



# PSYCHOLOGY OF YOUTH SOCCER

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# PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF YOUTH SOCCER



**Competitive  
Readiness**



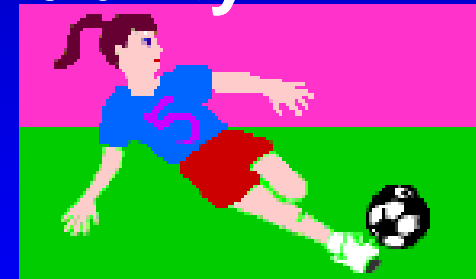
**Perceptions of  
ability**



**Soccer  
Motivation**



**Children only  
play**



**Coaching  
ramifications**

# COMPETITIVE READINESS?



*“Most children are not psychologically ready for competitive sport until they are 10-12 years old”*

# COMPETITIVE READINESS

- ◆ This perspective ***does not*** mean children cannot learn soccer skills, enjoy soccer, and develop fitness and health
- ◆ However, it ***does*** mean that children ***do not*** understand the competition process the way adults do
- ◆ Thus, adults should help children define and understand their soccer experience

# COMPETITIVE READINESS

- ◆ Cognitive maturity
- ◆ Spatial ability
- ◆ Understanding ability
- ◆ Effort vs. ability
- ◆ Realistic appraisal of ability

# SOCCER MOTIVATION



- ◆ Being with friends
- ◆ Playing
- ◆ Excitement
- ◆ Learning
- ◆ Improving

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PERCEPTIONS OF ABILITY



*“Sport psychologists believe that the major underlying reason for participating in and leaving sport are perceptions of ability.”*

# PERCEPTIONS OF ABILITY INFORMATION SOURCES

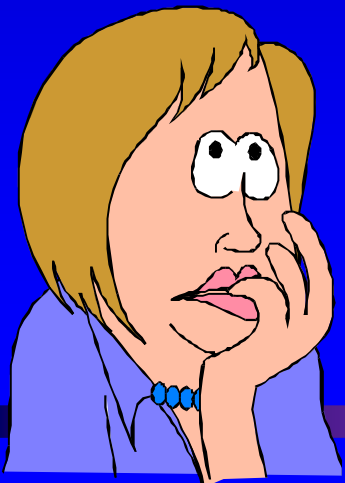


- ◆ 8-14 yrs vs. 14-18yrs
- ◆ Evaluative Feedback: 1 vs. 3 dimensions (coach, peer, spectators)
- ◆ Internal information: 1 vs. 3 dimensions (effort, skill, ease of learning)



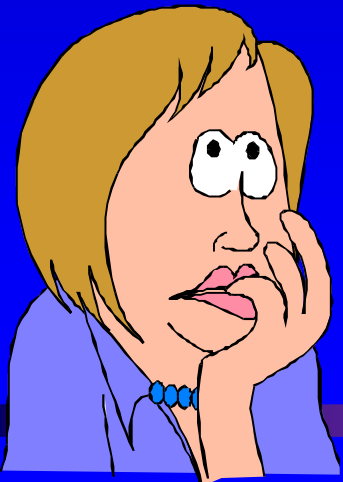
# HOW CHILDREN PLAY WHEN THEY ARE IN CHARGE

- ◆ Potential evidence about how coaches may want to structure practice and games.



# CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN ONLY PLAY

- ◆ Lots of action
- ◆ Lots of personal involvement in the action
- ◆ Close scores – no blowouts
- ◆ Challenges strongly match skills
- ◆ Opportunities to affirm friendships



# RAMIFICATIONS FOR COACHING



# COACHING PHILOSOPHY

- ◆ Professional model vs. Educational and Developmental model

# PROFESSIONAL MODEL



- ◆ Entertainment
- ◆ Success = winning
- ◆ Failure = losing

# EDUCATIONAL MODEL

- ◆ **Multiple definitions of success**
- ◆ **Success = learning, improvement**
- ◆ **Success = love of physical activity, health, fitness**
- ◆ **Success = developing desirable personal qualities (e.g., confidence)**
- ◆ **Success = friendships, fun, good memories**

# EDUCATIONAL MODEL

- ◆ Fewer definitions of failure
- ◆ Failure = not trying hard, not persisting, giving up
- ◆ Failure = poor sportpersonship, unethical behavior

# TEAM GOALS

- ◆ Think short and long term
- ◆ The practice, the current season, next season
- ◆ A lifelong love of physical activity and sport
- ◆ Create an atmosphere so that children want to come to practice



# COACH CREATED CLIMATE

- ◆ Create a performance (vs. outcome) oriented atmosphere
- ◆ De-emphasize winning: Its often uncontrollable and unrealistic
- ◆ Children will be exposed to plenty of information stressing the importance of winning (e.g., fun, attention, rewards, etc.)

# **COACH CREATED CLIMATE**

- ◆ **Emphasize controllable and realistic performance goals such as skill development, fitness improvement, learning, etc.**
- ◆ **Create opportunities for fun and socialization**

# **A FEW PARTING EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS**

- ◆ **One of the strongest predictors of stress in youth sport is the child's sense of how important winning is to adults**
- ◆ **Coaches who became more positive (e.g., encouraging) drastically reduced children's drop out rates and increase their self-esteem**

**Thank You**