Coaches Corner: The Four Moments Of Soccer

One of the most important skills to learn as a coach is how to make tactical adjustments during games. Unlike other sports, such as football and basketball, that have natural “time outs” during the course of the game, soccer only has one instant, halftime, when the entire team is at your disposal to discuss what's happening on the field. Thus, it is imperative that you acquire the skill set to quickly make adjustments to increase scoring chances and eliminate threats...

Although The Four Moments of Soccer are a simplified view of the game, understanding these aspects, will reveal both advantages and deficits on the field. Conceptualized by the Dutch, the Four Moments Of Soccer, went through several incarnations until four were settled upon in the late 1990's by the KNVB. Initially the Dutch looked at the game as just two moments, 1) when your team has possession, and 2) when the other team has possession. The glaring omission was Transition, the phase when one team loses the ball and the other team gains possession. This was added to the initial two phases, but was deemed too simplistic, and the fourth was added to include:

- Opponents In Possession (Defending)
- Gaining Possession - Transition To Possession by your team
- Your Team In Possession (Attacking)
- Losing Possession - Transition To Possession by the opponent

A competitive team must understand how to act tactically in each of the four moments, as functional groups (forwards, midfielders, defenders), as well as individuals. The depth of the strategy and the tactical details are determined by age, but players should understand each situation and their role.

The most precarious of the four moments is the transition to possession by the opponent, which can result in a devastating counterattack. How many times have you witnessed your team over-committed on the attack, get suddenly dispossessed and the other team launch a quick counter with a perfectly placed through ball behind your defense to a speedy striker who shreds your goalie?

However, there are many other lethal situations that often setup counterattacks, including dead ball restarts (corner kicks, free kicks, etc.), interception of a pass, an adroit tackle, when a goalkeeper cuts out a cross or gains quick possession after a corner kick, and so on. Thirty percent of the goals in the last World Cup were scored on counterattacks. Does your team have a strategy to contend with counterattacks?
Coaches Corner: The Four Moments Of Soccer (Cont.)

Coaching the Four Moments:
Defending - Opponents In Possession
-- Is your formation effective against their system of play?
-- Where are your defensive weaknesses? Poor 1v1 matchups?
-- How are they attacking?
  - What is their strategy?
  - Are they penetrating down the flanks?
  - Do they have one strong striker who they are always trying to play to?
-- What type of pressure is effective against the opponent?
  - High pressure with forwards pressing the defenders?
  - Or Low pressure - letting the opponent have possession in their defending third, but quickly pressing and cutting off passing options with compactness as they move toward the center of the field?
Transition - Regaining Possession
-- Where on the field have we regained possession?
-- Has the opposition lost their shape?
-- Where are they weak?
-- Where is the attacking space?
-- What is the best tactical choice to create a quick scoring opportunity? Long ball over the top? Angled through ball?
Attacking - Your Team In Possession
-- Is the opponent in disarray?
-- Have they overcommitted to one side of the field? Should you shift the point of attack?
-- What is the best tactical choice to create a scoring opportunity? Dibble, pass, shoot?
Transition - Losing Possession
-- Where on the field have we lost possession?
-- Has your team lost its shape? Disorganized?
-- Where's the most obvious mismatch?
-- Can we delay their attack, in order to recover?

Observing these moments can give you a much better understanding of your team and insights on how you should conduct your training. Training yourself on how to observe these four moments will allow you to become more proficient in making In-Game tactical adjustments, which are often the difference in tight matches.

Tournaments:
The East Islip Soccer Club 22nd Indoor Tournament
Feb. 23rd & 24th, 2013 • U6-U12 • Fee: $225
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17th!
Info: http://tinyurl.com/a9chxqh

Long Island Winter Classic
Feb. 16th - Feb. 17th, 2013 • U6 - U19 • Fee $320
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Call For Availability
Info: http://tinyurl.com/a7nrhng

Manhattan Soccer Kick-Off Classic
March 1-3, 2013 • U8 - U18 • Fee $399 - $799
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Ongoing
Info: http://www.manhattansc.org/tourn.php

Coaching Point:
To prevent counterattacks, the defending team must:
- Be able to Read The Game and anticipate Losing Possession (Transition To Possession By The Opponent)
- Delay The Play by preventing penetration and cutting off options (the devastating Long Ball / Through ball) until teammates can recover
- Immediately press to regain possession.

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Coaching Tip: Put Your Assistant Coaches To Work

Too often a Head Coach tries to do everything required to run a team, from registration to game management. If you have an Assistant Coach, don’t be afraid to Put Them To Work. Give your assistant coaches individual tasks with specific deadlines, and follow up to ensure completion. Most assistants will relish the opportunity to contribute and will often exceed your expectations.

One of the areas where help can be vital is during games. If your team is required to provide 40% of playing time during the course of the season, it is imperative you track minutes. An assistant, who can be reliably tasked to document playing time, is an invaluable resource. It can be achieved simply via Time Sheets that are filled out, or with an iOS app, such as Coaching Wizard - Soccer for iPad, iPhone or iPod touch. Any way you choose to utilize your assistant coaches will ultimately reduce your workload, game-day stress level and benefit your players.

PWSC Mentoring Program - Get Involved!

The PWSC is organizing a new Mentoring Program. The program is looking for coaches of older teams U15-U19, who are willing to be partnered with new coaches coming out of the Pre-Travel and Early Travel program. The idea is to not only provide answers to the many questions and predicaments that arise during the course of a year for a new coach, but also to build a stronger club culture.

In addition, we would also like to promote co-practices between older and younger teams. These practices can be with Mentored teams, with two teams who share a common trainer, or two coaches who are looking to forge a positive bond between younger and older players. Please contact Donna Bruno if you are interested in participating in this new program on any level: gbruno1017@aol.com

Trainer’s Resume - What Would You Want To Know?

Dan Brotman, VP, Competition and Pete Steincke, VP, Travel are creating a standardized Trainer Resume format. This document will be provided to all PWSC sanctioned trainers to fill out and will include basic information, including credentials, coaching history, philosophy, etc. It will allow all coaches seeking a new trainer to accurately compare trainers based on the same criteria. If you have any suggestions on fields to include, for instance, Team Case Study, please send us your suggestions by March 1st. Dan Brotman: dan.brotman@portwashingtonsoccer.com Pete Steincke: psteincke3@gmail.com

Game Intelligence: Parts Of The Field

Included on the next page is a sheet documenting all the parts of a soccer field. Every one of your players should know every part of the soccer field. Not only will this help your players understand your coaching instruction (“Restart play from the top of the 18!”), it will provide the foundation for kids to learn the mental aspects of the game, which is vital to create intelligent, creative players. Think your players already know all these terms? Test them! You may be surprised... Feel free to make copies of the sheet and distribute them to your players.