

Pat Michels

Girls 11U - Girl Power and Ninjas

Born and raised in Erlanger, KY Pat played soccer at Lloyd Memorial back in the early 80's. His Lloyd side was one of the first High School teams in NKY so while they loved playing they were probably terrible. After graduating from Lloyd Pat was away from the game until his first child began playing in 2004. At that point Pat began volunteering as a coach with the recreational club his daughter was playing in, NKYA, and he also got back into playing himself. By 2010 "Coach Pat" was working with more than a couple of rec teams with NKYA and he was also volunteering as the league administrator for the club.

As he continued to coach Pat became more and more interested in the process of coaching and which approaches worked best in teaching kids the game. Becoming a student of the game, Pat began reading about coaching, watching coaching videos online and watching games on TV or live as often as possible. In 2012 Coach Pat earned the USSF "E" coaching license. That same year he began coaching two U9 Academy teams with NKY Legends SC. Pat continued coaching with Legends through the spring of 2016, working with multiple academy and select teams during that period and also running various skills clinics and camps for the club.

After leaving Legends to help form NKY Fusion FC at the end of the 2016 spring season Coach Pat took the first half of the USSF "D" license course and is working to complete all course work by the end of the spring 2017 season.

Here are five principles that Coach Pat has adopted for himself during his twelve years of coaching youth soccer.

1) Be Patient. Obviously I try to be patient myself as a coach but I'm also trying to instill that willingness to be patient in the players and in their parents. Learning a new skill can take time and many repetitions and a lot of failures. It can be a struggle. I try to show my players and their parents through my words, my attitude and my body language that I am patient and will work with them for as long as it takes. I try to impress upon them that struggle is just part of the work and they shouldn't waste time with any unrealistic expectations as to how fast they can master something or make any unfounded assumptions about what their "natural abilities" might be just because it's taking a little while to learn a new skill. Stay focused and be patient with yourself and remember why you're working on developing new skills...so you can take them with you onto the pitch for games.

2) Nothing is obvious. Take as much time as necessary to teach a skill and don't hesitate to break it down into its smaller parts. Don't assume one way of demonstrating a skill will work with every player. Observe the players closely and coach to their individual strengths while challenging them to be aware of their own limits so they can work to expand their abilities

3) Keep it simple. The primary focus has always got to be on skill development with much less time spent on development of tactical understanding of the game. Teach the kids how to control the ball first then put them in game situations and with a little guidance they'll start getting the foundations of tactical understanding on their own. Tactics at its simplest means finding solutions to problems and in

most situations on the soccer pitch being able to control the ball is an indispensable problem-solving skill. With the younger age groups, U6 through U8, I generally avoid any sorts of passing drills or any other drills that focus on tactics in the broader sense of cooperative play. In my training sessions for young players we'll always favor practice work that gives each individual lots of repeated touches on the ball and opportunities to develop confident ball control.

4) Teach them to be unafraid of situational failures. If we spend time in practice learning a new deceptive move or any other ball control skill I want my players to feel free to try it in the very next game without worrying about when it is the right time to use it or even whether it will work. Only game experience can teach them where and when to use particular skills so I encourage them to just go into the competition committed to trying out whatever they've been working on in training.

5) Keep the focus on playing. A lot of what they need to learn as players they must learn through game experience so I try to keep a balance in my practices between focused technical work and teaching through playing games. We spend half of our total training time each week learning new skills and honing our proficiency with our total skill "tool kit" but the other half of our training time will always be taken up with games of some sort; 1v1, 3v3 or even full sided scrimmages when we can manage it. When we get into these "free play" situations at training I try to strictly limit the amount of coaching I do and hopefully at most training sessions the kids will generally self-manage whatever game they're playing. I'm likely to just be on the sideline nagging them with calls of "use your skills!"

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