

GRASS ROOT LEVEL DEVELOPMENT OF TABLE TENNIS

By A.Muralidhara rao, IRS(Retd.) and National coach

Promotion of game of table tennis at grass root level depends largely on administrators, coaches for the development of game at grass root level.

Role of the coaches in grass root level development

Coaches should have:

- Sound knowledge of the basic strokes and the ability to manage large groups of trainees
- Skill in drawing the attention of the trainees with good communication ability for imparting knowledge
- The ability to motivate the trainees to learn and have keen observation skills to spot the talent in the player pool
- Ability to organise competitions with in the groups to observe them under pressure to assess their potential
- Focus in increasing the fitness levels, both physical and mental, and develop a training plan by dividing the players in to groups as they learn skills
- Good rapport with the parents and administrators

Role of administrators in grass root level development

- Developing a broad base with large pool of players
- Create a large pool of coaches with good knowledge of game with passion to produce the result.
- Organising competitions for different age categories at grass root level to give exposure to players
- Organising coaching camps at various grass root level
- Organising clinics for the coaches

- Approach central and state government funding for their efforts to come up with promotional schemes to develop the game at grass root level

Role of coaches in grass root level development

Coaches should have

- **sound knowledge of the basic strokes and the ability to manage large groups of trainees**

A coach should be able to teach the trainees what is a good stance, Tossing the ball, a good variety of serves, neat actions of back hand push, forehand push, forehand block/counter/topspin or loop drive, similarly backhand block/counter/topspin or loop drive which are basics at grass root level once these are well developed the trainee may be taught to do forehand flick/taps, banana openings with backhand and also topspin against topspin (counter attack)

- **Skill in drawing the attention of the trainees with good communication ability for imparting knowledge**

Coach should be able to draw the attention of the trainees always particularly when a technique/stroke sequence is explained or when u explain a behavioural aspect or mental conditioning aspect to large group of trainees the coach should be able to first draw their attention and then go on to explain the topic he has in mind.

Coach should necessarily be a good communicator. Otherwise the knowledge he has cannot be transferred to the trainees. Even if a

coach has difficulty initially in communication, he/she can overcome by constantly making efforts to communicate. It is simply a skill that can be learnt. Never feel shy and avoid communication with the trainees

In my experience of 37 years of coaching I found that children respond very well and pay intense attention if the essence/ usefulness of what the coach is about to explain is first brought out from a small story/anecdotes/a senior players doing it/ story of successful persons in various fields/ some real life experiences

- **The ability to motivate the trainees to learn and have keen observation skills to spot the talent in the player pool**

The coach has to constantly keep up the trainees enthusiasm to learn and achieve their dreams. A coach needs to create a dream in players too. The method explained above is squarely applicable here too in respect motivating them.

Coach also needs to observe very keenly the trainees in the group while not only playing on the table but off the table too during fitness activities, interaction with other players, their attention to the training and understanding the content, discipline, attitude while playing games, their behavioural patterns under various circumstances as the same would give important pointers to the coach about the trainees abilities such as athleticism, aptitude for the game, their intelligence level, depth of their interest in achieving

their goals, tenacity, focus, depth of their ambition, competitiveness, enthusiasm to learn, their ability to work as team etc.

- **Ability to organise competitions with in the groups to observe them under pressure to assess their potential**

This would enable the coach to to observe them under pressure to assess the above characteristics. Many players act and react differently under pressure in a match. Mostly players performance comes down not only due to mental pressure but also physical pressure due to release of adrenalin flow into muscles for action which is commensurate with the players perception of the challenge they are facing

- **Focus in increasing the fitness levels, both physical and mental, and develop a training plan by dividing the players in to groups as they learn skills**

Coach should draw up a good plan for developing the physical fitness and also mental fitness programme. (with the assistance of trainers in those fields wherever feasible.

At grass root level training will always involve handling a good no. of palyers together. So the teaching will be for the group. However, as the training programme goes ahead, improving of their skills will not be the same for all. This will result in coach having to segregate them into groups and teach the basics based on the capacity of the trainee to learn. This grouping may frequently keep changing as the learning ability of individuals is not constant.

- **Should develop a good rapport with the parents and administrators**

Last but not least the coach should develop good rapport with the parents and administrators as both these sets of people are stakeholders in the progress of the trainees and also they are the foremost in support system. Coach should conduct review sessions with players along with their parents to apprise them of the progress being made and to rope in the parents support in creating a conducive environment for the growth of the trainees. Whereas, the coach should work supportively to the administration in the development of the game at all levels particularly at grass root level as a strong and broad base at grass root level will pave way to produce players of international calibre capable of beating the best in the world to achieve the Olympic dream for table tennis.

Role of administrators in grass root level development

- **Developing a broad base with large pool of players**

In order to create a large pool of players, schools and clubs should be approached and extend assistance in developing the infrastructure. Assist in engaging a good coach. Keeping them informed of competitions, bring to their knowledge about the governmental incentives for the

talented and achieving players. Publicise about the sports quota for table tennis players in various educational institutions, of jobs under sports quota etc.

- **Create a large pool of coaches with good knowledge of game with passion to produce the result.**

Coaches should be encouraged to actively participate in the development of the game and developing broad base. Coaches should be given appropriate recognition based on their performance. A panel of coaches and senior player volunteers may be drawn for assisting in short camps/ clinics in schools where large no. of player base is available.

- **Organising competitions at various levels to give exposure to players**

Besides the mandatory competitions organised by the national body and State and district associations a no. of competitions for non-ranked (other than those state ranked players) players should be organised at various levels to identify the talent in 2nd line players and also to create and sustain the interest among the 2nd line players

- **Organising coaching camps at various levels**

More less all schools have table tennis facilities and large no. of players are there playing whether a coach is available to them or not. A state/district association can chalk out a programme of short coaching

camps for 5 days for 2 hours in schools with school administration support. This can be used to develop interest in them, give them information about equipment, competitions, whom to contact for further information on training centres and benefits of taking up the game of table tennis etc.

□ Organising clinics for the coaches

The administrators should organise clinics/seminars for coaches to upgrade their knowledge, exchange ideas and understand the solutions for peculiar difficulties they face in training as each individual trainee is dynamic and the environment that develops around the trainee is also dynamic

● Approach central and state government funding for their efforts to come up with promotional schemes to develop the game at grass root level

At present there are various incentive schemes for players who are successful at national and international level besides state level chief ministers cup with high cash incentives. However for the development of game at grass root level there is no funding. Administrators must approach the sports authorities at both central and state government and seek funding and organise the above discussed activities to promote the game at grass root level.