



Rethinking Soccer — a return to chaos

We've all seen it—straight white lines painted on the grass, over-organized drills leaving straight lines of kids waiting for their turn to kick the ball, and well-meaning coaches giving tactical advice to a bunch of bored youngsters who are confused because they thought this “game” they signed up for was supposed to be fun. You can find this picture of classic youth soccer every Saturday morning across the country. It is American engineering’s formula for the game of soccer.

The problem with this American soccer formula is that it has reduced the world’s most beautiful game into just that—a formula! Youth soccer coaches have been working diligently for years to develop the most efficient process to reach the ultimate goal, winning. But in striving for efficiency and winning, we’ve lost what the game has to offer our youth. We’ve missed that soccer can be one of the best developmental tools for preparing our children for life. Now we all know that winning isn’t everything, right? I mean that message is far from revolutionary. But it is also far from actually being implemented. Not that we don’t *want* to instill in our children that there is more than winning. It is just that actually putting that message into practice is so much harder than simply preaching it. Every time you read a news article or turn on the TV you are bombarded with winning. The stories are all about winning: who is likely to win, what are their chances of winning, who won, how they won, why they won. (And these “winning questions” are in no way limited to just sports...business deals, legal battles, political elections, foreign policy... the list goes on.)

We are brainwashed to focus on winning. We prize the statistical win above all the natural elements that can maximize a developmental sporting experience. Andy Barney, author of [Training Soccer Legends](#), explains that this emotional win/loss rollercoaster is counter-productive to learning and consistent positive growth. The only approach that makes educational sense is one that focuses on individual creative moments of success. For HappyFeet and the Legends Soccer Club, these “individual creative moments of success” create the foundation for our coaching curriculum.

Everything we do, from HappyFeet classes and birthday parties to Legends skill sessions and games, is designed to teach and encourage our players to take a risk, try a new skill—and when they do, we celebrate it as if that risk or attempted skill was in fact winning the game! It is our mission to build into our coaches, parents, and players the understanding that the process—practicing, attempting new skills, developing mental and physical coordination—is the win, not simply the means to a win.

So try one of our HappyFeet or Legends programs. Don’t come expecting white painted lines or even players standing in lines. Come expecting organized chaos on the field where your child will have a blast while getting hundreds of touches on a soccer ball. Expect a coach that knows how to teach and encourage your child to take a risk and try a new move or shot. And remember when your little soccer star takes that risk—that’s your cue to throw your hands in the air and celebrate like crazy!