

**From: Gerald Steele
Recreational Technical Director
Pickering Soccer Club**

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“I Want To Make Every Child a Better Player.”

I subscribe to the SETANTA channel on cable television. This service provides, for my viewing pleasure, a steady supply of top class professional soccer games from England and Europe. It's a great channel for watching soccer at different levels and styles of play. I enjoy it immensely.

However, there is one thing about the channel which truly grates with me. It is the regularly featured advertisement for 'British Soccer Camps'.

Various people are seen in this advertisement. Young children, while playing with soccer balls, make statements like "I want to learn tricks and moves.", "I want to take my game to the next level." A soccer mum announces that she wants her daughter to "... have the best possible soccer experience." Fair enough.

The part that makes me squirm is when a young coach appears, making the statement "I want to make every child a better player." Well, frankly that is balderdash. Coaches do not *'make'* players better. Players *'make'* themselves better.

Coaches can encourage, nurture, inspire, prepare, persuade, mentor, lead, demonstrate, explain and on and on but they cannot *'make'* players better. To get better a player must have fun, develop a passion, make a commitment and work hard. Attitude, enthusiasm and respect are vital components. Coaches can recognize and encourage this progression and these qualities but they cannot *'make'* a player better.

So, where am I going with this?

The very basic duty of a youth coach is to provide a safe secure and positive environment in which a child can enjoy herself/ himself playing the game of their choice.

Beyond, that, I would venture that the primary responsibility of a coach is to recognize and act on the fact that there is only one person who he/ she can *'make'* better and that is herself/ himself. By doing so, I contend, that, a coach better equips himself/ herself to help the player *'make'* himself/ herself a better player.

While recognizing that all Recreational Coaches are fully entitled, within certain parameters, to determine their own level and limitations I do feel comfortable in suggesting that coaches can *'make'* themselves better in many ways. Coaches can be open to new ideas and thoughts on coaching; they can gain experience in different coaching roles; they can attend courses (OSA, NCCP, First Aid etc) and workshops/ conferences organized by the club, DRSA and OSA; by taking advantage of the tremendous resource that is the internet; by listening to the kids; by recognizing and having a true empathy with the children's needs; etc. etc.

So what does that say about the newly created role of the Recreational Technical Directors at Pickering SC? Well, in my opinion, it is much like the players and the coaches. We cannot *'make'* players better nor can we *'make'* the coaches better but we can work diligently, creatively and intelligently to *'make'* ourselves better Recreational Technical Directors.

For example, at a recent Recreational Coaches' Meeting my fellow RTD, Nathalie Urbas, emphasized how important it is that there be open, clear and efficient lines of communication between the RTDs and the Recreational Coaches. I totally concur with this assertion. There is an old saw that states:

***“When things are going well in an organization it is 80% due to good communications.
When things are going badly in an organization it is 80% due to bad communications.”***

Working hard to establish good communications with the coaches is one essential way in which the Recreational Technical Directors, Nathalie, Meagan Pearce and I, can *'make'* ourselves better RTDs.

One last thing; they aren't 'British Soccer Camps'. They are English soccer camps. It's the Limeys again trying to bask in the reflected glory of Welsh, Irish and, of course, Scottish football!

GS