

“TO SERVE, not to be served”

Faith-Based Coaches Fall 2019 Update

Message from the Chair

Anyone else employ some version of “Forced Family Fun”?

Whether it be in our TEAMS or our families, in some shape or form, I’m sure we all have. Why? We are wired for play, for being relational, for competing, for even overcoming fear or anxiety individually like challenging thrill of riding your bicycle “hands free” for the first time or executing the game plan against a superior opponent with success. Joy keeps the motivation engine running and is at the root of this issue's focus - "The rule of fun," the third of United Soccer Coaches seven cornerstones to building positive team culture (Commitment to Culture (<https://unitedsoccercoaches.org/united-soccer-coaches-unveils-commitment-to-culture/>)). United Soccer Coaches appropriately places a special emphasis on this cornerstone for several reasons, most notably, because they know kids (and adults) PLAY soccer and they will continue to play soccer when they, "...want to do it again." Thanks to fellow FBC members for their input in this newsletter to highlight the many different ways "fun" can be the outcome.

As always, please pass along this newsletter to your fellow coaches that may not yet be on our faith-based coaches member distribution list and let us know what we can do more, better or differently to serve YOU, our fellow Faith-Based Coaches, in our mission “To provide a space where coaches from any faith tradition can exchange ideas about how their faith informs their coaching and their soccer program.”

Have a fun-filled fall season!

Mike Lynch, michaelylynch@bac.edu

United Soccer Coaches Commitment to Culture

“THE RULE OF FUN”

What’s Keeping Sports From Being Fun...

<https://ilovetowatchyouplay.com/2018/07/01/how-to-keep-sports-fun/>

Sadly, today’s youth faces many issues that keep them from dreaming and falling in love with sports. By no means is this a comprehensive list, but here are some of the biggest obstacles to growing a passion for sports:

1. Technology: TV, phones, and video games are easy distractions from more beneficial activities like reading a book, throwing the ball around, playing with your action figures, or climbing a tree. We should do our best to cut these distractions out of our kids’ lives.

2. Fear: Maybe the world is getting more dangerous, with predators, faster cars, and taller trees, but we can’t let our fear of injury or something bad happening keep our children from experiencing life. I am

not sure what exactly is a healthy balance, but I know that in most cases, we are letting our fear keep our kids from experiencing a full life.

3. Structured Competitive Sports: Kids playing at the park, on the playground, or at the gym without referees or coaches is dying. We all know this was where WE learned to compete! We didn't need parents and coaches yelling or referees to organize the game for the game to be fun and competitive. In fact, all the pressures of referees, coaches, and parents can suck the fun *out* of it.

4. Adults Imposing Their Vision of Fun: “*We play to win.*” “*Winning is fun.*” I recently saw a lot of parents and coaches saying these things on Twitter when I brought up that we were losing sports participation to video games. Kids don't play to win as much as they play to have fun—it's ranked about 40th on the list in a lot of research—and often, they just [want to win](#) for the validation and praise adults give them when they do.

5. Obsession with College and Professional Sports: Not everyone can be a professional or collegiate athlete and not everyone should *want* to be one. But adults in many circles seem to be obsessed with the idea that every kid needs to train like an Olympic athlete. That there needs to be specialization, individualized training, and sacrifice so that they can live their dream... Ever consider that maybe it isn't *their* dream but the *adult's* dream?

Did you know the number 1 reason kids quit is because sports is no longer fun? In a 2014 study for George Washington University, researcher Amanda Visek interviewed numerous youth athletes and asked them why they played sports, and 9 out of 10 said the #1 reason they played was because it was fun!

The children in the George Washington study defined fun as trying their best, being treated respectfully by coaches, parents, and teammates, and getting playing time. They listed eighty-one characteristics of fun, and winning (#48), playing tournaments (#63) and practicing with private trainers (#66) did not appear high on the list.

If your young athletes are not having fun, they will eventually walk away, regardless of talent or how good their team or coach is. Adults rarely do voluntary activities such as exercise or community service work that they do not derive enjoyment from. Why do we think our kids will?

Solution: Your athletes are never too old, or too talented, to answer the question “Are you enjoying yourself out there?” Ask it! Chances are, the more they enjoy themselves, the better they play, the more they play, and the harder they will work. Michael Jordan had a “love of the game” clause in his professional basketball contracts, allowing him to play pickup whenever he wanted to, because he enjoyed playing so much. It has to be fun! And if it stops being fun, you need to figure out a way to make it fun, or before you know it ... early retirement!

The Rule of “FUN” During Training and Beyond

By Tom Gerlach

“FUN”. Many teams think that “fun” ends with soccer the same time that orange slices and juice boxes end at halftime.

I submit that it is more important NOW than it ever was back in the days of “recreational” soccer.

I spend about 70% of my energy with my teams on their culture. Soccer is a terminal sport. This means that, in time, it is going to end for our players. So, what are we actually investing in? If it is JUST X’s and O’s, and formations, then I think we are missing out on an amazing opportunity.

That doesn’t mean it’s all fun and games. There is a definite balance. My teams play hard, but they also train hard. The “fun” makes the hard parts so much more endurable.

Sometimes the Rule of Fun goes well....

Finding games such as “Tic tac toe”, “catch your man”, “soccer 4 square” (videos can be found on SoccerCoachTV on Youtube) are great ways to start (or end) a practice that still involves soccer conditioning/skill in a competitive manner, but a whole lot of laughter.

Sometimes it doesn’t go well:

In girls’ season, we did relay races, and I put sisters (I have three sets of sisters on my team) against each other and had players choose which sister they thought would win. In boys’ season, the guys would have been all over this (competing against their brother and choosing a side). But this actually backfired on us, as the girls’ team didn’t want to choose and make one of their team mates feel bad. However, even in the things that go poorly, we look for ministry moments. Times where we can talk about things that don’t go well.

This allowed us to talk about comparison and how we (coaches included) all too often compare ourselves to others and find ourselves lacking. But our identity is not found in what we do, or how we do it, but in Christ alone. We used this time to speak truth into each other’s lives and what started off as a “what was I thinking moment” turned into a really great time of bonding for our teams.

So my encouragement to you, is to give it a try. It’s ok to fail or for a “fun” event to fall flat. Use it as a ministry moment. Be intentional in all that you do, so that even the bad things can turn out to be a positive. I think that you will find that even a little bit of fun will bring something to your squad that is desperately needed.

Can Youth Sports be Both Fun and Competitive?

BY REED MALTBIE / TUESDAY, 03 APRIL 2018

How to Make Sports Both Fun and Competitive

If you want to make your sports experience both fun and competitive, try these six things:

1. **Play games in training, lots of them:** if you want people to compete at game speed, make it look like a game. At a minimum, 60-70% of your training should be game based. Add defenders, add constraints if you like, coach through the game, but play and players will compete.
2. **Focus on values such as fearlessness and accountability:** if athletes are not afraid to make mistakes, and are willing to be held accountable when they do not bring the right effort and focus, they will compete harder. This is what the best professional coaches do (see for example Karch Kiraly and USA Volleyball) and you should too.
3. **Stop yelling at players for technical errors:** nothing stops a player competing faster than getting yelled at for every mistake. If they compete with 100% focus and effort and still make a mistake, they are entitled to that. That is called learning.
4. **Play for something:** Let the winners earn something for winning in training. At times, you can even let your athletes decide what the winners get for winning. It might be picking up cones, a quick physical activity, making a rule in the next game, but let the winners actually win something and people will compete.
5. **Stay on schedule:** nothing diminishes competitiveness more than when athletes do not know when practice will end, or an activity will end. You are better off playing in shorter intense practice activities than longer, drawn-out ones. How can you go all out when you don't know when an activity ends, or if practice ends in 10 minutes or 30? Stick to the schedule so players can monitor their effort and hold nothing back.
6. **Give them ownership:** Whether it is choosing the game, deciding on the practice topic, or "running" halftime, when kids are given ownership, their enjoyment will increase and with it that competitive fire will be stoked because they are competing to prove their ideas correct.

Can sports be both fun and competitive? You bet it can. Actually, it should be. If sports isn't fun, kids quit. And if they quit, we lose the opportunity to impact their lives for decades to come. We miss that chance to change a life. That should scare us more than anything else.

As coaches, our greatest fear should not be losing the game we had a chance to win, it should be losing the kids we had a chance to transform.

Make your practices and games a boatload of fun. Add competitive games to your sessions. Find an appropriate level of competition. And let them compete. And when the game ends, move on.

Sports isn't work.

It's play. It's fun...and it's competitive, but it's play. Just let the kids play, and the kids will compete.

The Rule of “FUN” Spanning the Globe

Chicago Eagles Visit Brazil

Whether it was battling the Fluminense women’s team in Brazil’s oldest stadium, or “unlacing” the boots and taking on a skillful Indian tribe on a dirt field outside of Rio, the Chicago Eagles trip to Brazil this past summer will be one to remember for a long time! The Eagles men’s and women’s teams were able to compete with a variety of teams, once again allowing the sport of soccer to be the bridge that spans the societal and spiritual chasms in our world.



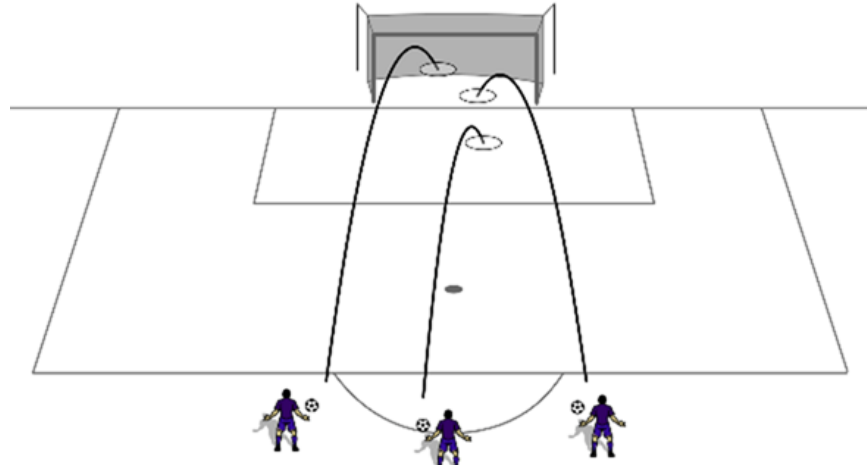
Both on and off the field, players were able to communicate their faith in God, which impacts both what they say and what they do. There were opportunities to serve boys and girls at an orphanage, conduct clinics at schools and in underserved neighborhoods (favelas), and learn more about the Brazilian culture. Speaking of culture, the men’s and women’s teams included not only American college students, but also players from Brazil, Ukraine, and the Dominican Republic! Coming together as one men’s and one women’s team was a visible example of the unity that can be achieved, making for an incredibly fun experience!

“The Rule of Fun” created an environment that allowed for several character values to be experienced on missions trips such as this. Although the events and experiences are great and provide lasting memories, the heart transformation that takes place in the lives of the individual players is something that is not taken for granted. Rafaela was one of the Brazilian women who joined the Eagles during their trip. Her life was completely changed after the Eagles players shared their faith with her three years ago!

For the past 20 years, the Chicago Eagle teams have traveled to Brazil, spreading faith, hope, and love through the world’s greatest game! If you’d like to know more about future trips to Brazil, please visit their website at www.chicagoeagles.com.

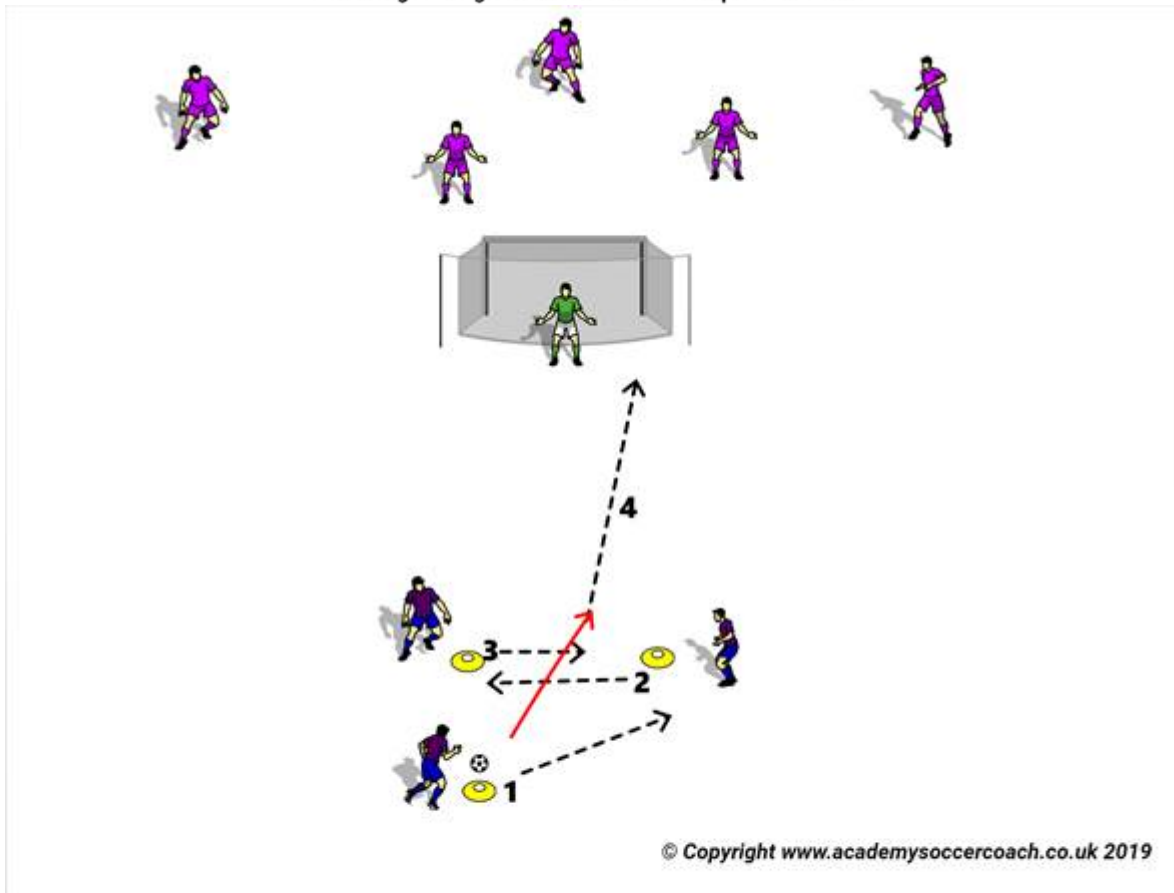


“Fun” Training Exercises



Individual Ball Skill + Volley On Net In Air

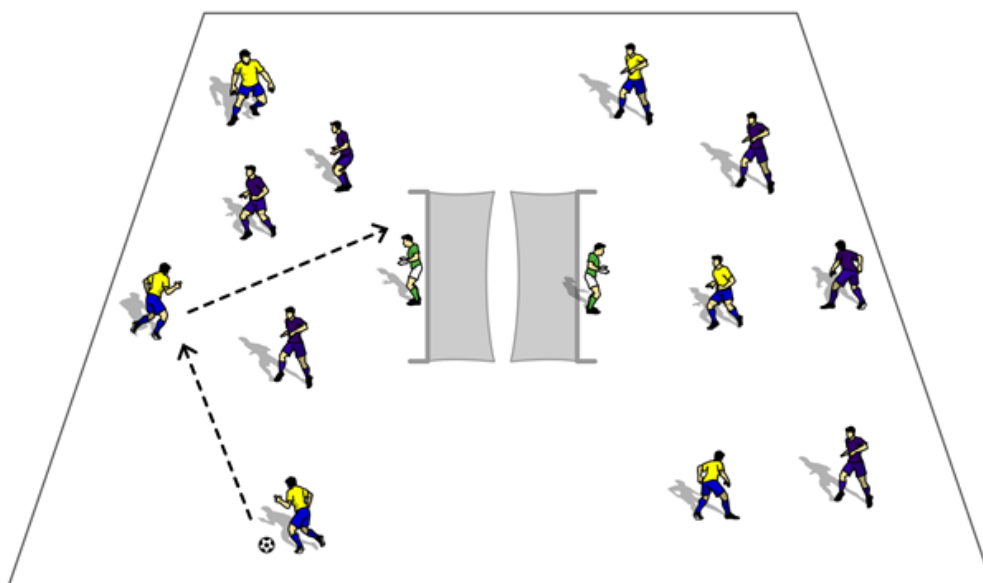
- All players start 20-25 yards away from goal.
- Coach calls out challenge such as foot juggle, bounce on ground, foot, bounce to volley.
- After successful completion, Coach calls out the next challenge.
- 5 challenges are given and the first to complete all 5 wins.



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Fun Finishing Competition:

- Create 2 teams. 1 team will be finishing while the other team will be behind the goal.
- The passing combination goes from 1 to 2, 2 to 3, and then 3 to shot. The rotation continues for a set amount of shots or a set amount of time.
- Every goal scored is worth 1 point. Every catch that the opponent makes behind the goal is worth 2 points.



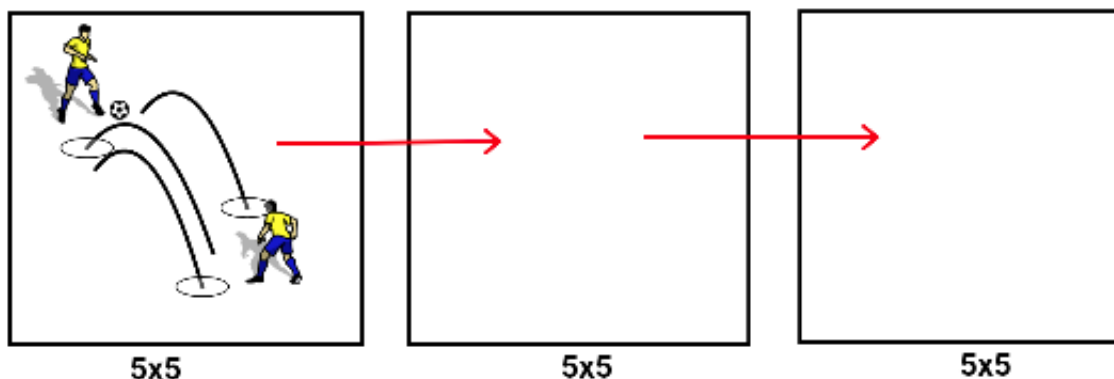
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Back To Back:

- Put 2 goals back to back and create 2 even teams. Pitch size is dependent on # of players.
- Assign each team a goal to score on.
- Designate each teams attackers and defenders.

JUGGLING GAUNTLET

- Create 3, 5x5 boxes and have players partner up.
- The coach calls out a juggling pattern (example: volley, volley, catch)
- If the pair successfully complete the pattern they move to the next box.
- They repeat the pattern until they successfully complete the pattern in each box.
- If the ball drops before they complete the pattern, they go to the end of the line.



Faith-Based Coaches Award of Excellence

The Faith-Based Coaches Advocacy Group has established an annual Award of Excellence to recognize an individual, organization, group or other entity who has used their leadership style to influence individuals and core team values transparently and authentically in their work with their players, school and soccer community.

The nominee can be a member or non-member. Selection is coordinated by a Chair appointed by each Diversity Group. The award will be presented each January at the annual United Soccer Coaches Convention.

Nominations are due on or before October 31, 2019, to:

Faith-Based Coaches Award of Excellence
c/o Kara Farnsworth
Columbia International University
7435 Monticello Road Columbia, SC 29203
E-mail - kara.farnsworth@ciu.edu

[Faith-Based Coaches Award of Excellence Nomination Form](#)

Stay In Touch

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