

An introduction to coaching

Football coaching in the modern game involves the effective understanding and application of a variety of skills and methods to get the best out of the players at hand.

The coach must communicate well, make clear decisions whilst under pressure and be able to handle players of various temperaments. He must know the game and have a great capacity to plan, adapt and put on a selection of quality practice sessions for his/her players.

He/she also requires a keen tactical mind and the strength of character to cope with stress brought on by the ever-growing demand for instant success. This is typical of all levels of football in the professional game but the emotional stresses of grassroots football are also problems that coaches have to face and be comfortable with.

Whether it be pressure from parents of kids who are not playing at youth level or disgruntled players who are unhappy with your decisions at adult Sunday and Saturday league level, all these elements require coaches to be fair, strong, confident and have a willingness to learn all the time whether it be tactical, technical or simply learning how to effectively communicate with the players.

The tips given here are more based on 'how to coach' rather than 'what to coach' as this is just as important in getting your theories and ideas across to your players.

The modern coach has to deal with a vast array of differing personalities and characters. It is not a bad idea to study psychology to give you a head start when dealing with modern day footballers at any level.

The likes of Jose Mourinho, one of the most successful coaches of the modern era, have studied psychology and have proven what an advantage it is when dealing with players as well as the often tricky media circus that encompasses professional sport.

This is not a request to return to school, but an insight into the importance of knowing how to approach various situations when involved in coaching, team building and motivating players.

Our home nations have often been accused of being 'old school' in their approach to sport in general, especially to football. It is good to see positive signs that this approach is changing at all levels of the game and the need to be more in-depth and professional in our coaching is being recognised.

If the home nations are to become competitive again on the world scene then our coaching methods need to be looked at, as it is the coaches who really bring the 'talent' out of the players.

The importance of good coaching at grassroots level is often overlooked but it is on those park fields that all the great players start their journey and it is with coaches like yourselves that their appreciation of the game and their motivation begins