



Royal Wootton Bassett Town F.C.

Coaching Ethos

An FA Charter Standard Community Club
2009 Wiltshire FA Community Club of the Year

Introduction

The debate surrounding player development is one that we in England never seem capable of getting away from. The first port of call whenever the national team gets knocked out of the World Cup or European Championships is always a deep period of introspection looking at the reasons why England have not been able to produce the calibre of player seen playing for the likes of Germany, Spain, Holland or France. Outside of those periods, the number of foreign players gracing the Premier League acts as a constant reminder of this issue.



In recent seasons the FA has started taking steps to address this matter. As parents, grandparents, guardians, coaches or observers of those taking part in youth football, you will have noticed that results are no longer recorded until children reach Under 11s. Additionally, 9-a-side football on smaller pitches has been introduced from Under 11s through to Under 14s.

However, as important as these changes are, the onus is on clubs like our own to affect change in the quality of education given to young footballers.

This is why we have put together this document outlining our 'Coaching Ethos'.

The content of the document is strongly influenced by FA guidelines set out to clubs. It focuses on how we approach player development, how we want to coach our young players and what we expect of our coaches. Importantly, it stresses our commitment to all our youth players, regardless of ability.

Ultimately only a selection of those currently playing in our youth section will go on and have the chance to represent Royal Wootton Bassett Town's first team or Ladies side, let alone have an opportunity to make it in the semi-professional or professional game.

However, we should still strive to give all those who play in our youth section – whatever their ability or ambitions within the game – the best coaching and experiences in football that we are capable of providing. Not only will this help improve their football skills, but it will also help develop their life skills too.

With the calibre of coaches we boast throughout the club following our coaching ethos, that is something I am more than confident we can achieve.

Yours in sport,
Pete Yeardley

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**Our club ethos is a written declaration that sets out how we want to run as a club.
It's simple and concise and can be understood by players, parents and officials.**

- **To provide football to children of all ages and abilities, in a safe and friendly environment.**
- **To deliver age-appropriate coaching to support long-term player development.**
- **To encourage all players to try their best and make the most of their abilities.**
- **To offer a challenging but supportive environment where children can learn from their mistakes without undue pressure and anxiety.**
- **To promote good behaviour and respect for others.**

Coaching Philosophy

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Royal Wootton Bassett Town's coaching philosophy, providing an outline as to how the club wants to coach its young players

- **This section outlines what we expect of our coaches in terms of aims, characteristics and qualifications**

Coaching Aims

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- **Make the game safe, fair and enjoyable**
- **Provide age-appropriate coaching (5-11, 12-16, 17+)**
- **Develop the whole player across all four corners of the FA's LTPD model**
 - **Improve the player's movement skills: agility, balance, coordination and speed (ABCs)**
 - **Develop the player's technical skills**
 - **Improve the player's decision-making capabilities**
 - **Improve youth section members not only as players, but as people by teaching life skills such as cooperation, teamwork, communication and friendships**

Role of the coach

- **Mentor**
 - Listen to players, give advice and extend their thinking
- **Motivator**
 - Set appropriate challenges to inspire the players
- **Friend**
 - Make the environment welcoming and inclusive for all players regardless of background or ability
- **Facilitator**
 - Allow the players to enjoy the game

A good coach...

- Encourages players to try new skills
- Enthuses and motivates players
- Supports and inspires regular, fun practice
- Encourages children to be the best that they can be
- Priorities the unique individuality of the child
- Puts the child and their needs at the centre of all activity

A good coach also...

- Understands issues that impact upon young players' development
- Considers how children learn, as well as issues of self-esteem and motivation
- Communicates using age-appropriate language, style and instructions
- Understands that children are not mini-adults and that developing football players is a long term process
- Fosters a life-long love of the game in all the players they come across

Coaching Qualifications

- **As a minimum, all Royal Wootton Bassett Town coaches will undergo the following training courses:**
 - **FA Level One Award in Coaching Football**
 - **FA Emergency Aid**
 - **FA Safeguarding Children Workshop**
- **Royal Wootton Bassett Town will support all coaches who want to see their coaching education go above and beyond these courses**
- **All our coaches have Enhanced CRB checks**
 - **The FA requires everyone who works or volunteers in children's football and regularly cares for, trains, supervises or is in sole charge of children to apply for an FA CRB Enhanced Disclosure**

Coaches' behaviour

- Coaches are required to strictly follow the FA Respect Code of Conduct
- Players must be free to play during matches, with positive encouragement from players and coaches
- Information from the touchline should be in the form of occasional questions from the coaching staff
- Patrolling the touchline giving continuous shouted instructions must not happen
- Players always try their best, which must be recognised, and will learn from their mistakes without being told they have done wrong

Player Development

Royal Wootton Bassett Town's approach to player development - based on the FA's 'Four Corner' model

- **This section outlines the club's approach to player development in all areas - from technical to physical and psychological to social**

The FA 'Four-Corner' model

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Technical

Unopposed - technique practice

Uneven sides (e.g. 2 v 1, 4 v 2) - skills practice

Even sides (e.g. 3 v 3, 4 v 4, 5 v 5) - game craft, game as the teacher

Target: developing technique

Psychological

Practising, learning, experimenting

Decision making

Learning styles

Relevant to the needs of the player

Target: increasing learning

Physical

Generic movement skills: agility, balance, co-ordination speed

Football functional movement skills:

Receiving the ball, running with the ball, dribbling, turning, kicking and heading

Target: improving movement

Social

Are the players enjoying the work? Are they included in the process? Are they being challenged

Are they supported when necessary (visually, orally, practically)?

Are they given ownership and responsibility?

Target: enjoying football

- **Encourage players to try new skills in practice and work out where they can be used in a game**
- **Where appropriate, practice should replicate the demands of the game, encouraging players to think and make decisions just as they would in a game**
- **Vary the difficulty of training to match the needs of the individual by altering the space, task, equipment or players**
- **Cut down on the 'stop, stand still' phrase and let players experience the flow of the game and practice**

Physical

- **Appropriate movement skills which develop agility, balance, co-ordination and speed should be encouraged through enjoyable games**
- **Through well designed practice, all coaching activities can include physical outcomes**
- **Remember players grow at different rates and may need support and patience as they develop**
- **Children are not mini-adults and shouldn't be subjected to laps of the pitch or press-ups**

Psychological

- **Use different methods of communication to engage with different types of learners**
- **Visual (seeing): tactics boards, posters, diagrams, cue and prompt cards, as well as cones on the pitch**
- **Auditory (hearing): speak with players, ask questions, encourage discussions in groups amongst the players to solve game-related problems**
- **Kinaesthetic (doing): demonstration to the team by the coach or by a player to their teammates**

- **Be a good role model for the players**
- **Create a positive and welcoming environment**
- **Praise players for their effort and endeavour as well as their ability**
- **Manage mistakes to the player's advantage – understand what they were trying to do. Sometimes they will have the right idea but just fail in the execution of the technique or the skill**
- **Make sure football is fun, but with a purpose. Ensure the development of skills and game understanding**

Ability and opinion

- **A player's performance in practice and matches can be influenced by the following factors, all of which need to be considered when forming an opinion of a player's true ability**
 - **Date of birth**
 - **Body type, adolescent growth spurt, physical maturity**
 - **Psychological maturity, social maturity**
 - **Previous experience, opposition, own team's playing standards, position suitability, instructions given to the player, recent playing activity**

Growth and maturation

- **Appreciate that all players are growing and maturing at different rates**
- **Be patient, supportive and encouraging with ALL the players in your squad**
- **Understand that all some players need is 'time'**
- **Don't mistake levels of physical maturity for maturity in other areas**
- **Don't assume that the current success of a player is an indicator of on-going proficiency**
- **Don't over-burden the players that represent the extreme early or late developer**

Relative age effect

- **Recruitment trends in professional academies show a bias towards players born between September-December, making them the older players in their age group**
- **Design and deliver challenges which offset the relative age effect**
 - **Consider changing the pitch size, the size of the ball, rules of the practice/game, the game format**
 - **Consider grouping bigger and physically developed players to compete against each other in practice**

Minimising distraction

- **By planning ahead the coach can create an environment that minimises distractions and helps players to stay 'on-task' for longer**
 - **Organise sessions that are interesting, challenging, varied and fun**
 - **Avoid players being stood in line or asking them to wait around for too long without a focus**
 - **Plan arrival activities so players can begin practising as soon as they arrive**

Managing behaviour

- **Outline rights and responsibilities to players. Refer to FA Respect Codes of Conduct**
- **Praise and reward good behaviour**
- **If you have to intervene, do so in a calm and controlled manner**
- **If boundaries are consistently broken then there should be a consequence**
- **As a coach, remember the only person's behaviour you can control is your own, so set a good example**

Formats of the game

- **Young players should be exposed to a variety of games they can actually play rather than struggling to understand a game created for adults**
- **This means small-sided games - 5 v 5 for under 7s and 8s; 7 v 7 for under 9s and 10s; 9 v 9 for under 11s, 12s, 13s and 14s - on smaller pitches with smaller goals**
 - **Small-sided games increase the number of touches each player receives**
 - **Smaller pitches increase the involvement of all players in the game**
 - **Smaller goals ensure that young goalkeepers are not forced to defend adult sized goals**
- **This also means games where the score is not recorded for under 7s through to under 10s**
 - **Learning, development and enjoyment of the game are the three most important aims**

Coaching recommendations for players age 5 - 11

Royal Wootton Bassett Town's recommendations for coaching players aged 5 - 11

- **Creating a positive and enjoyable learning environment which prioritises skill development, decision-making, fundamental movement skills and experimentation is crucial for young players in this age-group who are learning how to play**
- **Coaches are highly encouraged to use the drills outlined in the 'Coach's Corner' section of the club's website**
 - **This is a free resource available to all coaches within the club**
 - **For those aged 5 - 11 there are 36 age-specific drills with videos and PDF instructions available to download**

Positive learning environment

- Encourage players to be creative and take considered risks in both practice and games
- Remember – mistakes do happen
- Let players make some of the decisions
- Let them know that their opinions count too
- Create opportunities for players to explore, question and foster their natural curiosity and imagination
- Allow all players to experience success

Let the players play

- All children should be given equal playing time on match-day wherever and whenever possible
- Help players develop their game-understanding by rotating positions during practice and games
- Ensure players are given the chance to play a 'game' during every practice session
- Don't let the children's arena become dominated by adults

Skill development and decision-making

- Practice should replicate the demands of the 'game' as much as possible. Give lots of opportunities to practice different aspects of the game (shooting, dribbling, tackling, passing, goalkeeping), in context
- Goals should be used in practice as often as possible to help players' enjoyment and motivation
- Small-sided games on appropriate sized pitches provide young players with opposition, decision-making and challenge, all of which help their skill development

Themed training sessions

- **Try and link the different parts of a training session together**
- **For example:**
 - **Warm-up: Players work in twos passing through a variety of different sized gates, using different techniques and surfaces of the foot**
 - **Skill development: Play a small-sided possession game (e.g. 3v1 or 4v2) on appropriate sized pitch**
 - **Game: Any 4v4 game with a focus on passing or a through-the-thirds game**

Appropriate challenges

- **Set challenges in practice sessions, e.g. use your weaker foot when you next can in practice**
- **Reinforce the learning focus from practice sessions on match day**
- **Set players specific challenges that link to the theme of a recent practice session, which can be discussed at half-time and after the game**
- **During practice sessions try to 'match' players up in lots of different ways in order to meet their individual needs**

Develop fundamental movement skills

- **Between the ages of 5-11 players have a 'window of opportunity' to develop their agility, balance, co-ordination and speed (ABCs)**
- **Coaches should be creative in their practice design and build in a physical benefit for the players**
- **For example, the following games can be incorporated into practice:**
 - **Tag games**
 - **Running and dodging**
 - **Throwing and catching**
 - **Jumping and balancing**

Using a variety of interventions

- Young players don't enjoy being shouted at, having their mistakes highlighted or having to stop playing the game to listen to the coach talk at length
- A variety of coaching methods should be used to help players learn the game
- For example:
 - Command (directive)
 - Question and answer
 - Observation and feedback
 - Guided discovery
 - Trial and error

Coaching method: Five Pillars

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Coaching methodology	Command (directive)	Question and answer	Observation and feedback	Guided discovery	Trial and error
Player / coach interventions	Coach tells and shows required solution	Coach leads with question to gain answer from players	Coach and players observe	Coach asks a question or issues a challenge	Players and/or coach decide on challenge
Example	"I want you to...!"	"Can you tell me what you can do here?"	"Let's watch this!"	"Can you show me...?"	"Try for yourself...!"
Description	Coach determines the chosen outcomes in practice	Coach poses questions and players offer verbal solution to challenge	Players and coach observe and discuss feedback	Coach prompts and players offer visual demonstration of their personal solution	Players are encouraged to find solutions with minimal support from coach

Use small-sided games

- **Players should experience a variety of formats of the game, played on appropriately sized pitches**
- **Football is essentially a series of different scenarios (1v1, 2v1, 1v2, 3v2 etc.) and players should experience a variety of these game-like challenges during practice sessions**
- **Coaches should use uneven sides in practice as a tool to challenge the players**

Appreciate what it's like to be young

- What the game of football 'looks' like for a group of 7 and 8 year olds will be significantly different to the game played by older players and adults
- If a coach tries to 'fast-forward' young players to this level too quickly, important stages of development may be missed
- Young players shouldn't be benchmarked against adult professional players

Consider young players' self-esteem

- Coaches should consider how their decisions will impact upon a young player's self-esteem, motivation and enjoyment of the game
- For example, what would it feel like to be repeatedly used as a substitute?
- Coaches should praise effort and positive behaviour, as well as good play

Things to avoid

- **Don't impose unrealistic adult expectations on young players**
- **Don't be so intent on winning games that young players miss out on the opportunities to learn and fall in love with the game**
- **Don't apply 'out-dated' coaching methods with young players**
- **Avoid children standing in lines or waiting around**

Coaching recommendations for players age 12 - 18

Royal Wootton Bassett Town's recommendations for coaching players aged 12 - 18

- Coaches should continue to prioritise a positive learning environment (as recommended in the 5 - 11 section), ensuring methods and content are made appropriate to the age and ability of the players in this age-range
- Coaches are highly encouraged to use the drills outlined in the 'Coach's Corner' section of the club's website
 - This is a free resource available to all coaches within the club
 - For both ages 12 - 16 and age 17+ there are 29 age-specific drills with videos and PDF instructions available to download

Ensure training sessions are relevant and realistic

- **Realistic passing, receiving and possession practices which create appropriate pressure, interference and distraction will help young players develop their awareness and game understanding**
- **Become more effective 'off the ball'. Develop an understanding of movement to support team-mates and how to create and exploit space**
- **Develop scanning, predicting and assessing skills to form a 'picture' before receiving the ball**

Develop basic tactical understanding

- **Introduce players to the 6 phases of the game**
 - **Attacking when opponents are 'in balance'**
 - **Attacking when opponents are 'out of balance'**
 - **Defensive play whilst 'in balance'**
 - **Defensive play whilst 'out of balance'**
 - **The finishing phase**
 - **Goalkeeping**

Introduce some position-specific training sessions

- As players get older they will begin to recognise the significance of practice sessions to their role within the team
- Some specific positional practices should be introduced as appropriate
- This should be balanced with experience playing and practising in different positions

Encourage players to be self-reflective

- **Players should be encouraged to reflect on their effectiveness in practice and games, and challenged to think about how they may improve next time**
- **This process may be done individually, in small groups or collectively**
- **It may be enhanced if the team/player and the coach discuss realistic and achievable challenges and goals to work towards**

Encourage creativity

- **Coaches should continue to encourage players in this age group to be creative by designing challenging practice sessions**
- **Master the skill of posing effective questions to develop the players' active involvement in the training and learning process**
- **Encourage players to think, examine, judge and evaluate to find their own solutions**

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