

MYSA THROW-INS: March 2010

Question: Explain ways in which you make effective use of your assistant coach(es) to benefit your team at practices and games.

Greg Holker

Involve asst. coaches in the planning process by actively seeking input (match evaluation, session planning, season calendar, etc.). Clearly communicate overall expectations for the team and goals for each session and match - make sure you are all on the same page. Encourage ownership in the session —allow asst. coach to manage a small group or the entire group entirely on his/her own, and provide feedback at the conclusion of the session (and if necessary small comments during). Don't just have someone dropping discs and organizing vests. Clearly define a role for the match. Example: One asst. coach is responsible for making sure the forwards recognize cues to press opponent or control opponent to one side of the field in the final third. Another coach can have another role - all based on how you have trained and priorities for the match (which you clearly communicated).

Etch Andrajack

In youth soccer many times an assistant coach is a parent of one of the players on your team. They may or may not have played soccer themselves and may have no previous coaching experience. I believe it is best to involve them as much as possible in ways that make the game more fun for the players. Example: The assistant coach can take some of the players and run a small game while the head coach is focusing on a specific skill or tactic with another small group. After a period of time the groups switch. The kids get to just play, (which is what they always want to do), the coach gets to coach and the parent gets time with their son or daughter and their friends.

Aaron Frederickson

Lawrence Fine has written an excellent one page article on the use of an assistant coach entitled "A true partner or simply a 'yes-man' or a glorified 'go-fer'?" In that article, he makes some excellent points: "Communication between coaches prior to each practice/match. Communication should be initiated by the head coach. This is not the head coach telling the assistant coach what is planned or what is going on in the match. "Using an assistant coach to observe practice from a different viewpoint." Creating an environment where the assistant coach feels comfortable giving feedback or advice, an open exchange of ideas. Too often in youth soccer, I see this head coach/assistant coach caste, where people get stuck on titles and not what the game is supposed to be about, the kids! Assistant coaches end up being the go-fer and their time and talents are not fully utilized. All youth soccer coaches should locate this article, read it and apply it to their team structure.

Jeff Lightfoot

I believe that it is important to keep all of my players active during training sessions. I do my best to use my assistant coaches to work with players not involved with a specific training activity. They may work with the keepers, the strikers or defenders depending on the focus of the training. During games I most frequently use my assistants as another set of eyes and ears to analyze the game and watch for substitution needs that result from tactical opportunities or needs as well as fatigue or injury. One coach is the primary information sharer with the team during the flow of play freeing me up to closely watch the game and make decisions/changes that will influence how we attack or defend (tactical changes) and to determine what our future training needs are. It is extremely important that we are all on the same "page" and communicate the same information to the players.