

The Art of the Modern Coach

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At the 12th UEFA Conference for Coach Educators, held in Barcelona in February 2002, Roy Hodgson gave a presentation on the Art of the Coach and what, in his experience, is needed in the present era. The presentation was informative and amusing and gave the assembled delegates a real insight (no pun intended) into the demands placed on coaches in today's high profile environment. Roy followed this presentation with a practical demonstration given at Barcelona FC's "mini-stadium".

Aspects important to the post. "What a coach of today needs to know." The major areas covered by Roy were,

- 1 General approach
- 2 Players and coaching staff
- 3 The "ideal" coach
- 4 The coach and the club – President, Chairperson, Owner
- 5 The mass media
- 6 Problem areas for the professional coach of today

1 General Approach

Be positive in outlook. Accept that mistakes can be made and learn from them. Develop your ability to manage as this is vital to the post.

2 Players and Coaching Staff

Hand pick your staff if possible. The skill of player selection is vital.

Organisation

Preparation – Daily meetings with detailed preparation.

Quality of technical/tactical work

Have a balanced programme of work to include:

- Attacking and defending
- Taking account of injuries
- Warm-ups and cool-downs are important
- Physical preparation should be in detail
- Maximum training time – 90 minutes
- Enjoyment for senior players comes through mastery. Roy prefers an atmosphere which is enjoyable but not too "jokey"
- The coach must facilitate the correct mood for training

Management skills

The importance of leadership skills – learn and practice them

Project your personality

Discipline – no fines if possible, encourage self-discipline. The need to deal with large "ego's" and players advisors. Attempt to discuss with players what they see as important to their development. Accept that change will occur and adapt to these changes while recognising that your philosophy is vital to a stable environment

3 – The "Ideal" Coach

Coaching and improving players

The importance of good communication skills

Roy makes much use of practical demonstrations ("show the players what you want")

Be able to control your temperament

Incorporate logical thinking

The importance of good organisation

- This will improve your players and your teams
- Work on controlling your emotions because extroverts are often drawn to coaching and people with an extrovert personality are often outwardly over-emotional
- Develop appraisal skills for use during half time and for the week following the game
- Focus on preparing for the next game immediately the current game is over. Look forward to the next challenge.
- There is a need to make a controlled, logical evaluation of the game
- Be a student of the game

Human qualities

Be a role model for your staff

Use sound leadership skills and develop them

"Be yourself"

4 – The Coach and the Club – a relationship

Exercise control wherever possible

Construct a relationship based on mutual appreciation. European players will often go to the President of the club after a confrontation with the coach, therefore the coach and the president must be on the same wavelength.

"Make the president your best friend"

Make the president part of your team

Ensure a two-way flow of information

Encourage joint decision-making

Attempt to teach the president about the intricacies of the game

Sell your ideas

The best type of club will let you manage most things but in today's environment this type of club is hard to find.

5 – The Mass Media

Attempt to communicate by agreement

Try not to use tired old clichés

Often dealing with the media is a case of damage limitation

Accept the demands that the media work to. They have a job to do as well.

Work at your media presentation skills

Try to make their job less difficult

Television is vital to selling yourself

Be thoroughly prepared before your media work

Coaches can learn to communicate from observing effective politicians

Handling the media

Controlling your nerves only comes with practice

Be mentally prepared for unexpected questions

Be aware of the image you are projecting

Let your human qualities shine through

Avoid revenge or spiteful retorts

Be positive, kind, caring and humble.

- You have to bow so low that they can't see the smile on your face

Chinese proverb

- If you walk down the street and a dog barks at you, you don't get on your knees and bark back

Chinese proverb

How to survive in the modern game?

- Treat all your working colleagues with respect and care
- Behave in a professional manner
- Remain polite and courteous
- Devote time to the press
- Remain the same both in victory and defeat (control your emotions)
- Don't expect any rewards, if they come so much the better.

6 - Problem Areas

- Stress and how to manage it
- Trust - who?
- Balance - work and rewards?

Philosophy - keep your work in perspective
Favouritism - attempt to treat all players as individuals with fairness

"Arsene Wenger works hard, watches football videos as part of his relaxation time and keeps to a strict health and fitness regime"

Inconsistency - be honest with yourself

- Transference of anxiety (keep your anxiousness away from the team)
- Keep victory and defeat in proportion - think in the long term
- Media influences - don't ignore them
- Comparisons - don't look back
- Millionaire players - their lifestyle can adversely affect their playing form. Don't

get disappointed with them, rather attempt to support them through these lifestyle problems.

"Never underestimate the ability of the players to judge your character and personality" so be consistent and honest.

Have a clear strategy for re-focussing both after victory and defeat.

This was a fascinating presentation by a coach whose CV covers all aspects of coaching football including top English and European clubs and International Team management. The views from the "inside" show the need for the top coach of today to be a person of many attributes and to be constantly willing to develop these attributes.

The details of Roy's practical demonstrations are outlined below.

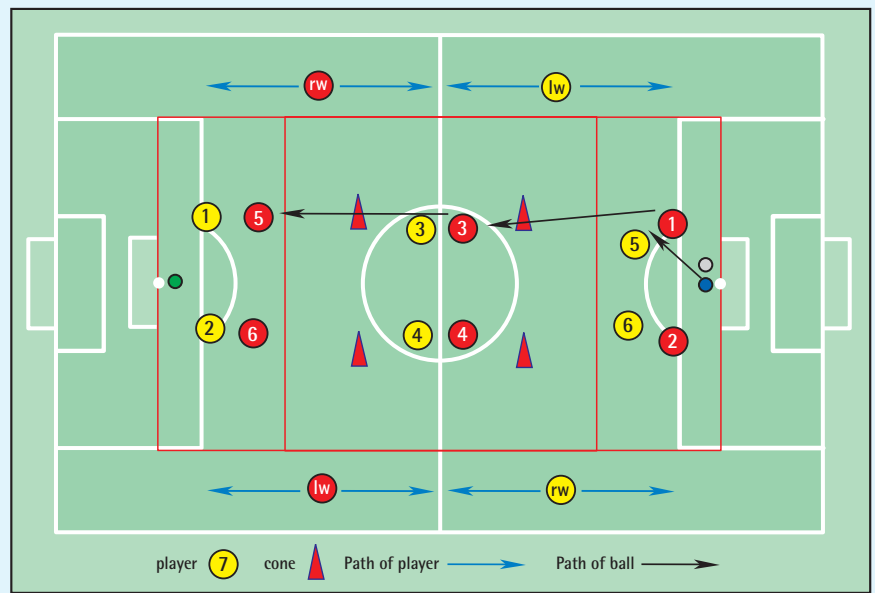
Session 1

Organisation

- GK blue starts practice by playing to red 2. Yellow 5 & 6 are passive
- Red 2 runs ball from zone 2 into central zone
- Red 3 or 4 must start each phase in central coned area. Red 3 or 4 create space to receive ball from red 2. Yellow 3 & 4 are passive
- Red 3 or 4 can then pass to red 5 or 6 who must start in zone 1. The red attackers and midfielders can then combine to attack the yellow's goal
- Red RW and LW can only operate in wide zones and should cross the ball if possible
- Once the red attack has finished the whole sequence begins with the green GK

Technical Points

- Keeping good "shape"
- Timing and content of midfield support for defenders
- Passing options for midfield players
- RW and LW support play and crossing



- Forwards playing close together, using combination plays and attacking crosses
- GK distribution, shot-stopping and dealing with crosses

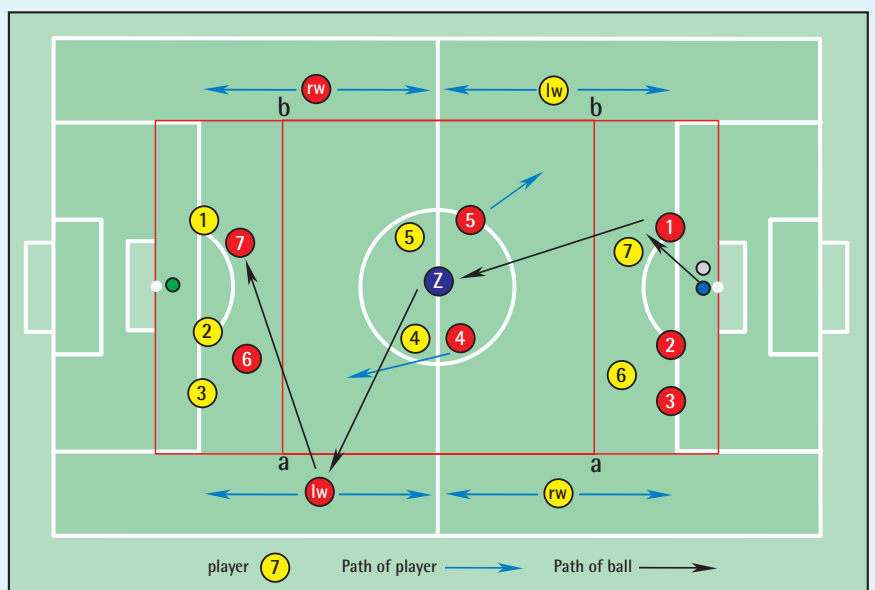
Session 2

Organisation

- As for session 1, although one extra defensive player is added to each team
- A floating player (Z) is also added who plays for whichever team is in possession.
- No zones, except for wide players who can only operate in wide areas. Players can play freely, however line AB denotes a line from which off-side operates
- GK starts practice. 3 defenders play out from defence against two forwards. The forwards can be passive if you so wish
- The midfield players attempt to use decoy/supporting run get one of them free to receive a pass from defence and turn.
- The game continues until the attack is finished.
- The practice is then restarted from the other GK

Technical Points

- Keeping good "shape"
- Defenders supporting and passing playing out from defence
- Creating space in midfield to get a player free of a marker to receive the ball



- Passing/support options for midfield players
- RW and LW support play and crossing
- Forwards playing close together, using combination plays and attacking crosses
- GK distribution, shot-stopping and dealing with crosses