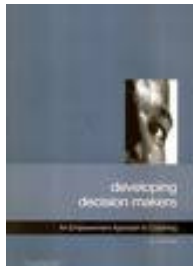




Title: *Developing Decision Makers: An Empowerment Approach to Coaching*
Author: Lynn Kidman



For years coaches have asked why their players struggle to retain ideas presented during training sessions and apply them within the context of a game. Many times, coaches find themselves questioning how much learning has taken place, or if it has occurred at all. One question that must be asked, do players feel empowered for their own learning? This question is examined in detail by Lynn Kidman. In *Developing Decision Makers: An Empowerment Approach to Coaching* Kidman examines the benefits of Teaching Games for Understanding and provides two case studies to further support an empowerment approach to coaching. The first case study follows Wayne Smith, former head coach of the All-Blacks (the New Zealand national men's rugby team). The second case study examines two coaches who have just begun implementing an empowerment approach with their teams.

Teaching Games for Understanding (TGFU) was a focal point for Rod Thorpe and David Bunker back in the early 1980's. Many present day coaches played and were taught through a traditional approach. The traditional approach sought to train skill and technique in an isolated environment apart from the actual game itself. The game was then implemented at the conclusion of the session and this is where players were encouraged to display the skills that were practiced in isolation. TGFU strives to have players acquire knowledge within the context of a game rather than in isolation. The TGFU approach seeks to involve players through guided discovery, asking meaningful questions, as well as the creation of game like situations that require players to decode information and respond in the appropriate manner.



Wayne Smith believes deeply in an empowerment approach to coaching. This approach is ideal, in particular with sports teams, as it shifts the focus from the coach and onto the decision making abilities of the players. Within the context of games, coaches pose questions to players rather than always providing them the answers to specific problems. Through a questioning approach, low-order and high-order thinking occurs and as a result learning takes place. Smith is quick to point to possible concerns when implementing this approach. One in particular is the patience required on the coach's part to enable players to begin thinking for themselves rather than always wanting the answers given to them. This is a challenge as coaches are ready and willing to impart their wisdom and knowledge. However the real challenge lies in asking the appropriate questions in the appropriate sequence to lead the players to the solution you know is correct.

While the empowerment approach and TGFU are a valuable learning tool, they are not appropriate in all situations. There are occurrences where a traditional approach is needed as time may not allow for an empowerment approach to be used. With that said, *Developing Decision Makers: An Empowerment Approach to Coaching*, is highly recommended by ASET. The book and its contents will force all coaches to re-examine the manner in which they structure training sessions as well as impart knowledge to their players. Enjoy the book and email us with your thoughts.