

## Styles of Play

In the last little while, at the World of Soccer offices, we have been getting ourselves ready for the launch of our new Byte Size Coaching platform (we have a tentative date - April 15th).

As part of the upgrade of the U13 - U18 section I have been looking at that controversial area - Systems of Play. Everyone is looking for soccer's "magic bullet" in the hope that it will transform their ordinary team into world beaters.

If we are honest with ourselves, we all know there is no such thing. But the quote that "the team performance should be greater than the individual parts" says it all. Not sure where the quote came from. Sounds like Lombardi, but I was unable to confirm that.

How do we do make that team performance greater?  
That's what I have been looking at.

A few years back, I worked with Soccer Learning Systems on a video called "Systems of Play." I told SLS founder, Pat McQuaid Snr, that there was no way I could even involve myself in tackling that controversial "systems" territory unless we first covered the 10 Principles of Play. I called Allen Wade, the former Director of Coaching of the English Football Association, at his home in London. Allen had first documented the "Principles of Play" in his book published in 1968 called "The FA Guide to Training & Coaching." He told me he would be happy for me to go ahead and said while he was the first to document the "Principles" many coaches of the 50's and 60's were using them - one way or the other.

With the incentive of the new website I decided to look at "systems" and the ramifications of team organization, and while I was doing it write another coaching manual for general publication and so double up on my endeavors.

76 pages later I realized there were three areas (possibly

four) that needed separate consideration - even though they are inextricably connected.

Those three are -

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Principles of Play

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Systems of Play

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Styles of Play

...and that is how we will arrange them on the website (but not in the book).

The five Principles of Attack and the five Principles of Defence are interwoven into the numerical arrangement of players - the team formation or System of Play. Style of Play is a somewhat nebulous factor, but so important. The fourth one probably merits separate consideration even though an integral part of the other three. And that is the method of defending - a Zonal System or a Sweeper/Man-Marking System.

At a later date, in a future newsletter, I will get into more detail about "Systems of Play." What I would like to do now is link you to a very interesting article by Tim Vickery, an Englishman living in Brazil. It is so pertinent to Styles of Play that I thought we would invite Tim into our Boot Room this month (and to his credit, he does give Liverpool a mention).

Enjoy and let us know what you think.

[Click here to read our Boot Room Article "Soccer - The Universal Language?"](#)