

The Coaching Roller Coaster

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Last summer I was at a theme park waiting in line for what seemed forever to ride the "Superman". One of the world's top roller coasters, as it was advertised. The line was about 50 minutes long to board the ultimate roller coaster that lasted a whole 2-3 minutes. While I was in line, I got to thinking, isn't coaching like waiting in a roller coaster line to enjoy a few minutes of elation? Isn't coaching like a theme park? Because I never think of anything else but soccer, even when on vacation, my answer to these two questions is Yes.

Let's look at the theme park first. When you walk in, after you have paid the unbelievable price, you receive a map of the entire theme park. From there, you have to decide which direction you wish to start. Do you start in Kiddieland, where you know the rides or safe, even though there is a ride named the "Taz Tornado" or do you know the park well enough to go right to the big coasters and other attractions that the park offers? If you are like me, you want to get to the good stuff right away. In relating this with your team, do you start off the season in Kiddieland or go for the good stuff, the adventure rides? It depends on your players. To enjoy the entire park, I usually go from one theme to another. Go from one section to another section so that I make sure that I see the entire park and to not miss anything. Prioritize your day! After viewing the entire park and experimenting all of the rides, then go back to the best rides and enjoy. As a coach, do we go from one section to another and teach our children progressively or do we go for the big rides right away? For development sakes, I hope that we all enjoy the entire park first and progressively train our players. To offer our players the full spectrum in parts, not the whole. In training our team, we need offer them a variety of activities, or have repetition without repeating, and then use the adventure rides to keep their enjoyment level up.

Coaching is also like a roller coaster. It seems like you wait and wait to get that few minutes of pure elation. As a coach in training, it might be a long wait for you as a coach to get purely elated when they actually do something that you have worked on. That's the thrill in coaching. There may be only a 2-3 minute period where everything goes so well, that you hope that the ride doesn't end, but eventually, because they are kids it does. So as a coach you get right back in line and wait it out until the next 2-3 minute thrill. Then there are those rides like "The Racer" in King's Island that the wait isn't quite as long, but the thrill and excitement is still there. How about in a match? Sometimes you see results in a match right away, and the thrill meter in your head lights up. Other times, it seems like forever before your squad comes does something that you worked on in training and takes you for that ride. Then there are times when you wait and wait and the thrill never quite comes. Sort of like waiting in a line for a roller coaster only to have your spirits drowned by a sudden thunderstorm that leads to closing the ride. So what do you do? Some of us keep waiting it out and hope for the best. Others of us, head for the snack shack, pay \$5 for a 12 oz soft drink, leave and come back to try again. At the end of a long day at the park, you get in that traffic jam to get out and wonder if it was all worth it. Was it worth the money? Was it worth the waiting in lines for a few minutes of enjoyment? For those that coach to get that 2-3 minutes of thrill on that coaster when everything seems to come together if only once in training or in a match, my only hope is that the answer is an emphatic yes. So the next time you are training your team, remember to enjoy the ride, because the wait is worth it.