

German Education Tour April, 2011

This past April, I went to Germany and I visited 4 clubs - from Nurnberg and Furth at the top - to Bayreuth and Wurzburg at the bottom. I had lectures from technical directors, directors of soccer, head coaches, and youth coaches. In addition I observed 3 matches and 10 training sessions.

The tour gave me a great opportunity to ask questions about the structure of soccer in Germany and the reasons behind their structure. I was able to see the top and the bottom of the professional and amateur soccer system.

The following pages are organized by lectures, training sessions and conclusions.

John Abe

Abesoccer@yahoo.com

www.johnabe.com



German Coaches Education Lectures

April, 2011

FV Wurzburg (Landesliga Bayern Nord)

Prior to meeting the 1st team coach observed the C3 (comparable to our U14 Div. 3) team for 45 minutes. Upon speaking with the trainer I was able to obtain the following:

- C3 Train 2 x per week
- C2 and C1 (the top U14 teams) train 3x per week

Training Facilities

3.5 Training Fields (2.5 fields lighted) + 1 Stadium (Match field, lighted)
Fields a combination of grass and dirt (are rolled daily, to ensure a flat, smooth surface)
25 ft. nets behind each goal
17 full size goals, 8 small-sided goals (heavy)

Michael Hochrein – 1st team coach of FV Wurzburg

Top level amateur player, could have played at a higher level, but stayed loyal and played for years for Wurzburg. He was the assistant and now is the head coach of the first team and the technical director of the club.

Ambition of the clubs 1st team is to be at the highest Amateur level.

Started at the youth level 5 years, became Asst. with the 1st team, and is in first year as head coach of the 1st team. He is also a swim instructor during the day.

The training session

Previewed the training session I was going to observe later that evening. Their next game is this coming Sunday vs. the team at the top of the table. Training session will be pleasurable due to the team losing its previous match to team at the bottom of the table.

Position Game – 2 players in the middle

Communicate what his observations were of the last match

Warm Up w/o ball

Passing Exercise

Position Game with 2 neutral players

9 v 9 (including GK's)

Expected to have 30 players (1st and Reserve team) with 5 injured, 16 with 1st team and 14 with Reserves.

Youth System

Youth teams are at the top level in the district and it is attractive for young players to be at FV Wurzburg because the step from the A age group to the 1st team is possible where in a pro club it is not.

\$ comes from sponsors, about 700 fans per game and members pay \$100 euros per year to play.

- o Money to pay for the entire club is through sponsors
- o Families pay 100-150 Euro yearly to the club.
- o Professional Club scouts are observing their top E & D level players.
- o Youth program is to develop the individual.
- o Each trainer/coach is paid
- o Play 1 match per week
- o Age Group Breakdown in Germany

Levels/Age Group	# of teams at Wurzburg
A = 16-18	1
B = 14-16	2
C = 12-14	2
D = 10-12	2
E = 8-10	3
F = 6-8	3

System of Play

1:4:3:3 with the center back pushing forward in ball possession, but not past the ball.

Or

1:3:4:3 matching up in back 3 backs vs. 3 forwards until the 16-18 age group (then 4 in the back)

April, 2011

Spvgg Bayreuth (Oberliga Bayern)

Ingo Walther – 1st team coach of Spvgg Bayreuth

Spvgg Bayreuth is in Northern Bavaria. The city of Bayreuth has a population of 70,000 and the amateur club has 800-1000 players. His aim is to get the team to the 3. Bundesliga within 5 years. Current success is expected for several reasons.

18 of 22 players are from last season's squad.

Older squad that has experience (especially in the midfield)

What were his priorities coming into the club?

Pick up players that he wanted

Organization on the field

Quality of the players

Technical ability – to build up the attack

Discipline

Doing things as a team (meals, go together to the field, clean up dressing room, carry balls, and pump up balls)

1st team training schedule this week (normal)

Monday-Tuesday	Fitness and Technical work (2 sessions)
Wednesday	Tactical 11 v 11 (1 session)
Thursday	Patterns, Finishing and Set Plays (1 session)
Friday	Match vs. Eintracht Bamberg
Saturday	light recuperation training
Sunday	Off

Club Budget

550,000 Euro

The majority is dedicated to the youth program.

Coach Contracts

1st team coach, always 1 year

Youth Director, longer terms is a necessity for consistency and structure.

Youth Education

Philosophy - Winning is important, but education (development) is more important.

On the field is the best place to influence players.

Youth teams play 1 way

1:4:3:3

Each Age group has two teams

A1, A2

B1, B2

C1, C2

D1, D2

E1, E2

Generally players are within 15 miles from Bayreuth

Buses (mini-vans) pick up players after school and bring to training

Parents pick up players at the conclusion of training.

April, 2011
1. FC Nurnberg (Bundesliga)

Peter Klaus– Technical Director of 1.FC Nurnberg

Club/City (population is 500,000) prefers hardworking players. To be successful in Germany they can use German players. To be successful in Europe they need foreign players.

Technical Director – in charge of football business

Buying and selling of players

Head of scouting

Medical Staff (FT Doctor, 3 Physio's, 9 Med Staff for youth)

Cooperations (South Africa, Ghana, Iceland, Poland, Japan)

Coaching (12 Full-time)

Youth Academy

Full-time Academy Plan for U12 and above

Training is designed for individual (primary) and team development (secondary)

Passing Game and Use your skills at the right moment

Individual Training (Coerver limited moves, free-kicks and defending)

Systems of Play

Up to U14 – 1:4:3:3 with the 3 midfielders across

U16 and above – 1:4:3:3 with a triangle in the midfield, triangle can either be point up or point down.

If opponent plays with 2 forwards, then 3 in the back (2 wide backs pinch in, 1 central defender steps into the midfield – creating a diamond (1:3:4:3))

If necessary wingers can drop 20-30 meters creating a 1:4:5:1

Academy to 1st team

4-5 Academy players in top 11

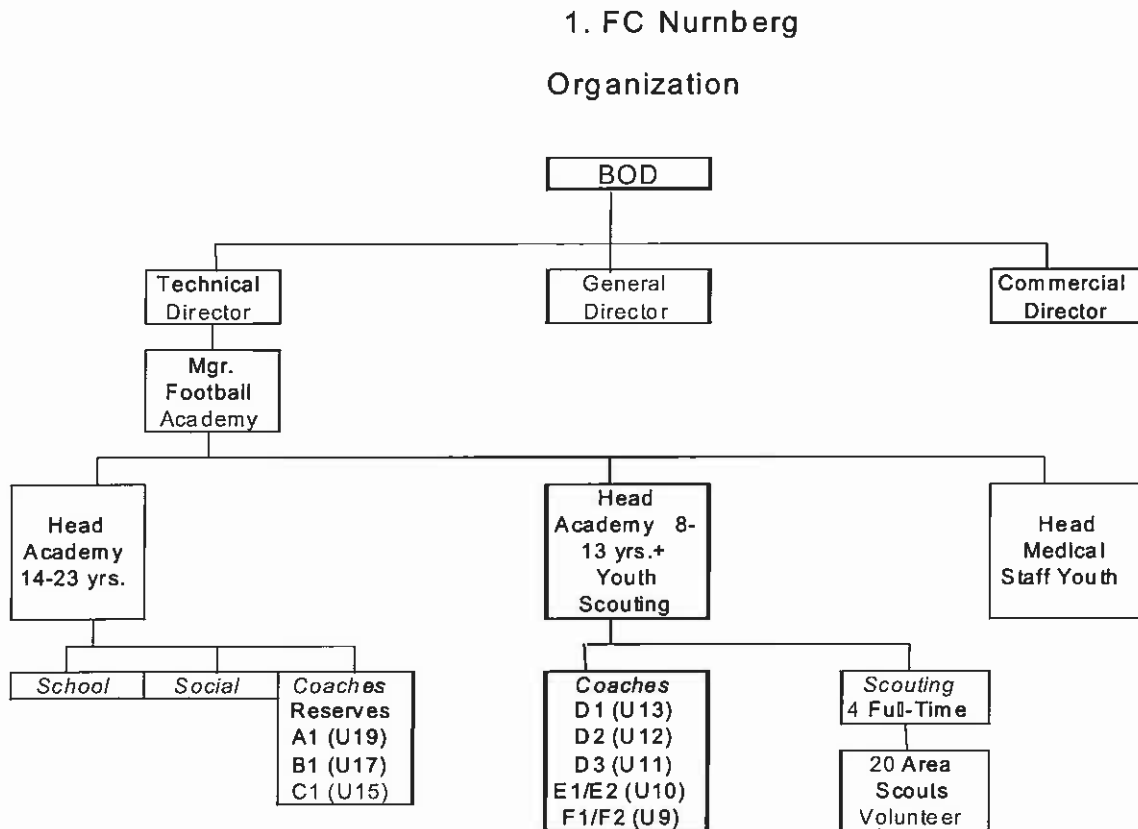
6 Academy players in top 18

Training Facilities

1st team facility is 50 yards outside the stadium. Youth facility is across the street – 200 yards from the stadium. Includes 3 fields all lighted, 2 Field Turf.

Dieter Nussing- Youth Director, 1.FC Nurnberg Academy U14-U23

Organization



Aim

For players to reach the top. They all have to reach for the highest level; (Personal Top, Bundesliga, German National team, a team abroad, 2. Bundesliga, or an amateur team.

To provide one player from the A1 (U19) to the First team per year.

Players who may not be good enough for the First team can go to satellite (Jahn Regensburg) or possibly to another club.

Talent and mentality together with intensive practices are decisive in the players education.

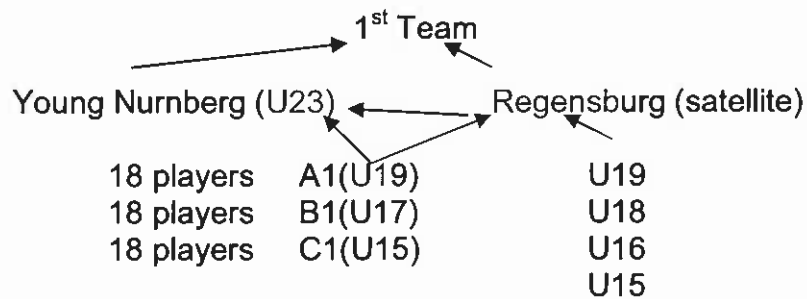
Junior Academy (U9-U13)

D1 (U13)	16 players	11 v 11	
D2 (U12)	16 players	11 v 11	
D3 (U11)	16 players	11 v 11	9 v 9 for friendlies
E1/E2 (U10)	8 players each	7 v 7	
F1/F2 (U9)	8 players each	7 v 7	

Coaching rotates each year as a team grows (gets older)

"Winning easily makes lazy, always losing demotivates"

Professional Academy (U23-U14)



Training

Aim is improving player

Club gives education, but "players have to develop themselves"

How? With organized practices

1) Team Training

- a. Always 2 coaches/trainers
- b. Position play/ Attack vs. Defense, Attacking Forms (Pattern Play)

2) Specific training

- a. Practices in small groups, 4-6 players, coaches analysis is the start point)
- b. Specialists are in charge of training (Heading, 1v1 Att. & Def., Training of strikers, technical training, speed of handling the ball.)

Training Frequency

Level	per week	team:specific
A1(U19)	6x	4:2
B1(U17)	6x	4:2
C1(U15)	6x	3:3
D1(U13)	4x	
D2(U12)	3x	
D3(U11)	3x	
E1/E2(U10)	3x	
F1/F2(U9)	3x	

Evaluations

Two times per playing year, 1 at the conclusion of the 1st half (mid-December) and one at the end of the 2nd half (late-May)

U17 and above parents can come

U15 and below parents are scheduled

Coaches must explain good and bad, but also why something is good or bad.

Relation with school and Nurnberg

Top-sport school in Nurnberg

60 players (13 to 18)

Adapt timetables to training

Spread exams/preliminary exams/tests for participation in international tournaments or participation with National teams.

Playing timetable

Off June & July and late December – middle of January

Youth will participate in 22 competitions

May participate in tournaments, but only participate in tournaments where host pays the costs.

Transportation

9 buses (mini-vans) are driven by volunteers from 0800 – 2000.

Professional Academy Train station-practice-school

Youth Academy Home-practice-home

Transportation takes teams to Away matches, airport.

Scouting

Staff

4 full-time scouts

20 area scouts (volunteers)

How do players get noticed?

Play well in your own team (observed by one of the scouts)

Promotion Day (800 players to open play-day)

If good enough invited U7-U10 to Talent Days

Invited to train and trial matches with the team (if good enough, and selected from above (3) manners.

Apartments

28 apartments for Housing (Older family looks after the apartments/players)

Players from 1st team, Regensburg, and Academy (if needed)

10 U14-U19 players in apartments, and go home on

weekends

2 apartments always available for trial players (1st team)

April, 2011
Spvvgg Furth (2.Bundesliga)

Frank Kramer – Youth Director, Spvvgg Furth

Roles

Assistant with the 1st team
Head of youth coaches/trainers

Youth

Nearly all teams are playing at the highest youth levels in Germany
F (ages 7 and 8) and E (ages 9 and 10) play in local league + friendlies
(Wednesday all schools in Germany let out early). Only 12 League
matches from August – Mid December.

Amateur clubs in Furth is pool for pro club

Scouting – not difficult to attract players to play for club

F and E players need to be friends with the ball, develop the players in a
technical way.

D is level where positions become stricter within the team

Teams play in a similar system 1:4:3:3 (Attractive soccer is a must,
midfield either plays point up 1 attacking mid, 2 holding or point down 2
attacking mids, holding, if up late in a match, adjustments may be made
with the wingers dropping deeper creating a 1:4:5:1.

Players have opportunity to play 7 days a week, fields available (with

goals)

Club Ideas

Put ideas on paper, and then make them happen

Prioritize and make changes/adjustments over time (not all at once)

Analyze your situation and see how what you have learned on this tour
can be applied to your situation.

Educate the parents/managers; they are your customers as they pay for
the training that their children receive. Speak with them consistently, after
matches (helps to eliminate some issues)

Training Facilities

3 fields just outside stadium, 2 lighted. 2 dirt with grass inter-mixed, rolled
by tractor with heavy roller each day to maintain flat, smooth surface.

Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvgg Furth- 1st team

Soccer Notes

Mike Buskens (Head Coach)
with two assistants (one was with GK

Warm-up Casual 2 games of x v 2 (in the middle) x = as players arrived at the fields. 10 passes in a row (2 stayed) 1st team and 2nd team with respective coaches, discussing the previous match. GK with GK trainer.

#1 In pairs
Jogging, skipping, running jacks, high knees, heels to butt, groin in-out + 10 sprint, groin out-in + 10 sprint, leg kick RR & LL + sprint, leg kick RL & LR + sprint, low skip "shake out", fast high knees + sprint, fast high knee. facing each other + sprint, fast high knees facing away + sprint, fast high knees backwards + sprint
Tag game, one player it, others cannot be tagged if jump on teammates back (piggyback).

Passing Passing X (see #2), 2 groups for repetition
Exercise 1 & 2 (alternate passing, then follow pass) to 3; receives ball and plays (4,5) sequence 1-3-4; 2-3-5. (4,5) dribble back to beginning of line (1,2).
NEXT SEQUENCE - 1-3-1-4; 2-3-2-5 Ball laid back then deep.

NEXT SEQUENCE - 1-3-1-4-3-4; 2-3-2-5-3-5 Ball laid back then deep, J run by 3 and wall pass with (4,5) and

5 players with 1 ball, pass and follow pass (1 touch)

Final Game 6 v 6 +3 (2 are on ends of field as targets) #3

15 min.

10 min.

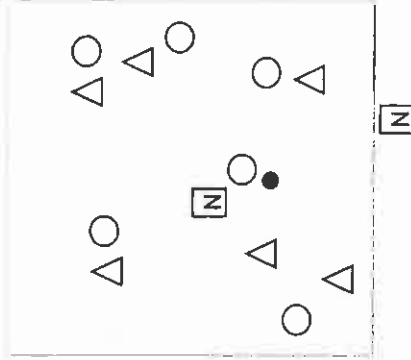
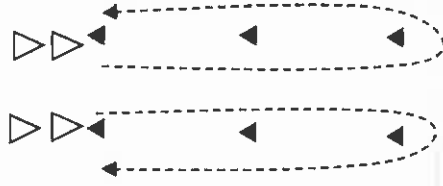
10 min.

5 min.

20 min.

25 min.

#1



#3

Soccer Notes

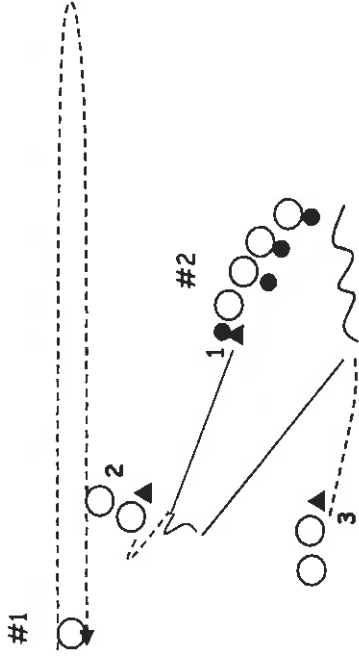
Soccer Notes

#1
5 min.

Warm-Up Players in one line, across field between sides of box. Jogging, skipping, shuffling, shuffling, heading, side-to side, high knees, short sprints.

#2
10 min.

Passing Triangles - 2 groups (1st team & 2nd team) 1st Sequence - 2 checks away (2-3 yds.) then back, calls for BALL, 1 plays crisp pass to 2's feet, 2 receives ball 3 calls SPACE and moves into space, 2 plays ball into space for 3 to run on to, 3 dribbles to end of line. 1 goes to 2, 2 goes to 3



#3
10 min.

2nd sequence - 2 checks away (2-3 yds.) then back, calls for BALL, 1 plays crisp pass to 2's feet, 2 receives ball 3 calls FEET, 2 plays 3 to the feet and supports immediately and calls BACK. 3 passes ball back to 2, 3 takes steps out (2-3 yds.) and then makes wall pass run 2 plays ball into space in to 3's run, 3 dribbles into space then back to line. 1 goes to 2, 2 goes to 3.

Final Game

11 v 11

1st team in normal positions

30 min.

2nd team playing with 2 forwards

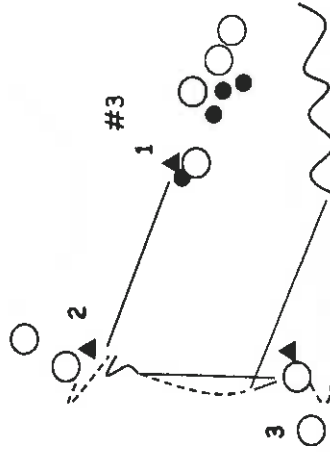
30 min.

2nd team playing with 3 forwards

30 min.

2nd team playing with 4 forwards

Coaching points were for 1st team and how to deal with the opponents system of play in attack and defense.



4 coaches present

Head Coach - with 1st team

Asst. Coach - with 2nd team

Asst. Coach - Observing and giving individual players comments

GK Coach - with GK'ers for first 25 minutes, then observing and coaching GK'ers during scrimmage.

Wednesday training is tactical in preparation for Saturday evening match. Only one training on this day, for 2 hours.

Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvvg Furth - 1st team training

#1

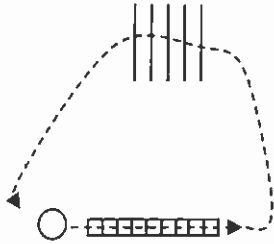


10 min.

5 min.

5 min.

10 min.



#3



Soccer Notes

Mike Buskens - Head Coach
4 assistant coaches

Warm-up Led by physical trainer (like Body Max) (see #1)
Simple movements across the penalty box, all players side by side.

see #2 Speed ladder loop with low hurdles (1 player, next player would follow after ladder completion.
20 yard build up sprints (2 lines)

Passing Exercise Teams broken into 2 (1st team and 2nd team) Injured players with the physical trainer.

see #3 In Groups of 5 by position (ex. Left Back, Center Back Left Def. Mid, Center Forward and Left Forward)
Knocking balls in the general vicinity of where they would be playing in the game.

Final 11 v 11

Game

1st team (some players rotated after 30 min.)
3 - 30 minute tactical games

Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

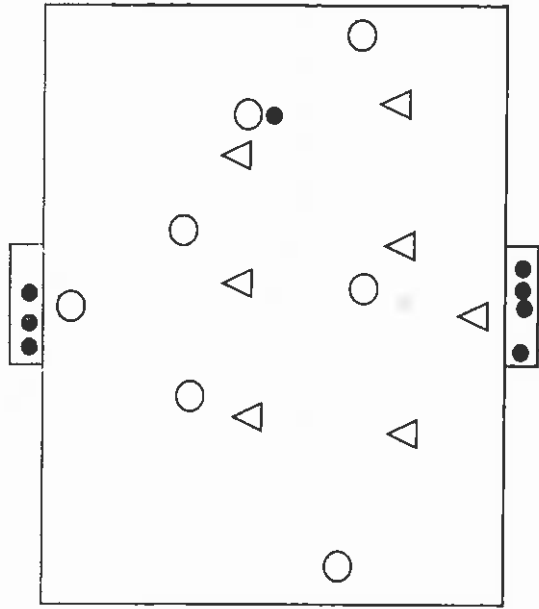
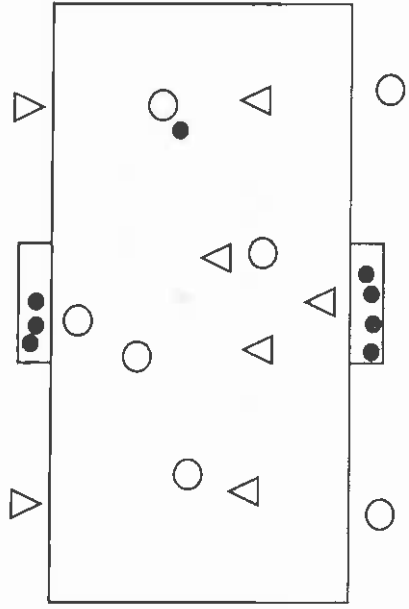
April, 2011
Spvgg Furth - Youth C1 (U15) Training

Soccer Notes

Observed 30 minutes of training after conclusion of lecture.

5 v 5 each team with target player on their attacking ends of the field. Player who passes to target player becomes target, target steps onto the field and becomes normal field player. Target has one touch.

7 v 7 Players organized in a 1:3:3 system. Possession with emphasis on combination play.



Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

10 min.

Warm-Up Jogging around pitch

10 min.

#1 Jogging + movement exercises every other cone

15 min.

Passing Exercise Group comprised of players that played significant time in the match the day prior, knocked the ball around in groups of three or four.

Functional Finishing Players that did not play significant amounts did finishing exercises below. Players took 5 shots from right, then 5 from the left.

#2 1. Two-touches inside then shoot

2. One touch then shoot

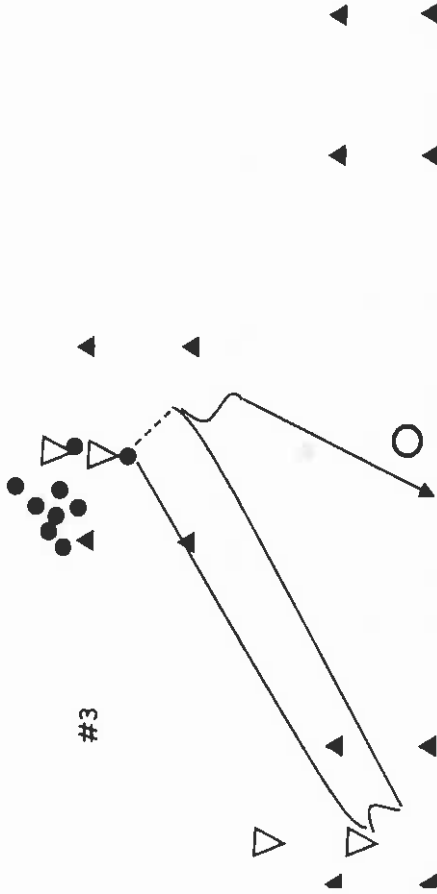
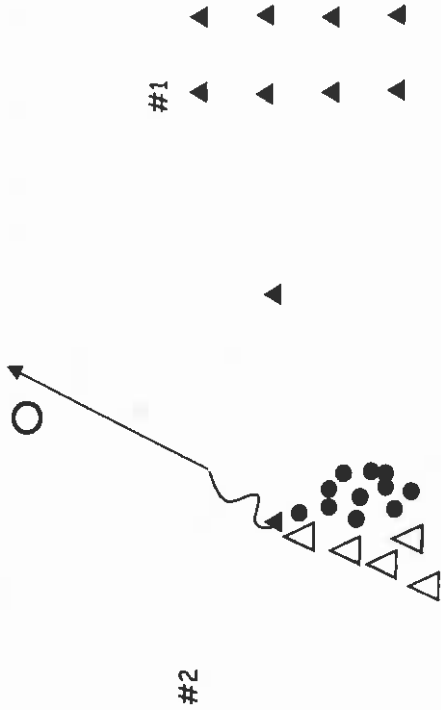
#3

1. Ball driven out wide to corner, player controls and plays driven ball back to front of grid, shooter controls and shoots. Players switch.

2. Ball driven out wide to corner, player controls and plays cross towards the top of the box, shooter moves forward and either shoots or controls and shoots.

3. Ball served in air from inside center circle, shooter controls, turns then shoots.

4. Ball served on ground from just outside center circle shooter, turns and shoots.



Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvgg Furth - B2(U17)

Soccer Notes

Observation started immediately following the conclusion of the lecture with Mike Buskens.

Final Game 6 v 6 to 4 small goals

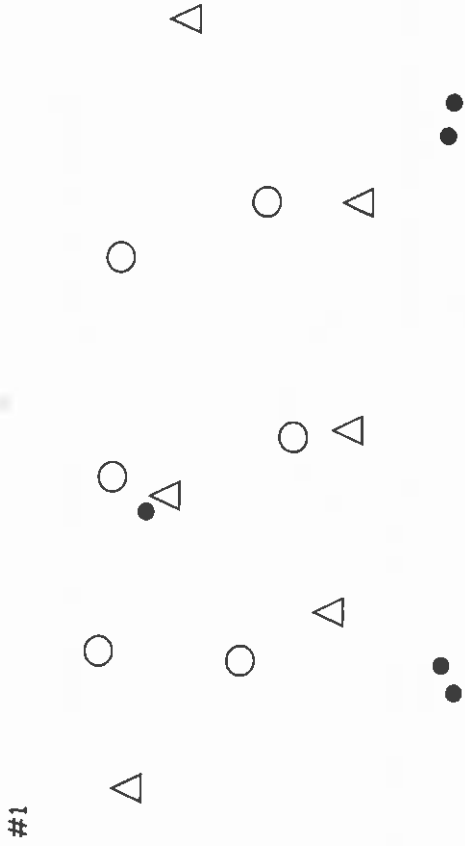
GK Training Goalkeepers (dealing with crosses)

Upon making save, attempt to drop kick past the keeper in opposite goal.

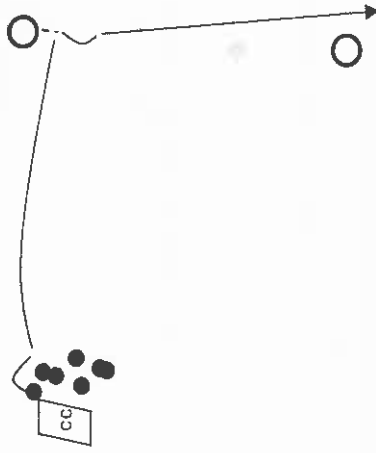
Of note - player got frustrated and booted ball to the other end of the field. Coach stopped play and did not resume until the player retrieved the ball.

#1

#2



#2



Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvgg Furth - E1,2,3 (U9 and u10)

10 min.



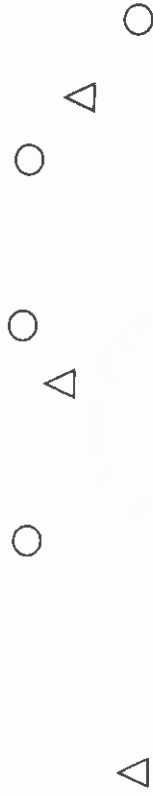
Soccer Notes

Warm-Up 5 v 2 (3 groups) in a 10 x 10
1 or 2 touch

Final 11 v 11

Game Abnormal training day, due to parent/player - coach evaluation meetings.

Observations - Use light size 5 ball. Technically very sound, especially apparent in the 5 v 2 exercises.



Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvgg Furth - A1(U19)

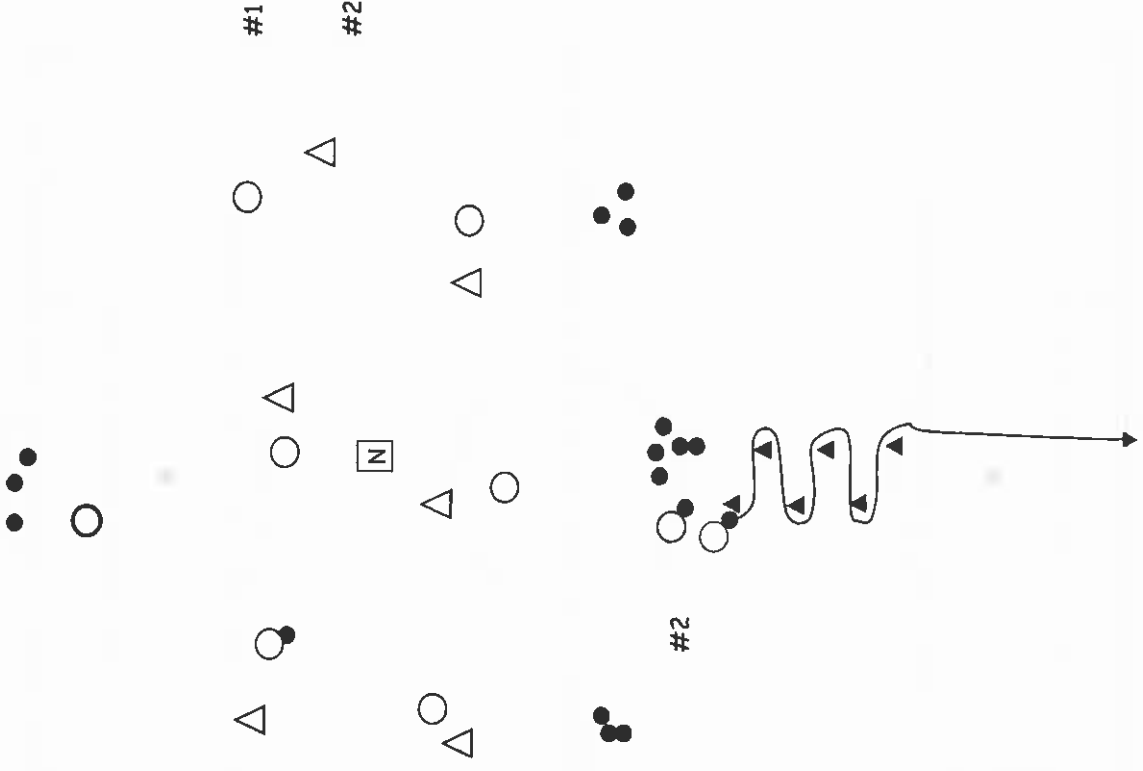
Soccer Notes

Observation started immediately following the conclusion of the lecture with Mike Buskens .

35 yard timed sprint - 3 x
One coach at the start line, with clipboard (writing times as they appear on digital clock). One coach at end of sprint to reset the electronic timing device.

Final Game 7 v 6 + 1 - One large goal (defended by 7, with GK)(team with 6 players defends two small goals at midfield)

2 players not involved, finishing on goal. Dribble through cones and finish.



Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

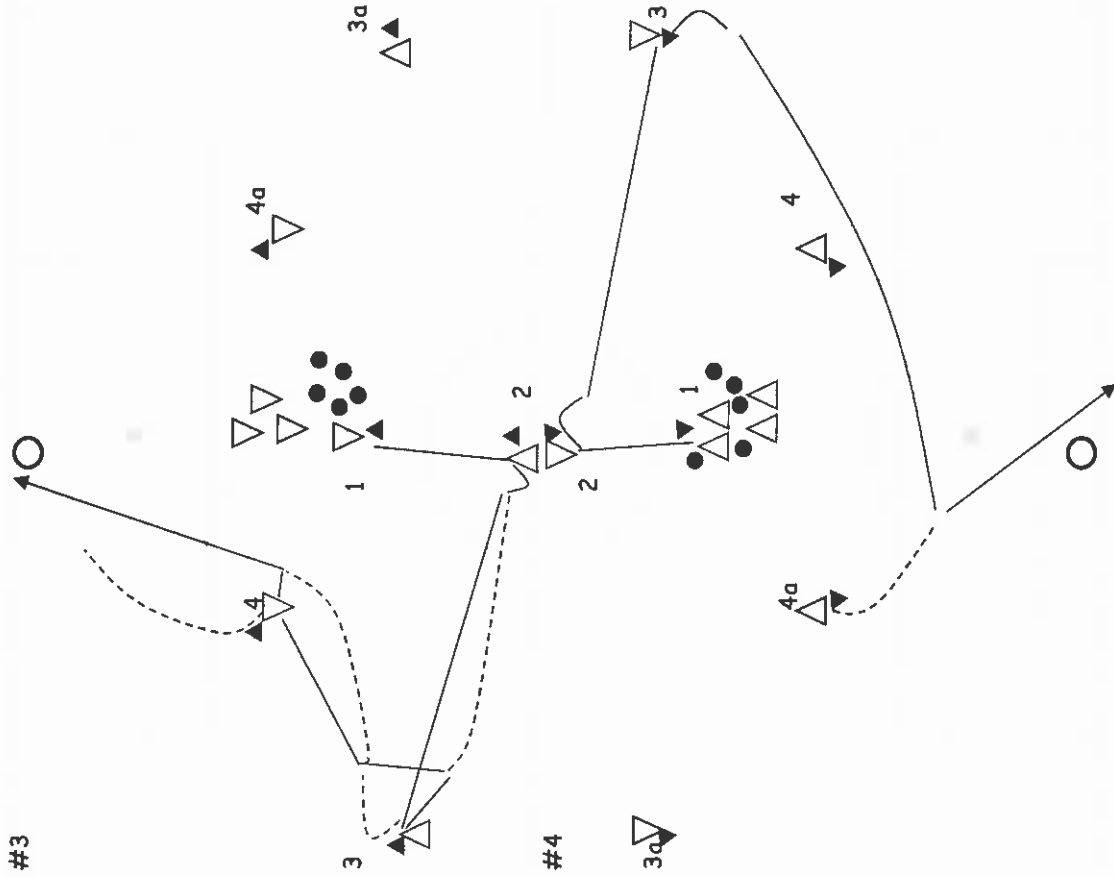
Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvgg Furth - Reserves

Soccer Notes

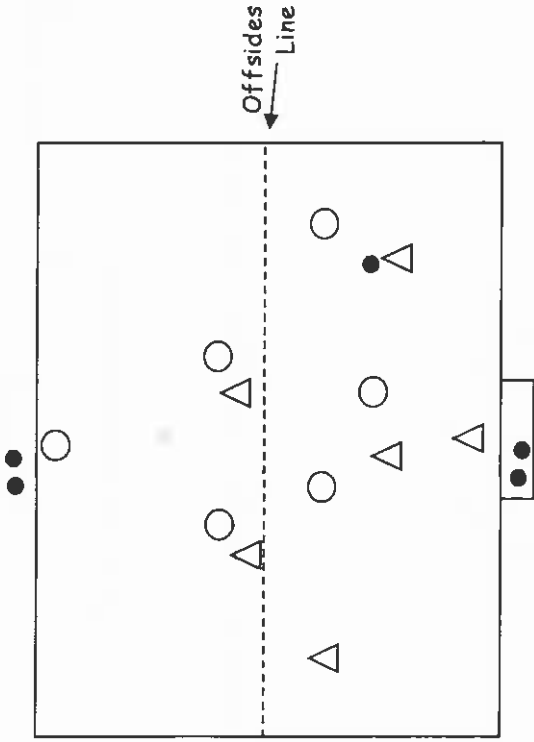
Continued

- Passing Exercise and 3a to shoot 4 follows up (sprint)
3. Same as above, except 4 and 4a lay back pass to 3
 4. Field moved back 20 yards, ball played into 3 or 3a then played to opposite 4 or 4a (driven ball/cross)



Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes



20 min.

6 v 6 - 50 yards length x 44 yards width (penalty box)

If a team scores, they cannot score for the next two minutes, therefore they must possess. The team that gave up the goal now must press to win ball and score, including GK. If team in possession is able to keep possession and not be scored upon, they earn another goal. No offsides for team that scores (for 2 minutes)

Soccer Notes

April, 2011
Spvgg Bayreuth- 1st team

Soccer Notes

Ingo Walther - Head Coach
3 assistant coaches

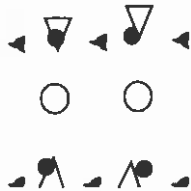
10 min.

Warm-Up Full field jogging; skipping; hopping; groing out-in; groin in-out; shuffle + stretching

10 min.

1 touch possession - player who loses ball and the respective players to his right and left become defenders
Technica. Pele exercises in 3's, two on outside (servers) one player working inside.

#1



10 min.

#1 1 touch passing, 3 quick steps then other side; 2 touch

5 min.

passing; chest & volley; inside of foot volley; heading; volley inside, 3 quick steps then other side; instep volley



5 min.
15 min.

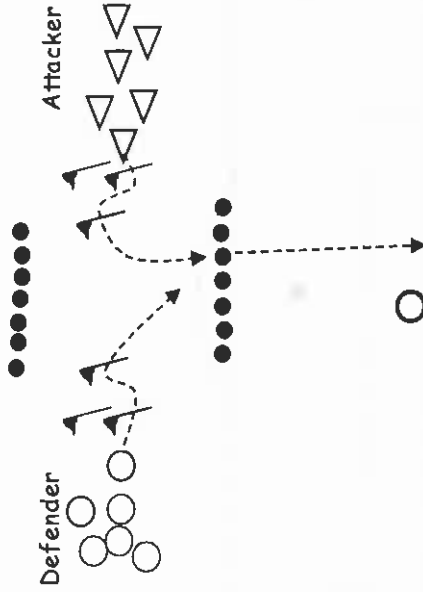
In 3's 1 player serving, 1 defending half-speed, 1 working
Volley with a battle, get around the player; head with a battle; pass on ground with a battle.
Passing in 3's and 4's (with one ball)
Shooting Exercise

20 min.

Final Attacker moves through the flags, defender starts when attacker makes first motion. Defender attempts to tag the attacker prior to the attacker shooting the ball (1st time).
Game 9 v 9 (including GK's) in half field with offsides line at middle of field. Asst. coaches served as linesmen.

10 min.

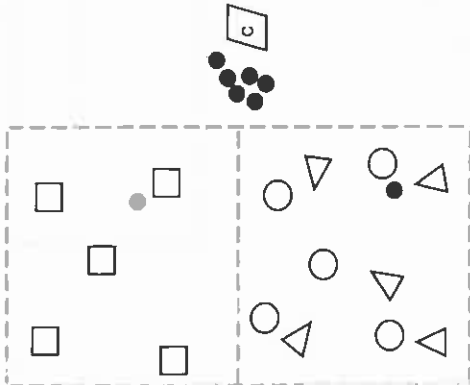
Function Players that would be taking corners and free kicks checking distances for the match tomorrow evening.



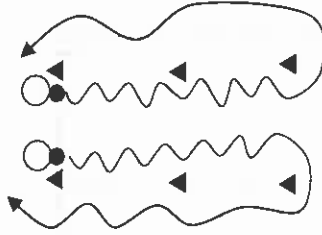
Soccer Notes

Soccer Notes

#2



#1



Warm-Up Jogging around the pitch, as a team

5 min. Across field, on own. Side-to-side, groin in-out

#1

Dribbling - end line to 23 yards out and back 2 players side by side

5 min.

Inside-inside-outside-outside; inside-outside switch feet; inside-outside then in between the feet (two touches); sole roles; dribble 3 touches stop w/ sole side shuffle to partners ball; dribble 3 touches stop w/ sole inside-out groin; sole rolls backwards - 4 touches then spin and 2 touches forward, spin and repeat; scissors (alternating feet); double scissors

5 min.

Passing - in pairs - end line to 23 yards out
One touch down length of grid; 1 player moving backwards the other forwards (one touch); 1 in front ball in hand moving backwards serving balls, receiver 4 fast high knees then volley; same service as previous thigh-volley; Partners across from each other one with ball in hand, services to partner heading feet on ground, then jumping (in air) while side shuffling length of grid.

5 min.

Long-strides from goal line to midfield.

Positional, 6 v 2 in a 10 yd. X 10 yd. Grid

Game

One or Two touch

One touch only

5 v 5 v 5 two grids

#2

One team rests or (plays 4 v 1 keep away), while two teams in other grid play. Object is to complete 6 consecutive passes, if successful the team that gave up the 6 passes sprints to other grid and attempts to be the team that connects 6 passes.

#3

7 v 7 + 2 (targets on each end of the field)

Targets have one touch, maintain possession goal =

connected passes to both targets without losing possession

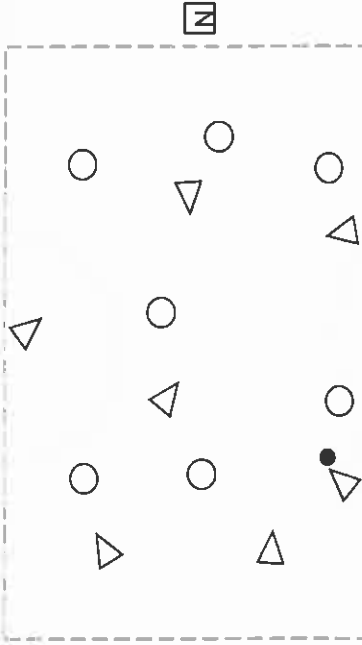
5 min.

5 min.

20 min.

30 min.

#3



Conclusions

Mission, Philosophy and Structure

Every club, regardless of level, placed development of the person first, the players second and the results were rarely mentioned. The clubs mission and its philosophy guided their structure. A measure of their success was the number of players developed for the first team. Perhaps the knowledge that your talented players can earn the club millions helps place development over winning. Development is truly the most important thing, and everything is done to assist that process. Most clubs do not care about the results of their teams enough to keep individual players from moving up to an older team in their club or a different team in a different club - if it is good for a that players development. Do these younger teams win their leagues? Not always - but that is not the primary concern. The top clubs have their teams play up an age group in order to insure they are challenged and developing properly. The structure is a direct reflection of the mission and philosophy.

System of Play

In the German model each professional club has a first team which all players in the club aim to play for. Each youth team plays a system similar, if not exactly like the first team. Without a professional team to feed players into (the majority of clubs in the United States), we need to ask ourselves what are we developing the players for. Currently I believe that we are developing the premier players for collegiate play and the select players for high school soccer. Analyzing the colleges and high schools system of play there are many, with no consistency even from freshman to Junior Varsity to Varsity at the local high schools. Therefore, we need to implement a system of play that is consistent at the younger age groups, U9-U13 and flexible at the older age groups.

Rhythms in (German) Youth Soccer

- Play for 4-5 months - take a winter break
- Play for 4-5 months - take a summer break.
- Practice 2-4 days a week (some clubs twice per day)
- Play one day per weekend.
- Attend a few tournaments each year.
- Social and family time and school are viewed as hugely important
- The greatest emphasis for younger players is the training, and while the games are important as part of the learning process, the training hours and homework are viewed as most important - until 14-15 years of age - and only then winning becomes more important.

Conclusion – Our schedule is so convoluted that:

- o Younger players (U9-U10) play almost as many matches as training, and therefore are not getting enough touches on the ball.
- o Senior players (U14-U19) have no natural breaks, leading to greater chance of injury and potential burnout.

Clubs need to analyze the playing calendar and look to make adjustments (take control of the competitive calendar). Simply, we play too many games (league play bunched into 7-8 weeks, tournamentitis (the notion that we need tournaments to get games)) without enough training sessions to properly develop our players. The amount of training as to the amount of games is totally skewed in the wrong direction. For the U9-U13 age groups, a ratio of 3:1 should be the norm, for U14 and above the ratio of 4 or 5:1 is the goal.

Finances

The players that play for the professional youth teams are not required to pay to participate in their program (training, uniforms, training gear). Their participation is dependent upon their ability. The youth programs are financed by ticket sales from the professional (1st team) a limited amount, but primarily by sponsorships.

Conclusion – We need to create programs that start to decrease the amount of financial responsibility on the parents/players at the same time providing the best coaching resources available to our players and teams. We should strive towards a no cost program for the players, while this may be an unrealistic idea, any steps towards that direction will be beneficial to all.

Parent Education

We need to continue, from a club standpoint to educate the parents. As they pay significant amounts of money for their players to participate in our programs, they are part of our customer base. Coaching staffs need to consistently communicate as to what is taking place on the field, why it is taking place, and what they (the parents can look forward to). This can be done in several manners 1) e-mail distribution, too impersonal and allows for mis-interpretation of what is being discussed. 2) Speaking face-to-face after a match, best manner as can address any issues, and all the parents get the same message.

Everyone competes but most keep perspective

Education - Grades are emphasized and clubs pay attention to their player's progress in school. All clubs withdraw players from trainings and games if they fall behind in school. In the area of the players education we need to look to take a greater look as to how we can positively influence the importance of education. Potential programs, gather educational information (players provide copies of report cards and progress reports) and if not at a pre-determined level player's playing time and or training participation decreases until there is satisfactory positive progress, team study time either prior to or after training sessions.

Officiating - Games are competitive, intense affairs but only one official referee is used. Throughout Germany, there is only a center referee assigned to the match. Each team provided a club linesman, who had been educated on the laws of the game. Even the U19 Furth - Bayreuth game had one center referee and two club linesmen - in each club's training gear.

Rule adjustments - The U10's coaches can agree to rules changes before the game. Furth uses size 5 balls for under 10 and U11's but takes corners from 10 yards inside the line to insure youngsters develop the ability to convert and defend corner kicks.

Scrimmages - Using scrimmages, as a better training environment. Arrange with opposing coach a certain amount of stoppages per half. This allows the coach to stop the whole match and teach the players.

The atmosphere at the youth games is intense on the field but relaxed around it. I do not want to suggest teams and clubs do not want to win, they do, however it is not the most important aspect of youth soccer. Parents are not screaming at officials or yelling at players. While it is serious business it is always only "fussball".

John Abe