

**Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation
The Key to Football Success at the International Level**

A Report from the Alliance of European Football Coaching Associations

Symposium.

Frankfurt, Germany

October 25th – 29th, 2008

The German Grand Plan

The message Matthias Sammer, Director of Sports for the German Football Association (DFB), delivered to the rapt, albeit somewhat startled AEFCA members, was simple and direct. Second place in the men's EURO 2008 and a semi-final place in the 2006 World Cup was, simply, not good enough for Germany. The only thing which will satisfy German ambition and passion for the game of soccer is to win every Men's and Women's World Cup and every EURO Championship, at every age group between now and 2031. The Germans certainly did celebrate the Women's World Cup success and the attendees did enjoy a presentation from Steffi Graf, Chair of the Organizing Committee for the 2011 Women's World Cup to be held in Germany. However, the Germans are already planning to build upon the women's success and address the "failures" of the men's teams by implementing a "Grand Plan" with comprehensive selection, education and training programs for children beginning with today's three year olds, – the group which will be representing their country in 2030 and 2031.

If we were to transfer the German "Grand Plan" to the USA then we would do something like this;

- Develop a nation wide playing system of 1-4-3-3 for under 18's and 1-4-4-2 for over 18's. (Yes, the "1" is important to include.)
- Train all American coaches of under 18's how to attack and defend in a 1-4-3-3.
- Train all American coaches of over 18's how to attack and defend in a 1-4-4-2.
- Develop 390 fully-staffed, government funded, regional training centers around the country where players are identified and receive intensive technical, tactical, physical and psychological training. Particular emphasis must be placed on developing technique under pressure.
- Develop a small army of professional youth coaches and coaching education instructors who are solely responsible for the identification and development of young, talented players.
- Introduce special "Soccer" grammar schools for players with talent.
- Make sure that all MLS and WPSL teams have fully-functioning player development academies with professional staff consisting of field instructors and conditioning, psychology and life coaches.
- Devise a system for making sure American children in kindergarten and primary school receive more play time and recess time to play soccer and other sports and movement activities. Review fitness standards and testing for all children with an interest in athletics.

- Institute procedures for identifying and cultivating players with leadership and personality qualities.
- Reinstitute standards of behavior, ethics and responsibility amongst our children.

To some the “Grand Plan” may reflect Sammer’s East German roots where the all powerful state system placed children in specified sports and trained them from childhood to be Olympic champions. Be that as it may, it is hard to overstate the commitment of a unified Germany to the sport of soccer, both materially and emotionally. This Conference was a lesson to all of us in analysis, planning with meticulous attention to detail, implementation, and evaluation. From Jorg Daniel’s goalkeeping presentation on angles and hand positioning, to Steffi Graf’s preview of the 2011 Women’s World Cup, spellbinding video technology and an array of opulent, colorful, glossy printed material accompanied every German presentation. The Conference delegates were introduced to a way of thinking and planning, a level of commitment and operational procedures which explains why second, in the sport of soccer, is just not good enough for Germany.

Grand Plan – The Key To Spanish Success in EURO 2008

This Conference was entitled “ New Trends of Euro 2008 – Relevant to Grassroots” and the fact is that, long term, highly organized and massively funded youth development programming is the key to international success for any country and was a major reason for Spain’s triumphs in the 2008 EURO Championships.

Dr. Gines Melendez Sotos, the U/17 Spanish National Team coach and the Director of the Spanish FA Training Center in Madrid, related how the Spanish dream to be champions of Europe began to crystallize in 2001 when they developed a team of national staff coaches, a national playing system and established clear objectives for talent identification, development and future performance. The Spaniards forewarned the rest of Europe about their ambitions by winning, almost unnoticed, a series of U/17 and U/19 EURO Championships between 1999 and 2008. The starting Spanish team versus Germany in the EURO 2008 final featured 10 players who had won junior EURO Championships. Despite playing in front of sparse crowds and remaining unheralded by the European soccer community these young Spaniards were being blooded in the art of playing, surviving and excelling at the international level. Indeed, featured amongst the voluminous amounts of video footage we were shown, was a goal from a short and dark-haired 16 year old Fernando Torres against the French, which was almost identical to the goal he scored against Germany in the 2008 final.

Lessons From Euro 2008

Why are the EURO's so carefully analyzed and followed by many non European Federations in the international soccer community? Simply put, Europe has the most money, the most advanced soccer infrastructures and the most sophisticated coaching education programs of any FIFA Confederation. Both the EURO's, held every four years and the UEFA Champions League, held every year, bring in massive amounts of money to UEFA, essentially overshadowing FIFA – whose only source of income comes from the dues of the member associations and the World Cups – financially. UEFA is, unarguably, the most financially solvent organization in the soccer world.

So, other than the fact that the best European Football Associations receive enormous funding and engage in intensive long term planning, what other lessons are to be learned from EURO 2008? Observations from the 10 staff coaches assigned by the DFB and also from those National Technical Directors assigned to cover the EURO's by UEFA Technical Director Andy Roxburgh, included the following;

1. Player Power


Having a corps of attacking players who can operate at high speed, under intense pressure and in increasingly smaller spaces, continues to be the key to international success. The sparkplug creativity of the diminutive Xavi Hernandez of Spain and Wesley Schneider of Holland, the elegance of Zlatan Ibrahimovic of Sweden and the wizardry of Luka Modric of Croatia are examples of the tremendous technical gifts which the best Europeans have and are able to display in front of tens of thousands of spectators. The EURO's contained a surprising amount of fast end to end action considering most of the participants were coming off extremely competitive European seasons. Hernandez covered over 10,000 yards of running in the final against Germany and it should be noted that both Germany and Turkey had enlisted the services of American fitness specialists. The technical demands on back players are increasing as is the need for goalkeepers to be able to become attacking players. Goalkeepers in the EURO Championships used their feet seven times more than they used their hands. The message to American coaches is clear – technique, technique, technique – and don't forget to include your goalkeeper with the outfield player exercises!

2. Systems

The analysts reinforced the importance of shape and systems with successful teams having a good balanced structure - disciplined in defending and flexible when attacking.

Variations of the 1-4-4-2, 1-4-3-3, 1-3-5-2 and 1-4-5-1 predominated with teams changing formations, (see table 1) <<<<<<Insert Table 1 – shown below>>>>>>>> for various games depending on the opponent, the players available and the game situation;

Systems of Play in EURO 2008	
1-4-4-2	Austria, Croatia, Germany (group stage), Italy, Sweden
1-4-5-1	Czech Republic, France, Germany (knockout), Greece, Holland, Spain, Switzerland
1-4-3-3	Notably Germany (also knockout), Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Turkey
1-3-5-2/1-3-4-3	Austria, Greece



- i. Almost all the teams played with a zonal back 4.
- ii. Most teams played with one or two, clearly distinguishable, holding midfield players. These players held their position in between the backs and the attacking midfielders and were responsible for dealing with counter attacks and securing the middle of the field.
- iii. Most teams played with one striker with a “shadow” striker behind.

3. Counter attacks

46% of the goals scored in EURO 2008 were from counter attacks. Teams are trained in the importance of the transition moment when the opposition is disorganized and defenders spread out and push up.

Counter attacks comprised of;

- i. Classic counter attacks. Counter attacks beginning in the back third and ending with a shot at goal.
- ii. Collective counters. Ball is won in midfield and advanced at pace by a group of players against a disorganized defense.
- iii. Advanced counters. Ball is won in opponents half and quickly moved forward as defenders are still running forward.
- iv. Individual counter. Following a quick transition a forward gets the ball and uses direct running with a solo finish.

As counter attacks become more important the ability to defend the counter needs consideration and the following strategies need practice;

- i. Immediate pressure on the ball to win it back.
- ii. Holding midfielders to screen the back players and slow down the counter attacks.

iii. Collective organization to force the opponents wide and delay until recovering defenders arrive.

4. Progressive Possession Football

If the counter attack was not an option then teams played the ball slowly but progressively down the pitch. Players used short angled passes, combination play and, occasional, long diagonal balls to break down the defensive block. It should be noted that progressive possession play is different than simply playing “keep away”. The intent is to move forward down the field and culminate with a shot at goal or a goal. Teams played incisive passes through defensive blocks when the opportunity presented itself as in Xavi’s brilliant through pass to set up Torres’ goal in the final versus Germany. When players got past the midfielders they, frequently, accelerated and drove at defensive players.

5. Restarts

This was one of the cleanest EURO’s on record with a new “Respect” initiative for referees from FIFA together with the fear factor of giving away fouls in defensive thirds and giving opponents a free shooting opportunity. This reduced the number of goals scored from restarts. Only 16 goals out of a total of 77 came from set plays in the EURO. Of the 319 corner kicks which were taken, only 5 resulted in goals. Interestingly the oldest head referee, Peter Frojdfelt of Sweden, was 45 years of age – a testimony to the need for youthful athleticism from the referee fraternity who had to keep pace with a breakneck speed of play in the EURO’s.

6. Double and triple teaming

Attacking players were double teamed more often than in other tournaments. Possibly a result of having two defensive midfielders who could double back and tackle center forwards. Teams have developed the ability to force opponents into predictable areas of the field and then double team and win the ball back and counter.

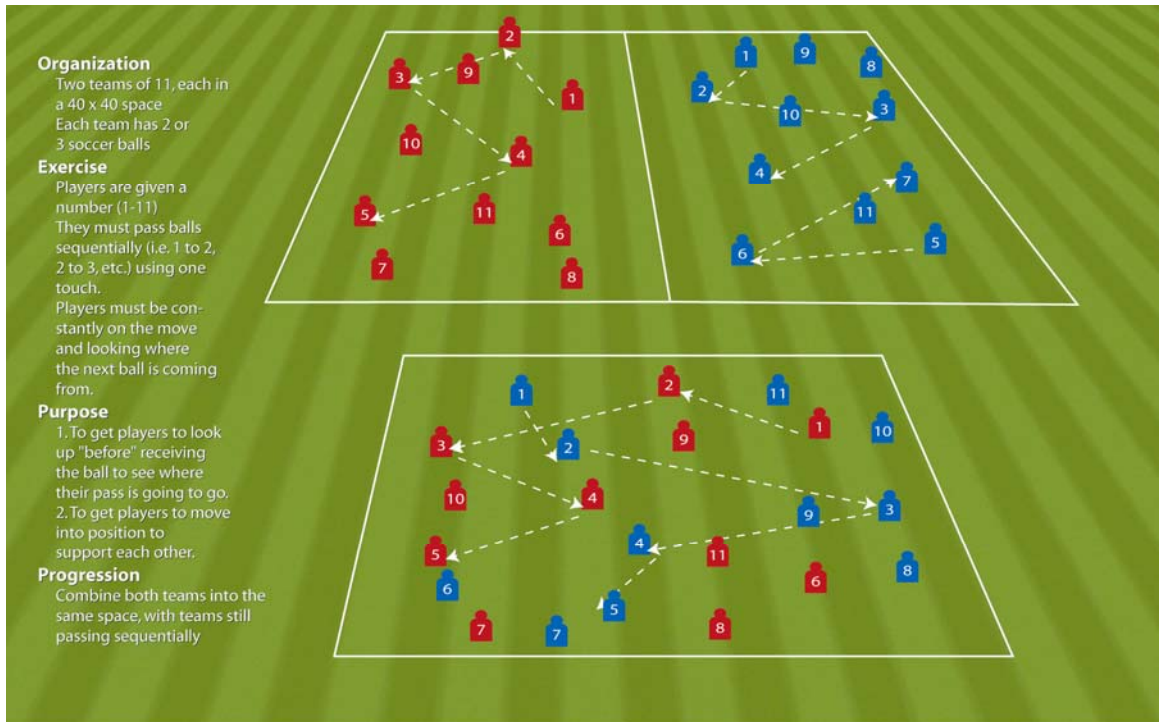
7. Lack of time and space

Defenses are becoming more compact and play is becoming quicker. Defenses are set up so that the players entice opposing attackers into areas of the field where counter attacking can be most effective.

Lessons for the American Soccer Coaching Community.

- ***Planning for the future.***

If the delegates came away from this Conference with one thing at the forefront of their minds it was the amazing planning and analysis the Germans are constantly engaged in. This has implications for all of our soccer organizations but none more importantly than our soccer clubs all around the United States. Directors of Clubs must have a developmental plan for players in their club from a young age. We might disagree with Mattheus Sammer’s philosophy and drive to win even at a young age but the fact that the Germans have such a detailed and thorough plan for the future should provide a



- **Transition Exercises.** Counter attacking is the “attack which counters the attack!” Players must be exposed to high transitional environments where the ball is moved forward quickly when the opposition is disorganized and spread out with limited numbers at the back. Coaches must devise exercises which go in two directions and emphasize transition mentality, forward looking and clinical 1 v 1 finishing with the goalkeeper. Defending the counter must also be practiced and of high consideration. Diagram 3 demonstrates a scrimmage that will help your players be transition minded. The transition game is examined in the NSCAA Advanced National Diploma.

<<<<<<Insert diagram 3 – shown below >>>>>>>>



- ***Goalkeepers as attacking players.*** Goalkeepers no longer stand underneath the crossbar sheltering from the rain. Modern goalkeepers act as sweepers, frequently move outside their penalty box, and must be able to use their feet either to receive back passes or to launch counterattacks. Goalkeepers must be used more frequently in passing and receiving exercises. All goalkeeping issues are dealt with in the **NSCAA State, Regional, National and Advanced National GK Diplomas** under the guidance of NSCAA GK Director and US U/20 Women’s National team coach, Tony DiCicco.
- ***Systems of Play.*** Described as a “Framework for Expression,” the system or shape of a team is dictated by a number of factors, not least the qualities of the available players, and our American coaches should have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different systems and how the shape of the team effects the style of the team. The **NSCAA Premier Diploma** analyzes the importance of team shape and is a popular 11 v 11 course taught four or five times a year.

It is impossible to transfer the German soccer and sports culture to the USA, just as it is impossible for us to replicate what the Brazilians or the English do. We have to work within our own frameworks, our own traditions and our own culture. From my perspective as the NSCAA Director of Coaching the implications of the German lesson reinforced and validated the very mission of the NSCAA which is, essentially, to support and educate coaches and provide them with the skills to help nurture sophisticated, creative and entertaining players and to develop a soccer culture in our country.

<<<Also – please insert the two additional files shown below as standalone pages. They are not shown to scale in this PDF.>>>



Starting XI - Jens LEHMANN (1), Arne FREIURICH (3), Per MERTESSACKER (17), Christoph METZELDER (21), Philipp LAHM (16), Thomas HITZLSPERGER (15), Simon ROLFES (6), Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER (7), Michael BALLACK (13), Lukas PODOLSKI (20), Miroslav KLOSE (11)



Starting XI - Jens LEHMANN (1), Marcell JANSEN (2), Christoph METZELDER (21), Per MERTESSACKER (17), Philipp LAHM (16), Lukas PODOLSKI (20), Michael BALLACK (13), Torsten FRINGS (8), Clemens FRITZ (4), Miroslav KLOSE (11), Mario GOMEZ (9)



Starting XI - Edwin VAN DER SAR (1), Khalid BOUHLAROUZ (21), André DOIJER (2), Joris MATHIJSEN (4), Giovanni VAN BRONCKHORST (5), Nigel DE JONG (17), Orlando ENGELAAR (8), Dirk KUYT (18), Rafael VAN DER VAART (23), Wesley SNEIJDER (10), Ruud VAN NISTELROOY (9)



Starting XI - Igor AKINFEEV (1), Aleksandr ANYUKOV (22), Sergey IGNASHEVICH (4), Denis KOLODIN (8), Yuriy ZHIRKOV (18), Ivan SAENKO (9), Sergey SEMAK (11), Konstantin ZRYANOV (17), Igor SEMSHOV (20), Andrey ARSHAVIN (10), Roman PAVLYUCHENKO (19)



Spain: 1-4-5-1

Starting XI - Iker CASILLAS (1), Sergio RAMOS (15), Carles PUYOL (5), Carlos MARCHENA (4), Joan CAPDEVILA (11), Andrés INIESTA (6), Desc FABREGAS (10), Marcos SENNA (19), Xavi HERNÁNDEZ (8), David SILVA (21), Fernando TORRES (9)



Germany: 1-4-2-3-1

Starting XI - Jens LEHMANN (1), Arne FREIDRICH (3), Per MERTESSACKER (17), Christoph METZELDER (21), Philipp LAHM (16), Thomas HITZLSPERGER (15), Torsten FRINGS (8), Bastian SCHWEINSTEIGER (7), Michael BALLACK (13), Lukas PODOLSKI (20), Miroslav KLOSE (11)

