

## 12 Coaching Tips of Christmas

So it has been a busy year for everyone and the playing season is finally coming to a close just in time for Christmas dinner. For many coaches you may have been back on the pitches from as early as January of this year and are now feeling the strains of a long season. It is important that you re-energise and re-motivate yourself for the New Year and therefore we are hoping to assist you with our '12 Coaching Tips for Christmas'.

### **1. Remember When**

Take a few minutes to think about how you felt when you were getting ready to start your first season as a coach with your team. Hopefully, if you enjoy this role even a little bit, when you first started it you were quite excited. So think back to that first day. Whether it was a year ago or twenty. Try to remember what it was like the day off that session. Remember the excitement, the anticipation, the desire to be your best and show the team, parents and other mentors how great you were. That is the feeling you're striving to carry with you every day when you head into your training session!

### **2. Ensure that you Set Achievable Goals for the Year**

Regardless of the age group you are coaching it is important that you set goals both for you and your team for the coming year. These goals will keep you motivated and will allow you to strive to achieve these. Short term goals will be established from your long term aims and will provide a bench mark to ensure that you reach your target. When it comes to setting goals and making changes, we often sabotage ourselves by going too big. Now, don't misunderstand me, I'm all for setting big goals and pushing ourselves to exceed our expectations and perceived limits. But sometimes, trying to do too much too soon can backfire and set us up for failure. So set that big goal, but be sure to break it into smaller steps so that you can have a manageable first step to take.

### **3. Get Inspired**

An important thing for anyone to do who wants to be motivated is to find their sources of inspiration. Nobody can remain 100% intrinsically motivated continuously. So figure out what gets you fired up and then be sure your days include a regular dose of those things. Why not buy yourself a great book this Christmas from some of the most influential coaches and read what inspires them. This way you can relax in front of the fire but help in your continuous professional development at the same time. When you properly identify your sources of inspiration then you can be assured in times of doubt and slump that you know how to get going again.

#### **4. Seek Support**

“No man (or woman) is an island” someone once said. You weren’t meant to go through this life alone and so you shouldn’t expect yourself to achieve everything you want without a little help along the way. It can be difficult as a coach with a team as you feel you have to do everything yourself. Do not always think that parents are just there to drop their kids off, many only willing you to ask them to get involved even for the smallest of jobs like helping to fill water bottles for you. Getting the correct support around you will make your job much easier and in turn it will be much more enjoyable and let you focus on your own goals.

#### **5. Set the Precedent on Your First Session Back**

Establishing your expectations from the very beginning is the best way to not only establish your role within the team but to also let your players know what kind of coach you're going to be. This is the same regardless of the age group you are coaching. For example if you want your team to sprint to you and put all footballs at your feet when you blow the whistle then set this out from the start. If they do not complete this send the team back out to their positions and repeat again. This will establish the expected behaviour for your team for the year.

#### **6. Keep your Players Active**

Just by using fast paced drills and keeping things moving, your players will have more fun training more enjoyable and they will get in better condition. Your players should be breathing hard and their hearts should be pumping. It's good for them! Avoid standing in lines as much as possible and keep the ball in their hands as much as possible. Remember you are aiming for a minimum of 200 touches per player per session...that's a lot of ball work and not running around doing laps! Keep this in mind when setting out your plan of sessions for the coming year and keep a copy of all sessions for your records. Buy yourself a new folder and this can be the most important resource for you for the year to track all activities.

#### **7. Keep Things Fun!**

Even at the most important time of the season there will always be time for your players to smile and show they are enjoying being part of your team. Remember the number one reason for players quitting sport is because it is not fun anymore!! This is especially true when there are so many other sports that females can now go and play. It is essential that you are positive as a coach and in turn your players will perform better both for themselves and you. The positivity around training will also assist you as a coach and re-motivate you to want to be involved. With this in mind even if you had a very poor season with your team you need to start the new season from scratch full of optimism and positivity.

## **8. Create a Positive Team Spirit**

You know you have done something right when your team want you to stay involved and even more so they all want to stay involved! As you are aware there is always going to be a certain level of dropout but if you can keep this to a minimal with your team then you are keeping them enthused and you have a high team spirit. Team is like a family, where mutual support and trust are the most important values. Organise team activities both at training and even away from the pitch at times. Can you start your year at a bowling alley or have a fun quiz on the rules? Maybe you want to start with one of your county stars sharing their tips. Easing into the year like this is also less pressure on you the coach and allows you to find your motivation also. You will have the half of success by creating and maintaining a powerful team spirit.

## **9. Believe in What YOU Do.**

Every coach has a philosophy and it is important that you build a culture around this for your players and other members of your management team. Too many coaches have failed because they didn't believe in what they were doing and doubts were easily cast in their minds from people outside. Believe in what you do and the job will be much easier. There are reasons for what you are doing and how you are going to achieve your goals so only you and your team need to understand and the rest of the jigsaw will come into place.

## **10. One New Year's Resolution.... COMMUNICATE.**

If you have only one New Year's Resolution then please revolve it around communication. You can't learn about ideas, attitude or concerns of your team members without constant communication. Use each opportunity to interact with them and you will discover hundreds of new ways of organising your activities more successfully. Players respond best when they understand the reasons behind activities and actions so clear, concise communication can ensure clarity for all. Open communication with your management team, and parents in some cases, will ensure that everyone buys into your leadership. This will ease your life as a coach!

## **11. Get Something for Yourself!**

As a coach there is not a huge amount of equipment required, mainly footballs, bibs and cones but why not treat yourself this Christmas and buy something new to help re-energise you. This might be as simple as a new whistle, a stopwatch, a tactics board or maybe a bit more hi-tech like an iPad to enable you to analyse matches in detail from the side of the pitch. You will be wishing for the new season to come along to show off your new gear and maybe that one added element could make a huge difference in the coming year.

## **12. Do Something for Yourself!**

It is important that you feel fulfilled in your role as a coach and this will ensure that you keep motivated to stay involved. One way to do this is to continue to educate yourself. Why not sign yourself up for an LGFA Coaching Course or Workshop for Christmas?? You can always learn something new. Our FUNdamentals and Level 1 Coaching Courses have recently been revamped and coaches will gain insights into the theoretical underpinnings of successful coaching as well as having the opportunity to coach and learn in a safe environment. We also have coaching workshops through 'Coaching the Keeper' and 'Key2Coaching' which help you see the skills you learned in the FUNdamentals put into practice. The annual GAA Coaching Conference also takes place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January in Croke Park and this year focuses on youth coaching so this is yet another opportunity to enhance your skills. Remember – you can never learn too much!!

So, maybe 'Peil' is the publication you decided to read over Christmas and if it is we hope that some, if not all, of the tips above will help you for the coming year. Coaches play an essential role in recruiting, retaining and rejuvenating our players. The importance of the coach can never be underestimated and we thank you for all your efforts over the year and look forward to yet another season in the New Year where more players will reap the rewards and benefits of your involvement. Enjoy the break!