

Your Teaching Progression: The best tool you have, so keep sharpening it!

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I would like to express my gratitude in you reading this article. I also would like to thank the Minnesota Football Coaches Association for allowing me this platform. It is my goal to provide you with some information that can hopefully benefit you and your players and to become the best program around. It is an honor to be part of the football here in the wonderful state of Minnesota and working with The University of Minnesota Golden Gophers. With respect to the restraints and complications you face as a football coach at the various levels, it is still my hope to provide some information that may be useful.

I think that we as coaches face an ever-growing issue to compete against all the distractions or other influences that our youths have in their lives. So as coaches, it is our responsibility to protect the game we love, by continuing to nurture and develop outstanding STUDENT-ATHLETES in the classroom, in the community and on our fields. We are definitely in the era of informing children why we do what it is that we do. Patience has been pushed to the side and youths (including adults) want INSTANT _____, you fill in the blanks. It could be instant wins, instant growth, instant money etc. Having this knowledge can be an advantage or disadvantage depending on how you approach it. Each year we take a look back at our films to see what we did good and what we did bad in hopes to build on our strengths and make adjustments to our weaknesses in our programs. My wife is a middle school teacher and it sounds like similar evaluations happen in the classroom. Why wait till the end of the season to evaluate how the season went. I have learned over the years that the Teach Progression is one of the most valued attributes a coach can have when dealing with players and other coaches. A good Teach Progression allows your athletes to clearly understand every aspect of what you are coaching them on. A bad teach progression that leads to confusion by all parties involved has the threat of losing a great player. I see this as a similar outcome on why many students choose to go another direction than math as a favorite subject.

So there are some key ways to better your Teach Progression.

First place to start is your meetings, whether it is a team meeting or group meetings like position, special teams or offense/defense. Just like game film, evaluate your performance. It's easy to look back and say "wish I could have covered this or that," but what about the non-verbal communication and the habits we don't know we use daily. I am guilty of using words like "uhm" to fill space between thoughts. I realized this after I recorded myself a couple times using my voice memo on my phone or even having our video guy set up and record a presentation. This allowed me to hear and see myself from a different point of view, the players point of view! This evaluation procedure allowed me to better my presentation and the way the information was delivered to the players.

Don't just film practice, film your drills! What better way to see and show your players and others what you are doing and how you are coaching on the field. Players get to see themselves in drills to have a visual on what they need to do better, I get a visual on something I may have missed out there on the field. Then you can match up game clips with drill clips to show them why you are doing what you are doing. Incoming players will also benefit from seeing others in the drills they did and what is to be expected not to mention seeing it in a game to validate it.

Get out and speak as much as possible. It is no better way to evaluate your teach progression than to go speak to others. Speaking to a group of your peers about how you teach forces you to look in a different perspective about what it is you see on the field. Although the statement is not 100% true (cause I know we face some trying situations), what you see on film should be what you are teaching in your meetings. If this does not match up on a consistent basis, I think you have to take a good look at your Teach Progression. What you are asking them to do is clearly not being transferred onto the field. Not seeing proper technique could be a direct result of a flaw in your teaching. Challenge yourself to identify these shortcomings and make adjustments when needed. A Student Athlete wants to be successful and will respond positively to a coach with a well thought-out Teach Progression. ■