The Coach's Tool Kit
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In 2005, US Soccer released "Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States". One of the key messages from that player development blueprint was that the youth soccer environment needed to become much more player-centered and far less coach-driven. Central to that notion was the desire to move coaching away from the traditional Anglo-German approach of stopping and starting training games whenever breakdowns occurred.

As an alternative, coaches were encouraged to find less intrusive opportunities to provide information to players. Those methods, the Coach's Tool Kit, are outlined below.

1. Coach the Individual within the Flow of the game.

- Individual players can be given information while the game is moving.
- Information should not be given when the player is in possession of the ball.
- Information should not be given to a player who is about to come into possession or who is about to be involved in the game.
- The volume of information should not escalate into a running prescription.
- The best information will help players understand how to recognize and perhaps deal with standard game situations.

2. Coach the Group within the Flow of the game.
- Group coaching should seek to address strategic objectives, such as how to attack and defend as a team.
- Group coaching may also address the overall rhythm of attacking play and the success or failure to defend relative to the cues coming from the game.
- Essentially, group coaching should seek to address the positioning and organization (balance) of one or more lines.
- Group coaching can be achieved by working through designated players who are responsible for standard game situations. For example, the goalkeeper can help organize his/her defenders when there is a goal kick at the other end of the field.

3. Coach during Natural Stoppages.
- Information can be exchanged between coach and player(s) when the ball is not active.
- Natural stoppages include balls out of bounds, injuries, goals, fouls, and the end of time periods.
- The length of any coach-player exchanges during a natural stoppage should be proportional to the duration of the time-out.

4. Use Conditions to promote learning.
- Conditions are rules of play that can shape learning and performance.
- The use of conditions offers one of the most effective modern teaching tools.
- Once the conditions are explained and understood by the players, there is no need to actually "coach" during the allotted playing time.
- Conditions can reward good play by assigning bonus points when, for example, there is a successful pass to a teammate.
- Conditions can penalize non-compliance, for example, by awarding indirect free kicks, when players fail to take more than one touch.
- There is a danger that using unrealistic conditions, such as "Do X (5 passes) before Y (score a goal)" hinder tactical development. The use of conditions must be balanced by periods of free play.
- Scoring schemes should always value goals more highly than extra points. The objective of the game is to score goals, not, for example, to keep possession.

5. Use the Freeze Method.
- Freezing play should be the last option in the coaches' arsenal.
- The use of the freeze method is most relevant when the players are positionally organized and likely to face the same game situation again.
- The freeze method is least relevant for technical mistakes.
- In the communication during a freeze, it is more important that the players to begin to understand the tactical cues (player-centered approach of a situation that the absolute solutions (coach-centered approach).
- Contrary to common practice, it

is not necessary for the game to be restarted with a successful performance. It is more important for the coach to relay the necessary information and restart the game as fast as possible.

- Freezes should include information on the "cues" (words) the coach might use to help the players read similar game situations later on.