



Am I Coaching Too Much During Game Action?

This resource stems from a question submitted to the Ask PCA blog. Responses come from our experts including PCA Trainers, who lead live group workshops for coaches, parents, administrators and student-athletes.

“Coaching U-8 soccer, we direct players a lot on the field (tell them where to go, praise them, provide feedback, etc.). Should we be that verbal during the game, or just talk with players on the sideline and at the half? I want to encourage, but not distract them, and I want them to have fun.”

PCA Response by Molly Hellerman, PCA Trainer–San Francisco

Coaching the younger age groups can be challenging, but by working to create a positive experience for your team, you can have a tremendous impact on their future sport trajectory! You hit the nail on the head by suggesting that your number-one goal was to make sure that they are having fun.

Any player will tell you that constant chatter from a coach is never fun (regardless of the age). But positive, encouraging effort-based instructive comments definitely increase the enjoyment of the game. So, while the frequency and timing of your comments during the game ultimately depend on your coaching style, I would encourage your coaching from the sidelines to focus on truthful and specific comments.

In particular, try to tie the comments to effort-based skills you worked on during practice. (“Juan, way to stay wide! Just like we’ve been working on!”)

These types of comments help fill your players’ Emotional Tanks and give them a sense of control in the game. When players’ tanks are full, they can take in more information, and when they feel as though they are in control, they work harder and stick with it longer...because they are having fun!

PCA Trainer Molly Hellerman played collegiate soccer and then went on to play in the W-League (US) and in the Premier League (UK). Over the last 15+ years she has coached the full spectrum of players ranging from first time youth soccer developmental programs through D1 collegiate teams.

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