

CREATIVE COACHING - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CAN'T USE A FOOTBALL GROUND?

Many a coach will relate to the situation when the ground on which they train is not available due to inclement weather, works on the surface, restorative work on the surface or the advent of drought conditions as prevail currently in Victoria and other parts of the country.

The obligation of coaches to make their training and playing venues safe for their players is obvious and is a legal obligation of such a role.

The first thing the coach must understand that many of the clubs will be in the same position so the need to get up to speed with skills and fitness will be a problem for everyone- in other words don't panic about falling behind!

If the availability of grounds is at a premium or absent here are a few suggestions on how "Creative Coaches" can make the most of the situation:

1. **Cross training:** includes: use of different playing surfaces-
 - a. Outdoor synthetic hockey courts,
 - b. Open parklands (check the surface and area for any hazards),
 - c. School facilities after consultation with school (great way to galvanise a relationship with the local school),
 - d. Indoor gymnasium for skill sessions,
 - e. Parklands for Fartlek training,
 - f. Beaches, swimming pools etc.
 - g. Consider athletics tracks and conduct club based competitions including athletic events and novelty events.
2. **Conducting triathlons or bike/ water based activities-** this will supplement conditioning for the older players and is beneficial for aerobic fitness and minimizes pounding on the muscles and joints.
3. **Football Education** – set aside sessions to teach players about:
 - ❖ Nutrition,
 - ❖ Healthy practices with alcohol and other social drugs.
 - ❖ Invite presenters to "talk footy" or who specialize in injury treatment e.g. the local physio etc.
 - ❖ Teach players recovery techniques including self massage, first aid, self injury treatment and rehabilitation.

Its fair to say the season comes upon us so quickly we don't have time to cover off on these very important "football life" skills and when the season is on we are too busy managing the running of the team and its performance.

4. **Skill correction work** which doesn't take too much physical exertion and has very little time devoted to it during the year or pre-season for that matter. This could include:
 - ❖ teaching correct tackling, kicking, running form, marking and all the other skills of our game without having to use a football ground for extended activities- small parkland spaces or indoor courts may be more than adequate.
5. **Small sided games and Game Sense** activities can be created in smaller spaces not needing football ground or grass surfaces which accentuate the conditioning demands and game paced skill demands of the game but with less space, non conventional space and less players per game, but more small games being played.
6. **Set Plays and tactics** rehearsal for the older groups. Again what a great opportunity to walk through set ups including kick outs, clearances entries inside 50 and rebounds etc. The areas need here could be any other than a football ground.
7. **Umpire relationship and Rules appreciation:**
 - ❖ Invite the local umpiring fraternity to join the game sense sessions and umpire some of the games.
 - ❖ The ability to have then relate to your players and club will be invaluable and harbour mutual respect.
 - ❖ A great way to help junior umpires get more experience and feel more comfortable in their environment than by umpiring your Game Sense or small sided games.
 - ❖ Umpires could stay around and help players understand the interpretation of rules etc.
8. **Create relationships with other sports:** by:
 - ❖ Training with the local basketball club, hockey club etc will also assist players in developing conditioning and skill related demands.
 - ❖ The idea of playing Running Golf at Golf courses assists in aerobic fitness and fun. In essence, running golf is a round of golf where all players try to play 9 holes in the quickest time and with as least number of strokes as possible and must run/stride between shots.
 - ❖ In the summer months, join up with the local surf life saving club and do some training with them- of course this pre supposes your players can access the beach and are water safe!

There is no reason why a coach should be left high and dry (pardon the pun) if he or she gives some creative thought to their predicament.

Football Victoria has resources that can assist in the implementation of these alternatives by visiting our website www.aflvic.com.au and clicking on DEVELOPMENT and heading for the RESOURCES section.

I always believe there are no such things as problems, only opportunities in work clothes.