

What Have You Learned Since You Got Involved With Soccer?

- I've learned that when someone says "I'm doing it for the kids" he's probably not.
- I've learned that a 0-0 game can have as much offense in it as a 5-4 game.
- I've learned that it's not parents or coaches or players that are a problem - it's egos.
- I've learned that 99% of the fans at a match think that the referee is terrible and is biased for the other team. The other 1% are not sure which one the referee is.
- I've learned never to judge a player's ability until they are at least 16 years old.
- I've learned that some coaches are considered successful because they develop good players and others because they recruit good players. The ones that develop players are the ones I consider successful.
- I've learned that speed is good - but speed and size is better.
- I've learned that you should never dribble when you can pass and that you should never pass when you can shoot.
- I've learned you should never "dive in" when you're the last defender.
- I've learned that despite what I think, soccer will never be as popular in the U.S. as it should be.
- I've learned that all goals count the same no matter how they're scored or who scores them.
- I've learned that way too many of my clothes have three stripes on them.
- I've learned that I can't pass a large open field without thinking "That would sure make a good soccer field."
- I've learned that I know much less about this sport than I used to think I did.
- I've learned that I would be much better off if I kept my mouth shut during games.
- I've learned that less than 50% of all coaches know the Laws of the Game and only about 75% of the refs do.
- I've learned that no matter how many cones and balls I carry to practice some will disappear like socks in a drier.
- I've learned that not all kids play soccer for the same reasons. Some want to compete and others want to socialize. But they all want to have fun. All coaches should remember that.
- I've learned that every coach with an accent is not a "soccer expert".
- I've learned that not all soccer matches are exciting but neither are all baseball, basketball or football games.
- I've learned that soccer is both an incredibly simple game and an amazingly difficult game - at the same time.
- I've learned that one of the hardest jobs is that of an assistant coach. I've learned that you should under-promise and over-deliver if you want to be successful as a coach.
- I've learned that sometimes the way a player plays or practices has less to do with the coach than with what's going on in his home or school life.
- I've learned that really competitive players want to be pushed out of their comfort zone.
- I've learned that you can shoot all you want but that the only shots that count are the ones in the back of the net.
- I've learned that every win is not good and every loss is not bad.
- I've learned that the harder you train the better your team will be, but that if you train too hard, you'll miss all the fun and experiences that make sports worthwhile.

- I've learned you should never take any sport too seriously.
- I've learned that the best players never think they are.
- I've learned that every good referee I've met has doubts about the calls they made in the game. But they've learned to accept that they will make mistakes and try their best to keep them to a minimum. Coaches would do well to do adapt the same philosophy.
- I've learned that some of the most influential people in my life have been coaches and teachers and that all the really good coaches I knew were also really good teachers.
- I've learned that how I behave toward referees sets the standard for my players and that if I blame the refs my players will also blame the refs. Putting the blame on anyone other than ourselves is non-productive and won't make me a better coach or make my players better defenders or attackers.
- I've learned that attackers that want to score a goal shouldn't stand in the middle of the goal and hope that the ball will come to them.
- I've learned that if we want more of our kids to keep playing soccer as they get older we need more soccer-playing heroes for them to look up to.
- I've learned that a penalty kick is both the easiest and hardest shot in soccer.
- I've learned that it's not always the most talented players who turn out to be the best soccer players but the best soccer players are almost always the ones that work the hardest.
- I've learned that not all great (soccer ball) jugglers are great players but almost all great players can juggle.
- I've learned that there's always a time later to teach tactics. At almost any age coaches are better off using practice time teaching skills.
- I've learned that if you don't shoot you can't score.
- I've learned that when a team I coach loses the players get over it much quicker than I do.
- I've learned that in the overall scheme of the universe, sports means very little - and so much less than we (fans, coaches, players, parents) think they do.
- I've learned that some players take criticism better than others but all players take praise well.
- I've learned that it helps to have a mentor - even if that person doesn't know what a mentor is.
- I've learned that hydration is more important than nutrition in sports - just as in life. You can survive days without food but will die quickly without water. Encourage your players to drink lots of water. It's the simplest advice that pays the biggest dividends.
- I've learned that practice and not halftime is the best time to provide a coaching lesson.
- I've learned that you should always choose the wind at the start of a match - you never know when it'll change direction.
- I've learned that all athletes are just one serious injury from being spectators.
- I've learned that you're never too close to the goal to kick the ball over the top of it.
- But most of all, I've learned that I'm really going to miss all this when my children quit playing soccer.