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Why there's overcoaching

Posted September 25th, 2008 by Paul Giovanopoulos

By Paul Giovanopoulos

I have read all the recent articles on coaching soccer from all publications and attended License classes. Every time you turn around you are being told that coaches coach way too much and don't give the players enough touch time on the ball and creativity time.

While I agree with this principal in theory — let the players play and stop talking — one needs to examine why there's overcoaching these youngsters.

Let me be the first to offer this. There is a direct correlation between overcoaching and not enough watching the sport of soccer by the youngsters. Let me explain.

Over 90 percent of my young soccer players do not watch the sport at all. Yes they watch the NFL, Major League Baseball and NBA — but not soccer.

The MLS does not have teams in every city, and there is not much interest generated at the homes of these players to have them watch the sport they play. This is a huge deal that no one talks about.

Most players love to play the game, however have no visual knowledge of plays and systems since they do not watch the sport.

Let's say, for example, you told one of them to go bunt the ball like Chase Utley. Well, they have seen him bunt the ball so they have an idea of how he does it and what to do. Can we as soccer coaches tell our soccer players to place the ball like Thierry Henry or Wayne Rooney?

Since our players have no visuals of the game they will play, then extra time is needed in practice to show them what you are trying to accomplish and how you should accomplish it. Thus it creates extra coaching time.

It would be nice for me to show up in practice and tell my boys today we are going to cross the ball the way Gael Clichy did this past Sunday as he hooked up with Henry for the goal. However, I can't do this, so I need to run it at practice while they watch so they can have a visual.

Other sports in America do not have to do this, as they have the added advantage of having visuals by their youngsters.

It's easy to say that coaches are overcoaching; however, players also need to know and understand what the coach sees and what he expects. It is very difficult and almost impossible to do this unless you take time to show them. In essence, many times you are becoming the TV game that they don't watch.

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