



D License Practical Coaching Topics **Tom Turner, August 2009**

The role of the youth soccer coach is to make players better. In order to maximize player development, good training sessions should consist of activities that relate to breakdowns in skill or understanding observed from live games. These breakdowns (learning deficiencies) are known as “Soccer Problems” and they always include the related technical and tactical (application) elements.

Experienced coaches have developed their own vision for the way they want the game to be played and also the methods they will use in training to help their players improve. These coaches have also developed the ability to analyze live games and select the most important soccer problems to address in training.

The D License is the first US Soccer national level course that challenges coaches to purposefully plan training sessions around soccer problems.

The following information is intended to help the D License candidate understand the context and potential application of their assigned training topics.



For each general training topic (Headline) there is a specific soccer problem that relates to a breakdown from live play. Within each soccer problem, there are possible technical and tactical elements that the coach must define as part of the planning process. By clearly defining the context and the specific technical and tactical elements of the problem, the coaching can become more focused and the training activities more effective.

Training Topic #1: Coach to improve the rhythm of play.

Soccer Problem: My team plays too fast or too slow. There are not enough “changes” in the speed of play.

Possible Technical Solutions: Passing? Receiving? Dribbling?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Spacing? Decision-making? Combining? Support?

Training Topic #2: Coach to improve team shape in attack.

Soccer Problem: My team lacks space between the back and front, and/or from side to side.

Possible Technical Solutions: Long and short passing? Receiving?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Define role and functions? Creating width and depth? Organize team balance? Support?

Training Topic #3: Coach to improve individual possession.

Soccer Problem: My players are not able to keep the ball when under pressure.

Possible Technical Solutions: Dribbling? Passing? Receiving? Disguise?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Spatial awareness? Vision? Support?



Training Topic #4: Coach to improve support play around the ball.

Soccer Problem: My players don't help the player in possession quickly enough and need to learn to play away from or through pressure.

Possible Technical Solutions: Passing? Receiving?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Support? Mobility? Timing? Spacing?



Training Topic #5: Coach to improve building-up from the goalkeeper.

Soccer Problem: My goalkeeper needs to support the team and help circulate the ball.

Possible Technical Solutions: Long and or passing? Receiving?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Vision? Support? Decision-making?

Training Topic #6: Coach to improve supporting play in the attacking half.

Soccer Problem: My players are struggling to possess the ball and create chances in the attacking half.

Possible Technical Solutions: Passing? Receiving? Dribbling? Disguise?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Spacing? Mobility? Vision? Combination play? Ball circulation? Speed of play?

Training Topic #7: Coach to improve shooting and finishing.

Soccer Problem: My players are not very productive in front of goal.

Possible Technical Solutions: Range of kicking techniques? Receiving? Heading?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Vision? 1st touch? Decision-making? Mobility? Support? Dealing with offside space?



Training Topic #8: Coach to improve team shape in defense.

Soccer Problem: My players are too spread out to defend effectively.

Possible Technical Solutions: Individual defending? Tackling? Dispossessing? Regaining the ball?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Organization behind the attack? Starting positions? Balance? Compactness? Dealing with offside space? Tracking? Game awareness: When to start defending?



Training Topic #9: Coach to improve defending around the ball.

Soccer Problem: My players do not recover the ball well enough.

Possible Technical Solutions: Body control? Closing down? Tackling?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Starting positions? Closing angles? Pressuring and delaying? Supporting? Tracking? Use of offside space? Double teaming?

Training Topic #10: Coach to improve effective transition to attack.

Soccer Problem: When coming into possession, my players do not recognize when to counter-attack and when to build the game.

Possible Technical Solutions: Passing? Dribbling? Finishing skills? 1st touch?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Game awareness: live play vs restarts? Mobility? Support? Speed of play? Ability to expand the team?

Training Topic #11: Coach to improve effective transition to defense.

Soccer Problem: When losing possession, my players do not recognize when or how to start defending.

Possible Technical Solutions: Individual defending?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Game awareness? Balance? Compactness?

Training Topic #12: Coach your team to improve its attacking play from wide positions.

Soccer Problem: My players do not recognize how to create width; or, are technically ineffective in creating chances from wide positions.

Possible Technical Solutions:

Dribbling? Receiving? Crossing on the run? Crossing bending balls? Crossing in the air? Crossing on the ground? Shooting?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Creating space? Game awareness: cross, dribble, or shoot? Combining? Changing the point of attack?



Training Topic #13: Coach the goal keeper to improve basic shot-stopping.

Soccer Problem: My goalkeeper has a limited skill set and/ or does not understand starting positions and angle play.

Possible Technical Solutions: All basic catches? Footwork? Balance? Body shapes? Hand positions? Collapsing?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Starting positions? Basic angle theory?

Training Topic #14: Coach the goalkeeper to improve distribution with feet & hands.

Soccer Problem: My goalkeeper needs to become better at starting the build-up and/or circulating the ball.

Possible Technical Solutions: Rolling? Over-arm throws? Passing with the inside of the foot? Passing with the laces? Driving the ball?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Decision-making? Support positions?

Training Topic #15: Coach to improve playing with back to goal.

Soccer Problem: My players ahead of the ball need to improve their ability to link with players from behind.

Possible Technical Solutions: Cushioning with different surfaces? Laying the ball off? Disguise?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Creating space? Timing of runs? Pressured vs non-pressured situations? Vision? Using the body to shield? Using the opponent to spin out?



Training Topic #16: Coach to improve combination play.

Soccer Problem: My players need to improve their ability to circulate the ball and link together to keep possession and/or create scoring chances.

Possible Technical Solutions: Short passing? Receiving? Disguise?

Possible Tactical Solutions: Support? Spacing? Vision? Mobility? Rhythm of play?

