



ABILITY BASED COACHING

*WHY WE SHOULD GROUP
CHILDREN FROM 4 YEARS
OLD BY ABILITY*

PRESENTED BY DAVID NEWBERY



AGENDA

Presenter

PD Approach

Defining ability
grouping

Why negativity?

The Facts

Why not soccer?

Wait a minute ...

Research

Adherence

Positive growth for
all

Coaches are worth it

Seamless transition

Common objections

10 tips to implement

Questions



National Soccer Coaches
Association of America



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Director of Player &

Coach Development,

Soccer Plus



USYOUTHSOCCER.ORG

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

COACHING

In house coaching education

Coaching certification

Coach mentoring & support

Planning & Performance

EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

Curriculum

Stages of development & player pathway

Replicable systems & processes

Establish standards of performance

CONTENT & METHODOLOGY

Competency based programming

Planning for development

Coaching tools – activities, sessions, books

Positive & challenging learning environment

PLAYER , COACH & EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

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DEFINING ABILITY GROUPING



- Segmenting players based on perceived capability
- Usually determined by a performance assessment

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ABILITY GROUPING CAN BE:



- 1. Within a team or group**
- 2. Within an age group or school grade**
- 3. Between age groups or school grades.**



POLL QUESTION

*RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU BELIEVE
IN THE BENEFITS OF ABILITY
BASED GROUPING*



POLL QUESTION

*KEEP YOUR HAND UP IF YOUR
ORGANIZATION ADOPTS ABILITY
BASED GROUPING*



WHAT IS US YOUTH SOCCER'S POSITION?

“It is healthy and appropriate to group players according to ability level, but movement between groups should be open and fluid in order to reflect changes in ability and individual development from year to year or every six months.”

Best Practices for coaching



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WHY SUCH NEGATIVITY?



1. Education
2. Previous experience
3. Fear of unknown
4. Concern over parent reaction
5. Good is the evil of great



FACT #1



Grouping players based on ability *within a team* produces larger improvements in performance than mixed ability grouping.

The benefits are slightly better for low-achieving players than for mid or high performers.

FACT #2



Grouping players based on ability *within and between a year/school grade* leads to significantly greater improvements in performance than mixed ability groups

At all levels (High, Mid and Low) of achievement.

FACT #3

There are no significant differences in performance when High, Mid and Low ability groups use the same content.



FACT #4

When the curricula is differentiated to meet the achievement levels of the ability groups, the effects are consistently positive.



WHY NOT SOCCER?

▼ PRE-SCHOOL SWIMMING LESSONS

Ages 3 – 5

The pre-school swim lesson program provides children with an opportunity to learn skills at his/her own pace. Children are not forced to do any skill, but encouraged to try when they are ready. **All classes are taught without bubbles.** Various instructional floatation devices will be used during each class.

▼ PIKE

Ages 3 – 5

This class is the first class for children without parent/adults in the pool. This class is designed for the beginner pre-schooler.



WHY NOT SOCCER?

▼ ADVANCED PIKE

Ages 3 – 5

This is the ideal level for the returning Pike who is comfortable with a floatation device, and back floating, but who can not yet independently swim without help.

▼ EELS

Ages 3 – 5

For those children who can swim 1/4 width of the pool with out an instructional flotation device.

▼ RAY

Ages 3 – 5

This class is designed for children who can swim 1 width of the pool on their front and back unassisted in deep water.



WHY NOT SOCCER?



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POLL QUESTION

*RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU BELIEVE
SOCCER SHOULD BE TAUGHT AS
AN INDIVIDUAL SPORT BETWEEN
THE AGES OF 3-12!*



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... wait a minute! We do use ability grouping in soccer!



- Prevalent in competitive soccer
- Tryouts used to answer one thing ... are you good enough to play travel soccer

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SOCCERPLUS RESEARCH

- Fall 2011 – 2 programs
- 120 players
- Both programs
volunteer coached with
professional oversight
- 2 data points – pre and
post season



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SOCCERPLUS RESEARCH

SoccerPlus Juniors – 3-8 years

- 30% improvement (wk 1 to 10)
- Similar % for low, mid and hi

Recreation program – 5-16 years

- 4% improvement (wk 1 to 10)
- Higher ability players accounted for the improvement



*WHAT WILL BE THE COMPOUND
EFFECT OVER THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS
ON CHILDREN IN BOTH
PROGRAMS IF THIS TREND WAS
TO CONTINUE?*



ADHERENCE TO SOCCER

ATTRITION
0%

4 & 5 YEARS

ATTRITION
5-10%

6 YEARS

ATTRITION
20-25%

7 YEARS

ATTRITION
30-35%

8 YEARS

ATTRITION
45-50%

9 YEARS

ORGANIZED BY AGE GROUP

ATTRITION
0%

4 & 5 YEARS

ATTRITION
+10%

6 YEARS

ATTRITION
0-5%

7 YEARS

ATTRITION
10-15%

8 YEARS

ATTRITION
15-20%

9 YEARS

ORGANIZED BY ABILITY



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POSITIVE GROWTH FOR ALL

Typical mixed ability model:

1. Early developers (A) touch the ball 2-3 times more than B&C
2. 'A' pass the ball to equally gifted players
3. 'A' more likely to continue playing beyond 4th grade.
4. Late developers have little chance!



OUR COACHES ARE WORTH IT!

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SEAMLESS TRANSITION BETWEEN REC & COMPETITIVE & MANAGES EXPECTATIONS



THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

PLUS 1

PLUS 2

PLUS 3

PLUS 4

PLUS 5



3 to 5 years

6 to 8 years

9 to 11 years

12 to 14 years

15 to 18 years



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COMMON OBJECTIONS

1. *Ability grouping benefits the high ability players*
2. *Players placed in the mid to low ability groups are more likely to leave the sport.*
3. *Results of the initial ability assessment are not a true reflection of performance & some players are misplaced*



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COMMON OBJECTIONS

4. *Once assigned to a mid to low ability group, the player is condemned and remains indefinitely in that group.*
5. *Most experienced coaches work with the mid-high ability players & there is an inequitable distribution of coaching talent*



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COMMON OBJECTIONS

6. *Players want to be with their friends*
7. *Soccer is a team sport*
8. *Experience from team tryouts (9-11 years) suggest young players have problems coping with rejection to B, C and D.*
9. *Our program does not support 'playing up' an age group.*



10 TIPS TO IMPLEMENT ABILITY BASED COACHING



1. Movement between ability groups for players should be easy and seamless.
2. Well designed and transparent assessment process
3. Parent education imperative
4. Leadership on and off field must be clearly evident
5. Equitable distribution of coaching talent

10 TIPS TO IMPLEMENT ABILITY BASED COACHING



6. Phased approach
7. Start with the youngest players
8. Provide written feedback
9. Communicate group changes to parents prior to session.
10. Establish broad commitment from the Board & Administration

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POLL QUESTION

*KEEP YOUR HAND UP IF YOU WILL
BE TAKING THE ABILITY BASED
GROUPING MESSAGE BACK TO
YOUR ORGANIZATION.*



NSCAA CLUB STANDARDS PROJECT 2012



**National Soccer Coaches
Association of America**

“We believe developing ‘National Standards’ will be a key to the health and longevity of soccer in the next 10 years, enabling youth organizations the opportunity to draw on expertise and good practice from around the country”



QUESTIONS



www.PlayerDevelopmentRevolution.org