

# Bradford Soccer Club / Bradford Community Soccer Club

## Practice Guidelines!

1. Set a target for each player to get an absolute minimum of 300 touches each and try to achieve this in the first 20 minutes of the session.
2. Don't run drills which involve long lines of players standing around, chatting to each other, waiting for their turn to have one or two touches. Design practices that keep everyone involved all the time using small-sided games.
3. Make all of your practices as realistic as possible. Insist that all of your practices simulate real match conditions.
4. Restrict practices to set periods of time or target scores and don't let them run on for too long – 5 to 10 minutes is usually enough.
5. You might understand the practice and what it's meant to achieve - but do your players? Plan how you are going to communicate the practice before you get there. Is it easy to understand and communicate? If not, ditch it and do something else.
6. Make it fun for your players, for their parents and for you.
7. Avoid LONG practice games or scrimmages. A number of players will get considerably fewer touches than others. Keep it to 10 to 15 minutes maximum.

Consider preparing yourself a checklist of questions to help organize your thoughts. Such a list might include:

- a) Did I have a realistic plan in place before the session started?
- b) Did my players improve in the areas that I wanted?
- c) Did the practices highlight any other training requirements? List them now.
- d) Were the practices too difficult or too easy?
- e) Did I conduct myself properly?
- f) Did I ignore any players or concentrate too much on some?
- g) Did I communicate effectively?
- h) Did everyone have fun (myself included)?

Make sure to do this within an hour of finishing the session while it is all still fresh in your mind and write your answers down. To fully realize the benefit of this approach you must revisit your answers when preparing the next session. Of course, in order for this approach to work you must be able to be completely honest with yourself and have the facility for self-criticism. For some, this is easier said than done.

A few thoughts to consider before your next session:

- Do you coach in absolutes? (“Never do this, always do that”).
- Do you constantly yell orders at your players rather than let them make their own decisions on the pitch?
- Are your players receiving conflicting advice from coaches and parents?
- Do your players look nervous and uncomfortable on the pitch, looking to you and others for help?
- Do your players sometimes ask to be substituted?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you are possibly guilty of over-coaching. Try the following tips to get you back on the right track:

- Avoid “never” – ask your players what they think, then tell them what you think and why.
- Give your players the space to make their own decisions and let them make their own mistakes – they will learn.
- Don’t shout so much (A lesson I took a long time to learn!) – If they can solve their on-field problems by themselves you’ve done a good job.

Make sure that your training sessions cover the four corners of player development (as espoused by the English Football Association):

- 1) Technical (skills, passing, dribbling, shooting)
- 2) Physical (power, running, change of direction, strength in 1v1)
- 3) Mental (decision making and choices)
- 4) Social (communication, combining with team mate)

If each of the exercises that you give your players fulfils these criteria, you can be confident that you are giving them all the tools they need to be effective team players.