



Taking Your TOPSoccer Programs To The Next Level

Thursday, January 14, 4:15 Central

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Session Goals:

- Help start-up or stagnant programs grow and become more sustainable
- Proven strategies from people who have seen it, done it
- Addressing four key areas/elements of TOPSoccer development:
 - Coaching
 - Buddies
 - Activities
 - Management

Coaching Development – Shawn

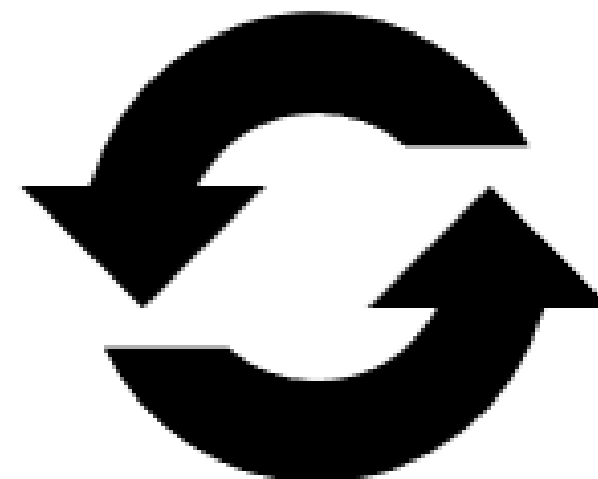
Why this is important:

- Improves confidence on the field
- Keeps your energy “fresh”
- Keeps you from becoming stagnant
- Expands your reach and your networks



Coaching Exchanges

- Agree to switch with another coach at another program
 - Healthy way to socialize
 - Learn new techniques
- Ask a club coach to assist and cultivate
 - Great recruitment tool
 - Helps spread awareness of your program
 - Get buy in for the help in the future



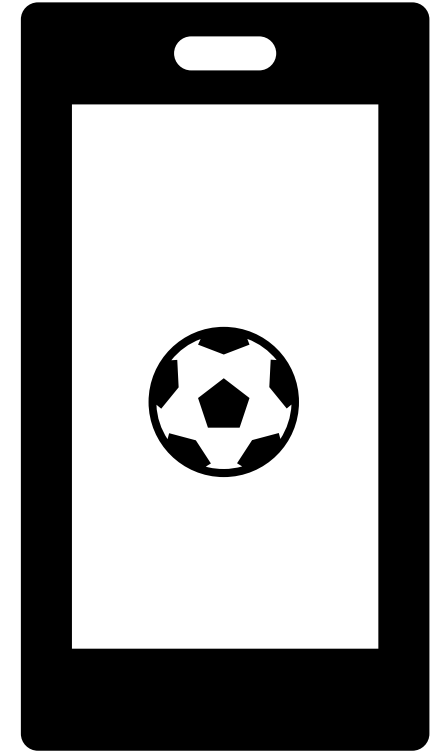
Online Education

- Various organizations provide online trainings and discussions
- Every coaching topic is relevant
- Be active on the chat and ask questions
- Follow up with presenters to build your network



Utilizing Technology

- Create content for social media
- Offer Zoom training for players
- Phone video homework/challenges for players



Advocacy Within State Association

- Present at AGMs and other coaching education offerings
- Invite your State Association Board members, staff, DOC/TD, and ODP coaches to attend a session. Get them out there!
- Do some work with the State Chair
- Write an article for their communications



Joining Coaching Groups

- United Soccer Coaches
- Disabilities Allies Council
- US Soccer Foundation
- Network with AYSO coaches
- Utilize Twitter & LinkedIn



Cycle Guest Coaches (And Players) From Competitive Teams From Other Clubs

- Learn from their ‘best drills’
- Have their players participate and model activities and help ‘coach’
- Look for clubs that have the potential to host a future program



Buddy Development – Dave

Why this is important:

They are the lifeblood of successful programs!



Buddy Education

- In addition to the pre-season training session
- Pick a weekly topic, disability
- Let them know schedule in advance
- Provide written materials during the pre-session time, and review
- Link to certain players who participate in the program to make it real for them
- Follow-up with email afterwards with pdf of materials in case they want to share

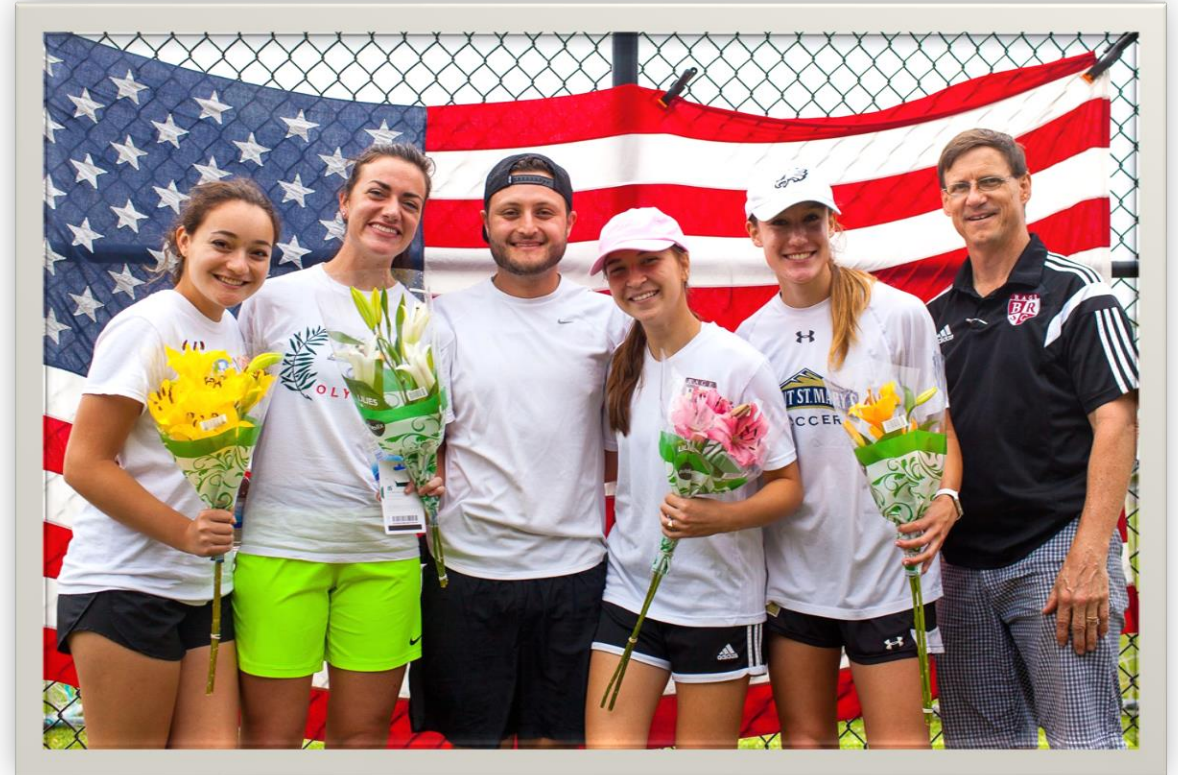
Kids with Autism

May...



Buddy Recognition

- Pizza party
- Secret Santa event
- Roller rink event
- College soccer game with tailgate party
- High School Senior day (ask them to bring their parents)



Develop A Scholarship Program

- Not necessarily expensive
- Formal application process
- Ask for donations, build into budget
- Example:
 - Soccer Association of Boca Raton
 - TOPSoccer partnered with George Snow Foundation - \$7,500



Assign Certain Buddies For Select Activities

- Do you have 'same' Buddies come early and stay late
- Don't take advantage of them!
- Assign Buddies on a schedule
- Offers a more equitable approach to doing the work



Establish Core Service Clubs As Perennial Program Volunteers

- Identify Key Club, National Honor Society, IB, or other clubs
- Commit to TOPSoccer as a core student initiatives every year
- Contact next year's officers before this year ends
- Attend meetings live or via Zoom



Activity Development - Shawn

Why this is important:

- Create new opportunities for our players
- Expand your program options
- Improve upon what you already have in place
- Engage with other programs – more socialization

Adding More Competition

- Game days with other programs
 - Games for those who want to play
 - Skills stations
- Unified format
 - Increases the tempo and competition levels
- Pool players from various teams



Adding Specialized Equipment

- Parachutes
- Hurdles
- Ladders
- Balance beams
- Tunnels
- Time Clocks



Make Your Own Equipment

- Plastic landscape containers
- Used tire 'rims'
- Ladders (PVC pipe and rope)
- Find a “handyperson” in your parent group to help
- Options are endless



Festivals

- Designate a date each season to meet with other programs
- Split up groups of like ability for games
- Have some fun skills competitions – awards for different levels
- Party atmosphere



League Games

- If you have enough players, establish teams in a league format separate from your typical sessions



Disability Specific Teams

- Form additional teams separate from TOPSoccer training
- Special Olympics
- Paralympic teams
- Pool players from various programs if necessary



Mastery Levels

- Create skill stations and time trials to challenge different levels of players
- Patches/Ribbons for completing a set of skills
- Promote achievements on social media



Invite Guest Speakers To Present Topics To Parents

- OT, PT, SLP
- Local colleges, universities, and social service agencies
- Other disability organizations
- Look for free speakers or find some way to have them underwritten by a grant or similar



Management Development – Dave

Why this is important:

Want something that will be easy to implement and last (after you have moved on)!



Succession Planning

- Identify candidates and cultivate early
 - Make it easy for them to start
 - Get them involved with basic help
 - Take pictures and promote their involvement, let their friends “like” their actions online
- Always be looking
 - Life happens; have a backup plan
 - Be specific when asking parents for help
 - Use SignUp Genius to make it less ‘confrontational’
 - Get new club coaches involved (make it a requirement at the club level)
- Attend club BOD meetings and let needs be known in that environment



Financial Stability

- Consider small registration fee if you are not doing so now
 - Gains buy-in, some commitment from parents
 - Offer scholarships to people who have hardships
- Be prepared to ask for donations
 - Have a form/ letter ready to go; dollar amounts; 501-c-3 status
- Tap into local community or national grant programs (Target, etc.)
 - Have description of your program, community/geography you serve, and numbers of players, parents, Buddies (eyeballs, shoppers!) you bring
- Gain commitment from host club for annual underwriting funds
 - Get it written into the Bylaws - \$X per player
- Carryover to future years – team account – no commingled funds



Partnering With Other Agencies

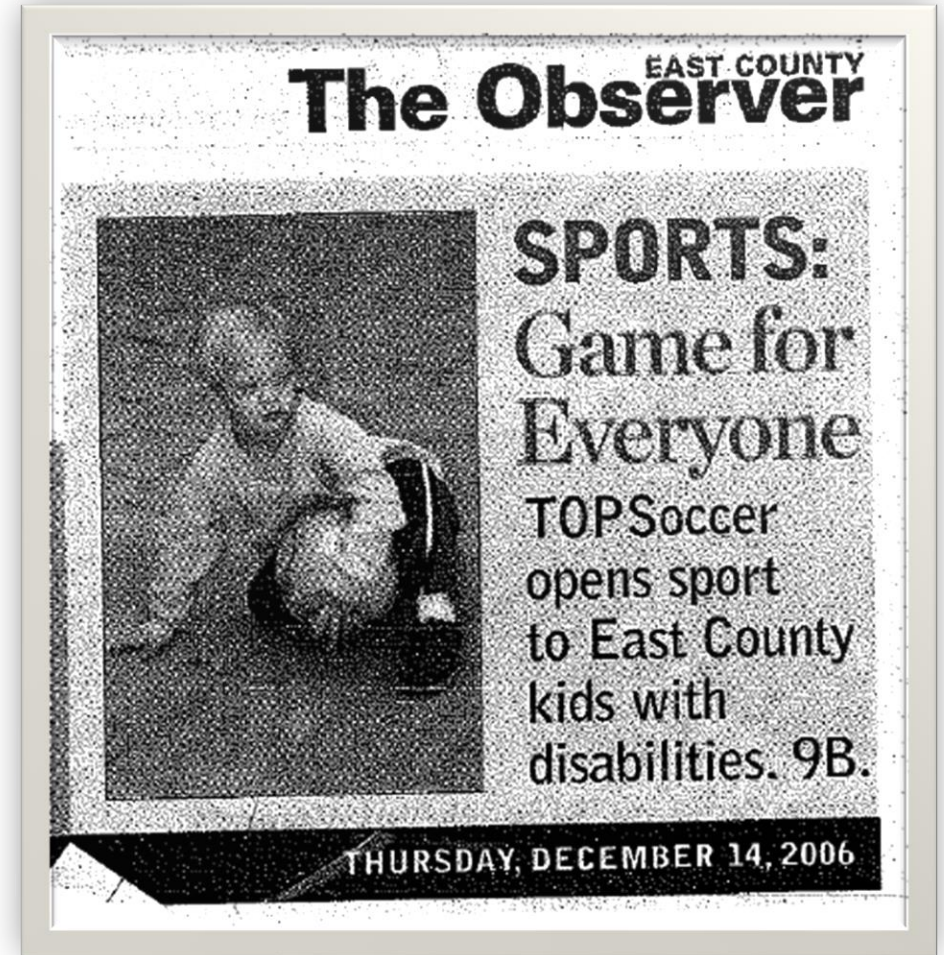
- Network with other agencies and work together to offer programming that doesn't conflict with each other
- Promote awareness and player sharing between both groups
- Work with park districts that offer programming. Work together, share resources

*Special
Olympics*



Community Awareness

- Seek local press – community issue writer in local paper (not necessarily sports-related)
 - Be prepared to provide a picture and name of player, parent who will offer glowing praise
 - Include podcasts and school papers
- Buy promotional signage, giveaways
 - Feather flags, a-frame banners to promote the program as people walk by
- Attend school district agency/ resource fairs
 - Staff a table, engage with parents (giveaways)
- Find service clubs (Kiwanis, Lions, etc.)
 - Money, services (food!) to donate



Growth Management

- Want to grow program (players) but will always have some attrition
 - Take new players even midway through season
 - Accept younger players (reduce minimum age)
 - Be careful to have younger Buddies, and keep activities simple)
- Consider splitting up program to offer it at two different times, back-to-back
 - Need ½ as many Buddies, field space, etc.
 - Make sure safety still #1
 - Promote kids who ‘play older than their age’



Summary Takeaways

- Reflect on what your program can be in the future
- Don't be afraid to try new things and make mistakes – adapt!
- Get more people involved; don't handle everything yourself
- Network with peers and state/regional offices
- Check in regularly with your state and regional TOPSoccer chair



Shameless Plug

2021 TOPSoccer Virtual Symposium

Wednesday evenings in March

7-9 PM (eastern) each night, with
two select speakers

FREE!

Watch for correspondence from US
Youth Soccer regional and state
TOPSoccer Chairs, and social media



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