DEFAULT SETTINGS:

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Recently while attempting to install new software on my new ‘fruit based’ laptop, confusion continually set in. The more I wanted to explore, the more technical it became; until eventually ‘crash’, information overload. The next window shot into the screen ‘default settings have automatically been reset’.

What are default settings? According to Webster’s Dictionary: ‘Default’ translates to: Automatically use a particular setting or option: To fail to perform, or make good. ‘Settings’ translates to: The time, place, and circumstances in which something occurs or develops.

That same night coaching an Academy team, compounding various combinations of techniques and actions, limited success was progressively gained. Suddenly, my ‘Default Settings’ coaching light bulb appeared, witnessing the transference of skill to the player’s lesser technical foot. Frustration, and ‘I can’t do it’ faces appeared on the pitch, the players regressed to what they knew, players are not machines, I wanted to explore and research reasons why? But more over, how to delay or re route methodologies to solve a player returning to his or her comfortable ‘Default Settings’, rather than continuing creativity, advancing the player’s internal faith to paint outside the lines: Realizing that young players are not created in crisis, but can be revealed through and confidently gain from it; if the teacher allows?

An initial thought led to the environment in which I was coaching. Was it a mastery based, or a competitive ego based environment. According to Cox (1) “A mastery climate is one in which athletes receive positive reinforcement from the coach when they (a) work hard, (b) demonstrate improvement, (c) help others learn through cooperation, and (d) believe that each player’s contribution is important” (p. 39). In contrast, a competitive climate is defined as “one in which athletes perceive that (a) poor performance and mistakes will be punished, (b) high-ability athletes will receive the most attention and recognition, and (c) competition between team members is encouraged by the coach” (1, p. 39). To support the player and positively reinforce their technical or tactical development of players witnessing success, or the picture of success, is essential in the creation of confidence. The teaching environment is a major key. However, I also agree with Anson Dorrance: Making the game and training competitive, advances success, both internal and external. Looking into this, Anson’s competitive style is facilited on a player-based relationship either through his ‘cauldron’ or style of training. Not an enforcement of domination through punishment, rather than development through delegation.

**Facilitation. The game being the Teacher: Success and confidence the reward. Create intensity through correct use of craft and choice of Small Sided Games, not threat and intimidation.**

The training environment seemed to be the locked door. But the factors supporting the environment were the key. How to transfer the atmosphere from one of confidence, creativity and success on the training ground to the competitive game. Often coaches will assume players are knowledgeable and understand an explanation. Thus, tasking them to take the test during the game with out offering, or tutoring them through the study guide at practice. The player, generally, always wanting to please, does his or her best, however in some coaches and parents eyes this is not good enough, so the player still wanting to please defaults to what they are good at: Technically playing the simplest of games ‘kick ball’ or tactically relocating their playing position to an area of the field they are comfortable in. The coach and the parent can often be the catalyst in this action by focusing on a players individual errors in the game, rather than the reinforcement training ground philosophies / activities, facilitating the cure.

**Coaching to the developmental level of my players, not forcing the development of my players to the ambitions of my coaching. Thus, supporting the creation of a player based growth mindset.**

Let the players understand in their developmental procedure, failure is acceptable and possibly the rehearsal for the next success as Daniel Coyle states: ‘Try again, fail again, fail better’. This is great coaching language, but players might not want to hear the fact they are ‘failing’. This can be a very concrete word, even when used with more mature players. However, he semantically also defines this by saying ‘Choose a goal just beyond your present abilities, to target the struggle. Thrashing blindly doesn’t help, reaching does’. It comes back to the training ground and the planning of our sessions, making sure we incrementally push each player around, and outside their comfort zone, so emotions and environments they have to conquer in the game, have already been sensed in training: The ‘ground’ is not new.

Creating a player with a coaching growth mindset over a player, or coaches’ fixed mindset. Trying to set up the mentality of forward purposeful actions, rather than defaulting to survival mode. “The fixed mindset makes you concerned with how you will be judged; the growth mindset makes you concerned with improving.” Caroline Dweck (2)

We as coaches can not carry a ‘couch’ out on to the pitch, but we can at least understand and attempt to add the psychological pillar to the planning of our training sessions, just as we plan for the technical, tactical and physical aspects.

Watching these ‘I can’t do it faces’. I want to change them to ‘I can’, ‘I have done it’, ‘look at me’ faces. How? From my experience, the best way to create confidence and visual success is to show visually, personal success. The smallest of small side games teach this; 1v1’s and 2v2’s. One V One can be the most important activity for teaching not only the optimum soccer skills, but also the psychological dimension needed to compete. There can only be one physical winner, but the second player can also internally win through performance, if facilitated correctly. We as coaches can ensure that every player gains success in their own win. Utilizing something as simple as the timing distribution of the ball. Initiate the game by passing the ball to the learning player in time and space, allowing comfort and time of confidence, not panic and time of pressure.

Laurence Fine, of [www.finesoccer.com](http://www.finesoccer.com) reinforces this philosophy. The cure/solution; one v one is the most important drill for teaching not only optimum soccer skills, but also the psychological dimension needed to compete. In short, by decreasing space, decreasing time and striving for perfection during training sessions, coaches can get players out of their comfort zone and force them to improve. If you are a coach who is not forcing your players out of their comfort zone, you will never help them achieve the highest level of play they are capable of competing at. Lawrence fine Oregon youth soccer

Painting outside the white lines of the field and this article, one has to address the taboo of the sideline and how the ‘default’ principal extends beyond the game. Parents have default settings too! No matter how positive and verbally supportive, or how much they want to see the team play/win, often they just see their ‘Johnny or Jane’, when the game fails, or tactics and techniques break down, they see their own player/interest. And adjust the responsibility of blame, ideally with their internal voice, often an external scream, but so many times through morally weak use of e-mail, with a full descriptive analysis of your DNA, not the player’s game, and how you can amend it in support of their son or daughter. As a coach, we place ourselves on both sides of every problem to solve the issue, our default settings are ones of education and facilitation amongst many others.

To close this article I would like to leave the ball on the field with the players, no matter our thoughts and planning a player needs to know: The best option is to play in the moment, avoid setting limits on your performance, and continue to press forward when reaching new heights. If this options fails and you begin to focus on how well you are performing or not losing the lead your team has, you should default to Plan B. Plan B is to accept that you are playing well and ride the wave of momentum. [Hitzelberger](http://www.soccerpsychologytips.com/author/Peaksports-2-2-2-2/) (3)

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