

## Thoughts on Player Rotation

I have been very impressed watching the way LUSC coaches adhere to the BAYS and MYSA philosophy of rotating players in an effort to expose all players to the different positions of the field. The benefits of player rotation are enormous; players learn the different tactical decisions one needs to make to play a certain position; they develop a greater understanding of the physical demands each position imposes on a player; and in turn enjoy the game more than if they were continuously asked to play the same position. The more the player enjoys playing, the better they develop over time.

Although I am a huge proponent of the rotation system, I do have a few concerns with the current system.

1. Flow of the Game- Watching the games on Saturday, I often see a team just beginning to settle into a rhythm and within a minute or two there is a mass substitution. Although soccer is a simple game, it isn't an easy game. It often can take several minutes, and a few mistakes, for a player to settle into the flow of the game. Constant substitution adds to this problem.
2. Learning to Play while Fatigued- One important skill for a player to learn is the ability to pace oneself over the course of a game. If we substitute too quickly this skill gets neglected. This problem surfaces when players reach the 11 vs. 11 game where the need to run for a longer period of time is vital in the performance of a player and team.
3. Reinforcing Coaches Feedback- After most substitutions, I observe coaches offering players feedback on their performance during their last shift (I would do the same), but the next time the player enters the game he or she is often in a different position. By doing so, we don't allow for the player to put into practice what the coach just offered as feedback since the demands of each position require different tasks.

I believe these negatives can be addressed in a positive manner with a couple of simple solutions while keeping the integrity of the player rotation system intact. A couple of recommendations:

1. Reduce the number of Substitutions- For example, in a game with 30 minute halves, instead of having 5 rotations of 6 minutes per half, have 4 shifts of 7.5 minutes. This will allow players to settle into the flow of the game while also providing the benefit of playing for a longer period of time where they'll learn to pace themselves.
2. Rotate Positions at the Half- Instead of having a player move to a new position on each shift allow the player to play in one area of the field during each half. By doing so, the coach can offer feedback and observe whether the player is applying

the information on his or her next shift. This will also allow the player to better focus on the requirements of a certain position in relation to their teammates than if they are moving from spot to spot each rotation.

Although these are minor changes to our current rotation system, I believe you'll find them helpful to your teams' performance on game day. Thanks for adhering to a rotation system. This will ensure that we develop more complete players who enjoy the game as they continue through the LUSC program and beyond.

Best Wishes,  
Brendan

