

TOVO | Training



An Interview with
Todd Beane



“There is great nobility
in guiding others to
reach their potential.”

TODD BEANE

What has inspired you to create TOVO Academy Barcelona?

My ambition reaches far beyond the development of talented athletes. I want to nurture capable leaders who approach the world with vigor.

After having worked with my father in law Johan Cruyff for 14 years, I felt compelled to offer professional training to amateur players. Players at AJAX and FC Barcelona get the benefits of a well-funded program. But, most players in the world do not have access to an innovative curriculum.

What have you learned from Johan Cruyff?

Johan was an intuitive thinker—arguably one of the most influential figures in football over the last 50 years. He was not one to put forth a power point presentation with sequential arguments. He was an artist who thought conceptually and presented principles of play, as I like to call them.

From him I have learned that football is a mathematical art—which sounds a bit oxymoronic, no? But he saw the game as a dance of time and space and that is the way great artists think. He gave me the confidence to go forth to share some morsels of wisdom with those that have not been so fortunate as I have been working with him.

What is the TOVO Training?

TOVO Training is a research-based program that develops a player’s competence, cognition and character through a progressive series of game-based exercises. The critical element is that players must think to perform. Great players perceive, conceive, decide, deceive, execute and assess within milliseconds. To develop that player we must train cognition. We must create cerebral superhighways nurtured through brain training.

“When we base our training on sound teaching principles, we develop players more effectively.”

TODD BEANE

How does it differ from other training programs?

Many training programs teach skills in such isolation that children do not learn to apply them under the demanding conditions of a match. In other words, the players do not develop their cognitive abilities. In addition, many training sessions are merely a collection of drills that have no connection or correlation to the player’s role within a style or system of play. We use a logical progression of exercises that directly construct the conditions under which a player will need to perform. The instructional progression is one that uses geometric shapes to simplify the complexity of the game.

How did you create this method?

I have taken what I consider to be a circuitous road to put this forth. While playing professionally I had a sensation that many practices were not effective. While studying at Stanford University I had access to great educators and intelligent colleagues who were putting forth creative solutions on how to engage students. The final piece of the puzzle was working with Johan Cruyff and listening to his intuitive approach to player development. I thought it was time now to share these ideas. So, I took all the best parts of what I had learned about learning and went to work.

What are the premises of the program?

I have seen so many trainings that do not align with the way people learn. Human beings are natural learners, capable of making meaning and overcoming challenges. The acquisition and application of new skills is a process of inquiry, discovery, execution, and assessment. Success in any endeavor is a result of effectively activating this process to achieve the outcomes desired. So, if we approach training in a learner-centric manner, we will be exponentially more effective in developing players.





“Learning is a natural process to be respected by those who coach all young players.”

TODD BEANE

What are the key elements?

The core concept is that athletes learn as individuals within a team context. In essence, a player embarks on a journey of guided self-discovery. The aim is to train toward mastery. Coaches and parents facilitate an applied learning program that is...

Purposeful
Progressive
Patterned
Precise
Positive
Playful

What are the key skills and concepts learned?

There are several elements that come into the equation. Having said that, we approach it from a holistic view. We work on ball control, movement, position play, behavior, preparation, and mindset all within competitive and self-regulated exercises.

You speak of learning conditions. To what do you refer?

Learning conditions are the optimal circumstances in which children acquire skills and apply them effectively. Players learn best in challenging yet safe environments. They learn best when expectations are high. They learn best through praise and recognition. We must engage them through implicit instruction and self-regulation. If we get the conditions right, development will flourish.

What is a typical training session?

A typical training session includes 3 or 4 challenges depending upon the needs and the ages of the players. One exercise is directly and logical linked to the next. Each exercise demands skillful execution as well as conceptual understanding of the game. We present them as challenges to the players and their task is to provide solutions. We also see matches as training where players celebrate in a competitive environment all that they have learned.

- Rondos
- Movement
- I-Skills (Individualized and Isolated Instruction)
- Position Play Exercises
- Training Games
- Matches



SLEEP • STUDY • NUTRITION

Productive habits are critical to maximizing one's potential.

BEHAVIOR

Respectful conduct leads to integrity in all endeavors.

MINDSET

A positive mindset leads to continual growth and development.

—

RONDOS

Exercises to develop both skill and vision.

MOVEMENT

Exercises to improve mobility, stability, strength, and endurance.

POSITION PLAY

Exercises to foster tactical understanding.

TRAINING GAMES

Small-sided matches to reinforce cognitive development.

I-SKILLS

Exercises to isolate and hone technical skills.

MATCHES

Games to celebrate learning through competition.



“Children learn with or without a coach. If we step into the process as educators, we better know how to add value.”

TODD BEANE

What is the role of the coach in this process?

A coach should set the challenges and provide functional feedback. We define “functional feedback” as the type of verbal or non-verbal interaction that adds value to the learning process. Dysfunctional feedback are those comments that coaches make that serve no positive purpose or feedback that actually inhibits learning. To this end, this program encourages positive, prudent, and purposeful communication on behalf of the coaches and the parents.

What do you hope to accomplish with TOVO?

I want to train youth players in a new way. I think that we have spent a great deal of time in the last 30 years making great advances in physical training. I have not seen the same commitment to cognitive development. If I am honest, I believe we are working off an old paradigm of talent development and I would like to open a debate about that. We must respect what has been done in the past, but it is time to rethink how we develop talented, intelligent, and responsible athletes.

I hope TOVO can play a role in changing the way we coach and educate players worldwide.