

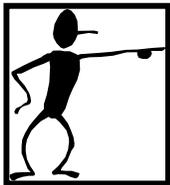
COACHING STYLES

“Whenever I take lessons, the coach always comes with their own agenda.” This is a typical comment of many club players taking lessons. How can a coach balance giving students what they want and what they need if those things conflict?

We can categorize how coaches convey their message into two distinct teaching styles, **directive** and **cooperative**. In the directive style, the coach says what is going to be done, how to do it, and gives the solutions to any problems. In the cooperative style, the coach presents the material in ways to get the student's agreement, sets-up situations for problem-solving, and asks questions so students can be involved in discovering solutions. Coaches tend to choose a style based on their personality. However, using both styles is required to adapt to the needs of the student, and to best fit particular situations. Let's look at both styles in more detail.



A) DIRECTIVE



In this style the coach is master. The role of the coach is to make the students perform correctly by getting them to do what the coach says. Feedback is always in the form of instructions (e.g. "Do this, Don't do that", etc.) The student has little power or input in the learning process.

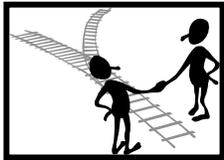
I. Advantages:

- This style may get students *initially* to respond quicker.
- If a student is unfocussed, being directive may help them get back on track.
- A coach may be able to minimize management time with younger children by simply telling them what to do and when.

II. Disadvantages:

- The majority of students will only make short-term changes with this approach. For example, they may do the movement the coach suggested in the lesson, but may not understand it (or believe it) enough to practice or use it on their own.
- The emphasis on constantly obeying may hurt a player's confidence and self-sufficiency. Players may become dependant on the coach's directions rather than developing their own sense of problem solving and decision-making.
- It is very easy for the coach to become negative using this approach. They may forget that learning is a process and get frustrated if the student cannot perform what they ask.

B) COOPERATIVE



In this style, both coach and student share in the learning process with the goal being to form a 'team' with the student. The coach's role includes setting up a learning environment where tactics and techniques are presented as problems to be solved to improve consistency or win more points. Through the use of questions, students discover and experience solutions and establish agreed upon objectives on what to do, and how to do it.

I. Advantages:

- Students are involved in their own learning process, which increases their motivation and increases the chance that long-term changes will be made.
- A better relationship is set-up between coach and student which increases the amount, and quality, of information exchanged.
- Students are less intimidated to explore ideas and ask questions.
- The coach gets more feedback from the student so they are more aware of how to improve the learning environment and individualize it.
- The increased use of questions typical in this approach helps equip students to solve their own problems and be less 'coach dependent'. This is critical for tennis since coaching is usually not allowed (or not available) when people play.

II. Disadvantages:

- Requires more expertise on the coach's part because the process is much more interactive (e.g. rather than just going through the 'steps' of a stroke).
- Coaches may fall into the trap of asking questions that are too broad and lead students into lengthy, unnecessary discussion.
- Coaches may talk too much and minimize the repetition required for the students to experience and learn the shot.
- Often coaches have a misconception that this approach means there is no structure or control, and students can do anything they want and rule the court (even though a lesson is fully 'learner-centred,' it should still be, 'coach driven').

Typically, the Directive style is what coaches use most. When exposed to the Cooperative style, the usual response is, "That takes too much time". This is a misconception that only occurs if the coach does things incorrectly. Remember, the goal of tennis teaching is not to have students mimic the 'correct' movements but learn how to *play* the game of tennis. Issues of problem solving, decision-making and tactical thinking are a priority.

COACHING NOTE: Which style to use?

A good coach would use both styles at times. It is recommended to use the Cooperative style most when the situation calls for learning, decision-making, and problem-solving (in other words, most teaching situations in a Game-based Approach). For court management, discipline, and drill organization, the coach may use their preferred style, or the one they feel is most appropriate for the situation