

MYSA THROW-INS: January 2010

Question: How do you adjust training activities to account for varying abilities within your team, so players are challenged appropriate to their skill level?

Scott Macleod

I look to encourage as many activities as possible where players are competing against themselves rather than against others in the group. Examples in warm ups would be one ball per player activities such as setting up gates where players are set challenges such as dribbling through as many gates as possible, performing different skills/fakes/turns at as many gates as possible and can progress to working in pairs for activities such as passing and moving. Players are not requested to shout out scores but instead challenge themselves to beat previous personnel scores. In shooting activities I try to adjust the range or angle different players are working from and in 1v1 attacking and defending activities I often incorporate a ladder system where eventually players of similar ability will be matched up.

Andy Coutts

For the dominant player(s), add restrictions to challenge them but in a way that isn't seen as punishment. For example for the player who has an easy time dribbling through everyone to score impose a rule that no one can score twice in a row. Now after scoring that player has to use different skills to set up teammates to score. At times play them in different positions, limit their touches, give them leadership responsibilities, but beware making them feel singled out. You might rotate players through those or instead of announcing restrictions on certain players, it might be a 1 on 1 chat that you'd like to see them attempt a specific something outside their comfort zone, e.g. score with weak foot, win a head ball, serve a good ball from wide, etc.

Anonymous

I no longer do elimination-style games where the weaker players usually get knocked out first and then watch the better players get more opportunities to improve. You can still play games like "knockout" but allow players to re-enter the game after doing a skill challenge - # of juggles, turns, toe-taps on the ball, something everyone can accomplish quickly but provides extra touches. This also gives the weaker players opportunities to learn and improve their dribbling/shielding by allowing them to try again immediately after losing a battle. Psychologically this format trains all players to recover from mistakes and stay in the game rather than being eliminated by them.