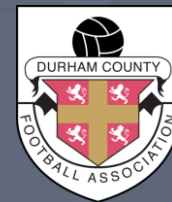


Name: Sean Dolan

FA Level 2 in Coaching Football Learner Journey



FA Level 2 Block 2 (How We Support / Future Player)

It was certainly a major benefit to myself that I could complete my FA Level 2 course during the half terms and around the school calendar. The downside to completing the course like this was that I then had a 7 week gap between my Block 1 and Block 2. Heading into the Block 2 after such a big break it was difficult pick up the momentum and excitement that we built up during Block 1. With this in mind it was nice that the first objective of our Day 1 morning was to recap and then discuss how Block 1 had affected our coaching over the 7 weeks. What made the transition from Block 1 to Block 2 even easier was the fact about 80% of our group remained the same. The laid back start to the morning allowed us all to share our experience and rekindle the enthusiasm for Block 2.

Day 1

During the afternoon, we began to look into the 'Future Player'. As we began to discuss this it really opened my eyes to the all-round requirements for developing a player aside from just playing ability. As we delved into the traits that make a player a talented learner, such as communication, resilience, focus and passion, I began to attach these attribute to the players that I coach. My experiences coaching my U11s team and then my Kicks session (an open fun session for 8-18 year olds) really allowed me to identify the qualities that make a good learner and what sets them aside from children who play purely for enjoyment (Kicks session). It became apparent to me that the children I work with in both sessions have very different intrinsic motivations towards football which then has an effect on their psychological corner towards football. Although my coaching philosophy around children learning through fun maintains the same in all my session, I am now more aware of how and why I need to adapt my sessions for these 2 very different type of children.

We then began to delve even deeper into the effect of age on a player's development. As a Primary school teacher I have, in the past, been guilty of reading too much into a child's month of birth before actually meeting them. Research would suggest in school, children born in September/October (the oldest in the class) will achieve more than those born in spring (the youngest in the class). This stereotyping was something I was aware of in teaching but had never crossed my mind as a coach. The more we discussed this the more I understood how this could be a major factor, particularly physically in younger children. Taking this into account the player age spectrum was an area I found quite fascinating as it highlighted certain areas I needed to get to know my players better. Since this discussion I made particular effort to get to know my players Biological, Sporting and Relative age, which has helped me gain a wider understanding of their ability.

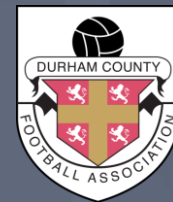


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Day 2 and 3

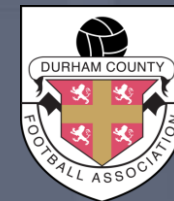
During days 2 and 3, this was probably the first time during that I found myself confident and par for knowledge with other coaches in the room. During the topic of ‘How we support’ we looked in depth at how to differentiate sessions and manage behaviour. These are two areas that I have constantly had to monitor and adapt during my teaching career. Although the way I do this in my classroom lessons is very different to what I can do during my coaching sessions I found that I always had differentiation in my mind and shared my support in sessions according to this. During all my lessons I have always been aware of the ability levels in my class and differentiated the task. If we take a maths lesson as an example the lesson may be differentiated by the difficulty of numbers, the wording of questions, the equipment available for the children, the group they work in or the support from adults they get. Other than changing the group of players the players work with or the distances they pass or shoot from, I always struggled with how to differentiate during coaching sessions and found the STEP approach particularly useful and although not obvious, quite similar to how I differentiate my lessons, in brackets.

- **Space** (groups the children work with)
- **Task** (the numbers they work with)
- **Equipment** (use of counters and equipment)
- **People** (support they get from an adult)



The behaviour management session was the area I found most common themes between coaching and teaching and an area where I found my teaching experience benefit me most as a coach. I found that a lot of the methods that were demonstrated to use by the coach leads were ideas that I had already experienced and used in class. For instance counting down from 10 as players congregate, offering rewards for task such as collecting cones and giving sanctions to teams for constant low level disruption. My favourite quote from the session which I believe applies to both coaching and teaching was “You can’t control how a child acts, but you can control the environment, the groupings and the way you act”. I believe that this highlights that by thorough preparation you can influence and minimise the chances of bad behaviour however you cannot completely remove the chances.

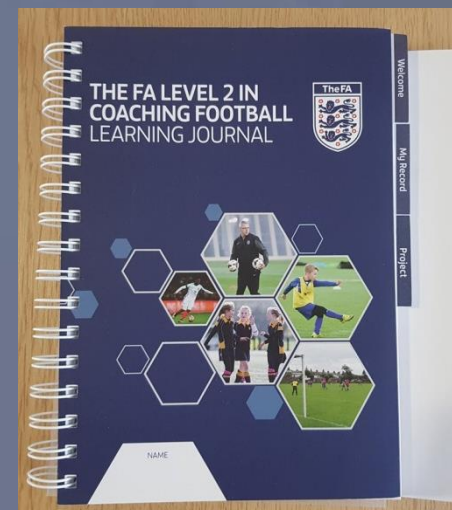




In Situ Support Visit with Tutor

Following on from my Block 2, I was aware that I needed to have a visit and observation of me coaching from one of the course tutors. Particularly after changing my team so late on in the course, this was something I was very apprehensive about doing. I feared that I didn't know my team well enough to demonstrate that I was putting a lot of what I'd learnt into my sessions. After discussion with Grace, she completely understood my concerns and allowed me to have my visit as late as possible, so that I could get to know my players better.

Looking back on the in-situ I know that I certainly over thought the visit. As soon as Grace organised it she made it very relaxed, emailing me in advance offering to assist in any way she could. Both before and during the session she was there if I needed any support. At the end she stayed back and gave me some feedback about the session. I only wish I had the in-situ a little earlier as the confidence I have gained from this visit will be invaluable as I move forward in coaching career.



My Project

My project has been an ongoing piece of work since day 1 of block 1, and has continued that way throughout. The flexibility to complete the project how we want has been a real bonus as I have much preferred completing mine as a PowerPoint rather than paper based. Although there are many parts of the project I don't feel are necessary to me in my journey through the Level 2. I have found that as I have completed my project it has prompted me to look differently and think deeper about certain areas of coaching that I may never have considered before. Having these prompts to think about certain areas has no doubt helped me to get to know my players and the game better and in turn improved me overall as a coach. The project is certainly something I would never have done before the course, but I am now proud that I have completed a coaching based project which can evidence a lot of the work I have done with my team.

