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This past winter I went to a soccer conference and was fortunate enough to attend a presentation entitled "The Power of Attitude - Building a Winning Mentality in Young Players," by sports psychologist Bill Beswick. I usually don't attend the lecture-style presentation because I like the action of the field demonstrations, and I am always looking for the latest drills that propel my team above the rest. But Bill's stories were great, and similar to experiences that we all have had.

Bill went on to tell us about several experiences he has had working with athletes from the professional ranks right down to the youth players. The point of the stories was confidence building. Too often, we as coaches are looking for drills that will magically transform our players into successful teams. We look for the latest, most advanced drills we can find. Some involve props; others do not even involve soccer balls. We too often believe that the more complex or detailed a drill is, the better the drill is for developing the player. The truth of the matter is any drill that gives the players confidence is a good drill! We as coaches need to make the drills challenging, but more importantly, the players need to be successful to develop confidence and receive praise when they have performed the drill well. That building of confidence and feeling good about the achievement is very important. When you have players that have developed confidence, the players are more likely to try new things and try what they have learned in practice on the field. Isn't that what we really want? It's a great boost for team moral, too!

Bottom line, build confidence first and worry about the complexity of the drill second. Bill's books are a great (and quick) read with a lot of "Oh yeah!" moments. I recommend them to any coach on any level.