

Foreword

It is my pleasure to congratulate Bert with the publication of his new book. It has become a complete overview of his many years of experience in youth football and top level football.

In the beginning of my career I was extensively involved in developing the first outlines of a vision on the youth football learning process. Under the inspiring leadership, and with the then technical director and National Team Coach Rinus Michels, Bert, Leo Beenhakker and I travelled the country to give demonstrations to coaches on the field and in the classroom to introduce a vision on the coaching of youth players. We were announced as 'The A- team' with a wink to the then popular TV-series. Bert continued with Rinus Michels and other colleagues to further develop what in that time was called the 'Zeister Vision'. (The headquarters of the Dutch FA is located in the town of Zeist).

Besides working together with Bert on this development task at the KNVB, I asked him to be my assistant coach for the Dutch National Team, the Glasgow Rangers, Zenit St. Petersburg and recently for the Russian National Team. In these tense and exciting periods we worked very well together as colleagues, but above all as friends. During these periods, where the main focus was the result of the here and now, Bert always remained interested in the developments in youth football. I remember when we were in Glasgow Bert was busy writing, an in my opinion bulky epistle, after training a number of days. I asked him what he was doing and he told me that he had written a 25 page piece about developments within the KNVB (Dutch FA), concerning the youth football learning process.

In short, with this book Bert has given coaches, coaches in training, instructors and others who play a role in training and developing young football players, the necessary focal points, objectives, tools and examples that are essential for their role and task. The most important message which I myself would like to give is that theory and knowledge will only then get meaning when enthusiasm and passion are present. Bert and I based our everyday life on this notion.

Dick Advocaat

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1.1 Introduction

The characteristics of the game of football are identical for everyone. It is irrelevant if someone is a professional football player, a recreational player, a boy or girl, child or adult. Irrespective of level, age or gender, everyone plays the same game. But what are these fundamentals of the game of football? As far back as the 1980's the technical staff of the KNVB (Royal Netherlands Football Association) occupied themselves, under the guidance of Rinus Michels and Bert van Lingen, with this question. In 2002, this process got a new impulse with the creation of the book 'Voetbal Theorie' ('Football Theory') by Jan Tamboer. He wrote this book together with Bert van Lingen and Raymond Verheijen and it was published in May 2004 and translated into English in 2016. In the foreword of the book, world class coach Rinus Michels talks about it being the 'founding theory' for the game of football. The power of such a 'founding theory' is that it truly limits itself to the game of football. Not one word is written about characteristics and particulars of football players and the outside influences on the game. A football theory limits itself to those characteristics of the football game which apply to every football player in the world. To be able to fully comprehend the characteristics of game of football, one must first make clear agreements concerning the language utilized. Only then will it be possible to describe what occurs on the football field in a universal manner.

1.2 Football: a game of actions and words!

The game of football is truly a practical activity. The actions on the field are the core of the game, not words. However there are only a few activities in the world that get more attention and which are discussed more on a daily basis than the game of football. In a majority of the world everyone has an opinion about last night's football game and it is critiqued during breaks at school, at work, in the bars or at the barbershop. Everywhere the actions on the field are exhaustively discussed and accompanied with critical comments. Also the various media spend numerous pages, and radio and TV spending many minutes each day on analyzing the game of football. Broadcasted games on television must not speak for themselves, as journalists and former top level football players are hired as analysts and color commentators to give their expert opinions throughout the game. Often more time is spent discussing outside factors on the game than the game of football itself. Football is therefore a game of actions and words.

1.2.1 Football language

The game of football entices people to talk about the game on a daily basis. All these words together can be placed under the denominator football language. In the first place this language is spoken by the people closest to the game, the football players themselves and the coaches. They know what they are talking about and pre-eminently seem to be the experts when

it comes to football language. However, this language is not always completely clear, coherent, consistent and adoptable. Thus it occurs on a regular basis that coaches make use of the same terms, but actually mean something very different. Often expert football analysts illustrate this weekly on television as they frequently contradict themselves and in fact use the same terms in ever changing meanings. Regularly it hardly seems to matter what is said exactly, as supposedly the authority of the former top level football player guarantees a qualitatively good analysis. The idea is that if you were a good football player, then you must also be an expert in talking about football.

Figure 1.1 lists random examples of football terms used by professional coaches in football coaching magazines. These examples are an excellent demonstration that football language is frequently not much more than mix match of words and terms. Someone has taken over these words from former coaches without giving them much thought and have expanded

Figure 1.1

Random list of football terms used by football coaches in coaching magazines demonstrating the mishmash of football language.

- 'Running technique is essential in football'
- 'Technique is the foundation of football'
- 'Mental toughness is the core of the game'
- 'Most importantly football players must be fast'
- '.....'

3.2.2.1 Football problem #1

A center forward of a team regularly gets in a position where he is 1 on 1 with the goalkeeper, but is unable to score. The question is how does the coach define this football problem as illustrated in figure 3.1a and 3.1b? Does the coach view the problem as (1) the center forward hits the keeper with the ball? Or does the coach believe that (2) the forward misses due to a fear of failure? Figure 3.2 shows that the manner of formulating the football problem can have far-reaching consequences for the training session.

When the coach describes the football problem in football terminology, then during the training sessions he will place the center forward in numerous 1 against 1 situations with the keeper. During those sessions the forward will be coached on shooting the ball past the goalkeeper in the goal. The coach will coach on, in particular, the positioning, the moment, the direction and the speed of actions by the center forward. This

specifically means that the coach will ask more from the center forward in relation to his game insight, his actions with and without the ball and his communication. The expertise of the coach will become a factor now.

In case the coach describes the football problem in general terms that lack context, such as a fear of failure, then there is no guarantee that the training session will solve the problem.

Perhaps the coach will send the center forward to a sport psychologist or so-called mental coach. They have studied terms such as fear of failure that lack context. But can a sport psychologist or mental coach teach a center forward how to score when he dribbles the ball to the goal? In short, the same football problem is tackled in two totally different ways, as the result of a difference in the use of terminology.

Figure 3.1a

Center forward shoots the ball against the goalkeeper.



Figure 3.1b

Center forward shoots the ball against the goalkeeper.



Figure 3.2

Football Terminology		General non-contextual terms
center forward shoots the ball time after time against the goalkeeper	football problem	center forward has a fear of failure
duel 1 against 1 between forward and goalkeeper	training session	conversations with mental coach? breathing exercises?
posture of support leg, upper body, foot at the moment of shooting	coaching	'you can do it!' 'do not think but shoot!' etc.
center forward shoots the ball passed the keeper and in the goal	impact of training session	player overcame his fear of failure (?)
the game!	test moment	psychological test (?)

4.5.5.5 The training preparation form

When preparing and 'putting to paper' a training exercise, it will help the coach when he arranges the contents in a logical and systematic manner. To guarantee that the content of the activities is placed in the correct context (the match), the correct description of the football problem (with the use of action terminology),

the correct exercises with correct coaching moments and coaching observations takes place, the so-called training preparation form was developed.

The function and objective of this form monitors:

- if the game is still being played
- if the game is still being learned
- if the players are still enjoying the game

Training preparation U19 boys national level competition

Team function	: defending
Team task	: disrupting
Part of field	: opponents half /around the middle line
Role of opponent	: the opponent plays 1:4:3:3 with one attacking midfielder
Objective	: to improve disrupting the build-up by the forwards, midfielders, and central defenders, when a central defender of the opponent has the ball in possession. The team defends around the middle line.

Phase	Exercises/progression	Organization
Orientation phase and/or Learning/ practice phase and/or Application phase	<p>9 against 9 game: dimensions: 65 x 70 meters</p> <p>Game rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both teams can score on a large goal • regular game rules (therefore also off-side!) <p>Formations: Coached Team (CT) plays: 1:2:3:3 (1 attacking MF) Team Not Coached (TNC) plays: 1:4:3:1 (1 attacking MF)</p> <p>Style of play TNC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • central midfielder (10) has an attacking role - makes runs between the lines and forward • striker (9) and MF (10) stay more central <p>Methodical steps: Increase difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coaching TNC - influencing their build-up • varying the running actions of the midfielders TNC • make space larger (wider) • adding players to 10 against 10 / 11 against 11 <p>Decrease difficulty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dropping back towards own goal • make space smaller (more narrow or shorter) 	 <p>Field dimension 65 x 70 meters Number of vests 9 yellow/9 red Number of balls 20 Number of cones 20 Number of goals 1 fixed goal and 1 portable goal</p>

The form should of course not be seen and used as an aim in itself. It is only a means to help structure training sessions. Experienced coaches do not need a form anymore at a given moment. The structure as indicated on the form will be embedded in the coach's brain after a while. He continually acts according to this structure. The completion of this form with the different elements will be discussed in chapter 8.

Instructions/corrections	Comments
<p>Actions with the ball: <i>Forwards (7/9/11)</i> Block; prevent the deep pass; slide tackle. <i>Midfielders (6/8/10)</i> Block; prevent the deep pass; slide tackle. Keep body between opponent and the ball; slide tackle. <i>Central defenders (3/4)</i> Block/block tackle; keep body between opponent and the ball; defensive attitude; slide tackle; heading. <i>Keeper (1)</i> Actions to stop/intercept the ball.</p> <p>Actions without the ball: <i>Striker (9)</i> Force the build-up to one side (move between 3 and 4); drop back. <i>Outside forwards (7/11)</i> Squeeze/give cover to each other/press forward on opponents 2/5. <i>Midfielders</i> Mark close; squeeze/cover towards (10) opponents. <i>Defensive line</i> Mark close; squeeze/cover; press forward; give cover to each other. <i>Keeper</i> Cover the space behind the last defender.</p> <p>Game insight: <i>Striker</i> Force the 'weakest' central defender to do the build-up; recognize the moment to attack the ball. <i>Midfielders</i> Make a choice to mark close or remain in a zone; recognize the moment to attack the ball; screen the passing lanes. <i>Central defenders</i> Recognize the moment to press forward in the direction of the midfield/zone; moment to attack the ball. <i>Keeper</i> Recognize the moment to play off the goal line - (give cover to the back line).</p> <p>Communication: Cooperation between the striker/midfielders/back line/keeper: • distances between the different lines/players; • coaching by players - what and when.</p>	

Observing and analyzing a B-juniors match and setting an objective for a training session

Playing style

The manner in which a team plans to realize the objective of football

Objective of the game

How can the team win the game?

Attacking

How can the team score goals?

Building-up

How can the team create chances to score?

Team organization

What team organization does the coach choose, for example 1-4-3-3?

Basic tasks

What actions are required at each position?

Football actions

What football actions does the coach have influence on?

What?

- building-up
- scoring
- disrupting
- prevent goals against

Example

Building-up

Where?

Part of the field

- on the opponents half
- around the middle line
- own half

Example

Around the middleline

Objective

Improving the build-up by the goalkeeper, back line, midfielders and striker, when the ball is in possession of the keeper and the opponent drops back to the middle line.

Starting situation training exercise

- controlled situation
- semi-controlled situation
- from a transition moment

Who?

Identifying the main players and their basic tasks

Example

Goalkeeper, back line, midfielders and striker

When?

In what situation does it take place?

Example

When the goalkeeper has the ball

Which?

- opponent's style of play
- opponent's team organization
- (score in the match)
- (special circumstances)

Example

When the opponent plays in a 1:4:3:3 formation and drops back towards the middle line