

# Emphasis on "teaching" needed in Canadian Soccer

## Soccer

By ALEX TOUGH

Reading newspaper reports and columns can be conflicting and confusing. Former player and current soccer commentator, Graham Leggat, often says, "well, that's how I see it, you may see it differently."

How correct this is may have been seen by those who were fortunate (?) enough to have read Scotland's national Sunday newspapers reports of the Scottish Cup final. Both agreed that the result was Celtic 1, Rangers 0. Both agreed that certain players had a good or a poor game. Both agreed that a mistake in judgement by a Rangers defender let in a Celtic player to slot home the only goal of the game. Both agreed that a last minute effort by Rangers was disallowed by the referee.

However, other aspects of the reports of the game are entirely different. One reporter stated that the game was one of the best seen in a long time. The other stated that this was not one of the better games seen in a long time. Few of us were fortunate enough to have seen the game, having been broadcast by satellite TV at the same time as the English Cup Final between Liverpool and Everton. Most reports on the latter game have been the same, a great game in the end.

The whole point is, I suppose, that the writer mainly states his or her opinion of how it looks to them and you have to pick out the bones of the matter and judge for yourself how factual or how opinionated it all is. So there!

I am, sadly, beginning to believe that soccer will never become 'big' in this country, for several reasons. The nature of the climate is the main reason. Whereas, in B.C. it is possible to play for around 10 months or more in the year - outdoors we may only play around 4 months. In most countries the game is played for eight months or more and players may learn the game in the surroundings in which they play.

The game is structured differently around the country, provinces have differing club or team organizations. Recreational (house league) and competitive (rep/select) are not known in some areas as it is here - and not in all parts of Ontario. We are out of step with the rest of the soccer world in setting our age groups, even the USA. WE organize age groups from January 1 to December 31. The rest of the world organize from August 1 to July 31. This distinction often causes confusion and is detrimental to our involvement with international competition.

There are too many different nationalities pulling in different directions in the organization of the game. It is surprising how much this is a factor at the playing

level and has to be experienced to be believed. This is also the opinion of a former colleague who was also a sports reporter for the Montreal Gazette.

All games are by nature competitive and the attempt to remove the competitive element is a mistake. The force should be the other way around.

Players soon find their competitive slot. They strive to the best of their ability and usually play better against more talented opponents. It is entirely possible to fully enjoy a sound thrashing when playing against a superior opponent - one learns.

In learning comes a final point - teaching is the proper name of the game. We should be teaching and not 'coaching.' Too much emphasis

is placed upon positioning, tactics, 4-2-4 or 4-3-3 and so on. Teaching the skills of the game, of any game, should be the priority.

Mini soccer, smaller teams and smaller fields is an ideal way in which to teach players. They see more of the ball and have more game time. Should we concentrate in winning games at the early age or should we be teaching how to control the ball. After all, it is to kick the ball that the young are mainly attempting.

I took in part of a house league game and watched the results of mini training. Only two players who have come through the system showed talent on the ball. Several players tried to set up their teammates with passing. Very few managed to head the ball at all.

Striking of the ball was average, some could and some could not. Yet all looked as though they were enjoying themselves, but is this the only be all and end all?

In spite of my seemingly negative prediction I do believe there is a chance for soccer to succeed. The current Canadian and Provincial leagues offer upcoming players an opportunity to bring the game up to world standards. It would be a great pity to lose the possibility after the great showings in the last World Cup and Olympics tournaments.

The Inter County league last Wednesday suffered from the weather with the late games failing to reach completion. In the first division Crown defeated Eagles 2-1, Meteor were leading Villa 1-0

when the game was stopped due to the weather and Marlin and Ancients did not take the field due to Ancients shortage of players (any game may have been abandoned anyway.)

In the second division, Trexcon defeated Tam O' Shanter 2-0, United defeated Stingers 2-1 and Laurentians 0-0 with Ajax rounds up the results.

Today (Wednesday) has Eagles vs Mariners, 7 p.m. Christian; Villa vs Crown, 7 p.m. McKenzie and Martin vs Meteor, 8:30 p.m. Memorial in the first division. In the second we have United vs Laurentians, Meadowglen or Alcott, 7 p.m.; Milton vs Trexcon, Brian Best 7 p.m.; Tam O' Shanter vs Stingers, Memorial, 7 p.m. and Team IV vs Ajax at Syntex.

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