

# UBABALO TECHNICAL COACHING GUIDELINES

## Introduction

Sport is normally associated with being physical, requiring skill, involving competition with clearly identifiable winners and losers, and that sport is played or performed according to set rules.

However, we should be viewing sport as any form of physical activity that is undertaken for any reason (including competition but expanded to include a myriad of other purposes such as enjoyment, social activity, weight management, friendships and developing self-esteem). Activities included in a broader physical definition of sport include: exercise, health related activities, exer-gaming, dance and activities of daily living.

## What is coaching?

In layman's language, coaching can be understood as a facilitation process of helping and guiding somebody/team from a position of not knowing or understanding or not being confident or competent in doing some task or activity or technique, to a position where he/she/they know, understand, is confident and competent in doing a specific task or activity or technique. It is important to note that in a team environment people are normally at different levels of confidence and competence (which means demonstrating the ability, knowledge, skill and willingness to do something towards an expected outcome).

## The multiple roles of a coach

A coach has many roles to perform and academic and professional literature documents the roles of a coach as the functions carried out in relation to completing the coaching tasks in the coaching environment. Typically the roles of a coach are presented as the following:

- ✓ Facilitator
- ✓ Motivator
- ✓ Friend
- ✓ Demonstrator
- ✓ Instructor / Trainer
- ✓ Assessor
- ✓ Mentor
- ✓ Disciplinarian
- ✓ Role model
- ✓ Organizer
- ✓ Leader
- ✓ Teacher
- ✓ Adviser

However, within the context of Ubabalo we want to make the coach aware of his/her role as a FATHER/MOTHER or ROLE MODEL in the lives of the players that he/she is coaching.

## Qualities of a good coach

- ✓ Be a God-loving person and love people
- ✓ Demonstrate and live by good biblical moral values and principles
- ✓ Be enthusiastic and show enjoyment of coaching
- ✓ Be self-confident, consistent, friendly and fair
- ✓ Have a sense of humour and make things fun!
- ✓ Dress appropriately
- ✓ Be a good role model for the participants
- ✓ Maintain discipline throughout the session
- ✓ Be well organised
- ✓ Include all participants, regardless of ability, disability, age, gender and ethnic background

## Organizing Tips

The coaching process generally consist of three basic phases, i.e. A. Planning and Preparation, B. Delivery & Implementation and C. Evaluation & Improvement

**Planning** – Planning is the key to success for any endeavour in life. Planning increases the chance that the session will run smoothly and effectively. It also increases the chance that sessions will be sequential throughout the season. Therefore, coaches should at all times plan for the following:

- ✓ What they want to do (e.g. drills, techniques, life-skills, etc.)
- ✓ When they want to do it
- ✓ Why they want to do it
- ✓ How they want to do it
- ✓ Who will need to do it
- ✓ Where they want to do it
- ✓ What equipment will be required
- ✓ How will it be used, etc.

Hence, this is why it becomes important for a coach to plan ahead at least for a season, for each month, week and daily session.

**Season planning** – When planning for the season, it's a good idea to ensure you include the following on your calendar:

- ✓ Training dates
- ✓ Competition dates
- ✓ Camps
- ✓ Club meetings or events
- ✓ Parent / Coach meeting (to present Parent Guidelines)
- ✓ Social events
- ✓ Fundraising events
- ✓ Dates for coach education courses, seminars or workshops (for your own training and development)
- ✓ If you have a mentor, include regular meeting dates with them

It's a good idea to also provide a copy of this to the team.

**Coaching plan** – Prepare a coaching plan for each session including the drills you will use with applicable 'coaching points', games, the equipment you will need, etc. Consider what you want to present and how you want to present it. Have a plan A, plan B and plan C. Some things you will need to consider:

- ✓ How many children are in the group?
- ✓ What skill level are the children at?
- ✓ What equipment will be needed?

**Maximize involvement** – Involve as many kids in each drill or activity as you can. Limit the amount of time a child will be standing and watching.

**Maximize space** – When setting up drills or games, maximize the space for the children to use so that they are not all bunched together. For example, the bigger the space, the more success the players should have, Make the space smaller to challenge them

**Maximize equipment** – Evaluate what you will need in terms of equipment and plan accordingly.

- ✓ Balls - have plenty available for each activity. Ideally, every player should have a ball to maximize the session but depending on your context, this may not always be possible
- ✓ Bibs - use bibs for identification purposes
- ✓ Cones - use coloured markers/cones to structure training space

**Eliminate distractions** – Eliminate as many distractions as possible. Keep your group together and away from other groups. Keep unruly players under control. If possible, face the sun or wind while instructing so the players have their backs to the elements. During training, parents (those not assisting with coaching) must remain OFF the field. During games, if at all possible, parents should remain on the opposite side of the field from the team.

**Make the session fun** – The children will stay more interested, be better behaved and learn more readily. Use plenty of games. Did you know that during a 1990 Athletic Footwear Association Survey of over 20,000 kids nationwide, they asked them "Why they participate in sports?", and here are their top 10 reasons.

1. To have fun
2. To improve their skills
3. To stay in shape
4. To do something they are good at
5. The excitement of the competition
6. To get exercise
7. To play as part of a team
8. To challenge of the competition
9. To learn new skills
10. To win

In the same survey, 65% said they participate in sport to be with friends. This should explain why it's absolutely critical to make and keep practice sessions fun and enjoyable for young players.

**Preparing for a coaching session** – When designing training sessions it is important to consider the age, gender, ability, etc., of the children/ individuals/team to be coached. The coach must establish a good learning environment and give positive feedback to players and be enthusiastic and excited about coaching. The players will feel the passion and feed off the coach's enthusiasm.

Therefore, the following elements become important in preparing a session:

1. Content:
  - ✓ Over plan rather than under plan. It is easier to omit planned drills than to add unplanned drills.
  - ✓ The session must have a variety of activities to ensure the participants stay active and enthusiastic.
  - ✓ Look for new ideas and adapt old favourites or games from other sports.
2. Appropriate activities:
  - ✓ Avoid activities that require inactivity or drills that eliminate participants. It is likely that the first eliminated participants will be those who are less skilled — those who need the most practice. If the coach plays a game with players eliminated, adjust the game so the player eliminated has to perform a ball skill before re-entering the game.
  - ✓ Use more groups with a small number of participants, rather than a few groups containing large numbers.
  - ✓ The activities must be appropriate for the participants' ability and age.
  - ✓ Develop activity station cards that explain the drill to be practised. Over time, this will become valuable reference material for your coaching team and yourself.
3. Progression:
  - ✓ Plan so that activities flow smoothly from one to the next. Have equipment close at hand and develop routines so that participants know what to do next.
4. Practice:
  - ✓ Ensure enough time for participants to practice and experiment with activities. Practising in small sided games is beneficial as it allows skills as well as techniques to develop.
  - ✓ Plan some training sessions with very limited coaching. Let players lead games or 3 v 3 games. Let players have "freedom" without "fear" of failure.

As a coach you may be confronted with unexpected situations. For example, before the training you sense among your players that they are impacted by something that happened the past week (e.g. in school). You may already have planned your session beforehand. However, it may be better to be flexible and adapt your training, based on what your players share with you.

Thus, be aware of what impacts them in their daily lives, pay attention to that, and if necessary adapt your planned session. Do utilize these "teachable moments" for your players' on-going learning. Be flexible, without losing your main focus/vision.

## Communication Tips

**Basic communication skills** – Remember that over 60 per cent of any message comes from body language. Ensure your actions match your words and where possible show things rather than explaining them. When you are ready to explain a drill, skill or tactic, try to demonstrate it rather than

just talk it through. It will usually be faster to do and you will have a much better chance that your players will understand what is required.

- ✓ Face your audience as much as possible (difficult at times in demonstrations)
- ✓ Use positive body language
- ✓ Speak clearly and project your voice for all to hear use key words or phrases

**Goals and objectives** – Briefly explain your goals and objectives in each session so that the players will know what they are learning.

**Asking questions** – Questions help to clarify things. It also stimulates and encourages players, athletes or people to think, which leads to self-discovery as well as the discovery of creative solutions to challenges. There are mainly two categories of questions, i.e. open-ended questions and close-ended questions. Open-ended questions (e.g. questions starting why, who, when, where, which, what, how, etc.) helps with clarification and with ascertaining more information and close-ended questions that always leads to either a Yes or a No answer (e.g. questions starting with Is, Are, Did, Were, etc.) helps with confirming certain facts or assumptions.

**Giving feedback** – It has been said that feedback is the breakfast of champions and breakfast is the most important meal of the day. When providing feedback to your players use the ‘sandwich’ approach. Layer the corrective feedback with a positive comment on either side. For example, “That is great body position, make sure you extend your arm after you have shot, keep up the effort.” The player now has useful information and they feel good about their efforts.

**Attentive listening** – Remember to listen. Players can provide a huge amount of information on how effective your coaching is.

## Coaching Tips

**Coaching points** – Don’t try to explain too many coaching points at one time. Highlight each ‘Coaching Point’ one at a time as you instruct and let the children practice. Stop them to point out what they are doing right and what needs improvement. Reiterate key coaching points, demonstrate what is needed and let the children continue.

1. **HIGHLIGHT** a key coaching point
2. **DEMONSTRATE** the coaching point
3. Let the players **PRACTICE**

Relate every drill and practice session to a game situation. Use examples that players can relate to. (Example: “Did you see Kaka on Saturday when he ...” This is an excellent motivator).

**Observe and demonstrate more** – Coaches love to talk. However, there is usually a lot of time when they need to stand back, let their players practice and just observe what is going on. What should you be observing?

- ✓ Look for ways to increase participation within the group.
- ✓ Are there any faults with the activity or technique as indicated by the struggle of players?
- ✓ Is one particular player struggling that needs your help?
- ✓ Are players following instructions that you gave them or do you need to repeat the explanation?
- ✓ Do I need to adjust for success? For example, field size, numbers of players, numbers up on one team, etc.

There are also times when players need to focus on their practice in peace and quiet.

**Review and reinforce** – Review coaching points from earlier sessions to keep the kids thinking. At the end of each session, reinforce what the kids have just learnt in the session. For example coaches must ask themselves “What have the players learnt from today’s session and how can I improve upon it?”

It is important for a coach to know the difference between ‘skill’ and ‘technique’.

- ✓ **TECHNIQUE** – the execution of a single performance - a pass, a control, a turn, a shot, a move a dribble, a kick. Techniques are the tools of the trade.

- ✓ **SKILL** – Is the ability to be in the right place at the right time and to select the correct technique on demand. Skills are using the tools of the trade in the right way. A skilful player then, is one who can select and perform the proper technique at the right moment

To develop the skills of a player, he/she need to work on and practice the various techniques involved. Let's use football as an example: For the skill of passing, we have the various techniques such as the push pass, the low driven pass, the long lofted pass, the flick pass, the swerve pass and finally the chip. These are all elements of passing used within the game of football yet which require a very different technique to perform.

The role of the coach is that of instructor - to offer correct instruction that will help a player improve his technique and thus his ability to be better skilled. For good instruction to take place a good coach will know the points he needs to focus on and which he wants his players to be able to perform.

We often hear this saying, "*Practice makes perfect*". This statement sounds nice, but it is wrong. A player may practice all year long, but if he is practicing incorrectly, he will never become perfect. A better expression to use is, "*Perfect practice makes permanent*". As a coach our goal is to set up practice so that the players are working on the correct methods and techniques so that in the end that action becomes permanent, second nature.

When learning a technique, normally every action will follow a logical order. A successful coach is one who can pick out the important coaching points and coach them in order so that they build on one another. For example, if we have the technique of picking up a pen, what important information would we want to pass on?

1. Extend your arm in the direction of the pen.
2. As your hand nears the pen, open your thumb and forefinger and place them on either side of the pen.
3. With a pinching motion, bring the fingers together around the pen and lift off the table.
4. Bring your index finger below the pen to add support.

There. That's the motion for picking up a pen in a four-step motion. If step 1 is not done properly, then one's hand will be nowhere near the pen. If step 2 is not done, the hand may be right near the pen, but will never be able to pick it up. Therefore, a good coach will know his coaching points and coach them/ teach them in a logical order.

The coaching session should be set up in low-pressure situations so that the players can be mostly successful in the techniques they are performing. i.e. - they have no opposition to worry about and can simply perform the technique without any pressure. However, team sport is typically played with opposition. Therefore, each drill should also be varied to bring in a little pressure. This starts the process of taking the technique into a skill.

## General Tips

The following strategies can be used to engage participants:

**Voice and expression** — by varying voice quality and volume to suit the situation coaches can gain the participants' attention, and add qualities such as excitement, concern and annoyance.

**Eye contact** — by maintaining eye contact, the coach can personalise things, give the impression of confidence, and add expression to the message.

**Signal for attention** — some coaches use a whistle and others use a variety of commands. Whatever the method, it should be loud and different and gain attention.

**Ask questions** — questioning and discussion techniques shift the focus from the coach to the participant. The participant takes on some responsibility and becomes more involved in the learning process.

**Praise and compliment** — sincere and equitable praise and compliments to the group and individuals provides incentive and motivation to participants.

**Quality instructions** — combining clear brief instructions with demonstrations help the coach to maintain the interest of participants. One of the most difficult things for many coaches is limiting instructions to one or two key points and then returning to the activity.

**Be enthusiastic (which means ...”God within”)** – Let the players see you love what you’re doing and love being with them. Laugh with them, encourage them, praise them!

**Be patient** – Understand that each person learns differently and will be at different stages of physical development.

**Be firm and fair** – Don’t let the players rule. You are the leader. At the same time, be fair in your treatment of them.

**Be open** – Let the players get to know you.

**Be prayerful** – Each person will have a different family situation, home life, background, etc. Ask God to help you sense what each individual is in need of.

**Be inclusive** – Find ways to ‘bring in’ the quiet one, the shy ones, the less talented ones. Encourage others to value each other for WHO they are.

**Individual attention** – Spend ‘personal time’ with each individual. Be careful of the few who will want to ‘hog’ your attention

**Expectations and ground-rules** – Clarify Team Rules/Expectations by:

- ✓ Involving players in formulating behavioural guidelines; use to help build team cohesion
- ✓ Explaining “why” team rules are necessary
- ✓ Discussing and agreeing the consequences of team rules are being violated.

Research on Coaching Effective Training (CET) by Smith and Smoll (2002) found positive results when coaches:

- ✓ Set a good example of behaviour
- ✓ Encourage effort, don’t demand results
- ✓ In giving encouragement, be selective so it is meaningful
- ✓ Never give encouragement or instruction in a sarcastic or degrading manner
- ✓ Encourage players to be supportive of each other, and reinforce them when they do so

In terms of measuring your success as a coach, a well experienced coach called Norbert Altenstad recommends that a coach should consider the following four areas:

1. How much are your players enjoying the game and having fun?  
(Ask them, are they coming back, are they smiling)
2. How much are the skills of your players developing?  
(Use player evaluation forms with stats to keep track of their progress)
3. How is their character and personality evolving as young men or women?  
(Use your own observation skills, get to know your players better and talk to their parents)
4. How much enthusiasm and excitement are they showing toward the game?  
(Use your own observation skills and be alert)

Furthermore, he also says that one of the things that can dramatically improve a coach’s results is to allow the players to make mistakes without overreacting and criticizing in a negative way. The negative critique can kill the player’s creativity, imagination and enthusiasm. When a player makes a mistake, don’t emphasize the mistake. Instead, begin with a positive statement, followed by a constructive criticism, and end with another positive statement – the ‘sandwich’ approach.

**“One coach will impact more young people in a year than the average person does in a lifetime. So who is coaching the coaches?”**

Rev. Billy Graham (American evangelist)