

# **GSM International Coaching Education Articles for Developing Your Players**

## **Soccer Psychology, The Coach Should Apply When Coaching**

### **Football Coaching - Half Time Psychology**

#### **Make Sure Your Coaching Mentally Prepares You for the Second Half Tactics**

One of the things that should be taught in any soccer coaching is that the half-time period in a match is not just about refueling and physical therapy. It's also a crucial time for the coach and team to gather their thoughts and prepare mentally for the challenges of the second half. The importance of effective communication methods should not be overestimated. A rhythm is a halftime provided is made ahead of time, and you and your coaching staff use the same approach (somewhat close) from match to match. The players will understand then to be focused at the half time they have.

The half-time period in a game tends to create an emotional experience amongst the players and the coach. A full review might take place a day or two after the game, which can be analyzed free of the emotional reactions associated with the match itself. However, at half-time, the outcome of the match is yet to be decided. The interval is only around 15 minutes in duration and is the only direct opportunity the coach will have to speak to all the players and to influence the second-half performance and result.

The half-time team talk will, of course, depend on the score and the coach's perspective of the match and key players, such as the captain or goalkeeper or mature field players who read the game well. It is also important to note other variable factors, such as the context of the game – e.g. is it a cup match in which the loser gets knocked out? Is it a league game and what are the league positions of the teams contesting the game?

Soccer, in particular, is a game with many mental demands, such as confidence, motivation, and concentration, and these requirements can be influenced by the situation in the match at half-time. For example, if a team is winning 3-0 and performing very well, it will go into the half-time break with a different psychological perspective from that of the team that is losing. However, if the same team is winning 2-0, and just before the half-time break the losing team score and make it 2-1, the psychological perspective of both teams would be different; the losing team would gain renewed optimism by scoring the late goal, and the team conceding the goal may become frustrated! Half-time is also psychologically important because it's the first time in the game that the players have an opportunity to reflect consciously for a sustained period of the match.

#### **The Coaches Role at Half Time**

The main goal of the coach during the half-time interval is to influence the second-half performance positively as much as possible. The coach may give the players feedback on how they are performing individually or collectively as a team, and discuss technical, tactical and physical aspects of the game, including formations, styles of play, changing tempos and pitch conditions.

A key element of a successful half-time talk is communication. This is a two-way process that consists of giving and receiving information. Coaches can learn a lot about the development of the game at half-time by listening and asking the members of the team questions to prompt a two-way discussion. However, while coaches are typically good at talking, being in charge and giving instructions, they are

often poor listeners. It is also important to note that communication is not only verbal. Research in communication had indicated that non-verbal behavior (i.e. body language) plays a major role in communication.

Researchers have determined that just 7% of what we communicate is the result of the words that we use or the content of our communication; 38% of our communication to others is a result of our verbal behavior, which includes tone of voice, timbre, tempo, and volume; and 55% of our communication to others is a result of our non-verbal communication, our body posture, breathing, skin color and our movement.

### **Your Coaching Leadership Styles**

The leadership style also has a significant influence on the effectiveness of a half-time team talk. There are several types of leadership styles, including authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire (leave players on their own for the most part). It is possible for coaches to use different methods in different situations, and it's important to note that personality types, cultural behavior, and other factors also contribute to coaching styles.

Some coaches display a combination of the different leadership traits, whereas others favor one style in particular. A good coach will adapt his or her leadership style to expectations, knowledge, and experience and group members. For example, if a group is hostile, the leader may prefer to adopt an autocratic style. If the team is friendly, the leader may choose a more democratic, person-centered style. Problems can arise if strategies for preparation used by the leader do not match the group expectations of the team.

### **Psychology of Half Time Substitutions**

As with other factors in a match, like scoring a goal or a poor refereeing decision, the psychology of a second-half substitution can change the tactical aspect of the game and give an insight to what the manager's state of mind may be. For example, if a team is winning 2-0 at half-time and the director of the winning team substitutes an attacking player with a defensive player, this could be perceived as being a negative tactic, and possibly that the manager doesn't have confidence in the team to carry on playing the same style; or as a statement by the manager saying 'we are going to hang on to our 2-0 lead, rather than seize the initiative and extend the scoreline'.

The criteria in deciding who to take off depend on the context of the match, and there are many tactical factors that could influence whether a player should be substituted, and who to bring on at half-time. However, replacing your captain when he or she may not be playing well can have a massive impact on the team's mental state. It may, for example, have an adverse effect, producing the belief in the team that the coach is panicking. It can also be a good idea to bring on a substitute who regularly performs well against the opposition you are playing – this may induce fear in the opposing team.

Sometimes a team's performance isn't always reflected in the score line. If the team is playing well and goes into the interval losing against the run of the game, is it worth keeping faith in the team to carry on performing well in the second half and hoping that the breaks will come, or does the manager make changes and risk disrupting the flow of the game thereby affecting the team's performance?

## **Using Neuron Linguistic Programming in Half Time Psychology**

Essentially, neuron-linguistic programming (NLP) is the study of excellence in how we think, how we behave and how we communicate. It provides a series of techniques, skills, and methodologies that can be used to create strategies to enable us to fulfill our potential in all areas of our lives. The brain not only controls the application of skills and strategic movements, but it also affects actual body movements that people used to consider automatic. NLP can help sportsmen and women to gain control over what many consider to be 'automatic' functions of our neurology.

### **Applying NLP (see above) at Half Time**

NLP can be applied at half-time in some different ways, just by using the principle of active instruction. Stating what you want rather than what you don't can have a powerful positive effect on the mind, but many coaches still tell players what they don't want, producing negative thoughts.

When you shoot doesn't miss the target might be the instruction from the coach to player, but would it not be better to instruct the player when he shoots to hit the target? If somebody asks you not to think of the color black, what immediately comes to mind? The very thing you were asked not to think about. Phrases such as 'Don't foul,' 'don't lose the ball,' 'and don't lose the game' can all be replaced by more positive instructions.

Here are some half-time techniques that can be used in sequence to create the right state of mind for the coach and the players. These techniques are 'dissociation,' 'reframing' and 'anchoring.' They are aimed at creating a logical state of mind for the coach at half-time and getting the players to go out into the second half in peak mental state to achieve their desired outcome.

### **Coach Can Use Dissociation Methods Creating a Better Half Time Conversation**

Dissociation is about recreating an experience from the perspective of an onlooker or observer. This means that the person does not re-experience the first emotion but instead experiences the detached emotions of an observer. This enables the coach to think logically and not emotionally. The technique of dissociation is useful just before half-time, so the coach can think logically and not emotionally when delivering the half-time team talk.

### **Anchoring into An Emotional State that the Players Are Performing**

An anchor or gripping onto a stimulus (words or expression such as "we need to go back and play the 1st half first 20 minutes) that creates a response either in you or another person. When an individual is at the peak of an experience during an intense emotional state, an applied particular stimulus can establish a neurological link between the emotional state and the stimulus. Anchoring can occur naturally or be set up intentionally and can assist in gaining access to past states and connecting the past state to the present and future. Anchors can be used by both coaches and players to produce a state of mind or mood needed for a given situation. This type of half time breakdown allows players to focus on what best worked or what will now work better than the first half because of our pre-match training over the past week.