



Pike Soccer Club/Indy Burn Vision Statement

Adopted from Sam Snow, US Youth Soccer Coaching Education Department

How do we measure success?

Indeed how do we measure player development? Too often in America a professional sport model is used in measuring youth sports success. Youth soccer is not immune to this misapplied standard. For soccer the situation is made worse by a desire of many adults to use measuring tools from other sports. In fact it is maddening to many adults that soccer is not as black and white as with some sports in judging successful play. Many team sports played in our nation are statistically driven and coach centered. Soccer is neither of those! Indeed just like the Laws of the Game our sport has many shades of grey within it.

In many sports the coach makes crucial decisions during the competition. In soccer, players make the primary decisions during the match. The coach's decisions are of secondary importance. The ego-centric personality will find coaching soccer troublesome. The other significant group of adults at a youth soccer match is parents. They too often have their view of the match colored by the professional model and by a view of "coaching" that is portrayed in the media. Although it is changing, the majority of parents watching their kids play soccer have never played the game. In fact the statistics show that most of today's parents never played any team sport. So their only exposure on how to measure sporting success is gleaned from the sports media. The sports media predominately report on adult teams at the college and professional levels. These adult measurements of team performance should not and cannot be applied to youth sports.

Alright fine you say. So how do we measure success? How do parents know if the team coach is doing a good job of teaching soccer to the players? How does the novice coach know if the kids are growing within the game? Well let's use the facts, from a study by the Youth Sports Institute, of what players want from their sports experience as a way to measure success.

"TRUTHS" about children and sports

- ☺ Fun is pivotal -if it's not "fun," young people won't play a sport
- ☺ Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun -it is more important than winning even among the best athletes
- ☺ The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to self-knowledge
- ☺ Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self-competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others) ¹

During childhood, allow the kids to have a good time playing the game while instilling the passion to love playing soccer on their own. Only a passion for the game can lead to success. "Success is something players take ownership of and in time it becomes personally meaningful. Success is a process, not a product. The process of doing one's best is the key to success. The determining criterion of success is whether a player gave his or her best that day. Doing one's best is the most important statement a player can make about the importance of an activity and the meaning it has. With years of experience comes self-knowledge and self-awareness. So players learn over time what it means to do your best, to give 100%." ²

“Winning isn’t everything, but trying to is!”

Rainer Martens, sports psychologist

Motives for Participation in Youth Sport

Reasons for Participating in Non-school Sports (study of 3,900 7th to 12th graders)

Boys

- 1 To have fun
- 2 To do something I’m good at
- 3 To improve my skills
- 4 For the excitement of competition
- 5 To stay in shape
- 6 For the challenge of competition
- 7 To get exercise
- 8 To learn new skills
- 9 To play as part of a team
- 10 To go to a higher level of competition

Girls

1. To have fun
2. To stay in shape
3. To get exercise
4. To improve my skills
5. To do something I am good at
6. To learn new skills
7. For the excitement of competition
8. To play as part of a team
9. To make new friends
10. For the challenge of competition ³

Truths & Motives for Participation

- 1 The motive to have fun and to enjoy participating in sport.
- 2 The motive to learn new skills and to improve on existing sports skills.
- 3 The motive to become physically fit and to enjoy good health
- 4 The motive to enjoy the challenge and excitement of sports participation and competition.
- 5 The motive to enjoy a team atmosphere and to be with friends. ⁴

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS

Remember the “truths” and talk to your children with them in mind. After a game, ask questions about “fun,” “skill improvement,” “learning experiences” and “having a good time with friends.”

See yourself as part of the team and supportive of the coach; avoid setting up a conflict in your child’s mind between his or her parents and coaches.

Develop perspective: remember what you could do at your children’s ages; don’t judge them by what you can do now. Kids will not become great players overnight.

Develop an understanding of what your children want from sports—not all children want the same things.

Note: winning alone is not a motive for participation by boys and girls.

“We are asking our players to compete before they have learned how to play.”

-Jay Miller, U17 Men’s National Team coach 2001

In general the benefits of youth sports for children include character building, dealing with obstacles, dealing with losing, humility in winning, dealing with competition, leadership growth opportunities, cooperative skills, social skills and so on. We employ soccer to develop well adjusted, good citizens. At Pike Soccer Club Indy Burn, “We Teach More Than Just The Game.”

Basic Urges of Children

Movement
Success and Approval
Peer Acceptance and Social Competence
Cooperation and Competition
Physical Fitness and Attractiveness
Adventure
Creative Satisfaction
Rhythmic Expression
To Know

Measurements of Success in Youth Soccer

Retention is recognized as also a short term measure of success in youth soccer and developing well adjusted citizens is another long term measure of success in youth sports. In a 2007 US Youth Soccer survey 96% of parents responded that one of the benefits they desire for youth soccer to provide to their child is fun. 97% of the parents surveyed feel the reason their child participates in youth soccer is fun.

Short-Term

FUN ... do the players smile and laugh? Do the players look forward to playing? The first question from the player's family should be, "Did you have fun today?"

Fair Play ... does a player demonstrate by words and actions a sense of sportsmanship?

Laws of the Game ... do the players know and follow the rules of soccer?

Health and Fitness ... are the players physically fit enough to meet the fitness demands of the game? Are they developing good nutrition and hydration habits befitting an athlete?

Friendships ... are the players creating new friends within the team and with players from other teams?

Skills ... are the players demonstrating a growing number of ball skills and are they gradually becoming more proficient in those skills?

Long-Term

Commitment ... how do the players answer when asked at the end of a game, "Did you try your best?"

Roles in the Team ... more important than learning a position, are the players learning about positioning? Knowing where the right back or the center forward spot is on the field is important, yet learning how to move tactically within the game is far more important. Do all of the players get exposed to playing all of the positions?

Leadership ... are players being given the opportunity to take on leader roles and responsibilities? Are the coaches and team managers teaching leadership?

Tactics ... are the players experimenting with new tactics in matches? The coaches must teach new tactics to the players in training sessions and then allow them to try out the tactics in a match, regardless of how that might affect the outcome!

Retention ... do the players come back year after year?

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Talk positively with their children before and after activity
- Supply transport
- Assist with supervision
- Officiate games
- Help with administration
- Assist with the organization of special events

Statistics, won-loss-tie records, goals for/goals against, saves, number of corner kicks and so on are straight forward ways to measure what happened in a game. Those unfamiliar with soccer find the use of those measurements comforting as they help them define a sport they find confusing. Yet those measurements fail to show the complete picture of a random skill, open-ended, transitional sport with no timeouts. There is an immeasurable organized chaos factor in soccer.

The bottom line is that statistics in soccer are largely meaningless. From this thought springs the reality that soccer perhaps is the cruelest of team sports. It may be the only team sport where a team could have the majority of ball possession, outshoot the other team and still lose the match. If you have played soccer long enough you have been the team that was much better than the opposition and lost. You have also been the team that was outplayed by the opposition and won. The won-loss record does not accurately show how the game was played, how the players performed or how well the coach prepared the team to play the game.

We now know that a long-term commitment to practice and training is required to produce elite players in all sports.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Stage 1 – THE FUNDAMENTAL STAGE

Age: 6-9

Objective: Learn all fundamental movement skills (build overall motor skills)

Stage 2 – THE LEARNING TO TRAIN STAGE

Age: 8-12

Objective: Learn all fundamental soccer skills (build overall sports skills)

Stage 3 – THE TRAINING TO TRAIN STAGE

Age: 11-16

Objectives: Build the aerobic base, build strength towards the end of the phase and further develop sport-specific skills (build the “engine” and consolidate soccer specific skills)

Stage 4 – THE TRAINING TO COMPETE STAGE

Age: 15-18

Objectives: optimize fitness preparation and sport, individual and position-specific skills as well as performance (optimize “engine”, skills and performance)

Stage 5 – THE TRAINING TO WIN STAGE

Age: 17 and older

Objectives: Maximize fitness preparation and sport, individual and position specific skills as well as performance (maximize “engine”, skills and performance)

Stage 6 – THE RETIREMENT / RETENTION STAGE

Objectives: retain players for coaching, administration, officials, etc.

It is certainly the stance of US Youth Soccer to focus more on match performance than outcome; yet this is not to say that players should not strive to win. There’s nothing wrong with winning! Trying to win is desirable and praiseworthy. It means trying your best. Indeed trying to play your best (match performance) often leads to winning. But not always!

Remember the outcome of the game is not a reason why kids play! Players and coaches should diligently work to improve their performance. This is the drive for excellence as opposed to success.

Success does not breed success; it breeds failure. It is failure, which breeds success. If that advice seems patently absurd, think about the careers of many famous winners:

We don't advocate for a moment that failure ought to be the objective of any endeavor. Instead, we advocate learning. We want American players to be leaders and not look for someone to blame when mistakes are made while expanding their soccer horizons. Instead ask, "What can be learned from the experience?"

Trying new ball skills or new tactics, a new set play or a new formation will cause errors during matches. Yet if the players do not feel they are allowed to try out these new talents in a match when will those talents become a part of their game? The sounds coming from the spectators at a youth match should be cheers for when a player tries something new. Parents can measure their child's success in soccer by the improving athletic ability of their child, by the growing confidence and self-reliance of the player, by the emergence of refined ball skills, by the opportunity afforded by the coach to play in different positions on the team, by the taking on of leadership and responsibility, by the demonstration of fair play and by the smiles. The parents will know that there is a chance for success when they see the players and coaches striving for excellence!

"There are many people, particularly in sports who think that success and excellence are the same thing and they are not the same thing. Excellence is something that is lasting and dependable and largely within a person's control. In contrast, success is perishable and is often outside our control... If you strive for excellence, you will probably be successful eventually... people who put excellence in first place have the patience to end up with success... An additional burden for the victim of the success mentality is that he is threatened by the success of others and resents real excellence. In contrast, the person fascinated by quality is excited when he sees it in others."

- Joe Paterno – Penn State football coach – 1990

Striving to improve individual, group and team performance is more important at the youth level than the outcome. Simultaneously players should play to win. Coaches should teach and develop the players as they learn how to win. Parents should support the players and coaches. Intrinsic success is by its nature more difficult to measure than extrinsic success. A trophy is more tangible to an adult than the exhilaration a child feels while playing soccer. The final measure of success for parents of their child's soccer experience will require a good deal of patience from the adults. That measurement is the free choice of the child to stay in the game!

Dr. Tom Fleck – "We must work to create an environment to develop the American player's growth and development! In the past we have tried to train the Dutch way, the Brazilian way, etc. We can and will together create the finest players in the world if we understand the growth, development and specific characteristics of our youth.

In matters of style, swim with the currents...
in matters of principle, stand like a rock.

