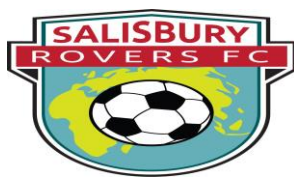
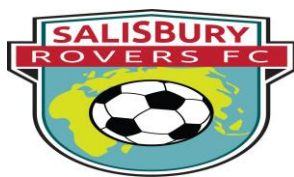


# How we coach



# Our overriding principle

The game belongs to the children who play it.  
Children's views must be sought and acted upon.



# The principles behind session planning



Coaching is about relationships. Take time to build them. We work across the FourCorners. Psych/social development is as important as technical. KNOW the child. This is more important than your plan.



Understand what's appropriate for the age and child you're coaching. 6 year olds do not need passing practices. Kids under 9 really don't need anything but unstructured play. Allow lots of time for this with, at most, simple, fun conditions to present challenge.



We don't use drills or isolated, repetitive practices. There are no cones in a game. Skills learnt in isolation will have to be re-learnt in the game. Kids want matches Listen to them.



Skills are acquired in context (the game). Our sessions are game-based.! We value free play highly. We also use a Constraints Led Approach. This should be **simple** and **clear**. Work with the children to do this.



If children are asking 'when are we playing a game', your session is not working. So listen and adjust! We deliver with not to children. Player ownership is critical. Keep it fun and engaging.



Our coaching reflects the self-determination theory of learning: kids should be allowed autonomy and be encouraged to develop the intrinsic motivation to play and improve.



No coach can 'give' skills to a player. This is not the way skill acquisition works. Equally, coach direction does not create learning. Instead, it may deprive the child of a learning opportunity. It also interrupts play.



OBSERVE instead. Little is so urgent it needs your intervention during play. Instead of directing, the coach should observe and discuss during breaks in play, create a genuine dialogue.



All children should be involved all of the time. We use very small groups (e.g. 3v3). No children in lines, waiting, or used as 'feeders'. Children should not be stood listening to coaches. for too long None of this is fun!



Coaching content changes as children mature. We look to meet the needs of the child and use mixed age play for flexibility. However, our coaching philosophy does not change.



# The practice of session planning

## Our general approach

### Delivering with children

- Coaching is a dialogue. Ask for ideas, listen and act. Make changes to the game. Can children explain if they liked the game and if they're having fun?
- What would children like to do in sessions- individually and collectively? Exchange ideas. Ask them to explain what they think the game is about, how they can add challenge. Was the game fun and helpful.
- Be flexible: some children may need more assistance or challenge

### Coaches are facilitators

- Coaches know the children and design the game for them.
- Coaches observe the game without intervention (but don't ignore a child who asks for help). Positive praise is encouraged.
- Keep discussion to natural breaks in the game (e.g. every 10/15 mins). Very little is so urgent it needs adult intervention within 10 minutes.
- Use open questions "what do you think" not directive statements "you need to push up". Discuss individually and in a group.
- Older children should be able to tell you what the game is about and what they will do to play it. They can then review.

### Designing the game

- What is age appropriate for your group? E.g. not position play for 7 year olds. Be aware of what children are physically and cognitively capable of at different ages. Ask if unsure!
- Don't have children standing in lines or used as 'feeders'. No child wants to be a 'feeder'! Children should be playing most of the time.
- Prioritise the individual child - we do not 'train' teams until the children get much older (e.g. u12+). Psych/social goals are just as important as technical. Include challenges to encourage resilience and confidence (e.g. playing outnumbered, speaking in a group etc). This could be a whole practice. Children are more than just a pair of feet!



# Focus of our sessions

## Focus of session 1

- Ball time and fun. It should look and feel like play and will be chaotic!
- Children will want to keep the ball themselves. They won't want to pass or share. This is fine. Avoid passing practices.
- Use game based opposed play wherever possible (2v2, 2v1, 1v1, 3v3 etc) with adaptations for need.
- Fun tag and chase games. ABCs.
- Lots of free play and time to make friends.
- Light conditions, and adaptations, number of balls, goals, individual challenges, player cards.

## Focus of session 2

- Game based opposed play as above.
- Focus on empowering and encouraging ownership and football thinking as well as technical skills.
- Constraints to create challenge.
- Allow children to voice opinions.
- Use challenges or scenarios. Individual and collective. Use player cards.
- Allow time to discuss and review as a group. What do they think?

## Focus of session 3

- Evolves in to a more structured CLA.
- At u13/14, it becomes more recognisable as 'training'.
- More technical and tactical but still working on individual goals around 4 corners with 1v1, 1v2 etc as well as SSGs.
- Heavy emphasis on player ownership, game intelligence and psychology. Can they set up the practice from a plan? Can they run it, adapt it? Can they lead, include others etc? Can they analyse and evaluate their own play?

