in 6-yard intervals and you want to lengthen it by 4 yards go ahead and make the last segment 4 yards. Likewise you can shorten up the last segment.
  - Look across the field, find your stationary object and begin pacing the second line. Since there is likely to be a difference between the width and length of a field you can use different distances between the discs i.e. 8 yards on the long side and 6 on the short. Repeat for the third line using the same measure as the first.
  - The distance of the fourth line should be equal to the second. If not, you have a problem with the angle in one of the lines.

- Set your goals up. When you have evenly spaced discs, finding the center of the line requires either finding either the center disc or the space between the two middle discs. This makes finding the midfield line easy as well.
  - Taking the time to pace off the field systematically pays off in the long run. It provides consistency, allows for quick computations for adjustments and helps you remember what sizes generally work best.
  - Use different colored discs to mean something. Using a different colored disc as the end line in line soccer gives kids a visual cue. Alternating the colors of fields in your opening really small games facilitate organization.
- Fix the game before you try fixing the players. If the games not working fix it first. (Remember the Goldielocks rule.) If you have to reduce or increase the numbers go ahead. If the field conditions don't allow the team to play the way you want you'll need to make an allowance or abandon the idea altogether.
  - Don't stop the game to change the field size. Make your adjustments while they're playing. Simply walk along the sides or ends and adjust the discs, or, set a new line down and then go back and pick up the original line. There's usually no need to stop the game.
  - When you have the players gather around you for a talk make sure that there is nothing interesting happening behind you. If the kids can see something interesting, like another game, you'll have to repeat yourself. If there's a hill, they can sit at the bottom of it and look into it while you stand slightly uphill. Look for a neutral or passive background to keep behind you and make sure that they are not looking into the sun.
  - With the u-yongs, get down to their level when you talk with them. This will help make them more comfortable and help you to appreciate the world from their perspective.
  - The freeze technique. As you're watching the team play you can freeze the game when you observe something going wrong. Just yell "freeze" or "stop" when you see the problem and the players will do just that. (Make sure that you explain what you're doing and how they should respond before you start the game.) After you tweak the players back to what you want to address you'll have a three dimensional picture of the problem that you can show as well as talk about. Step in, make you're comments and then let them proceed. They can restart the game from that point with a first pass free or a player's choice. Don't take too long or begin a lecture, keep it under a minute. Explanations should be brief and to the point. Point out the on/off, yes/no or technical options and get the game going. Don't overuse this technique. Two or three freezes in fifteen minutes is more then enough.
  - Coach an individual or the group. When you want to make a point to the team you can stop the activity and make sure that everyone hears what you have to say. Or, you can address only those that you need to during a normal stoppage and let the others carry on in the game. (You can pull someone aside while the game goes on.) The advantage to the former is that everyone hears the same thing. The advantage with the later is that you make your point to those that really need to know. The disadvantage with the former is that there are likely to be individuals that aren't involved or interested in what you're saying and they'll simply tune you out. "Why are we stopping? It's not my problem" or "Oh no, him again!"

Coach the opposition. If you want the players to work on a particular problem but the opposition isn't cooperating, spend some time coaching them. For example, you want the attackers in a game of 5v2 to move the ball quickly but the two defenders aren't working together so the attackers don't