

Two words to change your coaching relationships...

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Ok, I'm holding my hands up from the start, this has taken me too long to figure out. As my understanding on coaching has developed and the more I have started to consider the fact that everything starts with the interactions *between* people, this is now essential.

What I see in many coaches is that they are quick to judge, quick to decide what an athlete or player can't do, rather than focus on what they can do. However, as they make this assessment, which in fairness is still part of a coach's role as they look to teach, I'm not sure jumping to an assumption as the first port of call is the right approach.

These are the two words that can change a conversation, that can enlighten your understanding, that can help you peer through their lens on the world...

I'm curious...

It's that simple. *I'm Curious...*

That should be the start and the foundation. And it does many things.

Firstly, it shows you are interested in them, in their point of view, in the decisions they made and in getting their side of the story. Opening up that form of questioning can help you see things you may not have seen, as quite frankly, you weren't in their shoes! You don't know what they saw or what they didn't see because you were most likely stood in a different spot, at a different angle, have a different level of game understanding, a different belief on the game, a different view on what success would have looked like etc.

The other point is that it diffuses judgement. It can open you up to hearing something different that can in turn change your view of how you help them next.

Example:

You see a player with the ball at their feet look up, appear to notice a player in space, but don't make the pass you think they should make and then lose possession.

Option 1: You can shout at them from the side of the practice... "*MAKE THE PASS!*", under the impression that will help.

Option 2: You can stop the practice, rewind a few seconds and try to recreate the moment that was there, demonstrate, and tell them "*That's the pass I want you to make*". Then give them a turn and carry on.

Option 3: You can wander onto the practice, without necessarily stopping it, and as you get over there ask "*I'm curious as to what you saw last time you had the ball here and what you thought about?*"

The last one then offers the opportunity for input, for the chance for the player to share what they saw. They may not have seen the pass you saw. They may have seen it but decided against it as they saw something else. They may have seen it but decided they were too tired to kick it that far so chose not to! But what it shows is co-creation on learning, offering them the feeling of value and support and as you then delve into it further, this can shape your coaching relationship with them as an individual.

Summary

The first two options are always there, but my personal preference is now the third but it has taken me time to get there.

Start with curiosity, without judgement, and see what you can learn too...