



boulder county **FORCE**

SOCCER CLUB COACHES NEWSLETTER

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A MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD COACH

Coaches please mark your calendars for the following:

Pre-Season Coaches Meeting
Tuesday January 31
7:00 PM
East Boulder Rec Center

Thanks to all the participants in the BC Force Winter Training sessions. Each session, we've had over 100 players participating. Great job!

The start of the spring season will be **Saturday March 4th**. CSYSA will post the spring schedules on its website (csysa.org) around February 18th.

Those BC Force teams which are not playing in the Sun Belt Classic will have the opportunity to participate in the BC Force 'Scrimmage Day' at Pleasant View on **Saturday February 25th**.

A schedule of the day's games and events will go out as soon as we have final confirmation.

Congratulations to our Coaches Of the Year: **Tim Barbour** (Girls U10 Denmark), **Brad Pellman** (Boys U10 Italy), **Ryan Henkel** (Girls U11 Red) and **John Hathaway** (Boys U12 Barca). These coaches will be recognized during the CSYSA Symposium.

I'd like to welcome the following team head coaches to the BC Force. **Justin Taylor** (Boys 16 ManU), **Balen Arenas** (Boys 15 Barca), **Pat Keane** (Boys 11 ManU).

Coaches, with the start of the new season quickly approaching, here are a couple of suggestions to get your players and parents on the same page.

1. You can either send out an e-mail to your team or you can organize a player/parent meeting. Either way, the following information needs to be conveyed. Practice schedule
Start of the first training. Days, times and location of practices.
2. What needs to happen if a player misses a practice. (Phone call or e-mail).
3. Game schedule
Dates, directions, etc.
4. Weather line: 303-651-6036
5. Tournament schedule
Coach decides? Parents decide? Out-of-state travel?
6. Playing time and distribution of it.
7. Coaching philosophy in regards to winning and losing. (Player development)
8. Player expectations
Attendance, practice gear and game gear, behavior, etc.
9. Sideline behavior for parents
10. Transportation/car pool
11. Player evaluations
12. BC Force tryouts
Tryouts take place throughout the year, not just the two days in June.
13. Weekly parental updates?
14. Managerial responsibilities

Be clear and organized in this aspect of team management and it will give you a good start to the season.

Rob's Ramblings

"The Next Level"

This off-season I have had a few changes in my life. My wife had our second child in December and this has given me plenty of time to sit back and think about where we are as a club. Mostly thinking about the girls' side. In 2005 the buzzword was 'Communication'. This year I'd like the buzzword to be 'Culture'. Changing the culture of girls' soccer in Boulder is one of my top goals for this year. As if any goal is this realistic? I think it is. We have a better U10 program than ever before. We have better coaches than we've ever had. The quality of player is also better than ever. So what needs to change? I believe that we need to get our players to 'The Next Level'.

'The Next Level' is like any other slogan. It is a hip saying that a marketing guy came up with to try and get a group of people excited about something. In essence it is another flavor of Kool-Aid. So instead of just throwing it out there I will break it down and show you what we need to do and how we can change it.

When we are talking about change we are really talking about comfort zone. We are talking about getting players out of their comfort zone. There are two sides to this for a soccer player, physical and mental change. Both of these can be affected to get the player to 'the next level'. It is sometimes hard to define these two sides because they overlap in so many ways. You cannot have one without the other. I did not say that it would be easy.

The task of physically getting players to rise to that next level is really the easier of the two issues. When I say physical, I do not mean to run them more or have them do more sit-ups. I am referring to demanding more out of them. Demand perfection! This may sound unrealistic, but it's not. As long as you approach the players in a positive way you can get more out of them. I tell my players that I demand that they play at this level because anything else would be a waste of our time. Get them on board. Keep pushing them. If they can do something perfect acknowledge it and then show them something that they cannot do. Keep getting them out of their comfort zone, but make sure you tell them

'good job' on what they can do. If you leave this out your players will just think that you are a jerk and you have lost them. In training, I am very demanding on the amount of touches they are allowed. If I say we are playing three touch max, then that's what we are playing. It might interrupt the flow of the exercise, but it will also not let the players become sloppy. Keep demanding more from them physically so that they are ready for you to demand more from them mentally.

Playing better mentally can mean a lot of different things. I view it as follows: These players for the most part are academically some of the smartest girls in this area. At some point it seems that they come to soccer practice and they just shut their minds off. This is not acceptable. I feel that for the most part soccer does not come that easy to our players so they need to think even more at practice. Playing better mentally means understanding the game. They need to understand their position and how it relates to the game. They also need to understand why they are doing things. I am so tired of getting players that do certain things on the field and they have no idea why. To me that means your coach either does not understand the game themselves or they think you are not smart enough for them to explain it to you. Any exercise you do needs to have a why and how it relates to the game. The players need to watch more soccer. They need to see the game at a higher level than you play at. We have the high school season coming up. Take your team to a high school game. I even took my U12 girls to a high school boys' game. They need to see 'the next level'.

Next fall I will develop a big sister/little sister program for our club. Then the younger girls can have someone to look up to.

So to wrap things up. Mentally do not let your players just show up for practice. It is not good enough to just show up.

'The Next Level' is an attitude. It is a new way of thinking. It is what needs to happen to our players. We as a club must keep striving to get better. We need to demand more from our players. They can do it! To quote a great man "We cannot be the Boulder Barbie's anymore".

**CSYSA
2006 Tournament Schedule**

February 18-20	Colorado Storm Spring Cup	June 9-11	Prodigy Cup
February 25-26	Sunbelt Classic	June 16-18	Colorado Storm Fireball
May 12-14	Durango Shootout	June 16-18	Rocky Mountain Cup
May 21-22	CSYSA American Cup	June 16-18	Thompson Futbol Cup
May 26-29	Real Colorado Cup	July 17-23	Pikes Peak Invitational
May 27-28	Colorado Showcase	August 4-6	Pride of the Rockies
May 27-28	Glenwood Invitational	August 10-13	Arsenal Cup
May 27-29	Stenger Invitational	August 10-13	Colorado Rush Kickoff
June 2-4	Front Range Invitational	August 11-13	Colorado Storm Classic
June 3-4	Colorado Sting Invitational	August 12-13	Colorado Sting Kickoff
June 8-11	Colorado Rush Open	August 17-20	Broomfield Blast Shoot Out
June 9-11	Arsenal Shootout	August 17-20	Colorado Storm Classic
		October 7-8	Vail Valley Challenge Cup

League Alignment/Boys/Spring 2006

B18 Red	- Elite 1	- Welsch
B17 Red	- Elite 2	- Balboa
B16 Red	- Premier 1	- Lepper
B16 Barca	- Classic	- Angha
B16 ManU	- Classic	- Taylor
B15 Red	- Premier 1	- Kalisher
B15 Barca	- Premier 2	- Arenas
B14 Red	- Premier 2	- Welsch
B14 Barca	- Classic	-
B13 Red	- Premier 1	- Jozwiak
B13 Barca	- Chall 1	- dela Chica
B12 Red	- Premier 1	- Ebersole
B12 Barca	- Classic	- Hathaway
B12 ManU	- Chall 2	- Shapiro
B11 Red	- Premier 1	- Kalisher
B11 Barca	- Premier 2	- Napior
B11 ManU	- Chall 2	- Keane

League Alignment/Girls/Spring 2006

G14 Red	- Premier 1	- Solar
G14 Red II	- Classic	- Sclaro
G14 Tar Heels	- Classic	- Serralheiro
G14 Amazons	- Challenge 1	- Hurley/Orin
G14 Pilots	- Challenge 2	- Kelley

G13 Red	- Challenge 1	- Solar/Hayes
G13 Tar Heels	- Challenge 2	- Patterson
G12 Red	- Premier 2	- Johnson
G12 Tar Heels	- Challenge 2	- Bloomfield
G11 Red	- Premier 2	- Henkel
G11 Tar Heels	- Challenge 1	- Real
G11 Pilots	- Challenge 2	- Preston



**BC Force Calendar
Spring 2006**

January 28-29 CSYSA Symposium
 January 31 Pre-Season Coaches Meeting
 7:00 PM East Boulder
 Rec
 February 1 Start of outdoor practices
 February 10 End of indoor training
 February 16 BC Force AGM
 February 18 Spring schedule will be announced
 February 18-19 Colorado Storm Spring Cup
 February 25 BC Force 'Scrimmage Day'
 at Pleasant View
 February 25-26 Sun Belt Classic
 March 4 Start of CSYSA League games
 March 17 State Cup registration due
 March 17-19 Las Vegas College Showcase
 April 7 Start of BCF Friday Skills Clinics
 April 22 State Cup Games
 April 23 State Cup Games
 April 30 State Cup Games
 May 7 State Cup Quarters
 May 14 State Cup Semis
 May 20 Last scheduled league games
 May 21 State Cup Finals

May 30 BC Force tryouts
 May 31 BC Force tryouts
 June 1 BC Force tryouts
 June 2 BC Force tryouts
 June 4 Last day to play and report make up games
 June 16-18 Rocky Mountain Cup & College Showcase

Focus on Focus

By T. A. Pollock, PhD

Anyone who has competed has experienced the multitude of distractions present in athletic events. Weather, opponents, spectators, field conditions, etc. Another type of distraction can be even more of a performance-killer: confidence-eroding thoughts inside your own head. Despite their best efforts, many competitors can't rid themselves of an internal chorus of "Everything's going wrong today," "I don't belong at this level," or "Everyone here is so much better than I am." As a result of this negative self-talk, they can't perform their best.

Top athletes are skilled and talented, to be sure, but they've also learned how to deal effectively with both external and internal distractions. What do they and other elite athletes know that you may not? In this article, I'll tell you.

What is Focus?

Some people define focus as the determination to pursue a goal through thick and thin, never wavering until it is accomplished. Another definition is the ability to tune out all distractions, both external and internal, while performing, whether in practice or in competition. Let's take a closer look at focus and how you can learn to practice it more effectively.

Focus is a skill that you can learn or improve. As sports psychologists define it, focus is a state of intense concentration and total absorption in successfully completing the task at hand. Focus means having your mind in the right place at the right time. It comes from learning to deal effectively with distractions.

Any external factor can cause you to lose focus while you compete, noise, weather, opponents, spectators. The potential list is long. In contrast, internal distractions are self-

- Broad external
- Narrow external
- Broad internal
- Narrow internal

External focus is defined as paying attention to something in your surroundings. Broad external focus occurs when you scan your

generated. These include negative self-talk, worry and anger, to name a few. The major difference between external and internal distractions is that you usually have little control over most external factors and must learn how to limit or cope with them, while internal distractions, although they're related to personality and learning, are completely under your control and can be eliminated or changed with a little work. If you tend to be fearful, anxious, angry, a perfectionist, or lacking in confidence, you may be more prone to internal distractions. This is because physical and mental relaxation play an important role in the ability to maintain focus.

Right Place, Right Time

To truly focus effectively, your attention can be in only one place at a time. Those who learn to "multi-task" are not really thinking of several things at once but have mastered the ability to shift focus rapidly from topic to topic. Don't believe me? Try this: give someone directions to your house while simultaneously writing the alphabet. If you do each task in chunks, shifting back and forth between talking and writing, it can be done - but only if you focus on only one task at a time. And the most efficient way to complete multiple tasks is still to do each one separately.

The Four Quadrants of Focus

Many athletes find it helpful to assess their focus periodically. When practicing, have someone ask you occasionally to state what you're focused on at that moment. Are you thinking about the game or are your thoughts elsewhere? If your focus is elsewhere, is it on something external, or is it on an internal thought? If it's on a thought, is that thought relevant to the game, or is it unrelated?

Learn to identify the source of your focus. There are four possible "quadrants of focus": environment, as in when you hear a sound and are searching for the source. Narrow external focus occurs when you pay attention to a specific external stimulus, such as the instructions of a teammate or coach.

Internal focus refers to your thoughts and feelings. Broad internal focus occurs when you think, analyze, plan or strategize about

something. Narrow internal focus usually refers to a specific single thought or word cue. The thought may be positive or negative.

Best Focus

Focus is “good” only if it is aimed at the right place at the right time. Every sport has its own best quadrant of focus for attaining peak performance. For example, the sport of soccer requires first a broad external focus, as when a player scans the field; and then a narrowing of external focus, as he shifts his attention to the ball and the current play.

Learn to Change Gears Quickly

Under stress, our ability to shift focus breaks down, and we tend to cling to whichever focus

- *Eye control.* You choose what you look at.
- *Ear control.* You choose what to listen to.
- *Thought control.* You decide what you’re thinking about.

Here are some strategies for putting eye, ear and thought control into practice.

See no evil. Keep your eyes on the game and your immediate surroundings. Develop a “blindness” for anything that could distract you or shake your confidence. Deal with unexpected events as quickly as possible, and then get your eyes and your mind back on your job asap.

Hear no evil. Tune out negative comments from the sidelines. Focus on a positive thought.

Think no evil. Stay away from worry, fear and anger. Negative thinking leads to negative feelings - anxiety, sadness or lack of confidence.

Relaxed and Confident

As you know, when you are tense or stressed, you may lose the ability to shift your focus back to the task at hand. This is why relaxation is a crucial part of focus.

Confidence also contributes to physical and mental relaxation. People with good self-esteem tend to be positive in their approach to life, with higher expectations of success. As a result, they are not afraid to push themselves toward success.

Just relax. Some time-tested methods of

quadrant we find most comfortable. Therefore, that “comfort zone” quadrant has the potential to become an athlete’s Achilles heel. For example, if you are best at analysis and planning, you might get “stuck in your head,” thinking too much. Or if you tend to be hyper-aware of your surroundings, you might have difficulty narrowing your focus to just you.

Learn to Control Your Focus

Everyone can improve his or her ability to focus. The process may take practice, but the components are actually quite simple.

Gain mastery over the following, and you’ve got your focus mostly where you want it:

relaxation training include:

Belly breathing: Learning to breathe correctly by breathing deeply and slowly into your diaphragm instead of your upper chest.

Autogenics: The use of word cues to induce relaxation.

Burn off excess energy: A good warm-up is crucial to performance.

Listen to calming music: A set of headphones and an MP3 player works well.

Limit distractions: Arrange your environment to be as quiet and calming as possible.

Practice visualization: In your mind’s eye, see every detail of how you will your best performance.

Communicate your needs to others: Let your coach, teammates and parents know if you need quiet before competing.

Build yourself up. Here are some hints for confidence-building:

Look the part: Your physical posture can actually influence your degree of confidence. Keep your eyes up, your chin up, and your shoulders back. Act confident and you will feel more confident.

Keep your self-talk positive: Talk to yourself the way your most supportive friend would talk to you.

Surround yourself with positive people: Have people with your best interests at heart around you whenever possible.

List your successes: Write them on an index card, and carry the card in your pocket. When you have self-doubts, pull out the card and

remind yourself of what you can do.

Preparing for Distractions

One final step you can take to improve your ability to focus is to prepare for those situations that could cause you to be distracted.

Create a list of your own personal distractions. Create three columns on a piece of paper. In the first column, list situations that could cause you to lose focus. In the second, list all the ways you can think of to maintain focus if that situation should happen. In the third, describe what you will do to regain focus if you do lose it. Ask yourself: What situations can I

prepare for? What unexpected problems might occur? How have I dealt with these situations in the past? What responses worked? How would I like to respond the next time this situation occurs?

Plan for Success

To focus optimally for any sport, you need to learn to control your eyes, ears and thoughts. As an athlete, learn how to direct your attention to the desired focus. Practice positive self-talk, work on boosting your confidence and learn to relax when the pressure's on.



Beware the Rush to Specialization

By Dan Gould

The question most asked at our Sports Parent Workshop is how parents should deal with pressure on their children to specialize in a sport. In pursuit of scoreboard wins, too many coaches too often tell too many children to drop everything but the ball used in their sport.

When coaches pressure athletes to specialize, parents must weigh the potential costs: dropout, burnout, and overuse injuries. When you factor in poor on-field performance and interpersonal stress resulting from children being pushed against their will, early specialization may well backfire. Most importantly, the fun and opportunity to learn life lessons can get sucked out of the child's experience.

Prior to puberty, generally age 12 and under, the idea is to expose kids to multiple sports. From age 12 through high school, children still should play multiple sports, although cuts, tryouts and greater time commitments mean that kids and parents may not have time to do it all, so the child may have to choose a sport with the parent's guidance. The danger in parents choosing - or in forcing a child into premature specialization, or in acceding to a coach's demand - is "the Tiger Woods/Venus Williams Effect," where you specialize from age four and never try another sport.

Maybe that's not the right sport, and maybe, like 97 % of the rest of the population, your

child is not going to play college sports. It takes 10 years and 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to become proficient, so people start early to get all those hours in. If they watch ESPN, they get the professional view and say, 'We better get started.' But if kids don't fall in love with that sport early, they never get all those hours.

En route to the college scholarship, or any other desired outcome that specialization is supposed to achieve, lie many physical, psychological and emotional pitfalls.

Physically, specializing too early may deprive youth athletes the chance to fully develop their fundamental motor skills, such as hopping, skipping, jumping and running. Also, children are subject to overuse injuries, especially 'growth-plate trauma.' An increase in doctors treating conditions such as stress fractures may be coming from kids doing too much too soon. Running excessive mileage or throwing curve balls can put stress on growth plates.

Psychologically, early specialization may lead to burnout, which is defined as formerly enjoyable activities becoming no longer enjoyable due to chronic stress. The burnout may manifest physically, as well, because children who quit sports may exercise less, or not at all.

When early specialization indicates a parent's overall overemphasis on outcome, kids feel like they have to win to be worthy. Early sports specialization is a big part of the overall pressure

of youth sports. If you push and push you get a lot of baggage where a kid is only as good as his last performance.

Emotionally, the dangers include long-term damage to the parent-child relationship. Parents may get disappointed if kids are no longer interested in the sport they chose, especially if parents have spent a lot of money for the kids to participate.

Another problem is that parents must be careful not to get sucked into equating their worth as parents to their children's performance in sports. When that happens, you start making questionable decisions in the name of your kid.

PCA's Sports Parent Workshop teaches parents how to engage in "Empowering Conversations," which can relieve the stress that often arises when parents want too much for their child to achieve success as an athlete. This and other tools covered in the workshop can help parents help their children continue to enjoy and get the most out of the sports experience.

□

Responsibilities for Our Players

- Players should be on time for practices and games. (45 minutes prior to game time).
- Players should take care of their practice and game gear. (No muddy shoes).
- Players should be respectful towards teammates, coaches, opponents, officials and parents.
- You represent yourself, your team and your club. Show pride.
- Practice the way you would play in a real game.
- Take care of your body. Eat healthy and drink plenty of fluids.
- Do not blame others for mistakes. Work hard to make up for your teammates mistakes.
- Give your best at all times, especially when things are not working out as expected.
- Don't play selfish. Play as a team. Share the ball.
- Practices are mandatory. If you have to miss, you need to let the coach know in advance.
- In general, you earn your playing time through your practice performance.

The 'Common Thread' For Our Teams

- When we step on the field, we play to win the game.
- We win as a team, we lose as a team.
- We encourage our players to play with flair, creativity and confidence.
- Respect, don't fear your opponent.
- Accept the referees' decisions.
- Play within the team concept.
- Communicate with your teammates.
- Coach each other on the field.
- We control the pace of the game.
- When we have the ball, we make the field as big as possible.
- When they have the ball, we make the field as small as possible.
- When we have the ball, look to play forward as quickly as possible, however, if you don't like what you see, keep the ball in the team.
- Keep the team together, don't get too stretched out

- Constructive criticism is part of the development.



Positive Coaching

US Club Soccer and PCA share Goal to Maintain Positive Culture

by Coach Tim Hanley

Attending youth soccer games, you probably have thought to yourself, “I wish that guy would be quiet...” or “She must be embarrassing her child...” Unfortunately, conduct deemed unacceptable in other social contexts is often tolerated, even encouraged, in youth soccer.

As a coach in the professional (San Jose) and collegiate (Stanford) ranks, I frequently interact with youth coaches. Many seem amused when I say that with my youth teams I do not tolerate any behavior that does not Honor the Game. They laugh and suggest that parents and players listen because of my position. I gently remind them that I coached youth soccer for 14 years before coaching professionally. I didn’t have tools laid out; it’s just common sense.

My team had a culture, which basically means :”The Way We Do Things Here.” I behaved in a way that suggested we all should conduct ourselves in this manner. If the volume started to rise on the opposite sideline I would shout, “Hey!” and with my hands facing palms down, I could push the volume back down.

Ironically, for every individual who behaves poorly, there probably are 10 people within earshot who object - but not out loud. Such tolerance lets bad behavior persist. This is a sign of an eroding youth sports culture.

As you establish and maintain your club culture, what types of behavior will your club demand and tolerate? Parents, coaches, administrators and athletes can take two key steps to maintain a positive culture:

- Be proactive. A positive culture doesn’t just happen. We must collectively decide which behaviors meet the club’s goals. Ask and thoroughly answer, “What do we want our club to stand for?”
- Spread the word. After identifying elements of the desired culture, communicate them clearly to all club participants.

The question then is, “What do we do when, despite our best efforts, negative behavior still arises?” The answers:

- Recognize the need for action. Though few of us enjoy confrontation, we must occasionally intervene in a non-confrontational manner.
- Find allies. Negative behavior rarely offends just one person. Build a consensus with other fans, league administrators, and team parents regarding how and when to intervene.
- Rely on stated consequences. Codes of conduct must explicitly state the consequences of unacceptable behavior.
- Prepare in advance. Think ahead of time how you might intervene if the need arises.

In the last few years I have incorporated a number of tools that help me coach youth teams with a great deal less anxiety. I meet with the parents before each season. I spell out our goals, my coaching philosophy, and how we will behave as a group. Again, “The Way We Do Things Here.” I am a huge fan of this concept.

Here's a recent example of handling inappropriate behavior. At December's NCAA College Men's Soccer Final Four in North Carolina, a Maryland supporter was lambasting her own team. After enduring a bit of this screaming, Dominic Kinnear, head coach of San Jose, tapped her on the shoulder and said, "Hey, you know it is not that easy out there, and I am sure those guys are doing the best they can." Just a gentle nudge was all it took in this case, and no, she did not even know who he was!

None of this is easy. Our aversion to confrontation is often healthy. However, if you cherish youth soccer as an activity that is vital to educating your children, ask yourself three questions:

- Is this environment important enough to defend?
- Can we summon the moral courage required to uphold a positive youth soccer culture?
- Can we demand that the majority who behave nobly refuse to tolerate the negative behavior of a few?

The answers must be "Yes, Yes, Yes".