

## **What, When, Why and How**

In a recent discussion, I asked again that we consider seeing a lot more HOW being delivered in Coach Education courses. Vern was right to also say to me, "don't forget the WHY". Of course, the WHY is a pertinent part of all this education discussion but I still maintain that the seriously missing ingredient is the HOW.

In many of the courses and conferences I have attended I see loads of WHAT backed up by plenty of WHY.

In the skill acquisition element of the session I hear a technical description followed by a WHY e.g.

"Keep the foot turning in the middle of the circle because....."

"Brace the left-hand side so that the ....."

"Get close to the defender so you can....."

"The heel is taken to the Hamstring so that the ....."

"Grip the ball with your fingers so the....."

"Include this activity in the warm-up so that the....."

"Drive your hips to the bar so that....."

"Drive the Knee up and across so you....."

I also hear a lot of WHY when a plan of work is being discussed e.g. a training plan can be being illustrated with activities and other decisions alongside the reasons (WHY) they are included:

"Following a heavy, light, heavy, light pattern of work allows some....."

"When the CNS gets 'cooked' in a high speed / agility session it is best to leave it for another 48-72 hours before repeating it because....."

"Coaching a movement 'outcome' rather than an explicit set of actions can assist in....."

"Playing a 4 v 4 game in a confined space increases the....."

I regularly speak with coaches who can recite the WHAT and the WHY who have never been taught how they need to act to get someone to learn the WHAT. Knowing WHY something exists or WHY certain decisions are important, is a vital part of understanding the context of what we are doing. If there is no reason for certain things to be done, then what is the point of doing them? If you see the WHY as a means of keeping a watchful eye on the context of our actions, then the pathway forward (progression) might just be more appropriate.

While I am not ignoring the WHAT and the WHY – they are clearly part of the language and vocabulary of coaching methodology – I am highlighting the HOW because this is the element of coaching that I seldom see in action and certainly hardly ever see in a coaching workshop.

We all try to get coaches to:

- Plan a session that is appropriate to the age-range of the athletes
- Plan a session that has an appropriate balance of General, Related and Specific activities
- Know how to introduce the skill (action / posture); describe it; demonstrate it
- Know how each activity can be progressed and regressed
- Know when to move between 'whole – part – whole' learning units e.g. when to use drills effectively
- Choose appropriate activities that guarantee the foundations and fundamentals are being learned
- Create a session that has precision, variety and progression
- Create a session that has no 'laps, lines (queues) and lectures'
- Teach the elements using the entire 'explicit to implicit' learning continuum
- Know when, what and how much feedback to give to the athlete
- Know how to add variability to the learning environment to consolidate skill acquisition

- Know how today's session fits into the cycle or work that is yet to come.

The idea is to create an ongoing learning environment that is appropriate for each individual athlete. It will need to be effective, adaptable and flexible enough to cater for the ever-changing journey of the athlete.

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