

Try-Outs: What is the message
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No matter how you conduct your soccer try-outs somebody will find a flaw, somebody will be unhappy, even if you opt to keep every player that attends the try-outs. The reason being is that it comes down to opinions and the inability to please everyone.

You can ask the parents or the players what their definition is of a good effective coach and again you will get many different opinions. So trying to educate people to understand the different shades or gray can sometimes be a difficult task. Are you all about winning or does player development play a huge role in your way of thinking?

Clubs and organizations can make their lives easier by portraying their expectations from day one and sticking to it. Creating a fine balance of developing players and swinging the axe to cut players from teams is something that needs to be measured depending on what the club wants to achieve. However if they are to be successful both need to take place

The approach of keeping as many players at the youngest age group in an academy format seems to be a good avenue to take. However it is probably important to learn from the mistakes which in my opinion are being made by the European clubs. Instead of naming the few elite, you should try to keep all the players involved with the program. We may not be able to find a perfect answer for the definition of a coach but one of the roles and responsibilities is to develop and educate the players.

The mistake that is being made by many of the professional clubs in Europe is that they take the elite few for the younger age groups, but many of them fail to go on and make the grade at the top level. So the process of keeping a bigger pool so that you can develop and mold more players in to the clubs style can take place. This would not mean naming players in to first, second and third teams but to keep players training and playing together so that the club can develop more savvy soccer players.

Eventually the process of cutting and naming of A and B teams has to occur, because clubs have to start separating the elite, not for purposing of winning games but simply because the same caliber of players have to train and play against each other. However there should always be the opportunity for movement to take place between the two levels.

Of course this can cause problems if the process is not clear from the beginning to those who are being selected. To keep yourself from the emotional turmoil that parents and players can drag you through during this process, you can keep it clean and simple if you follow some the guidelines below.

1. Put your philosophy across early and stick to it, therefore if you cut players say you are going to and why.
2. Collect as much data on the players during the try-outs and keep the players continuously involved.
3. Have neutral coaches come in and assist you.
4. If the club is going to form a second team, explain that movement can take place in between the teams from season to season. Club directors of coaching should encourage as much communication between the coaches of the two teams.
5. When posting or naming the teams inform the players and parents that if they have not been selected and would like some feedback, that it is the

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- players responsibility to contact you. We recently did this with the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association Olympic Development Program and received zero phone calls from parents but several from players showing their true maturity request information on how they can improve
6. Stick to your decisions but be fair.

There is no perfect answer to what can be volatile situation but if you remain strong to your ideas and keep avenues and lines of communication open you will gain respect from the people that really matter, **the players**.