

Praise works better than criticism

By Ernest v. Falke

I've got soccer in my blood. After 13 years of coaching my children, I have only one regret. I wish I knew then what I know now.

The following are tips which have worked well for my players and me:

- Praise a player who does something right. Try to emphasize the goals you are teaching .(e.g. "Great tackle, Lisa")
- Critique a player's performance when he/she is a substitute or at halftime in a positive manner. Tell him/her what you want done, not what he/she should not do. Do not yell advice to your players during the game; it only distracts them and often increases their fear of trying something new.
- Emphasize sportsmanship. Everyone will enjoy the game more and form closer relationships with teammates and opponents.
- Say something positive about each player during each practice.
- "Walk the walk." Set positive standards and follow them yourself. Do not be sarcastic, derisive, or verbally abusive at any time.
- Meet with parents before the season to explain your rules about parental behavior.
- Include skilled teenage youth players in your practice sessions. Teenagers can provide role models for the young player to emulate.
- Once in a while mix players and coaches together when you scrimmage. This an excellent opportunity to emphasize an important point. The coach with the ball might say "Tiffany, quick, run into space" and then pass the ball to Tiffany when she makes the run. This rewards Tiffany for making the run and reinforces the coaching point about using space.
- Show young players something to do, let them do it awhile, and then stop them and provide a single coaching point. Lengthy explanations are not as effective.
- Require that each player have their own soccer ball and that it is brought to every practice. You cannot learn to play a musical instrument unless you have the instrument. Likewise, you must have a soccer ball to learn to play soccer.

Editor's note: Coach Falke's reminders originally appeared in the Montgomery,(Va.) Soccer, Inc.,
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