

Girls vs. Boys: 'It's about how the individual ticks' (Part 2)

Interview By Mike Voitalla

Considering different approaches to teaching based on the students' gender has become a hot topic in the educational world, so we've been asking experienced American coaches if it's also an issue to consider in youth soccer. In Part 2 of our series we speak with Minnesota coach Julie Eibensteiner, who has coached both genders at the youth and college level for more than a decade. She's currently the goalkeeping coach at Woodbury SC and head coach of U14 & U16 teams. She's been a Region 2 ODP staff coach for both boys and girls.

SOC CER AMERICA: What should coaches keep in mind if they move from coaching one gender to another?

JULIE EIBENSTEINER: I coach both genders -- field players and goalkeepers -- and I coach them as soccer players and not so much by if they are male and female. I think you need to look at how the individual ticks and not just group them in one heading by gender ... and you can only effectively do that by getting to know the player.

At the end of the day, it's pretty to safe to say that the majority of players seek personal development, a positive environment, a confidence-building experience, and fun (however they define that).

Other than that, you need to get to know the player and their motivation, learning, and feedback preference ... and I am not convinced that is gender-specific especially as you get to the higher competitive levels.

SA: Are there unique challenges to coaching girls vs. coaching boys?

JULIE EIBENSTEINER: Generally, girls tend to be a little more hesitant with feeling confident and competent with how they are doing more so than boys, at first.

Boys probably overestimate their ability a little bit more so you need to find the middle ground with both and there certainly are exceptions.

Early in their careers, boys tend to be more outwardly competitive where girls tend to want to look out for the greater group and be a bit more cooperative ... again you just need to find the middle ground because both aspects are good.

SA: Are there coaching styles that work better with one or the other?

JULIE EIBENSTEINER: I have found that with no matter what age and what gender you coach, the best coaching style is one that demonstrates you are genuinely interested in their development, genuinely interested in them as a person.

To effectively explain the whys behind the whats ... a coaching style that keeps the expectations of the coach consistent with the expectations of the player.