

## 7 *Make a Difference on Match Days*

**You CAN make a difference on match day. Whilst every coach has a different style, they all share a common goal – to get the best out of their team when it really counts. Follow these simple do's and don't's, and you WILL make a difference once the game is underway.**

**DON'T** micro-manage the game. It is easy to talk particular players through every move, but this is potentially destructive because it stifles their instinct for the game. Positive encouragement gives players confidence. Psychologists tell us that it is better to say “hit the target” than “don't miss”.

**DO** find the right moment. Information needs to be given when players are most receptive i.e. when they can concentrate on what YOU are saying – NOT in the middle of a play.

**DON'T** get distracted. Talk to spectators and the other coaches afterwards. Your players need your full attention. Create a bubble for you and your team. Make sure at half time the bubble continues. Youth teams suffer the most from a babble of comment from parents, confusing the main message you want to deliver. Your team needs to avoid conflicting messages.

**DO** watch first, worry later. Keep your emotions under control – keep panic, anger, frustration and fear out of the equation. Players depend on the coach to be the coolest head on the pitch.

**DO** watch from as many different angles as possible. This will enhance your perspective on the game. For example, the shape of a team is more discernible from a distance, speed easier to gauge from the side and physical fitness more apparent when standing close up.

**DON'T** argue with the referee. It distracts the players. It is also unlikely to have a positive influence on the outcome of the game and is not in the spirit of the game anyway. Referees will rarely change a decision once it's been made and your intervention may turn them against you.

When the whistle blows for the start of the match, it should start a concentrated period of thought, action and reaction for the coach. Having spent significant time preparing a team for this moment, the coach also needs to be prepared, mentally and emotionally. Whether you can find glory in defeat, humility in victory, can you say you made a difference on the day?

**“The secret of winning football games is working more as a team, less as individuals. I play not my 11 best, but my best 11”**

*Knute Rockne – soccer coach*