

For Coaches and Parents: Soccer Club DOs and DON'Ts

edited by Dan Woog

DON'Ts:

- ❶ Don't shout instructions to the player with the ball. The player has enough problems maintaining possession while making quick and difficult decisions about what to do next. He or she must learn to make decisions without your input.
- ❷ Don't use such phrases as "boot the ball," "kick it," or "send it." First, you violate rule No. 1; second, you encourage panic rather than good decision making, and mindless kicking rather than possession.
- ❸ Don't try to control the game from the sidelines. You can't! A soccer coach is not an active participant in the game. Soccer is played, controlled, and ultimately coached by the players on the field. Teach players to "coach" themselves.
- ❹ Don't try to teach "aggressiveness." In soccer, what is perceived as "aggressive play" merely reflects the confidence a player has in his or her own abilities. Teach the skills that generate confidence; encourage players to believe in themselves. If you do, they will play "aggressively."
- ❺ Don't abuse game officials, or show disrespect for opponents. Referees make fewer mistakes than your players; your opponents are not your enemy. Be aware of the example you set for your players.
- ❻ Don't forget rule No. 1!

DO's

- ❶ Do offer suggestions to players not currently involved in what is happening on the field. Brief words of advice are helpful to players who have time to consider them (those who are either out of the match or on the field far from the ball).
- ❷ Do encourage players to use the skills they are being taught. Encourage - and sometimes push - players to experiment in scrimmages and games. If this approach costs goals, learn to accept temporary setbacks as the price of progress, and recognize them as opportunities to help players improve. Soccer is best learned through trial and error.

- ⑤ Do teach players to coach themselves on the field. By the time they find themselves on a full-size field they will be unable to hear you anyway. Players must learn to assist each other in making hundreds of split-second decisions each game.
- ④ Do teach players the game's skills, and encourage them to hold the ball long enough to make good decisions about what to do next.

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