

“Stimulate rather than Instruct!”

A Summary of Horst Wein’s presentation at the USYSA Convention

By

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Horst Wein, author of more than thirty books on the subject of Player Development, shared some of his thoughts and conclusions on training players. Wein described the coach as an artist who selects appropriate exercises for his/her players, manipulating the activities in a way that the players find solutions to the problems they are confronted with without the coach directly giving them the answers. This method of coaching, often referred to as the Discovery Method, calls for the coach to observe each activity closely and formulate questions. These questions should steer the player to the proper solutions on their own. Wein cited statistical analysis that showed that three months later players remember about 18% of what you instructed them, in contrast, they remembered 68% of what they experienced on their own. He concludes that a coaches’ objective is to open the mind of the players in a way that they both improve, but also extend their learning potential.

Wein is a firm believer that players develop best through small sided games. He referred to the 11-aside game as “the cancer of youth soccer”. Wein used several variations of 3 vs. 3 soccer to show how a coach can manipulate an activity to grow the players’ game intelligence without dictating orders. Two very interesting conclusions Wein shared with the coaches about developing game intelligence were:

1. Don’t Count Passes
2. Play odd numbered teams (3v3 or 5v5) to multiple goals.

The reasoning for not counting passes is very logical. With the restriction of counting passes, players tend to get rid of the ball when they are under no pressure and don’t learn the proper time to release the ball. “The pass is born out of necessity” was a phrase Wein uttered on multiple occasions. Instead of counting passes, ask your players to maintain possession for a certain amount of time. Example 10 seconds, instead of 5 passes.

Playing odd numbered teams to four goals (attacking 2/ defending 2) creates numbers up situations. If you were to play 4 v4 to four goals the defensive team can establish an equal balance to defend each goal limiting the obvious visual cues for the attacking team, therefore, limiting their growth of game intelligence. In the 3 vs. 3 game to four goals, the player on the ball should recognize which goal the defenders are guarding with greater numbers. If they appear to be balanced, the attacker on the ball should run at one of the defenders “fixing him” to create a 2 vs. 1 situation. These small sided activities promote repetition on the ball, multiple opportunities to make decisions and still maintain all the elements of larger game.

A final reason, for playing games with multiple goals, Wein shared with those in attendance was lack of flank play in youth soccer across the world, particularly in the US. Wein felt that playing too many competitive games at too young an age has hindered our

player development. We have done a good job of “teaching players to win, not become soccer players.” If we become more patient and less concerned about results at a young age (prior to U14) we will be doing a great service to our players. Let the players discover the answers to the questions the games we present them in training. If we choose these exercises wisely we will develop more educated players that will continue to advance soccer in the US.

Next weeks posted exercises will be from Horst Wein’s field session in Houston.