

"Back of the Net" - Newsletter

The "Beautiful Game"

Hi Everyone,

As the Director of Coaching for CJSA, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the new website, and also to the newly featured newsletter, "Back of the Net".

Soccer is known as the "beautiful game", and it should be the responsibility of coaches, players, parents and administrators to ensure that this statement remains intact.

For me personally, there are many reasons why soccer is known as the "beautiful game". Growing up as a young boy in England, there was only one sport for me....soccer, better known in Europe and other nations as football. My parents never introduced me to soccer.....I found it, I found a love for a game that will stay with me forever.

From as young an age that I can remember, all I ever did was play soccer. Pick-up games with my older brother and our friends, mixed ages, mixed abilities and kids that supported many different teams with a passion. When we played we would take the names of our favorite players, George Best, Pele', Eusebio, Bobby Charlton, Jimmy Greaves, Gordon Banks, Johan Cruyff, Gerd Muller, players of years past whose names will remain etched into the history of the game, and we would try to emulate them.....I know.....some of you will be asking who are these players? I also know that for some of you I am showing my age!!

Because we would change the teams as frequently as possible to make the games more interesting, every game became different for many reasons. George Best and Johann Cruyff on the same team.....awesome!!! Imaginations ran wild, if a game got a little lopsided we would play it out and then make some transfers.....George Best would get traded for Pele' and we would start again!!!

What is remarkable is how the "beautiful game" can bring people together, people from all walks of life, different nationalities, different cultures, different professions. Every individual is unique, they have their own characteristics and beliefs, but soccer can unite them and in doing so create friendships and bonds that can last a lifetime.

As I reflect upon the impact that soccer has had on my life, I remember the years that I have played, and the years that I have coached. I remember all of the lessons that not only the game, but the people around me within the game have taught me. Important life lessons that helped mold me and strengthen me. Lessons that helped form my character, morals, my qualities and work ethic. I remember the good, the bad, the tears and the laughter. I remember the friends that I have made, the friends that I have, and the cherished memories of friends that I have lost.

Coaching youth soccer players takes patience, perseverance and an understanding of each player's needs in order to help improve them. There are many important factors that we need to take into consideration. Yes, we need to teach the fundamentals of the game, the technical, tactical, physical and psychological aspects, but we also need to teach much more. Yes, winning and losing are integral parts within the game, but we should not use results as the only measure of success.

When we coach the games, instead of looking at the result as the measuring stick, look at the manner in which your team played. Losing does not necessarily correlate to playing bad and winning does not mean that you may have played well. To keep the "beautiful game" alive we should allow the kids to play in a manner that will promote attractive soccer, creating individual flair, meaningful and crisp passing, playing out of the back if and when applicable. Letting them learn from their decisions without the fear of reprisal from the coach.

We need to be ambassadors, role models, teachers, facilitators, mentors, coaches, passionate, knowledgeable, caring.....along with the many other qualities required of a youth coach. However, it is vitally important that we also need to remember how to instill a love and passion for the game for our players, and one that will stay with them for as long as possible!!

With the Holiday season approaching, I remember the Christmas mornings when I would run down stairs to see if my wish list had been fulfilled. I would look under the tree, over the years my eyes had been trained for this moment!!! Scanning the wrapped goodies I would look to see if I could locate the shape of a brand new replica kit, maybe the new warm up suit I had wanted, ooh a large box.....it must be the latest edition of Subbuteo, maybe I did get the newest high-tech Stylo soccer cleats signed by George Best. Yes, now I am really showing my age!!!!

This year I am going to keep it simple.....just one present.....please Santa, just do all you can to help keep the "beautiful game" alive.

What does the game of soccer mean to you?

Email your thoughts to doc@cjsa.org

A safe and Happy Holiday to all and I hope to see you on the touchline!!!!!!

Best,

Shaun Bailey,

Director of Coaching,

Connecticut Junior Soccer Association