



Director of Coaching  
Nick Roberts

Soccer is a simple game. They call it a 'the beautiful game.' The beauty is in its simplicity.

Players who develop the basic technical skills of the game can play to a high level, as long as in time they can perform these skills at speed, under pressure and in game situations.

Too many coaches (generally speaking) complicate the game and coaching by looking to far forward and neglecting the teaching off the basic skills. Coaches may talk and try to teach in depth tactics, systems of play, set plays and overlapping runs. This is not appropriate until a player or teams have developed the foundation and competency in the 'mastery' of basic technical skills.

These skills are:

Shooting:

Ability to strike a ball with both feet with the laces correctly.  
Ability to curl a ball using the instep. Ability to place a ball with the instep.

Dribbling:

Using all parts of the feet using both feet the free and fluid movement of dribbling a ball with skill, change of pace and change of direction.

Passing:

Passing with the instep, passing with the outside of the foot, clipping or chipping the ball accurately and driving a ball into space.

Control:

With the instep, with the outside of the foot, controlling out of the air, with the feet, thigh and chest and head.

Heading:

Defensive headers and attacking headers. In a proper technique using the forehead and without fear.

Basic goalkeeping:

All players from a young age should be taught the basic goalkeeping techniques. From catching a ball, to high balls, low balls, diving and

bouncing balls. A general knowledge promotes a well rounded soccer player. (Provides cover in case of injuries.)

This may seem a simplistic agenda, but to many times at all levels of the game I have observed players that do not have a level of technical competency needed for players to perform at the next level. Young players are often taught techniques that are not correct (or not corrected, thus reinforcing bad habits) and thus the resulting factor is a learned bad habit that stays with the player and is very difficult to change later. Therefore one of the biggest impacts I can have as a director of coaching is to develop coaching tools and methodology through a detailed curriculum (and possible testing program) where all players can achieve a high level of proficiency for the basic technical elements of the game.

Parents have a role to play too. Players must practice at home. Parents need to encourage that. This is where the process can be accelerated many times fold. Players should also watch the game and emulate players on TV, attend professional games (the Columbus Crew, Dutch lions etc) or watch and attend high school and college games. In Europe where youth players regularly watch games and emulate players on the streets develop a higher level of technical ability than the American youth counterparts.

I will be working on a curriculum addition that will involve the correct teaching and implementation so our players can create this foundation. My hope is not only to explain and implement through the coaches but also getting support from parents and the players.

In summary coaching is; 'Making a group of players to be greater than the sum of its total parts.' The total parts if more refined to a higher technical level gives the coach the ability to achieve this.

I look forward to our coaches and parents participating in this direction.

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