

SWINGING FOR THE FENCES: A little parallel thinking....

Would any good team coach have his or her players....

- Hit for the fences on every at bat in baseball or softball?
- Throw “Hail Mary” passes on every down in football?
- Shoot every puck into the attacking zone in hockey?
- Throw every inbound pass the length of the court in basketball?

Would any good individual performer.....

- Hit the cue ball as hard as possible on every shot in pool?
- Attempt to complete a distance race at sprint pace?
- Take corners at top speed in NASCAR or speed skating?
- Use a driver on every hole in golf?

If you answered “No, of course not” think about the impact on fun and growth when coaches and parents discourage or deny or denigrate dribbling and inter-passing and risk-taking because their team may lose a goal or a game. Good soccer teams don’t kick everything long and good soccer players have multiple dimensions for creating goal-scoring chances. In every sport, it is the changes in pace (rhythm) that are important; in every sport, it is the diversity of skills that elevates the personalities to greatness; in every sport, it is “doing cool things” with the ball that are most fun for young players.

The lessons of history suggest that successful cultures learn and benefit from the endeavors of their ancestors: Will our next generation of soccer players reflect 40 years of stuttering evolution to become more graceful and talented, or will they still be swinging for the fences in 2010?