



FA YOUTH AWARD - MODULE 1
“DEVELOPING THE ENVIRONMENT” (5-11 Years)

These notes were taken from FA Youth Award course, Module 1, held from 27th - 30th October 2008 at The Holbrook Club, Horsham. The course was presented by Ben Bartlett, FA South Eastern Regional Coach Development Manager (5-11), with assistance from Dave Jupp, Player and Coach Development Officer, Brighton and Hove Albion and FAYA Tutor.

Pre-Course Work

Around a week before the course, I received, through the post, a booklet of pre-course reading and self assessment tasks. The information presented in each of the chapters was subject to self assessed answers at the end of each chapter.

The chapters included information and test questions on:

FUNdamentals in the development of young players from 5 - 11.

- Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed (ABCs)
- Window of opportunity (optimal learning period) to learn motor skills is from 3-9 years

Physical and Physiological Development of Young Players

- Growth concepts
- Chronological age vs biological age
- Individual differences
- Meeting the needs of EACH player
- Coach awareness

Aspects of growth and development of young players

- Growth and maturation - the differences
- Implications for the coach
- Height weight and fat
- Cardiovascular
- Neural growth and development

Motor Control

- Motor Development - what is it?
- Movement pattern and skill
- Fine and gross motor activities
- FUNdamentals of movement

The risk of overuse injuries in young players

- Overuse injury - medical insight
- Vulnerable areas for footballers
- What to look for
- What to do



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In addition to these chapters, there are 3 appendices, Glossary of Physical Terms, Physical Growth Terminology and Physical Performance Terminology.

Day 1 - 27th October 2008

What Age group are you? What do you want from the course?

We were grouped according to the age group that we mainly or currently coached. The participants had a variety of coaching experience, age groups (U7 - U18s) and FA qualifications.

Some coaches were 'professional' inasmuch as they did coaching and football development as their job rather than because they were at professional football clubs but most were grassroots, recreational standard coaches.

Our initial task was to discuss within our groups and to note down:

What we knew about the course

What we would like to learn / take away to help us help our players

We then had to feedback to the whole group what those things were

How Players Learn

We were given a visual problem and had to solve it within each group

We were left a while to get the solution and where we struggled (it was difficult!) one 'player' in one team/group was given the answer. In another group, two 'players' were given a clue as to the answer and were then invited to show the other groups what to do.

Fascinating exercise the learning point of which was: Don't **give** the players all the answers / the whole answer to the problem, at least not straight away.

At practice, let them try and solve it for themselves first. If they don't 'get it' perhaps try to give them some clues as to what they may want to consider and finally, only show / tell them the answer if they can't work it out for themselves

This being a 'Social Corner' exercise led us nicely into a series of discussion and feedback exercises in individual groups with feedback discussion to the wider group on the social development of players.

This included factors that affect the social development of the child such as parents / guardians, peers / school / groups, technology, financial, religion, culture and so on.

Each group was asked to consider a different statement and suggest how they may affect the developing player and their participation in football.

We were shown a video of a coach with young players where there was lots of positive reinforcement, where he 'caught them' doing things well and overtly praising the individual. This included actions such as being patient and kind to others as well as football stuff.

We discussed the roles that football and everyone's actions within in it can play in the development of the child.



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We were asked to discuss what messages it sends if a coach argues with a referee or doesn't play substitutes.

Day 1 cont'd

We then went outside where we were shown and participated in games and considered the progressions for young players and how we could use / adapt them for use with our own players / age groups.

Four Corners

In the afternoon, we reviewed and discussed the games we played before lunch and discussed the developmental benefits for players in each of the '4 Corners' of development - Social, Physical, Technical and Psychological.

We went outside again to look at more games and when returning indoors examined different learning styles and how our delivery and use of tools and techniques can impact the understanding and development of our players.

We looked at each of the four learning preferences, that is, how individuals process and take in information:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Reading
- Kinaesthetic

In each of our groups we were asked to examine in more detail what that would mean for each of us as coaches in our respective age groups.

We were given a task to solve some anagrams and then watch a video of a coach with young players and how the players were challenged to find solutions to football problems.

There was a theme throughout the course where we were asked to participate in fun football and general knowledge related quizzes (to help us switch attention and then regain focus on the overall subject of the course), to observe videos of good practice to re-enforce the principles we had discussed and to see the games that we played in action with young players and how they coped with them.

Day 2 - 28th October

Motivation

The first task of the day was to review what we had done on Monday and to note what was important to us as individuals and to discuss within our own groups some of those things and to feedback to the rest of the group.

We then examined the two types of motivation and how they affect players and their participation in football.

- Intrinsic Motivation - Internally generated by the individual
- Extrinsic Motivation - Generated by external forces or rewards



We then played a short team game in the indoor facility and were asked to examine the motivational factors behind our individual and collective participation.

Day 2 cont'd

We were asked to discuss and note how motivation affects

- Choice
- Effort
- Persistence
- Enjoyment
- Performance

Motivation is what drives all our actions. It is a reason or set of reasons for behaving in a particular way and is concerned with **why** we do what we do.

We were cautioned not to confuse motivation with 'psyching up' which can lead to an over anxious or aggressive state.

We looked at the motivational factors which affect why children play football and we saw a short video where children were shown answering the question "Why do you play football?"

Answers included:

- To have fun
- To learn new skills
- To be with friends
- To meet new friends
- To be fit
- To be like their heroes

Interestingly, NONE of the children said anything about winning trophies, games or championships (accepting that these children were probably all aged 11 and below).

We were provided with tips for maintaining motivation:

- Don't stop the game / practice too often
- Frequent praise for good play and, especially, for **effort**
- Use the player's name first to attract attention
- Relate the praise to specific actions (e.g. "Jenny, good turn, well done")
- Have frequent breaks for social interaction
- Change activities on a regular basis (10 - 15 minutes)*
- Ensure that parents / spectators observe and adhere to the RESPECT principles

*Later in the course we were told of a principle / guideline to determine children's attention span. Generally, children have an attention span of their age plus one minute.

So, if you are 10 you have an attention span of 10 + 1minute = 11 minutes.



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In the late morning and in the afternoon we were out on the field with practical games / exercises.

One of the activities we did was to stop the teams at some point and ask, separately, the defenders and attackers what their tactics were to achieve success at the game, whether or not they thought it worked and, where not, to consider a different strategy before going back to the game and giving them another go.

Consistently though, the take home message from Day 2 was to "Catch Them Doing Stuff Well" and allow the players enough leeway to make mistakes.

Prior to leaving at the end of the day and in the feedback session on the games, one participant asked a valid question which was:

"Having done my Level 3 recently, we were told to go in and correct errors as soon as we identified them, correcting the problem and affecting the players on, near and away from the ball.

Now, you're telling me that we should let it go, almost without correction or at least not for some time. Which is correct?"

Ben Bartlett commended the question and gave the following as the reasons for the differences:

- The traditional pathway courses are about **you** as a **coach**.
- Can you identify the errors?
- Can you correct them?
- Can you affect the players?
- Do you know and can you demonstrate that you know the 'key factors'? i.e. knowledge of the subject.

With the new Youth Award, it places the **child / player** at the **centre** of the learning and therefore the following are more important:

- Involvement / participation
- Decision making (psychological development)
- Social Interaction
- Technical development
- Physical development (ABCs)

Day 3 - 29th October

Managing Mistakes

Again, the first task of the day was to review what we had done the day before, this time with the use of prompt cards with 'headlines' from the day before. We had to discuss within our groups what each meant to us as individuals, what we remembered from the previous day and then choose one topic for a spokesperson to feedback to the rest of the group.



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We then looked at the FUNdamental stage of development, identifying the ages that this stage of development related to and what implications there were for coaches.

We looked at early and late developers, what that meant physiologically and psychologically and, again, implications for the coach.

Day 3 - cont'd

There was a digression then with a general discussion around SAQ (Speed, Agility and Quickness) and the need to understand the implications of using that type of 'training' with young players although acknowledging it can have a positive impact on the development of ABCs (Agility, Balance, Coordination and speed).

We then had a visual prompt to open a discussion on Managing Mistakes.

We also were given a maths problem with a child's answer to the problem.

Strictly speaking, the answer given was incorrect, but, with a certain interpretation of the words and the way in which they were presented in the problem, logically, everyone could understand the answer given. And, more importantly, the answer was 'correct'.

The question posed here was " Is this a mistake?"

The point was made that there may be different ways to achieve an outcome and just because it may not be the way the coach would do it or recommend it was done, does not make it "wrong" or a mistake.

If the way in which the child reaches the conclusion may have a longer term detriment to their development (e.g. incorrect technique which may lead to overuse type injuries or where in a game they may put themselves in danger) then the coach may choose to "correct" or give an alternative solution.

Creating a Positive Environment

However, FA Learning recommend:

- Positive environment, where praise and encouragement are the norm
- Awareness of learning styles
- Find ways to give ownership of problems to the child / player
- Problem solving and decision making are given to the child

How can we create a positive environment?

A positive environment is one which is:

Safe and secure - both physically, but especially in a learning sense - where decisions and mistakes can be made without fear of remonstrations or ridicule

- Inclusive
- Challenging
- Involves player choice



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- Has fun / enjoyment
- Involves player / child ownership
- Builds 2-way trust

We were shown another DVD clip with examples of good practice in terms of the coach's interaction with the players, how the exercise was 'tweaked' to allow achievement where it was too challenging initially.

Day 3 - cont'd

We were then given a group exercise to identify what mistakes were, where they occur and what coaches can do?

Create the environment to manage the mistakes that they WILL make while learning the game.

We then had practical exercises outside with new games the players could play.

In the afternoon we reviewed a DVD with those games and then looked in some depth at self esteem.

Self Esteem

What is self esteem?

A feeling of worth or value and what we believe to be true about ourselves and what we are capable of doing.

It is possibly dependent on the environment in which the child finds themselves and may be different from school, to home to football.

The last activity of the day was for each group to identify two practices that they would deliver to the other participants on the last day, demonstrating the learnings from the course and how they affect the four corners of development.

We were given a choice of delivering one of the games already demonstrated on the course or devising our own original practice. We were given 40 minutes to prepare and were told we would have 20 minutes to demonstrate each practice the following day.

Day 4 - 30th October

Games - Group Delivery

The biggest proportion of the day was given over to the delivery of and participation in the games and took us up to lunch time.

After lunch, we had the course 'mop up' completing forms and the like but also included a discussion on managing the differences in the Social corner of development.

We also looked at our personal areas of strength and development as coaches and devised a short Personal Development Plan from a set template in one of the course booklets and identified some key development activities for the relatively short term. We were not asked to discuss these with the group and this was for our individual benefit only.



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Summary

Pre-Course

Reading and self assessment questions (4Hours)

Day 1

Course introduction and the importance of the social corner (1Hour)
How Players learn (1Hour)
Physical Corner - FUNdamentals (3 Hours)
Physical Corner -Pre-course work (1 hour)
Managing differences in the Physical Corner (1 Hour)

Day 2

Consolidation exercise - Revisit Day 1 ('Key Word' activity) (30 mins)
Motivation (1.5 Hours)
Practical games (4 Hours)
Managing Differences in the Technical corner (1 Hour)

Day 3

Consolidation exercise - Revisit Day 2 Practical Games (30 mins)
Self Esteem (1 Hour)
Practical games (3 Hours)
Managing Mistakes (1.5 Hours)
Managing Differences in the Psychological Corner (1 Hour)

Day 4

Consolidation exercise - Revisit Day 3 ('Word Tennis' activity) (30 mins)
Planning Activity (1 Hour)
Group Delivery (4 Hours)
Managing Differences in the Social Corner (1 Hour)
Course Consolidation and Action Planning (30 mins)