



Connecting Youth Soccer to the US Men's National Team



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My Perspective

- Soccer dad in a soccer family
 - 2 children playing youth club soccer
 - 1 son
 - 1 daughter
 - Watch training
 - Travel to league games and tournaments
- USMNT Head Coach
- US Youth Soccer is the largest affiliate of US Soccer and youth soccer is the future of soccer



1. Train the Way You Play

- USMNT
 - Intensity of a game
 - Develop a flow --- do not stop constantly
- Youth Soccer
 - Soccer is a player's game
 - Game as the teacher
 - Do not stop and correct constantly
 - Use training exercises that do the teaching



2. Encourage Players to Train/Play On Their Own

- USMNT
 - Dan Coyle --- “The Talent Code” --- 10,000 hours
 - Will not happen with only organized training
 - Example: MLS players extend training
 - New experiences with foreign clubs
- Youth Soccer
 - Teach fun games/skills to do on their own
 - Example: Pick up basketball
 - Backyard, schoolyard, with parents/friends



3. Style of Play

- USMNT
 - Explain the characteristics to the players
 - Train the way we want to play
 - Intense and competitive but using our style of play
 - Friendly/exhibition games to test the style of play
 - WC qualifying requires results
- Youth Soccer
 - Think long term player development
 - Be comfortable on, off, and with the ball
 - Speed of play
 - When and how to support on offense and defense
 - Winning is not the same as developing a style of play
 - Example of training to style of play: US Soccer Coaching Curriculum



4. Personal Development

- USMNT
 - The whole player --- on and off the field
 - Thinking, growing as a person
 - Example: Visit Panama Canal; Offer seminars (e.g. Media training, nutrition)
- Youth Soccer
 - Every road trip can be a learning experience
 - Do not only play, rest, and eat
 - Explore!
 - Colleges, restaurants, museums, history



5. Promote a Healthy Lifestyle

- USMNT
 - Being a professional is a 24/7/365 lifestyle
 - Self responsibility
 - Testing and feedback: Fitness, blood chemistry, decision making
 - Education: Nutritional seminars, organic food, custom shakes
 - Example: Whole Foods
- Youth Soccer
 - Medical, fitness, and safety standards
 - Encourage active lifestyle
 - Soccer is not only formal training sessions
 - Eat right --- Pre game, post game, snacks
 - Players do things for themselves --- do not expect parents to do everything



6. Developing a Best Position

- USMNT
 - Want players in their best position
 - Lose effectiveness in secondary position
 - Not emphasizing versatility at this level
 - Still helping players identify best position
 - Clear descriptions of characteristics by position
- Youth Soccer
 - Encourage trying different positions at younger ages
 - Being a youth star does not predict senior success
 - Allow for individual development --- over winning



7. New Experiences/Out of the Comfort Zone

- USMNT
 - Growth comes from new experiences
 - New style of play, different tactical approaches
 - New/young USMNT players playing in Panama
 - Playing the top teams in the world
- Youth Soccer
 - Training without constant coaching feedback
 - Road trips that include more than soccer
 - Pre game and post game meals that are not fast food
 - Different positions --- particularly at younger ages



8. Positive Reinforcement Versus Criticism

- USMNT
 - Primarily maximize strengths, not focus on weaknesses
 - Incremental gains on weaknesses/“opportunities”
 - Build confidence and supporting teamwork; not doubt
 - Very focused, specific, correctable criticism
- Youth Soccer
 - 3 – 5 positives/encouragement for every correction
 - Building a love of the game is primary
 - Again, long term perspective --- growth over time
 - Only manageable and specific constructive suggestions



9. Respect

- USMNT
 - It is an honor and a privilege to represent the USA
 - Many contributors --- All deserve respect
 - Internal: Coaches, support staff, opponents, officials
 - External: Sponsors, media, fans
- Youth Soccer
 - Again, players represent their families, team, club
 - So, do coaches and parents!
 - Show respect --- Maintain perspective
 - Be positive; no tantrums; no placating “stars”



10. Different Pathways

- USMNT
 - Players come from different backgrounds, experiences
 - College, foreign teams, MLS teams
 - US born and raised; Foreign born and raised
 - No one pathway --- Although trend to foreign clubs
 - Even at this level there are still pathways to explore
- Youth Soccer
 - Explain soccer pathways to players and parents
 - Different playing options for different circumstances
 - Recreation, travel (different levels), high school, ODP, college, professional
 - Be realistic with players and parents (e.g. commitment, money, end results)



11. Coaching Education

- USMNT
 - Personal development/coaching education never stops
 - In December I visited a coaching forum in Brazil and an NBA training camp
 - Bottom line: We/coaches are teachers
- Youth Soccer
 - We/USMNT want to help in your coaching education
 - USMNT now has open training sessions before home games
 - USMNT will be more accessible providing materials (e.g. Online)
 - US Soccer has posted the US Soccer Coaching Curriculum online





- Join the USMNT!
- Promote soccer as a lifelong journey and adventure
- All youth clubs can be connected to the USMNT
 - Player development comes first
 - Positive style of play (over winning at youth levels)
 - The game as the teacher --- Intense but fun
 - Different soccer pathways --- Educate and encourage
 - Self responsibility
 - Respect
 - USMNT open training sessions, games, online video
- Thank you!