



FOOTBALL FEDERATION
TASMANIA

FROM THE DESK OF THE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

14 MAY, 2010

Mark Egan, coach of Launceston City, asked me a little while back to come up and take a session with his Northern Premier male team. Mark, who also does work on behalf of Football Federation Tasmania, has a predominantly young team augmented with a few older players and it has been tough going for his side in the early part of the season.

He asked me to do a practice on defending. Starting with some 1 v 1 and small group work, we gradually expanded to where we were working with the goalkeeper, back four and three midfield players against the rest on one half of the field. I was impressed with the concentration, attitude and work ethic of all his players in what was a very demanding and intensive session. There was a distinct improvement in a short space of time, especially as we were cramming what would normally be weeks of work into around 75 minutes.

I thank Mark for the opportunity to work with his club and players and I thank them for their excellent response. Next week I will be back in Launceston to take a session with the club's Women's Premier Team.

As I have stated before, I am happy to take a coaching session at a club at any age level and anyone interested can call the office to arrange it.

Talking of coaching, a Junior Licence course began this week in Kingston, based at the Kingborough soccer club. The first two nights were Monday and Wednesday. The second two nights take place the week after next. The course is being held over four nights instead of a two-day weekend to test the demand for that method. Candidates must attend all four nights in order to get the licence.

The 12 people taking part are a great group of football enthusiasts and they are responding brilliantly to the methodology of coaching now required by Football Federation Australia. I am leading the course, assisted by Anthony Alexander, FFT's Southern Development Officer, but that's pretty much where the us and them format ends.

The courses are essentially all hands on deck, with the candidates being involved as much as possible in the process under our guidance. The feedback and involvement of all concerned has been excellent, both on the field and in the classroom, the latter of which is limited. For example, after the first night the candidates were given homework: "Come back Wednesday with your idea of a small-sided game."

The results were superb and I know that Anthony and myself will be using some of them, or variations thereof, in our own State team coaching sessions. This is the key, crucial element, especially in youth coaching. Get players into football related small sided games and be ready to adjust them. If your session is passing and it is proving too difficult for the players, adjust it to make it easier. If the session is proving too easy, then adjust it to make it harder.

If the players are unable to perform the task you are seeking, no amount of cajoling or asking is going to help unless you change the scenario to gain success. For example, if your players cannot succeed in keeping possession in a 3 v 1 situation, then make it 4 v 1 or even 5 v 1. Alternatively, if you are working on 3 v 1 in a 10 metres grid and it is not working, then perhaps it will in a 15 metres grid.

It is up to the coach to find the answer and all our coaching courses will assist you in doing just that. Forget any focus on winning and focus on player development. By developing players you develop success.

On another note, as I tour around watching young players at weekends I am noticing a number of things.

1. Many children are wearing shin guards that are way too big. An easy rule would be to find a shin guard that is approximately half the length of the distance between your child's knee and their foot. The shin guard should be worn on the INSIDE of the sock.
2. Just about every one of the younger players I see is using a mouth guard. Why? Some of these mouth guards are so big the kids cannot speak. I thought one kid I saw had half an apple in his mouth. I have never seen young children wearing mouth guards to play football in any other country. It is totally unheard of in North and South America and Europe. I am told it may be a mirroring of Australian Rules Football, I don't know, but that is a different game with hands and feet flying everywhere. Kids do not need them for our football.
3. The use of the throw in for under 9s and under 8s is not such a good idea. In the rules or not, I would strongly urge that during these games the players are allowed to kick the ball in or dribble it in. This will give provide more relevant touches on the ball - a pass or running with the ball - than throwing it and constantly being called for a foul throw. The two coaches can get together before the game and agree on it. That's fine with me. It's like the coaching I talked about earlier in the column. If it is not working CHANGE IT.

As always, please call with any questions.