

## Teaching Sport Skills and "Air Buck"



I learned something new while I was officiating soccer this weekend at a local tournament: Having a deer running around on the field will delay the game. I've been through a number of rigorous officiating clinics to get "patched," but this was one scenario (that even included a tranquilizer gun) which was never addressed. An "Air Buck" movie in the making...

Honestly, I love officiating on my day off because I always see things that relate to my job here at ASEP. This weekend, I saw the best example of a U11 boys soccer team at the tournament (once we had Bambi securely off the field). It was truly an enjoyment for me as a referee to see this caliber of talent for such a young age group. There was no superstar Beckham or Ronaldo on this team as each athlete was well versed in ALL positions, both offense and defense. They had to be. The coach switched them around to a new position about every seven minutes or so. The boys were constantly chattering among each other on the field and calling out names of their teammates prior to passing. They used the entire field and avoided bunching up, which is very common in youth soccer games. This was a team that had the full package, and they went on to win the championship in their age division.

The coach of this team didn't say too much during any of the three games I refereed. He wasn't yelling or screaming or barking out instructions. I had to ask, "What are you doing in your practices to help your boys grasp the game so well?" The coach told me that, while they have technical focus, they blend it with a lot of small-sided games in order to reinforce skills. This way the athletes are more easily able to understand how to apply concepts during competition. It also helps them to use practice to "figure it out for themselves" and makes his job a lot easier as a coach. He said it was also important to keep things fun and engaging. And for his team, he said, a very important part of youth soccer is swimming in the hotel pool, not dribbling around cones for hours on end.

These are concepts that can be applied to any sport, so

- No screaming instructions or "over-coaching."
- Repetition is good, but it can be boring for younger kids, so think out of the box.
- Avoid lines for drills and "boring" repetition.
- Find ways to make practices fun.
- Create experiences for kids to put things together on their own.
- Encourage communication and peer coaching among athletes.
- Talk to other coaches for new ideas.
- Always allow for time in the hotel pool.

For more information, download our FREE Seven Principles for Technical Skills Practice form taken from ASEP's [Coaching Principles](#) online course. To download, just complete the [short form](#) and you'll have access to this and the many other documents found in our download area.

If you'd like more ideas for your soccer team to get a jump on the fall season, purchase your copy of [Coaching Youth Soccer 4th Edition](#). This book, with the help from Sam Snow, Director of Coaching for US Youth Soccer, uses game-like activities to teach offensive and defensive skills, which sets it apart from other soccer coaching books. You might also be interested in our VHS video [The Games Approach to Coaching Soccer](#), which teaches many of the same concepts that our spotlight soccer coach uses in his practices.

Perhaps I'll wear blaze orange the next time I referee a soccer match...  
Good coaching,

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