



From the desk of the Technical Director – No. 6

*A weekly column series from Steve Payne, Technical Director and Game Development Manager for Football Federation Tasmania.*

A look at how the club Head Coach programme operates in Ontario, Canada.

At the three seminars I gave recently in Burnie, Launceston and Hobart, I mentioned how clubs in Tasmania should consider appointing a suitably qualified individual as the club Head Coach.

Such a programme has been running very successfully in Canada for a number of years and is very common in the United States.

The rationale, as pointed out by the Ontario Soccer Association, is based on the premise that players need a higher standard of coaching than they are currently enjoying. That would be fair comment in Australia, especially at the younger age levels, and it is one of the driving forces behind the new national curriculum.

The vast majority of players at the grassroots and youth level are with clubs and if the coaching standards can be raised across the board at that level, as Australia has set out to do, it would represent considerable progress.

A club, for example, could seek out an individual within its ranks that has at least a senior licence, and, by appointing him or her as club Head Coach, that person would become a resource for all the volunteer coaches in the club.

In Ontario, some club Head Coaches work full time and are paid, others are part-time, also paid. In some cases people take on the role voluntarily. Paid Head Coaches are preferable as it is more professional in approach and adds incentive and responsibilities to the position which can be monitored by the club board. Such responsibilities can be set out in a contract.

Ontario clubs who appoint head coaches work closely in conjunction with the Ontario and Canadian Soccer Associations.

This way the clubs follow the coaching curriculum set by their national and state associations, which puts everyone on the same page. In addition, clubs provide a heads up on those players it is felt can be highlighted for possible selection for the relevant provincial teams (in Canada) or states (in the United States.)

At the provincial and state levels, the more highly qualified coaching staff use their expertise to take selected players to even higher levels, such as state and national youth and senior teams.

Everyone benefits. Clubs benefit due to the work of their Head Coaches. Players benefit from better coaching at clubs. The governing associations benefit by having increased numbers of talented players to choose from for state and national squads.

Club Head Coaches are encouraged to upgrade their knowledge by attending courses run by their governing associations. For example, a club Head Coach would attend courses here run by FFT and should they wish, the FFA.

Such courses allow talented coaches to be spotted and mentored.

Overall, the role of the club Head Coach, as has been formulated by the Ontario Soccer Association, would include helping to select club coaches and arranging for them to attend coaching courses, monitoring and organizing coaching clinics for coaches in the club: providing coaching advice and feedback; acting as a resource; organizing skill development clinics and camps for players within the club; maintaining a library of books, articles, and videos for coaches in the club to access; creating long and short-term seasonal and multi-seasonal plans focussing on skill development and physical fitness and helping coaches in the club to plan and implement practice sessions.

Note: Trials for the selection of state team players for the 2010 season in the various age groups for boys and girls will begin shortly. Those players invited to attend the tryouts will be informed. Trials will take place in the north and south of Tasmania, after which players selected from those venues will combine for a further tryout prior to final selection.