

Planning a Coaching Session

Making the most of the time you have available during a training session is vital to both individual and team development. To make the most of the session requires some prior planning. Turning up to the field early and prepared, with a session plan is the foundational building block of an effective session.

Portuguese Manager Jose Mourinho lays out entire sessions so players can simply move to a different activity. This means there is no time wasted in re laying the cones for the next exercise.

We are aware, of course, not nearly enough teams are blessed with the wealth of space needed for this, so it is even more important that we as coaches know exactly what to do next during our session.

When planning a session. It is important that you try to create a structure, a structure that may stay the same from session to session even though the topic may change.

For youth soccer, I find a suitable structure for success in the following progressions:

- 1- Topic of the session with no pressure**
- 2- Topic of the session with passive pressure**
- 3- Topic of the day with real pressure**
- 4- Conditioned game**

It is important to stay with one theme over the entire course of the session. For example if you are working on an attacking/shooting session, do not have an activity which stresses the importance of retaining possession. Your objective in an attacking session should be to get lots of shots and ultimately, score lots of goals. With this in mind, it is always beneficial to weight the session in favour of the attackers. Playing numbers up in real pressure (5 attackers' vs. 3 defenders etc) will give the attacking team a challenge while still allowing them opportunities to score. Thus the objective of the session is still being met.

Sessions at the professional level are delivered with the next game in mind. Scouts will research a team prior to the game. If for example, the opponents are vulnerable when the ball is crossed high into the box, a team may work their session around spreading play to the wings, crossing and finishing.

Most youth teams should plan their practice with the previous game in mind. It's important to engage the players so they are aware of the reasons we are working on the things we are. Once they know the reason why, they will be better equipped to retain the information and recreate it on the field in the next game.



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