

## **Player Centred Coaching**

In simple terms, 'Player Centred Coaching' means coaching that meets the needs of the players. Regardless of what level of coaching you are involved at, PLAYER CENTRED COACHING should be at the heart of your coaching philosophy.

For coaches who are developing players, PLAYER CENTRED COACHING involves blending the 'What' of coaching (what is in your session) with the 'How' you coach (method) as to meet the needs of your players. It also takes into account the age of the players and not only their technical/tactical needs but also their social, psychological and physical needs in order to develop into their potential.

As an example consider the coach who has a group of six year olds and compare it with the coach of 16 year olds. The player centred coach firstly takes into account the age of the players and therefore their needs. For the six year olds they need a balance of general movement and coordination activities, technique and small sided games. Technically they must be focusing mainly on dribbling. For the 16 year olds they need a balance of physical conditioning, technique and group tactics. Immediately you can see a difference in 'what' the player centred coach would prepare for their players to fit their needs. Consider now 'how' the player centred coach might coach in order to develop good understanding of the game. For the coach of the six year olds the method the player centred coach might choose is to use guided discovery eg "try and find a way to get the ball into the air without using your hands" or lots of demonstrations. The coach of the 16 year olds on the other hand may use probing questions to stimulate thinking and better understanding of a players role in a particular position.

Below is an article from the Auckland Football Coaches Network Newsletter about Player Centred Coaching and some further links.

If you want further information or to learn how you can develop your coaching further get on a New Zealand Football Coaching Course or contact Aaron McFarland [aaron@aucklandfootball.org.nz](mailto:aaron@aucklandfootball.org.nz)

## Player Centred Coaching – Empowering Players

As we all know, coaching football is a complex process. Not only is it about understanding the game but it is also about allowing players to learn. Often as ex-players moving into coaching, we fall into the trap of thinking that just by telling someone else what you want to happen it will happen. Many coaches have often used that approach and find themselves frustrated when players showed in games that they didn't understand something that they had worked on constantly at training. Was the level of understanding there?



Melbourne Victory's Ernie Merrick says he is as much a teacher as he is a coach.

This traditional approach of coaching termed 'coach centred coaching' (using instruction as the main method of coaching) has recently been challenged as an effective means of developing understanding in players at all levels of the game and at all ages. Research and evidence in this area is showing that

players who are coached using a coach centred approach are less likely to be able to make good (skillful) decisions under pressure on match day. "it is the athlete that makes the decision in real time; therefore you must trust the athlete to make the smart decisions under pressure. If I don't trust my athletes to make the smart decision then I would consider that I have failed them". Don Tricker - White Sox Coach

Many elite coaches (also teachers and business managers) are adopting 'player centred coaching' approaches to improve understanding and ultimately performance. In football (and other team sports), a player centred coach approach involves;

- building a positive team environment
- using games that allow players to solve problems, learn outcomes (teaching games for understanding approach or constraints based approach)
- effective use of questioning

Some of the main advantages of this approach are that players are motivated to learn and they have greater understanding and stronger retention of both tactics and skills.

"Asking the right questions to the right athlete at the right time is often the most effective way of ensuring that a particular experience has

been analyzed and the key learnings identified". Don Tricker

Over the next issues we will look at player centred coaching in more detail and if you want to know how to apply this approach to your coaching, come on one of our courses. For more detail have a look at our website [aucklandfootball.org.nz](http://aucklandfootball.org.nz).



For more reading on Player Centred Coaching, you will find the following references useful:

**Lynn Kidman** - Athlete Centred Coaching. Developing inspired and inspiring people.

**Horst Wein** - Developing Game Intelligence in Soccer.

**Rainer Martens** - Successful Coaching

**Lynn Kidman and Stephanie Hanrahan** - the Coaching Process