

**The Super Liga Newsletter is proudly designed and distributed by Giovanni Pacini, *your* Super Liga Director of Coaching Education.**

**The Super Liga Newsletter is designed to keep you up to date with all that’s happening in the world of coaching and player development! Enjoy!**

**THE SUPER LIGA NEWSLETTER #6**

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM COACHING WEBINAR FEATURING ARNI GUDNASON**

On April 2nd, The Super Liga Coaches Webinar had the honor of having Arni Gudnason from Fimleikafelag Hafnarfjaroar FC of Iceland participate. He did a presentation on coach and player development in Iceland. Iceland has enjoyed significant international success despite it being a small island country in North Atlantic. The Super Liga DOCE Giovanni Pacini spent time in Iceland in 2019 researching this phenomenon. The following are some of the areas that were presented and discussed.

**Mandated Licensure**

In a move to get away from parent coaches, the club established a professional coaching staff that is fully qualified. As is the case at FH, all coaches at every club in Iceland must have at a minimum the UEFA B. This insures that the appropriate methods are being applied throughout the player development process.

**Player enjoyment**

Because all coaches have earned coaching licenses, efficacy is improved contributing to a more effective training and playing environment. Coaches know how to create environments that the players enjoy being a part of. They have more fun; enjoy the experiences more, so subsequently retention is nearly 100%. By contrast, here in the US, upwards to 70% of all kids participating in youth sports quit. Why? It’s not fun. So there is a clear correlation between coaching education / efficacy and player enjoyment.

**Collaboration**

I can report having traveled to many first world soccer nations that the idea of collaboration is a predominant and accepted feature. Club representatives meet with regularity to discuss issues relating to their organization and in the spirit of developing players for their country, they share ideas and offer assistance. It is a mindset not featured in the American soccer culture where clubs compete with each other from a business standpoint and the idea of sharing what one “business” does with another is counterintuitive.

**Training to Game Ratio**

Teams play once per week from October to May. Each age group has their own Training to Game Ratio so as to insure that the appropriate number of training sessions are taking place so that the learning / development curve is sustained in a positive direction.

**Ball Mastery**

In my travels to several Icelandic clubs, ball mastery is the predominant emphasis for young players. Arni noted that in his presentation. If players cannot maneuver the ball using all areas of their feet, then their ability to control it whilst under pressure, beating an opponent, dribbling it in general is diminished. Players *must on their own* take the ball outdoors and practice maneuvering it in a manner that is only limited by their own imagination. Remember as well that ball mastery includes the ability to pass and receive it effectively.

**Basic Tactical Application**

The process follows this progression- 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3, 4v3, 4v4. The addition of attacking players intrinsically creates the player’s need to space themselves out in order to beat a defender. On the flip side, defenders learn the balance between pressuring and delaying the ball.

**Physical Literacy**

In Iceland, the culture in general is an active and healthy one. Children proactively get outdoors to play. When children “go out and play”, they run, jump, skip, fall, get up, roll on the ground, climb, leap…all of the elements which combined form a foundation of physical ability called- “physical literacy”. It provides a foundation for future sport specific training and development.

**Street Soccer / Free Play**

Icelandic children as noted are active and given the cold and snow have no issue with shoveling off an area of a field to play. In that environment of free play is where true creativity is born and the players are forced to problem solve game situations on their own devoid of coaches.

**Nordic Spirit**

Arni used the term “crazy” when speaking about dealing with the long periods of cold and snow and playing soccer, but indeed my research indicates that it is the Nordic spirit that drives their willingness to fight through obstacles in order to achieve results whether it is a group of kids shoveling off snow to play or the National Team doing well on the international stage. American kids in general do not possess such a trait.

**“Sport in Iceland”**

“Sport in Iceland”: How Small Nations Achieve International Success” is written by Vidar Halldorsson of whom I met when I began my plans totravel to Iceland and the book is an outstanding read and a must for any coaches soccer library.

**Iceland as a country**

After my research period concluded, my wife flew in and we put on our tourist hats! It is a country of amazing beauty, its inhabitants are a peaceful and welcoming people, and I had some of the best seafood I’ve ever had! It is short flight from Boston and I suggest staying in Reykjavik via VRBO. It is a trip and experience you won’t forget.

**HAVE FUN OUT THERE!**

