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IT'S EASY TO CRITICISE: THE IMPACT OF PARENTS AND COACHES

How easy it is to criticise from the sidelines. Instructions are easy to give but not always that easy to follow, especially if the person giving out the instructions is 35 years plus and the person receiving them is 11 years or under. Views of the world and frames of reference are totally different – a complete mismatch. What is vitally important to one person may not even have occurred to the other.



In football great emphasis is placed on the result as a measure of success. Certainly for First Teams and First Team Managers at every club it is the points and the result that is paramount. But is this still true in development football, where the greater emphasis should be, and so often is not, focused on learning. In development football some coaches 'play the game' for the players by constantly shouting instructions from the sideline and never letting the players make the decisions or solve the problems the match presents. There can only be one 'real' reason for this – the coaches' desire to cut down on players' mistakes so that their team will win the match.

Some parents too can fall into this trap. It is sometimes said that parents may try to live out their past career or lack of one or even present insecurities through their children. Football in particular seems to lend itself to this kind of behaviour, and could be especially true if parents were under-achievers but now find that they are parenting a child with the 'potential' to make the grade. How often do we see parental over involvement in the child's activities, almost to the point where the child rarely seems to have an opportunity to make a decision either on or off the pitch?





As Professor Biddle of Loughborough University points out, "The parents create their own [motivational] climate, not just the coach. What's the first thing parents say after the game? What's the first question they ask? Are they rewarding effort, enjoyment, as well as the result?"

'Player development' is all about problem solving and decision making because 'player development' is about learning and learning is a long term, some would say 'life long' process where decisions, mistakes and consequences are vital if things are to truly stick. A football match is a short-term event and simply part of this process – a test where the youngster can experiment and find out what he or she currently knows and can do.

By constantly trying to make the decisions and solve the problems for the players those coaches and parents are in fact dis-empowering them in favour of short-term solutions with short-term rewards --- a win! Through dis-empowerment the players never learn to become self-reliant or trust themselves – because the coaches and parents obviously do not trust them. Therefore they find it more difficult to make the right decisions and solve their own problems both on and off the field. This is a major issue for 'player development' as football from the grass roots up to the world cup final is a decision-making, problem solving game.

How can coaches help and support player development more effectively?

- Presentation Skills – The ability to strike up a positive rapport with, communicate information effectively to young players using the most appropriate strategies and mediums.
- Identifying Development Needs – The ability to identify the development needs of young players and plan appropriate activities and practice to challenge and meet those needs.
- Designing Learning Activities – The ability to design appropriate learning activities and creative practice as part of a wider, long-term development programme

And, Mum and Dad, please:

- Give me the time and opportunity to make my own decisions both on and off the field – I need to learn the consequences of getting it right and wrong.
- Try not to tell me off or shout at me from the sideline when I do get things wrong. Give me the chance to relax and play – I need the mistakes to help me learn.
- Try not to keep offering me advice going to games or coming home again. Let me unwind and reflect – it helps me learn.
- Listen to me if I come to you with a problem – Sometimes I just need someone to talk to – It helps me learn.
- Remember I am a young person not a small adult – sometimes I don't see things like you do or understand what you are saying.
- Come and enjoy the game – I'll always try my best.