



Coaching Corner: Varying Your Goals Will Vary Your Coaching Emphasis

By Jeff Tipping, NSCAA Director of Coaching Education (from the NSCAA Coaching Newsletter - March 2nd, 2005)

The goals a coach sets for the players in practice can have a great effect on the focus of the practice. Coaches may set different kind of goals and the following are some suggestions:

1. Dribble the ball over a line.

When players score a goal by dribbling the ball over the line the coach emphasizes possession play, changing the point of attack and accelerating the attack. Obviously when the players have to dribble the ball over the line they do not have the option of shooting the ball at a goal, which would give them an early release. If they coach puts a "sweeper" defending the line the players will have to be aware of the sweeper's position and will have to change the point of attack once the sweeper has swung to the side of the field where the ball is.

Two goal games.

When players can score in two goals which are set up on the same goal line approximately 40 yards apart they classically develop swivel vision and change the point of attack from the side where one goal is to the other side of the field in response to the movement of the defenders.

Driving the ball to the goalkeeper.

The players score a goal by driving the ball in the air to the opposing goalkeeper. This goal emphasizes the following important coaching themes.

- I. Defending. To prevent opponents driving the ball in the air defenders are forced to put pressure on the opponent.
- II. If the coach is working on playing out of the back with Team A he will require Team B to score a goal by driving the ball to Team A's goalkeeper, hence Team A keeps getting the ball back all of the time.

Four-sided central goals.

This exercise is a good one for teaching shooting. As the goals are basically a square made up of four corner flags with two goalkeepers operating inside the goals. Team A can score in the goals North/South, Team B can score in the goals East/West. The two goalkeepers together defend all four sides of the goal. Team A and Team B are not allowed inside the goal but rotate around the outside. Lots of shots are produced and the players have a lot of fun.

The ball as the goal.

This is a classic exercise played in the 1v1 format where both players have a ball. One ball is stationary and the players play with the other ball. The players score if they ricochet their ball off the stationary ball. This is obviously a good exercise for teaching 1v1 attacking and defending, especially the skill of shielding the ball. Whenever very small goals like a soccer ball are used a good deal of shielding normally takes place.