

Cognitive Soccer Diploma Course

Module #1

Developing a player's ability to process key information rapidly, decide upon an appropriate action, execute the action, and then evaluate the outcome of the action in-order to make future decisions based upon the success or failure of the action as it relates to an overall strategy, is just one part of cognitive development in sports. Today's modern soccer player must be able to make ultra fast intelligent decisions under pressure, while possessing the ability to successfully execute on those decisions with high-level technical skill. Top players are able to sort through, instantly organize and chunk essential information together, while discarding all non-essential information. The high-level player rarely gets stuck in the decision making process, while the lower level player will frequently get stuck. Often the lower level player will fail because somewhere in the decision making process they fail to process data quickly enough, focus on the wrong cues, don't possess the correct skill for the situation or they simply do not have the technique to execute the required skill, even if they made the right decision. It is no coincidence that top-level players possess higher

intelligence levels and are better problem solvers on and off the field than lower-level players. Today's scientific data is making a convincing case that becoming a high level elite player has far more to do with your brain than your body. I can't stress enough the importance of developing thinking players who are also excellent overall learners, problem solvers and information processors, compared to just physically fit players.

However, the million-dollar question is, what exactly is the best way to develop players who have a high soccer IQ, excellent technique, tactical intelligence, emotional control, large attention capacity, superior focus and also make excellent teammates? Why do some clubs produce many players with superior soccer intelligence, while other clubs fail to produce any at all? Why do certain clubs produce high-level players year after year while others struggle to produce just one? Look at the size of the United States; the number of youth players and the amount of leagues in America, yet the United States still has still never produced a world class striker. Why? How does a tiny country like the Netherlands or Belgium develop so many world class pro's? These are the types of questions this course will attempt to answer from a cognitive soccer coaching perspective, the

information in the course is based upon scientific research done by neuroscientists, clinical psychologists, sports psychologists, high level coaches, fitness experts, sleep experts and many more qualified professionals. Very simply, the course is based on scientific findings from a wide variety of experts in many different fields, along with my own 25+ years of coaching experience; I combine the science and coaching experience together to make up the cognitive soccer methodology and course.

One important concept the course stresses is that soccer should not to be taught with a separation between the body and mind. I repeat, Coaches should educate and train the players mind and body together as one; it is not realistic to consistently train the two separately. This is not to say technical training should not be done separately at times, it certainly can, there is some value to rote training methods if done in the right context, but technique ultimately must be used in game realistic situations that requires the brain to use strategy. Top players understand that in order to play the game using strategy, they must be focused at all times, attentive and constantly problem-solving, both with and without the ball for the entire 90 minutes, regardless of the situation. The famous player Johan Cruyff said, "The average time a player

spends on the ball in one game is about 3 minutes, so its what you do for the other 87 minutes off the ball that determines how good you are". Any lapse in concentration during the 90 minutes will reduce the player's effectiveness and weaken the team, it is not good enough to only focus for the 3 minutes the player is on the ball, it is imperative that concentration levels stay high for all 90 minutes. Players must have the ability to stick to the task and stay concentrated, regardless of the environment, game situation or any other external uncontrollable factors. A major benefit of cognitive soccer training is that it develops the player's ability to focus and concentrate for a full 90 minutes. Cognitive soccer training constantly works on problem-solving, decision-making and building attention capacities; this mandates that every player stay focused and attentive or else the entire practice will break down.

As a coach there is no magic drill or exercise that will instantly create the next soccer super-star, but over the long term a highly skilled coach can produce top quality players, if the players are willing to put in the required time. However, there is a big difference between having a curriculum loaded with all kinds of content, compared to having a methodology that the coach fully understands and implements. Coaches

who are well versed in a high quality developmental methodology have the ability and knowledge to adapt trainings and make necessary changes to improve student learning, while a curriculum or drill book coach will not have that same skill set and central developmental philosophy. An example of this is when we look at poor performing students, these students are not automatically less intelligent, the main problem is that lower performing students often get stuck processing the information they are given, if the information was presented in a different way, those same students may learn very quickly. Being able to adapt content and deliver it in different ways is a skill that top coaches and educators have; this is often where the drill book coaches will fail. Coaches should always use a variety of ways to deliver content, presenting the information in the best possible way for each individual student, by doing this it allows for the greatest chance of deep learning to occur. Presenting content in different ways does not have to be overly complicated, it may just be playing on a different surface like the beach, or using a variable bounce soccer ball, or adding various constraints to the training. Becoming a “Master Coach” is not something that can be accomplished overnight. Top coaches have worked at their craft for a long time in order to gain the skills necessary to

become great teachers. Want to become a great cognitive coach? It’s all about having a methodology that allows you to deliver quality content in a way that the players can process the information and apply it in many different and unique settings, with enough freedom to find their own solutions, while learning from their mistakes without a coach telling them what to do every five seconds. A skilled cognitive soccer instructor will help develop players that will become efficient learners and in turn, confident problem solvers and excellent players.

Before you start the course please remember these five important cognitive coaching guidelines. First, soccer is a team sport and every member must be a humble hard working member of the team. When the team trains it depends on the focus of all individuals to make the group better. Exercises will break down if all the players are not working together, just like the real game. Second, autonomous learning, minimally invasive learning or player centered learning are all very similar important modern coaching concepts; the old school model where the coach is the dictator that yells and talks down to players is finished, we are smarter people than that now. The modern coach is a facilitator of quality information using many different methods that stimulate player learning; the modern

coach is a true leader and respected mentor to the players. Good coaches guide players in the process of becoming better; they don't rely on screaming, yelling or making sarcastic comments to their players. The third important factor in cognitive soccer development is the importance of teaching a cognitive centered lifestyle outside of soccer. This means developing well-rounded individuals who continually develop their brains off the field by taking part in activities like playing music, reading books, focusing on academics, writing poetry, programming computers, learning art, asking philosophical important questions, meditating, practicing mindfulness and making an effort to learn about other cultures. These are just a few things that will not only increase the brains plasticity and ability to learn, it will help your players become well-rounded individuals. Fourth, ethics, respect & sportsmanship must be taught and seen as an important part of the curriculum. There is no room in sport for "me, me me" or "lack of respect for any human being". Players should be asking, "what can I do to make the team better", instead of "what can I do to start". Unfortunately, we are living in a world that you hear "what can I do to start" more and more compared to "what can I do to help the team". The good news is the coach can create the environment, so "team

first"! Lastly, players & coaches should look at the learning environment (training ground) as a place to be excited and feel empowered to learn and teach in. Learning and getting better should be a passion shared by all. Players should not feel scared or embarrassed about failure, they should feel comfortable taking chances, learning, creating and asking questions, regardless of the outcome! Cognitive soccer development and coaching is really a holistic and scientific methodology for soccer, learning and life. If we can produce great soccer players, that's awesome, but if we can produce great soccer players and great people together than it's a total success. Enjoy the course and feel free to get back to me with all your questions. I am sure you will have a lot, because the information in the course will challenge many of the conventional coaching methods most of us have been exposed to growing up.

After the successful completion of the course, the "Cognitive Soccer Instructors Diploma" will be awarded. Also, be sure to check out my Youtube channel under "Marcus DiBernardo", it has over 250+ trainings. Feel free to email me any questions or comments at coachdibernardo@gmail.com