

OLYMPIC SPORT TAEKWONDO OBJECTIVES

Introduction:

The Associate Coach training program is the first step in the process of developing your coaching skills and talents. As with anything you want to excel at, there is always more to learn and incorporate into your skill bank. Understanding these basic concepts is critical and creates a solid foundation to any coaching program. However, this is merely the beginning, and additional study and experience will only enhance your coaching abilities.

Scoring Points While Not Being Scored Upon:

It sounds so simple. Score points... don't get scored on! Anyone can say that, but a good coach understands the theory behind this very simple statement.

Scoring points... of course, there are many ways to score a point, many technical elements that, put together, will score a point. It is so tempting at first to focus on scoring that point, but what oftentimes coaches forget to instill in young athletes is the importance of scoring the point strategically.

Strategic Taekwondo is more effective both short and long term. Score that important point by thinking through the best way to get a point and not give a point away in the process. There are ways to set up a win-win situation in a match. Points are made and matches are won by the smart fighter. Establish a philosophy in your athlete that will benefit them from their earliest fighting days to International competition.

- ***Teach athletes how to set up their points.*** Anyone can kick, and most athletes can learn to kick correctly. However, coaches should teach their athletes to establish a “game” whereby the athlete lays a foundation, drawing the opponent in, essentially controlling what the opponent does, so athletes can then execute the techniques they want to use without the threat of being scored upon. The smart athlete will learn to control the opponent's game without the opponent knowing he/she is being set up to be scored upon. Athletes must be taught to use techniques that keep them in control, using strategies that encourage the opponent to do exactly what the athletes want them to do.
- ***Engage only when necessary.*** One big mistake coaches and athletes make is to engage at all costs. Of course, you cannot score if you don't engage, but engagement should be limited to scoring points and not just to be active or kicking. When a young athlete enters an exchange, it should be a precision strike. There should be a goal for the exchange and an exit strategy. In other words, each time athletes engage, they should get in, score the point, and get out, establishing distance and a comfort zone

immediately upon ending the exchange. If an athlete engages for the entire fight, it becomes a kicking contest, and the opponent can very quickly realize that they can let the athlete kick themselves right out of the match. Develop the philosophy that your athlete should establish a policy of kicking with a purpose, while always being aware that the longer they engage, the more opportunity they give the opponent to land a point.

- ***Create defensive strategies.*** Defense is about not getting scored upon. That is true, but as with everything in Taekwondo, this simple statement is much more involved than it appears. Defense is not running from the opponent or stepping out of the way. Defense is about running a smart game, establishing a tempo, and setting up strategies to prevent the opponent from scoring points in the process. Defense is a strategy, and should be as precise as engagement. A coach should teach athletes to establish a defensive game, where the athlete can use strategies to avoid being scored upon and still score points. The athlete can draw the opponent into complacency playing defense, only to strike when the opportunity arrives. Coaches should develop strong defensive games around the well-known defensive strategies, always encouraging their athletes to be thinking offense while playing defense.
- ***Tactical Placement.*** It is important for the coach to train the athletes to maneuver their opponents into the most advantageous position for viewing and scoring of potential points. Athletes should position themselves and their opponents in a location that will provide optimal visibility to a majority of corner judges. This will maximize the potential for a point to be posted on the board.

Hit and Don't Get Hit:

Again, what could be simpler? But if it is this simple, why are athletes still struggling with this very simple concept? When an athlete engages, the athlete should go in, get the point, and get out. This was discussed in another section, but how do athletes accomplish this? Kick selection, strategy, and quickness are what smart athletes will consider when establishing a game.

Coaches should encourage their athletes to be aware of the scoring dynamic. Teach them to go for the high percentage, safe kick and leave the theatrics to others; use techniques that will not leave the athlete vulnerable to being hit. Athletes should rely on their strengths and always be aware that the opponent is looking for any opening to score.

Again, this seems so simple, but we have to establish in the minds of the athletes that this philosophy is something they must buy into. They cannot kick without a purpose. They cannot win if they are matched kick for kick by their opponents. Coaches must learn to

instill smart, safe game strategies into their athletes versus the flashy but dangerous all-offensive game.

Avoid Penalties:

Penalties are the quickest way to lose a match. Once the athlete has learned to set up points, engage only when necessary and with a purpose, establish defensive strategies, and hit and score without being hit and scored upon, why give up those hard fought points because of penalties?

The answer is that coaches must mentor young athletes to not give up points due to penalties. It is essential that athletes learn how to manage the match in a positive way. Athletes must be aware of the rules and their game must be complimented by the rules and not aggravated by them. Athletes must also be aware of what is being called and under what circumstances in that particular ring. Coaches have to teach athletes how to adjust to the rules, rule changes and rule applications.

Conclusion:

Understanding that this is a simple game, i.e. score and don't get scored upon, is only the beginning and not the ending in the study of coaching. Simple concepts are often the most difficult to grasp and instill into young athletes. Coaches should keep it simple and focus on proven strategies. Innovation is wonderful and the game changes all the time, but as the game expands, the simplicity of scoring and not being scored upon continues to be the most important element to coaching.



National Team Coach Juan Moreno working with Charlotte Craig at the 2008 World Olympic Qualifier