

Greetings to the Rainbow Youth Soccer League!

First of all, I'd like to thank all of the families that contribute to the continued success of the RYSL! Without the many parents that are now supporting their children's desire to play, the volunteer coaches, referee's and commissioners; this league cannot succeed. We are fostering the passion of soccer in our future players and fans of this fantastic sport...SOCCER! Thank You!

I'd also like to thank all the players that attended our pre-season clinic with my guys from UNLV, and the many coaches that have come out to participate in my coaching clinics over the last few years! This has become a tremendous partnership and we look forward to having the "Rainbow Youth Soccer League Day" when UNLV plays home vs the United States Air Force Academy on Friday Night, November 1st, 7pm at the Peter Johann Memorial Field.

It will be an honor to share my knowledge and articles I find helpful with your League! A few tips:

- Keep it fun!
- Every player should have a ball!
- Avoid Laps, Lines and Lectures!
- Be prepared with a training plan and theme for the session.

Phase 1: Warm up...with a ball.

Phase 2: Specific technical work, ie. passing, dribbling, defending, shooting...etc.

Phase 3: Small sided games implementing the theme for the day.

Phase 4: Play a game

- Enjoy the games, set a good example for your players and parents.
- Respect the referee's and Opponents
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See you on the fields! Enjoy this article!

THE ART OF QUESTIONING

There are lots of experienced coaches, who run sessions and are pleased how the session goes. They move each element of the session on at a brisk but efficient way and each player is exposed to something new quite often. However, checking whether the player has UNDERSTOOD those elements and what they mean to THEM and the TEAM is quite another challenge which most coaches don't consider.

4 of the most effective ways to check players understanding of a session are:

1. **Have period points** built into the session to reflect, refine, repeat if necessary and then move on,
2. **More use of** Question and Answer coaching style within the session AND at the debrief at the end.
3. **Using their experience** already gained to solve problems set?
4. **Observance and guiding** of players according to their individual needs, both physically and mentally.

The challenge then is:

WHAT to ask?

WHEN to ask?

WHO to ask?

WHY to ask?

WHAT to observe?

HOW to guide?

There are two main factors to consider about the content.

a) Review questions

b) Direct response questions.

Review questions take the form of reflecting on a point that you have either stopped play for or immediately after a moment where play has stopped for various reasons.

Direct response questions take the form of asking directly to a specific player which leaves them NO opportunity of saying "Yes", "No" or "Maybe". They are 'obliged' to expand on what they answer.

The **timing** of the questions is vital to the hopeful outcome of the response.

There is no point in allowing play to go in a Small Sided Game for instance and then when the ball goes out of play to ask a question about something that occurred 2 minutes previous. Helpful reminders of previous points can be good for positive feedback but checking understanding requires a more tangible approach specific to the point.

It is also important to put relevant questions to the relevant player/s in the sequence that the question warrants. There is no point in asking a GK why the forward took too long to shoot other than to see if the GK was concentrating on the match as they should be.

And then we come to the WHY do we ask?

Like I have already stated, this gives us an accelerated way of checking players understanding of coaching points AS THEY OCCUR and not wait until another session to test their memories.

We know that repetition plays a major part in players learning, but the main inhibiting factor is the delay in time from the event to the question being asked.

You use Q&A when you want to check a 'Teams' understanding for the purpose of expediency in a session (it takes time to go around all the players individually).

These ways are a start point so that coaches have a choice of different approaches instead of being stuck on one approach, but of course, the more experienced coaches among us will know the other approaches and then it comes down to personal choice and what they feel comfortable with.

I encourage ANY kind of feedback from players. It's far worse to have silence, than the wrong answers. Wrong answers from players, should be just opportunities for a good coach to impart their knowledge to assist the player and not be treated as a negative view to the player.

So, even though a player may not give me the EXACT answer or only parts of an answer, I immediately latch onto that and 'reward' the feedback by acknowledging it, then state " Good, your on the right track,nearly there, Can anyone else add to that ?".

You also use leading questions....

"What happens when John moves out there???...."

"When he does that, what do YOU do???...."

"Can you show me another way to do...?"

"Is there a better way to play the ball to that position...?"

And THEN if you feel that a player knows but is refusing to answer because of shyness, belligerence, awkwardness etc....then ask THEM directly.

"Now Tony here is the BEST at this, and he REALLY knows what is next, don't you Tony...so how about it...tell us what we should do next??"

This usually helps to overcome a player's reticence of fear of failure within the group. However, you must be aware of other factors why players won't answer....fear of being labelled a Coach's Pet...Suck up etc.

No such thing as lucky guess. If you suspect a player of giving information that you KNOW they have taken a wild guess at, then just USE it to gain forward momentum in the questioning...

" Well, now THATS what I have been waiting for, someone who is prepared to say WHAT they think and NOT what the coach wants to hear...well done...now I BET there are some others who can top that answer....eh??

It's all a matter of being enthusiastic about this part of coaching and not let it degenerate into a classroom exam quiz.

In discussing questioning techniques and when to ask, we must also look at certain aspects BEFORE we ask them.

1. What are your primary purposes in questioning...I would suggest they are..

- To get information from players as a base for making responsible and valid decisions
- To help the player/s think constructively about the aspect
- To direct the players thinking towards the matter at hand
- To assess their understanding of the preceding events

2. The power of your question depends on whether it compels an answer. When a player is asked a question effectively, they are stimulated to think and motivated to discuss their point.

There are 3 vital factors within a coach's control, which will affect a player's response to your question:

- Choice of the right type of question
- Framing the question to illicit a response
- Speaking naturally in your use of questions that embody relevance

A) CHOOSING THE TYPE OF QUESTION

The 7 types of questions most commonly used in coaching are:

PURPOSE EXAMPLES

1. FACTUAL

a) To get information "Who, What, Why, Where, When?"

b) To open discussion The " H " question "How"?

2. EXPLANATORY

a) To get reasons and explanations "In what way would this help solve the issue?"

b) To broaden the discussion "What other points should be considered?"

c) To develop extra information “And just How would this be done?”

3. JUSTIFYING

a) To challenge old ideas and ways “Why do you think so?”

b) To develop new ideas “How do you know?”

c) To get reasoning and proof “What proof do you have?”

4. LEADING

a) To introduce a new idea “Should we consider this as a possible solution?”

b) To advance your own suggestions “Would this be a good alternative?”

5. HYPOTHETICAL

a) To develop new ideas “Suppose we did it this way, what would occur?”

b) To suggest an unpopular opinion “Club X does it THIS way, would it work here?”

c) To change the course of discussion “What OTHER ways are probable?”

6. ALTERNATIVE

a) To make decisions between options “Which of these solutions is best –A or B ?”

b) To get agreement “Is A our choice in preference to B?”

7. COORDINATING

a) To get agreement “Do we agree that this is the next step?”

b) To clear the way for action “Do the rest of the team agree on this plan?”

B) FRAMING THE QUESTION

Some pointers:

- Be brief
- Ensure the question is directly relevant the coaching point being discussed
- Avoid making 2 points at once –stuck to one point at a time
- Thinking from a constructive and not destructive point of view should be developed
- Use natural conversational words as much as possible
- Use words that MEAN something to the player
- Avoid as much as you can questions that can be answered by a “yes” or “no”

C) SPEAKING NATURALLY AND RELEVANTLY WHEN QUESTIONING

Questions are a natural part of checking understanding of players during a coaching session. Ask questions because they are important to their development. Don't plan a long list of fixed questions though; let your questions flow naturally from the activity at hand AND their responses to previous questions.

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One of the problems I encountered was *who to ask*. Often a situation involves several players and questioning one player might not reveal what the others know especially in team tactics. So one technique I've used satisfactorily is to tell the team to *show me*. Everybody moves at once for the next action and need to coordinate their action with that of the ball and teammates (almost like recreating shadow play). An obvious situation is the goal keeper catching the ball and the team starting the counter.

~John Abe~

Coaches are 95% importance to practice; players are 95% importance to games

Rich Ryerson
Head Coach
UNLV Men's Soccer