



## **The FA Youth Award – Module 2**

### **FA YOUTH AWARD Module 2 - “DEVELOPING THE PRACTICE”**

These notes were taken from the FA Youth Award Module 2 course conducted at Motspur Park, Fulham's Training Ground from Monday 1 st to Thursday 4 th June 2009.

The course was presented by National Coach Paul Holder and co-hosted by Ben Bartlett, South Eastern FA Coach Development Manager (5 – 11 years).

All resources were provided upon attendance and there were no pre-course tasks or reading as there were for the FA Youth Award Module 1, though there may be pre-course reading in future courses.

#### **Day 1 – 1 st June**

Opening introductions and remarks included Paul Holder's assertion that we would make a “Four Day Journey into Practice”.

Objectives of practice should include:

- Make it as simple as possible
- As relevant as possible to the players with whom you work (NB Age, ability, maturity etc)

#### **Outcomes from the Course**

- Possible outcomes from and the rationale for using a practice
- Understanding of key issues relating to age, maturity (these are different), ability, experience and how they apply to practice and coaching
- The value of planning, evaluation, feedback and reflection
- Building key observation skills

#### **Structure of the Course**

Days 1 – 3 will investigate key areas of practice and its structure including some practical demonstrations by staff.

On day 4 each small group will deliver a practice and everyone will evaluate either their own or another group's practice. There will be no assessment as such just observation and feedback.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Certificate**

The certificate for the course is generated by:

- Full attendance for the 4 days
- Evidence of understanding through written tasks
- Evidence of planning, delivering and evaluating a practice
- Completed personal action plan (template provided in course material)

**NB** These are not onerous tasks. The Action Plan can be done in a lunch break or an evening – it is your personal action plan and therefore there is no right or wrong 'answer'.

Evidence of planning, delivering and evaluating a practice is done in small groups – your group is asked to provide a progressive session from warm up, through technique, skill and game related practice on a particular 'learning focus' but we were only asked to deliver one aspect of that (usually the skill/game related practice). We just had to show that we had thought through and planned a progressive session.

Written tasks were relatively few – you will naturally take notes during the course but there is no proscriptive method of doing so. I believe, from memory, we were only given 3 small pieces of 'dictation' during the whole course and these were key messages not necessarily contained in the same format within the course material.

### **Resources**

Three booklets are provided:

- Resources Pack (small group games, structuring practices, age group characteristics)
- Physical Development Pack (Growth, neural pathways – this would have been pre-course reading)
- Candidate Pack (Course format, Development/Action Plan for you, space for notes taken during the course)

### **The course presenters / facilitators will try to:**

- Add to candidates' existing knowledge
- Consolidate what candidates already know (e.g. from Module 1)
- Give you time to breathe and think – i.e. it is not so physically demanding as to detract from the content of the course.
- Make sense for the candidates to understand rather than just make statements

### **Formative Assessment**

Assessment for learning is the process of finding evidence for use by the candidate and tutors to decide

Where learners are in their learning process; Where they need to go next; How best to get there

Leads to a Personal Action Plan (see above)



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



The course is not pass or fail

“If you want to know if a coach is effective, look at the players they coach.” – Paul Holder

In other words, it is not the session itself or its organisation but it is whether the players have learned that is the key.

### **Review of Module 1**

Ben Bartlett invited us to reflect on what we had learned and remembered from Module 1.

We then went through a fairly brief exercise to re-visit some key themes from Module 1. This is part of the process to revise what we had already done. Each group was given one of the workshop themes and asked to discuss key points and what they knew / had learned about the topic within their groups.

Each group then presented those key points back to the rest of the course with an open question for others to add / raise additional key points which may have been missed. Our group was given ‘Motivation’ as the theme and asked to recap on 5 key learnings from Module 1.

### **Motivation – key points**

- Enjoyable / fun
- Achievable targets – individual/group
- Coach enthusiasm – be infectious
- Variety of activities
- Being with friends – keep groups together
- Overtly praise rather than criticise – especially for good behaviour

### **List 5 things coach can do to motivate + 3 things that can de-motivate**

#### **Motivate**

- Use players’ names – be interested in them as individuals
- Praise and recognise
- Provide enthusiastic and enjoyable sessions
- Adapt to different ability levels
- Get input from the players

#### **De-motivate**

- Isolate players with criticism
- Creating a negative environment
- Treating everyone the same (they are all different and have different needs)



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



- Repetitive, unimaginative “drills”

### **Essential Elements of Learning**

Paul Holder described the essential elements of learning as:

- Practicing
- Experimenting
- Competing

These activities help players to become

- Resourceful
- Resilient
- Reflective

In order to underline the element of competition, Paul told us of an experiment where around 80 children of mixed ability in the age ranges from 9-15 were provided equipment and were left to devise games that they could play. With one or two exceptions, nearly ALL created games where they had to compete for an outcome although it was also pointed out that SOME of the girls devised cooperative games rather than competitive games.

### **Self Esteem**

We then discussed things which adversely affect self esteem:

- Failure
- Public Humiliation --> Paul suggested you need 4 x praise to make up for 1x public criticism
- Physical Traits – pointing out physical differences – e.g. short or tall players compared to the average in the group
- Lack of Honesty and Trust

### **Risk Taking**

It was pointed out that Risk Taking is important in order for players to learn the game. Coaches should help players by:

- Providing Boundaries
- Making sense of the Risk
- Teaching players which are acceptable or reasonable risks in the context of the game.

This can be achieved by questioning players rather than providing them specific ‘rules’ to which they should conform. By doing this and appropriately structuring



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



practices, the players will begin to learn what they can do and where in relation to the state of the game and area of the field.

As an example of why it is necessary for coaches to help players understand risk, he told us of the incident when he was watching an Academy U12 team playing a match.

The central defender executed a perfect Cruyff turn in the centre of the field in his own defensive third whereupon an opponent, whom the defender had not seen, took the ball and scored directly.

Paul's observation was that, even at U12, the player should have been familiar with the risk that such a move could present and that the coaches should have been providing practices that not only would allow the player to be able to execute the technique, but also to understand that it is not usually advisable in that area of the field; In other words, providing practices that teach the game, not **just** the technique.

### **Practice**

It is the coach's job to provide all players with equal access to learning and improvement.

### **Checklist for Practice**

Practice = Repetition i.e. lots of "goes" – This does **not** mean it has to be repetitive!

Practices should:

- Have a Clear Learning Focus
- Have multiple opportunities to repeat the Learning Focus
- Be Realistic (game based)
- Relevant (to age, ability, maturity and experience)
- Challenging and Motivating
- Be of Benefit to ALL
- Have Player Ownership / Responsibility
- Be Enjoyable (not necessarily FUN, of and for its own sake)
- Simple (to understand) and well organised

The need for boundaries for children was re-iterated as they need boundaries and some structure is necessary so that you ensure the practice is game related and you don't end up with balls, bibs and cones everywhere !

We were then asked to begin planning a practice based on choosing an age/year group and an ability level (e.g. Grass Roots or Academy etc). This exercise did not lead us to delivering a 'session' but gave us a basis for a thought process taking account of players available.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



We then went outside where a number of different practices were provided in which we took part.

### **Learning Focus**

We were advised to consider the detail and specificity of the Learning Focus.

As an example we were told that perhaps 'Passing' as a focus was too generic and all encompassing and that, depending on age /ability of players, we may wish to be more specific. So, as an example, we could concentrate on the side foot push pass or instead of "Shooting" we should specify the inside of the foot "punch" as the learning focus.

Within the learning focus we should take care to ensure that the principle has plenty of opportunities to repeat.

### **Beginner / Expert**

We then looked at an exercise from the Candidate Pack looking at how we might observe differences between Beginners and Experts and where along the development continuum players may sit.

We looked at physical indicators and made comparisons as to how a beginner would look compared to an expert, what their level of knowledge may be and why there are those differences.

In order to help the beginner advance we must provide practices where different physical movements are required, techniques are utilised and decisions are needed and in order to build 'football pictures/memories' that the player can use in the future.

### **Game Craft Skills**

Technique becomes 'forgotten' by the body and is considered redundant by the memory if the techniques are not used in games (skill).

We therefore need to provide practices that involve:

- Time and space skills
- Tactical skills
- Decision making
- Social skills
- Teamwork skills
- Other mental skills (predicting outcomes, realising 'what if')

By the age of 11, a person's neural pathways are 95% complete and whilst it is possible to make improvements to mechanics or movement patterns after that age, it becomes progressively more difficult to do so and improvements that are achieved become smaller.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Technique – Development and Maintenance**

Development of technique is best achieved before the age of 12  
Maintenance of technique after 12 is essential

### **NB Movement and technique go together – Think about the implications for your practices.**

Paul then showed us an exercise outside throwing a tennis ball using your preferred hand and your 'other' hand in order to indicate how the neural pathways become 'grooved' to a movement and that even though you may know HOW to throw with your other hand, it is difficult to do so in a smooth and efficient way.

The brain discards unused pathways over time and therefore it is important to have players do things they need in a game. (Example that an adult right back may discard things they used to do as a 10 year old which are no longer needed now they have a 'fixed' position)

### **Muscle Memory**

These are repeating movements which allow the brain to remember them and so it can send efficient messages to the muscles and joints to move quickly and efficiently and, eventually, automatically.

### **Game Craft**

We then played a game of 7 a side after which Paul asked us what we were doing during the game. These are some of the answers:

- Searching
- Looking
- Assessing
- Trying to predict where the ball is going (based on what? Previous knowledge/ experience)

These are all awareness skills relating to space, time, players and the ball.

All of these **GAME CRAFT** skills facilitate / allow / enable decision making and problem solving both **ON** and **OFF** the ball.

- Recognise
- Adapt
- Search
- Plan
- Assess
- Predict



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2

Decisions based on these skills dictate how fast you run, how, where and when. These skills must be practiced in order to develop:

- Football Memory
- Muscle Memory

Children build up a “football memory” which they can then access when they need to (a bit like a chess master playing multiple games at once – they can do that because they have seen a strategy or an approach before and have a memory of how to deal with it.)

We then looked at film clips of children playing games and looking specifically at the decisions they made.

### **Football Memory = Perceptual/Understanding Skills**

A collection of experiences that players can recall in order to help them predict and plan in order to make decisions and solve problems.

They can then begin to “Play in The Future”, i.e. predict what will happen.

Football practice should give the player memories

- Muscle Memory
- Football Memory
- Fond memories of the game and experience of, football.

**NB** Does practice involve movement off the ball? IT SHOULD!!!

So, consider, is 1v1 better or is 2v2?

(They still need to be encouraged to use techniques and skills to beat players)

**NB** See remarks on 4v4 compared to 6v6/7v7 later in the text.

### **Spain vs England**

To illustrate the issue of ‘Football Memory’, Paul Holder told us that at academies in the two countries at U10 level there is a massive difference.

In one season at Villareal an U10 academy player plays 120 games.

Not all competitive or in the same format, but the club provides this so their players can build up their football memory. This also encompasses a variety of games not just at the academy; so school, district, tournament, in-house, different game sizes etc.

Compare to England where an academy player is allowed to play between 12-15 hours per season. That equates to less than 20 games, so guess which player will have the more advanced game craft skills, muscle memory etc?





## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Two-Footed Players**

Following on from discussions around muscle memory, there was a general discussion about trying to develop two-footed players.

Accepting that 95% of neural pathways are completed by around age 11, Paul Holder suggested that with time available, especially to Grass Roots coaches (who may only have players for 1.5 hours per week) it would be best to provide practices to build football memory rather than concentrate overly on two-footedness.

He further stated that time at practice spent on improving the “other” foot would detract from time spent on the favourite (strong) foot. Rather, Paul suggested it was a case of ensuring that players at recreational level could just “tidy up” with their other foot.

### **Football vs “Business”**

**NB** From my own experience in business and as regards coaching staff for improved performance, it is often stated that to spend time developing an employees “weaknesses” is counter-productive.

It is believed that all you achieve is a level of mediocrity and potentially adversely affect what the employee is good at by reducing their engagement and commitment.

That said there will be situations where certain tasks are essential for an employee to fulfil their job role and so you cannot ignore weaknesses in those areas or allow the person to just ‘not do it’.

From a football perspective, **I** believe it is worth including both feet work especially in a warm up and asking players to do personal practice at home and have them work on both feet – this will be in addition to work at a club and therefore should help. Those players that are keen enough will do it, those that aren’t, won’t!

### **Day 2 – 2 nd June**

#### **Activity 1**

As with Module 1 we were asked to review the previous day’s work and highlight what we felt was important.

Discussion centred on:

- Muscle Memory
- Football Memory
- Game Craft Skills



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Creating Practices**

Ensuring that practices address the 'Four Corners of Development' we discussed that the Four Corners weren't so much distinct corners but more of an inter-connected blob where practices tended to cover all aspects of development. It was accepted that some practices could concentrate more on once aspect than another but not to the exclusion of one of the "corners".

We were asked to consider a scale of 1-3 as a continuum of where a practice sat in terms of realism or being game-like.

So, 1 would be ball juggling where a 3 may be a small sided game which looked more the real game. Two players practicing static passing may be higher than a 1 but not as high as a 2 and so on.

### **What do you Want Me to Learn Today?**

We discussed again the importance of a Learning Focus and Paul Holder told us how important it was to ensure that there was a specific focus that players could understand.

Paul told us of a story of a young player in Denmark who asked the question "What do you want me to learn, today?" in order to understand the point of the practice.

If the focus is repeated in the practice there will be other repetitions as a consequence of the practice. For example, if the focus is wall passing, other types of passing will happen as a result.

Think about ensuring that players have practices that help develop appropriate techniques and skills.

There was a discussion about a tall player at an older age group who couldn't time a jump correctly to head a ball. The point being that having always been taller than here peers she never had to jump to win the ball so as other players began to catch up, she was left wanting at that particular skill.

So, observe your players and understand what the individual, as well as the group, needs.

### **Game Sense/Game Craft/Game Memory**

In order to develop Game Craft as discussed previously, practices must be realistic and involve movement off the ball as well as on and around the ball. This allows players to develop predictive skills as they start to recognise movement patters.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **4v4 or 7v7?**

In small groups we were asked to debate the benefits and disadvantages of either of the above practice game formats in developing game craft skills.

#### **4v4**

##### **Pros**

- Depth & Width
- Number of touches
- Rotation of positions
- Improve control
- Small problems
- Lots of transitions

##### **Cons**

- High risk
- Physically demanding
- Not tactically focussed
- Technical test – isolates less developed players
- Limited choices – little decision development

#### **7v7**

##### **Pros**

- More rest
- More tactical
- More Game Craft / Predicting

##### **Cons**

- Less touches / tackles etc
- Less 'involved'
- Players can 'hide'

Clearly there are pros and cons to each and therefore as coaches we need to consider and research what our practices provide in terms of benefits and outcomes for our players.

We should seek to provide a balance of different types of practice including even and uneven sided games/practices

### **Outside Practices**

As a group we then went outside to look at a number of different practices put on by Ben and Paul and we either took part or assessed the practices based on the Checklist above.

Ben advised that where we provide a new practice, we may find that younger players may take 10 minutes or so to 'get' (understand) the practice. We should persevere and the next time they see the practice, they will be familiar with it and you will see results more quickly.

Practices provided were relatively simple, easy to understand, quick to get going and have success at and were enjoyable. They had few 'progressions' but that may change depending on the age, maturity and experience of players you coach.

Involve ALL players – include the goalkeeper as part of the practice and plan for their inclusion rather than adding as an afterthought.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



“The goalkeeper is a part of the team, not apart from it”.

In the afternoon we were able to watch a number of practices involving Fulham Girls' Centre of Excellence players with topics / learning focus as follows:

- Receiving to space
- Defending outnumbered
- Scoring from crosses
- Dribble or Run With The Ball
- Dribble or Pass
- Through balls / passes

Players need the 'focus' in order to know what they are improving upon.

### **Day 3 – 3<sup>rd</sup> June**

Review of previous day's work and especially the practices. Where did they sit on the scale of 1 to 3? Whilst they certainly weren't the game itself, we discussed that they repeated aspects from a game and developed skills and familiarity which could be transferred to a game.

We also discussed and emphasised the importance of using observational skills to ensure practices were providing what we thought they were designed to do. We were advised to maintain a flexible approach and to include or discard rules as appropriate if the practice did not proceed as we had hoped.

### **Game Craft**

This means players adapting to differing/changing circumstances.

- This can be achieved by affecting:
  - The number of players
  - Opposition (Distraction/Interference/Pressure)
  - Decisions
  - Goals/Targets
  - Rules/Conditions
  - Number of balls
  - Directional / Multi-directional

What are you providing? Is it technique or skill practice? Adjust some or any of the above to achieve the desired outcome.

Consider where 1v1 and 2v2 fit in the scale of 1 to 3 – Maybe about 2? There are decisions but of a specific nature; how to beat players but also consider transition.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2

Adjust the level of difficulty by moving from semi to fully opposed and increasing decisions/choices and increasing interference/distractions.

We then had an exercise using a series of flash cards with player attributes and had to place them in order of the scale/continuum and in relation to a described practice.

The object was to physically review what we should mentally review throughout practice.

### **The Practice ‘Scale’**

Low end – “1”

**Constant Practice** – Same technique, same conditions, predictable and unopposed

Mid Range – “2”

**Variable Practice** – Same technique, different conditions, fairly unpredictable, unopposed or only part opposed- interference/distractions.

High end – “3”

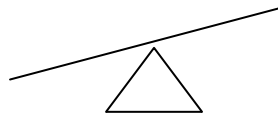
**Random Practice** – Different skills in different conditions. Unpredictable, semi to fully opposed.

Random practice builds multiple ‘programs’ so that players can execute different movements. The quicker and more efficiently the players can execute the different movements determines the level of their ability.

### **The Trade Off**

You get what you practice....

Motor Control  
Specific Repetition  
Narrow  
Development  
of Muscle Memory



Decisions  
Football Memory  
Game Understanding

If you only have an hour and a half per week with players, you need to provide a **balance** but err towards game skills **IF** the game at the end of the week is the “test”.

At higher or more competitive levels and you are considering releasing a player from a club because of poor decision making skills (for example) ask yourself – “What did I identify and (more importantly) what did I do about it?”



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2

In other words it is the coach's responsibility to provide practices that develop decision making skills.

We then had more practical exercises outside.

### **Planning for Practice**

Realism – Make the practice realistic to the game e.g. distances/areas of field – GET CLOSE TO THE GAME.

Make sure rules are "real" and consistent with the game.

Consider what effect rules/conditions will have on the practice/game.

Consider what players do/need to cope with in a game – NB

Underloads/overloads.

We looked briefly at some film clips of young players where the film was stopped and highlighted to show occasions of 2v3, 2v2, 4v3 etc.

If this happens naturally in the game, can you create a practice that replicates the CHANGING loads of a game.

Build in counter-attacking to the practice (so it benefits all)

We then had to plan our practice in our groups (3 people) for delivery the following day (Day 4).

We would be expected to:

Deliver (1 to deliver the session)

Evaluate (1 to evaluate using a checklist that it did what it was supposed to)

Explain (Discuss with course director the elements of the practice and to observe whether it actually did what we thought it would).

### **Age and Maturity Issues** (from Task 4 of the Candidate Pack)

It was observed that the majority of players do not make it to "expert" level.

The types of thing that impact on the player journey are:

Injury	Confidence	<b>OPPORTUNITY</b>	Genetics
Parents	<b>BIRTH DATE</b>	Economy	Religion
School	Coaches	Culture	Gender

Apparently, the Russians are conducting research in genetics as it has been indicated from studies that children inherit a lot from the mother where she is "sporty".



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Cogs of Development**

Aspects of development are “driven” by each other like inter-connecting cogs in a machine – Ability → Opportunity → Drive (motivation)

Which ones can we affect as coaches? Answer All of them BUT the biggest one we can offer is OPPORTUNITY.

### **Birth Date Bias**

There was some discussion around birth bias and a subject about which everyone was aware. Paul Holder showed graphs indicating the birth bias in professional clubs' Academies but asked why they had such a bias.

Discussion centred on bigger, quicker, stronger, better developed players being selected.

An alternative suggestion was put by Paul. They have that bias because that is what is presented to them by the Grass Roots/ recreational clubs.

We were given ‘homework’ to go and research the birth bias, if any, at our own clubs and reflect on why that was the case.

Also, is it a problem? We discussed from the evidence that, if approximately 100,000 children were not playing purely as a result of birth date, it was a problem and we were challenged – “So what will you / can you do about it?”. What is YOUR club doing to recruit the children that aren't playing?

Why is the birth bias effect in evidence?

Possible reasons include:

Bigger, stronger, more developed = More confident, get selected, more accumulated knowledge (game craft), get more confident, get selected more. So, more practice opportunities, increased game understanding/craft etc.

The knock on effect is that we miss potentially talented people.

Grass Roots teams tend to take players who turn up – but what happens if the birth bias effect with a resultant lack of confidence means they just don't turn up? They don't get an opportunity and they are lost to the game.

Biological Birth Dates means that there is a roughly even spread (33% each) across the three main parts of the year, Autumn/Winter, Winter/Spring and Summer. So there is no biological reason for a birth bias that manifests itself at clubs.

Check YOUR club's players' birth dates.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Day 4 – 4 th June**

Review of day 3, especially around the Planning for Practice theme. Paul reiterated the need to provide boundaries for children especially around time keeping, behaviour etc. We also discussed the new, free FA Learning Tool which allows coaches to download a free application from the FACA website and to provide visual representations for players (if you have facility – Laptop and possibly a projector and wall to show on before practice).

Looked at some areas to consider when planning practices (see page 40 of Candidate Pack)

How much time do I have with players each week?

Why are they at practice (motivation)?

What is their age, maturity, experience and knowledge?

What do they **need** to practice?

What do they **want** to practice?

What can they do already? **NB** Maintenance

For Grass Roots players, you may consider that the game is the thing – it is what they look forward to and play for each week.

Err on the side of game craft exercises to make them better in the game.

Learning is doing something that you don't know how to do already.

Provide simple and quick instructions in order to get players active and practising quickly.

### **Practice = Repetition**

- Decide what the players need to focus on
- Design an activity that gives opportunities to repeat the focus
- Teach and help when they are practicing
- Reflect and evaluate if the practice is doing what it should.

We then went outside to run through the various groups' practices spending around 15 – 20 minutes on each one. It was not too demanding as there were enough participants to ensure everyone got to rest as well as participate.

### **Thursday Afternoon**

#### **Maturity**

Again we looked at young player development especially around maturity issues.





## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



We saw a picture of two boys in the same school year but at very different points of their development, physically. Paul Holder pointed out that one boy may develop almost 3 years later than the other.

### **Early Developer**

We have mentioned late developers but what might be the effects of having an early developer in your group?

Socially – People may have higher expectations as they think the player is older than they really are.

Physically – May have coordination and agility issues owing to growth spurts. They may tire easily.

Technical – their technique may suffer as a result of a lack of coordination or by a loss of muscle memory because the centre of gravity has changed.

Psychological - they may lose confidence in their ability, their social standing may change, they may become more self aware (negatively or positively).

### **Playing Up**

If children are played up an age group as a result of their advanced physical development they may struggle based upon reasons above.

Technical content will be increased (older players, more knowledge/Game Craft) at a time when their ability may be diminished temporarily. The player then finds themselves out of their social comfort zone (not with usual group) and loses self confidence because of reduced technical and social comforts.

**MAKE SURE** that if you play someone “up” their other “corners” are appropriately developed to allow them to move up.

Also, if you think about playing late developers down, you may end up with similar, if not bigger, issues.

Early developers may be exposed by playing 1v1, so consider using them in group practices where they have more time and room. Consider also using players as targets or servers where they can still be involved in the practice and learn from it whilst practicing their techniques in a ‘safe’ environment.

Late developers may struggle with physical battles. Encourage them to come up with coping strategies to offset the difficulties of a physical battle. But hold on to late developers, they will catch up. Give late developers opportunities to demonstrate game craft skills and if they have these, beware of ‘releasing’ them.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



### **Grass Roots**

Again, if you are selecting a team based on ability, are you aware of any growth spurts that your players may be going through? Can you place players to accommodate early or late developer issues – perhaps in different positions?

### **Mop Up**

Following the final few sessions outside we reviewed the content of the course and Paul again had some video clips showing how young players make decisions, how they are not always evenly matched up in terms of numbers in games.

Paul also said that there would be a resource DVD being produced fairly soon and that we should obtain a copy to supplement the course material (I'm not sure if we have to pay or if it will be included in the course fee).

Too often we give players answers to remember rather than problems to solve. We were urged to use the FAC Live site and review a number of resource articles highlighted in our packs to understand more about the developing players and the types of practice they need and can best use.

### **Summary**

Module 2 - Developing the Practice - follows on from Module One - Developing the Environment and it aims to take coaches on a journey into understanding practice and how it affects the players.

For most coaches, some elements of the course content will be new, but for others it may consolidate existing knowledge. It depends on the individual coach's experience and indeed experiences rather than formal qualifications.

The course is therefore aimed at coaches who wish to enhance their understanding of practice and how it works (or doesn't) for the players. It is not necessarily a straightforward journey.

Developing the Practice helps coaches understand the value of repetition and how this manifests itself according to the age, ability, maturity and experience of the players it is meant to serve. 'Practice' does have a science, which is to be respected, but it is more common sense than anything else. 'Practice makes permanent' and 'You get what you practice' are therefore adopted as the key themes that underpin the content of Module 2.

Essentially the course aims to make sense and not judgements or statements and therefore is more likely to aid understanding. Paul Holder and Ben Bartlett strove to bring any science and the logic together in a simple, meaningful and practical way, with plenty of time for coaches and tutors to 'breathe and think' over the four days of the course, enabling reflection and evaluation at every stage.



## The FA Youth Award – Module 2



The content of the course is simple and focused. The following are the intended learning outcomes;

1. Develop an understanding of the outcomes related to different types of practices.
2. Develop an understanding of how differences in age, ability, maturity and experience impact on the planning and delivery of football practices
3. Develop an understanding of how to plan, deliver and evaluate effective coaching practices that meet individual player needs and learning outcomes
4. Develop observation skills and an understanding of the value related to evaluation, feedback and reflection
5. Signpost where you can go next on your coaching pathway (Action / Development Plan)

The nature of the course and its content prompted discussions into topics such as the value of 'drill like' practices, the notion of the game as a teacher and age and maturity issues.

### **Certification**

In order to generate the certificate, coaches were formatively assessed (assessment for learning). This is an essential fabric of the course.

Assessment for learning is a process in which students end up with feedback (in the form of an action plan) of 'where they are' in their coaching, where they can go next and how best to get there. It is a reflective rather than reactive process and it is not pass or fail. The last two days of the course is built around a task to plan, deliver and evaluate coaching and practices but these should be seen as opportunities to learn, reflect and develop observational and evaluative skills rather than anything else.