

Why Talent is Irrelevant - Todd Beane

Talent: Nature vs. nurture, is it relevant? Top PDP contributor and coaching innovator, Todd Beane discusses the preconceptions around talent and the role of the coach observing and assessing performance before adding value through a considered program of training.

Was Leo Messi born a star? Is talent innate or acquired?

While we may find the nature vs. nurture debate interesting it is completely irrelevant to us as coaches. A player will show up for training on day one and that is where we begin.

Our day one with her may be her day 451 in soccer. However, the fact is that day one is day one with us. We cannot change her past skill acquisition anymore than we can change her genetic code. Both nature and nurture has led her to us this day.

Begin at the Baseline

Upon arrival, each player in our charge has a baseline capacity to play the game. Our role is to assess that capacity quickly and effectively.

We must look at a players' cognitive ability. How well does she perceive her environment and respond intelligently to the challenges at hand? What solutions does she propose? What decisions does she make?

We must analyze her competence. Can she receive, pass, and dribble? We can test individual skills within the context of a dynamic session as long as we observe and observe well.

We must assess her character. Is she ambitious? How well does she respond to mistakes? Is she energetic and engaged?

Of course, we must be patient and not draw grand conclusions too quickly but the data we need to collect is there for us to amass with keen sensibility. The trick is not to let failure obscure the success of a player. A great decision may fall short when accompanied by poor technique. However, that does not mean that the cognitive process was poor, just that the left foot may be weak. Conversely we must not be deceived when poor decisions are salvaged by speed or a skillful move.

Let us celebrate the best qualities of our players and build from there. A small player need not be compared to a taller one. She does not control her maturation in that regard. But she does control her attitude and her commitment to play with joy. That we can expect of her and every child.

And, as coaches, what can we give her?

We can commit to an open mind about who she is, why she plays and where we can guide her. We can promise to be observant, caring and professional. We can dedicate ourselves to improve her baseline one training session at a time.

And we can throw the nature vs. nurture debate aside and nurture, nurture, nurture the potential within her and every player.

Coach's Survey

- Do you treat each player as an individual within the team context?
- Do you celebrate effort?
- Do you accept that smaller players are just smaller and younger players are just younger but that neither fact should prejudice our commitment to talent development?
- Can you make a meaningful and precise distinction between cognition, competence and character?

Conclusion

In the end, we are brilliant coaches if each and every player leaves our supervision better in as many aspects of the game as possible. And the remarkable thing is that this victory can take place for every player of every team at every level in the league standings.

Let's coach the player we have in front of us.

About the Author:

Todd Beane is the Founder of [TOVO International](#), a football immersion program in Barcelona for players and coaches. Todd was also a Co-founder of Cruyff Football & is heavily involved in the Cruyff Institute.