Future coaches for future players for the future game
FROM THE EDITOR

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COVER STORY

‘Future coaches for future players for the future game’

Within imposed and pressurised learning and developing environments for playing and coaching football, players and coaches alike too often solely pursue the ‘what’ to do before understanding the ‘why and how’ aspect, as the meaningful and more purposeful objectives. This is where perspective is the key. In this way, coaching programme structure has tended to be objective to a much prescribed result and response, thus devoid of creativity and the components of differentiation and individualised learning.
As 2012 draws to a close and a New Year dawns, it has been another incredible and evolutionary year for the beautiful game. And, although for many we are only half way through our playing seasons, we have witnessed the game of football exponentially become an ever greater asset and commodity in the face of global recession and austerity. Whether playing, coaching or watching; football has been there to help us through, whatever emotions it has yielded.

Along with English Premiership clashes of titans and megastars, Los Clásicos of La Liga and UEFA Champions League spectaculars, the world witnessed a phenomenal Olympic football tournament at London 2012, featuring many a household name as well as providing a platform for up-and-coming talents. EURO2012 (in Poland and Ukraine) produced a fantastic and intriguing tournament, and yielded revealing statistical data bases (particularly on passes and areas attacked) to evidence those changes and evolutions in the game that will inevitably contribute to the basis of future coaching.

Within this Issue, our cover story explores and explains the premises and notions of a football coaching curriculum and syllabus as living learning document. This article produced by Michael Francis Pollin and Ben Bartlett, seeks to lay the bedrock of a method of planning football coaching for ‘future coaches for future players for the future game,’ to address the coaching needs of the evolving game. Also in this issue, Paul Van Veen interviewed Toon Gerbrants about his rich and varied experience in coaching, writing and with AZ Alkmaar, and how he plans to put them back on the map of European football. Along with these articles, there are the many other resources of coaching and learning enrichments to share and explore.

In sharing and beholding coaching ideas, beliefs and philosophies, we must remember that learning and development are reciprocal processes that require considerate thought and application in planning and delivering. As well as individualising skill, technique and tactical practices to the needs of players, we should consider our individual and different needs as coaches. Referring back to our earlier mention of London 2012 and the Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin (founder of the modern Olympic movement) said, ‘the most important thing is not the winning but the taking part.’ Maybe we need to take this into account shift our fixation away from nothing less than victory mindsets, where, ‘it is not about winning at all cost, we can enjoy through learning, developing and sharing; that way there are no losers!’ Achievement and success can be drawn from every performance. We should not be so short-sighted as to believe that victory is the only goal, and that other motivations exist. Win, lose or draw, there is always something positive to take from every game, or even practice, as the real emphasis should be directed to ‘competitive performance not competitive outcome.’

As we move into the New Year of 2013, football will continue to evoke passion and emotion, imprint memories as it forms the indelible history for tomorrow; this is powered by our motivations to be involved in football, whether playing, coaching, supporting or even financing the game. Football is undoubtedly important for us, and important in us. A very famous football manager’s wife once said to him, ‘football is a matter of life and death to you,’ to which he replied, ‘ah no, it’s far more important than that!’

Whatever your motivation, it is worth considering at this time of peace and man-kindness, that within our beautiful game a sense of humanism exist; that brings us together and holds us together in commonality, and may football be your constant.

Happy Christmas and a Prosperous Footballing 2013!

Michael Francis Pollin (Chief Editor)
The Philosophy of a Coaching Syllabus where Perspective is Key:

‘FUTURE COACHES FOR FUTURE PLAYERS FOR THE FUTURE GAME’

Part 1
Introduction
Within imposed and pressurised learning and developing environments for playing and coaching football, players and coaches alike too often solely pursue the ‘what’ to do before understanding the ‘why and how’ aspect; as the meaningful and more purposeful objectives. This is where perspective is the key. In this way, coaching programme structure has tended to be objective to a much prescribed result and response, thus devoid of creativity and the components of differentiation and individualised learning. This is, of course, applicable to game situations and outcomes, and is actually also true within the framework and objectives of the curriculum and syllabus used to structure football learning programmes. It is the more holistic learning aspect that will form the structure of a successful coaching syllabus, to not be constrained by the prescriptive objectives that only conform to standardisation of a rigid learning framework; where all should qualify to the same criteria.

Through the processes of socialisation, coaches’ practice can tend to be heavily influenced by role objective pressure and performance expectations, normally in line with what is fashioned by others or deemed (through prescriptive mandates) to be the standard and only way to; deliver, test and make judgement. Even good practical coaching practice, learned, and then implemented through coach education can be (post) affected and diluted by the processes of socialisation that influence the coaches actions and actual beliefs and philosophies. This make the aspects of considering, planning and organising curricula and syllabuses even more important, they will serve as living documents to sustain and maintain the philosophy and framework of an objective material learning plan. To bear in mind also, curricula and syllabuses are often designed by others, to meet others’ agendas, imposing a system that is nothing short of ‘one size (should) fit all,’ and that those coaches and players should all be the same!? This sort of imposition only serves to marginalise the great inclusiveness and opportunity to a purposeful, meaningful and creative learning journey, where the individuals (coaches/players) and the system (curriculum and syllabus), all have their place.

Coaches and educators need to understand the importance of ‘learning structure as curriculum and syllabus,’ and thus the ‘why’ we plan and do, before implementing the ‘how’ aspect as the more specific learning aims, which are then applied to the ‘what’ aspect in the real planning and actually coaching. In understanding and doing this, coaches are more readily conceptualising coaching ideologies and philosophies into reference and resource; but also contextualising the content as learning and development (opportunity) as knowledge and understanding for players.

This composition will permit more logical and constructive cognitions (learning processing) both within linear (progressive) and spiral (progressive and revisiting) learning structures that can appropriately accommodate individualisation and differentiation for maximal opportunity and de-
development for all. Football learning programmes should present a sense of continuity and logical progression to offer value, meaning and constructive cognition, and this is applicable to the detail of technical and tactical aspects, the progressions through practice and function, from practice to match day, week to week, from season to season; with a greater sense of continuity.

Curricula and syllabuses are as equally important for players and coaches alike, as planned, structured and appropriately implemented; they will guide, drive and properly measure ‘learning as well as the delivery,’ with this being an important aspect for coaches to remember. A clear framework that is more considerate and accommodating is richer as conceptualisation (relating the ‘why, and ‘how’) and contextualisation (relating and implementing the ‘why’ and ‘how’ to the ‘what’) of delivering, learning and developing within the flexibility to fully individualise and differentiate any part of the programme. This ability to individualise the learning aim and process is the important aspect of any syllabus and/or curriculum, as players are all different (physical and psychological maturation – even in same chronological setting, with skill and ability levels also variant), so players are not the same, neither is it an objective to make them the same. Therefore, one size does not fit all, so the syllabus (and the coach) needs to be able to apply the learning with individuality in mind and to provide learning inclusion with maximal opportunity and with perspective as the key; as everyone is different, we need to treat everyone differently, in order to treat them the same!

Although we should not negate the innate ability and curiosity of young developing players to initiate learning towards meeting any curricula criteria, whilst developing decision-making and problem-solving towards a good sense of game intelligence; we need to understand the necessity of syllabus to guide and drive learning with meaningful purpose thus adding greater value for all. Such paucity of appropriate syllabus, and in expecting (young) players to learn upon a blank canvas, would consume too much valuable time with the players; time too valuable to waste. And actually players (as learners) need to know ‘what’ they are doing or should be expected of them, as well as the ‘why’ and ‘how’ aspects that all together conceptualise and contextualise the learning achievements and aims within the football learning and development syllabuses and curricula. Therefore, it is constructing equilibrium through considerate planning and organisation of coaching syllabuses that are accommodating to the players and the (role) objectives, but also to football; as the evolving game.
Within this series in Soccer Coaching International, Ben Bartlett (former semi-professional player, coach (England Youth, Chelsea, Colchester United and Aldershot Town) and coach educator (The Football Association) and present day Professional Clubs’ Coach Educator contributes his perspectives and philosophies (and so on). Ben recently presented and delivered the ideas in action at Fulham Football Club Training Ground (London, England) to members of The FA Licensed Coaches’ Club as CPD through Surrey County FA, and to members of the Surrey Football Coaches Association. Ben explained and reasoned to a packed auditorium the elements of a coaching syllabus as they would feature within a considered and designed curriculum for football learning and development, and then also displayed with Fulham Academy players the implementation of the practical to fulfil the needs for general curricula structure whilst still meeting the needs of individuals.

Along with the conceptual and contextual writings of Michael Francis Pollin (University of Southampton), this series will explore the notion that as coaches and players we are not all the same, and that as coaches there is scope to deliver and accommodate realistic and valuable coaching opportunity that still meets the needs of and complies with, possibly imposing and pressurising role objectives.
The premises for the philosophy of our coaching syllabuses and curricula are; considerate in planning and organisation, accommodating in delivery exhibiting flexibility and individuality; elements that relate to the principles within the game and the motor, physical, technical and tactical skills that reflect realism (as much as possible). There is no need to label any such approach as ‘New age,’ but it could be representative as a shift away from what is sometimes perceived as the old traditional way; heavily didactic, (post) critical and instructive. The only innovation is bravery, forethought and consideration to accommodation; to break the status quo and step away from comfort zone that only really serves to meet the criteria (and needs) of others. Within presenting a logical structure and framework for learning and development, the task of individualising the programme is better facilitated for both coaches and players, where cognition and constructivism permit skill, technique and tactical development through the fundamentals of motor movement within physical and spatial perception and awareness; imperative aspects for young growing and developing players.

Therefore, with the aforementioned in mind ‘perspective is key,’ to carefully consider what the real objectives would ideally and realistically be; implementing the considerate and accommodating learning framework within the scope of the game of football. In whatever way, shape or form; a syllabus is a document to consider, plan, organise, individualise and effectively and efficiently deliver and capacitate the coaching. And within these conceptual (why and how) and contextual (what) frameworks of learning and development we can be ‘future coaches for future players for the future game; but not in the old way.’

**Considerate Planning and Organisation**

**How to devise and plan a syllabus?**

Designing curricula and syllabus from scratch can be difficult, as can be the constraints of having to meet the criteria of someone else’s prescribed objectives; this is equally applicable to coaches as it is for players. Firstly, as coaches, in designing a learning plan and sessions as part of a syllabus, we can use much of the technical, tactical, skill and fundamental aspects within the framework. Then the considerate inclusion and application of these elements will provide the foundations that constitute a learning basis from which players construct and develop playing skills and game knowledge,
most possibly as decision-making, problem-solving and anticipatory and experiential abilities of game intelligence. This does not necessarily detract from young players’ capability to be self-motivated, independent, creative and imaginative; to diverge in learning journeys of discovery that are still fulfilling to the objectives and enrichment to an holistic learning experience.

Identify themes that will be incumbent to the aspects and principles within the syllabus, these will be your objectives and will also form the foundations as base tenets to facilitate players’ learning and development. Consider and plan beyond the blinkered focus of fully replicating a tactical system, as this will only gravitate towards didactic, critical and over-instructive coaching, that would not be considerate and accommodating.

So essentially, it could be viewed that it is about identifying the aspects that make up the game and subsequently detailing practices that capacitate players to be able to practice, implement and develop these objective foundations in game context, then still with a considerate and accommodating view that is inclusive of the individual; implement coaching (inter)actions upon interactive observation and intuition. The logical and constructive session and syllabus also capacitates serendipitous learning as a natural occurrence within an environment that engenders the notions of individuality, creative and imaginative choice, and certainly permits the development of anticipatory skills of a greater game intelligence associated with decision-making and problem-solving; all within a conceptual and contextual living documents of curricula and syllabuses.

**Accommodating Implementation**

**How to put the thought and consideration into practice?**

In identifying the common themes; game play should be real, free-flowing, and reflect a practice constant that is set up to create the objectives; with players practising different things (skill, technical, tactical and motor); experimenting within a climate that readily recognises mistakes as learning opportunities. Mastery in an instance is not the objective; achievement within deadline should not be the ultimatum; accommodating and considering the individuality and difference of your players within the coaching as a conciliatory blend of approaches and styles that is also written into the curricula and syllabuses.
With the objectives delivered and foundations laid, it is important to remember that players are not all the same; working at different levels, to different means and different ends. A certain level of freedom should be afforded to coaches to permit them to escape the inhibiting pressures from role objectives; to orchestrate their own mastery and to maximise and optimise player learning and development, freedom should be afforded to be creative and experiment; to expressively develop their own (potential) uniqueness.

Note that, within the syllabus presented within this article, the coaching points and challenges for the sessions use the word ‘try,’ instead of ‘have to,’ ‘must’ or ‘should.’ ‘Try’ infers and permits invention and creativity with experimentation and a permissibility for (un-scolded) mistakes, as learning opportunities. Then, if something does not work, ‘have another try!’

Remember the objectives and themes’ detail within the syllabus and the sessions, but most importantly remember how these aspects apply to the individual. If the group is working towards the same objectives, it would not necessarily be correct that all players are working to the same coaching points. As with the teams or groups, players may have their own challenges and/or conditions that are tailored to their learning plan. Therefore, curricula and syllabuses are designed and delivered as much with the individual in mind as for the whole team.
Coaching syllabus; Part 1 – Playing through the Midfield (with relevant Skill, Technique and Game-related Warm ups)

The benchmark and reference point for exciting, exhilarating and exhibition-like football is demonstrated with consummate natural flair by the likes of; Barcelona, Spain (national team), Arsenal and Swansea City; all very effectively playing through the midfield. A grace and beauty to watch where guile can overcome giant, pure skill outsits others’ immense presence and the skill of game intelligence and anticipation is representative of fleet of foot. This world renowned style of play is something so many are envious of, but also exemplary of what so many, if not all, aspire to do.

In considering playing through the midfield as part of a curriculum and syllabus, the planning and organisation needs to be inclusive to aspects of play (as outcomes) that you may want players to work towards achieving in and around this theme.

Four elements as the focus of such work for a series of sessions (two to four) depending upon age, ability and experience:
(1) Combination play
(2) Third person movement
(3) Using space effectively between lines
(4) Playing in tight areas

Remember, players may have their own challenges (within sessions or syllabus), possibly based around the outcomes, for example:
• Working on trying to recognise when to play one touch
• Working on trying to know what and who is around before receiving the ball
• Working on trying to play forward upon receiving
• Working on trying to lose an opponent before receiving the ball
• Working on recognising when to support behind the ball and when to support in front of the ball

Consider also that some players may be working on something that is not directly related to specific aspects. Consider also that whilst the session log as syllabus follows a logical order, building from; ‘Through the 360,’ then into ‘Deft Distribution.’ As a considerate aspect, there is a selection of related warm-up practices that can be used in part or all, that as well as providing essential physical warm-up, they are inclusive of fundamental factors and the objective themes. Along with the practice sessions that form syllabus content of a considerate and accommodating curriculum with logical progression and individualism, the warm-up sessions provide an enjoyable and challenging array of game-related sessions for players to experience.
TAG GAME
1. Try to tag as many people as possible in 45 second game
2. As above; 2 points for every player you tag on their back, 1 point for every player you tag on their front
3. As above and 3 points for every player you tag on their knee

HANDBALL + HEADERS
1. Try to keep possession by throwing and catching. Score by heading into the goal
2. Try to recognise when to run with the ball; if you get tagged when running please give ball to opposition
3. Try to use throw on technique to throw ball

RECEIVING SKILLS
1. Reds – passing ball with feet Yellows – throw to each other & control with body into hands (e.g. chest + catch)
2. Yellows do what reds are doing and reds as per yellows
3. Try to either release on 1 touch or take more than 2
4. Try to play passes between the other colours
IN THE GAME (CENTRE)

1.6 v 6 including GK’s

2. 2-2-1 – try to play through and support your midfield players to set up scoring chances

1. Dealing with the Ball
   1. Pass back and forth with your mate.
   2. Try to use different parts of the foot and control/pass on different angles
   3. Try to recognise moments to swap places with your mate (run with ball)
   4. Try to help your mate as he swaps by clearing space
   5. Let the ball run across your body and move to pass with a different yellow – visit 5 different yellows and then go back to swap with your mate

2. Dealing with the Space
   1. In 3’s – Receive from your number 1 and pass to your number 3 (on the other side of the circle) – repeat 5 times and then swap places with one of the outside players
   2. Try to spot the times to turn 1 touch, no touch or multiple touch
   3. If number 3 receives and turns away from the circle with the ball – number 1 + 2 swap places

3. Dealing with the Pressure
   1. 4 v 4 + 4 target players – try to receive the ball from a target player on one side of the pitch and get it to the other to score
   2. Upon scoring target player plays back to scoring team to try to score in opposite direction – opposition team try to regain and do the same
   3. Try to recognise when to turn, combine, set back or score
CHALLENGES AND COACHING POINTS

Challenges Relating to the Theme
1. Try to let the ball run across your body
2. Try to face forward before you receive the ball
3. Try to leave the ball playable for the next player
   3a. Try to lend it to someone else and get it back (1-2’s)
4. Try to recognise when to risk it and when to keep it
5. Try to play forward (pass, run with)
   5a. Try to pass between opponents
   5b. Try to bypass as many opponents as you can
6. Try to recognise when to support behind the ball and when to support in front of the ball
   6a. Try to recognise when to join the attack and when not to
7. Try to look for passes into the forwards feet
   7b. Try to link up passes from midfield

Other Challenges that may suit Individuals
1. Try to recognise when to follow an opponent short and when to hold your position
2. Try to identify when to mark space and when to mark players
3. Try to recognise when to press and when to drop
4. Try to mark ball-side
5. Look for opportunities to switch play
6. GK – when to push defence up
   6b. GK – when to play short and when to play long
7. When to use skills and tricks to beat an opponent

NOTES FOR COACHES

1. Try to use the challenges to help the players to decide the best thing to do for the situation
2. Try to select challenges that fit the area of work
3. Try to recognise which player(s) needs a new/different challenge (recognise when to stop the whole group and when you can speak to an individual
Allow players to choose their own challenges (even if it doesn’t link directly to the theme (so it’s their own syllabus)
BEN BARTLETT BIOGRAPHY

Coaching career
- The FA Professional Clubs’ Coach Educator (2012 – Present Day)
- County Football Development Manager - Berks & Bucks County Football Association (2005 – 2006)
- Colchester United FC: Assistant Football in the Community Officer (1997 –1999)
- FA Advanced Coaching Licence (UEFA ‘A’)
- FA Youth Award Module 1, 2 & 3
- FA Coach Educator Level 1, 2, 3 (UEFA B)
- FA Youth Award Tutor – Module 1, 2 & 3

Playing career
Witham Town FC (Ryman League) (1997 – 2005)

INTERVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Michael Francis Pollin
has worked, studied and researched in a number of fields of education, which of course includes football coaching. Whilst collaborating with a number of Grassroots clubs and Academies, he has carried out extensive research with The (English) Football Association (The FA) on Coaching Behaviours, and how these may be affected through participation in coach education.

Michael has developed the notion and paradigm of Independent Learning from academic research of Early Years and Primary education in Italy and England, and has conceptualised and applied the ideas to Youth Football Coaching (5 – 11 year olds). He has taken the ideas to the wider range of age groups, and is now researching the pedagogical principles of Independent learning as it relates to coach education and coaching behaviours; to create more ‘pedagogically skilled coaches.’ Within Independent Learning and his further advanced and developed proposals in Football Coaching and Coaching Education; it is essentially and fundamentally conceptualizing and contextualizing ‘best (considerate and accommodating) practice’ that is pedagogically underpinned to realise an ideology and emerging paradigm that capacitates creativity, imagination and experimentation in football learning and development.

To all coaches, managers and players with a passion for learning and developing in football coaching; if you would like to contact Michael with any feedback, thoughts, ideas or proposals, you can contact at;

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