



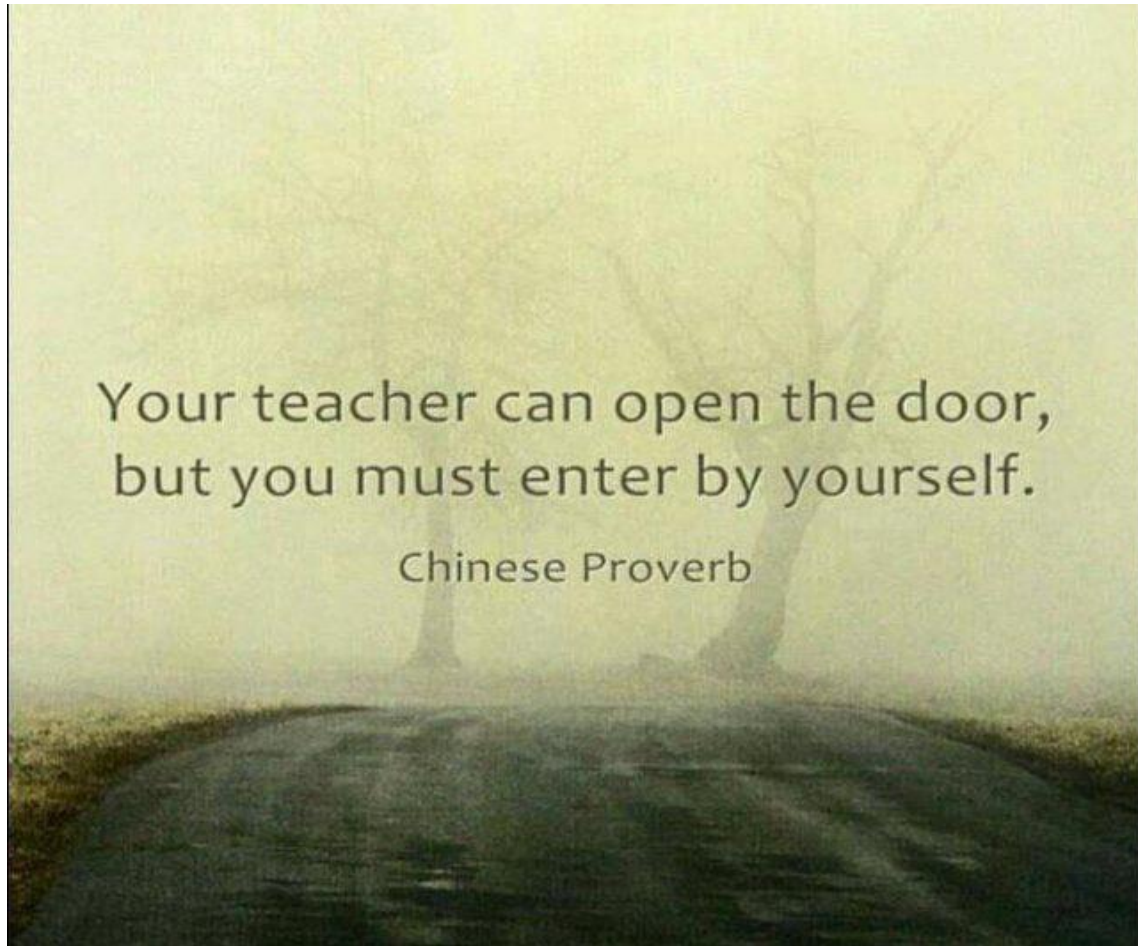
## MASTER YOUR DECISIONS

A coach's role is to design tasks and problems, not movements and solutions.



We believe that the most powerful learning moments occur when a coach acts as a **facilitator**, guiding players towards potential solutions as opposed to fast-forwarding learning by directly showing or telling players what to do. We look to avoid this traditional

'command-style' coaching, which denies a child's creativity. Instead, we position the learner as the decision-maker, encouraging players to engage in the powerful learning processes of self-discovery and problem-solving.



## A CONSTRAINTS-LED APPROACH

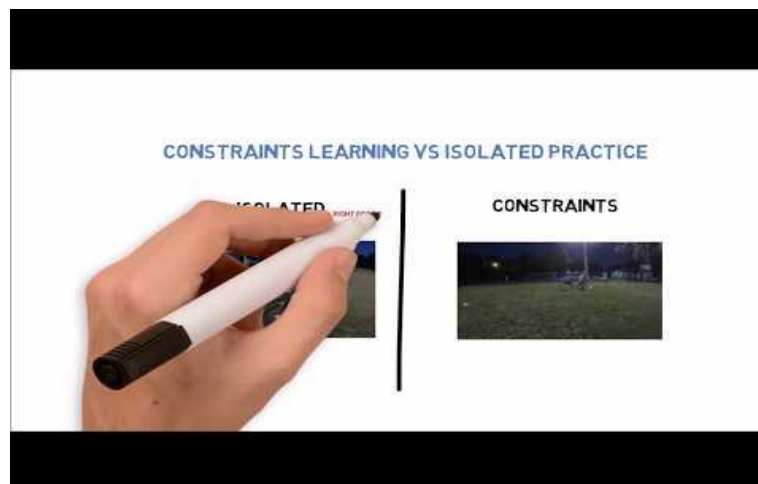
Skilful manipulation of **task constraints** can help create multiple and specific opportunities for players to find solutions to tasks. The role of the manipulation of constraints is to help 'nudge' players towards such intended outcomes, with the understanding that solutions to tasks will likely differ from learner to learner.

Rather than prescribing one solution to a problem, a constraints-led approach expects **variability**, **flexibility**, and **adaptability**, developing creative decision-makers capable of responding to game situations in a variety of ways. Such an approach allows for and embraces individual difference, with learners empowered to *'search for and find their preferred styles'* (Chow et al. 2016).

The manipulation of task constraints is designed to **exaggerate** specific technical and tactical solutions, to encourage and shape learners' behaviours. There are many ways to do this, with the following a few examples:

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- **Pitch type:** Big, small, narrow, or wide.
  - **Player distribution:** How many players are on each team, how are they set up?
  - **Parameters:** Pitch markings (i.e., zones) used to guide or limit players' movements.
  - **Player constraints:** Challenging players' actions and decisions. An example of this could be *rewarding* players for certain outcomes (i.e., all goals featuring combination play are worth double).
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The below video clip (Opposite Direction 2017) provides a great practical example highlighting the benefits of constraints-based activities.



## FEEDBACK AND INSTRUCTION

Nonlinear pedagogy places great emphasis on a coach's expertise in choosing *when*, *how*, and *why* to provide *what* verbal information to their players. The clear danger of providing constant, prescriptive verbal instruction to players is over-saturating the learner (i.e., *paralysis by analysis*), yet this is still very common in junior sporting environments.

**At C.A.R.D.S, we look to avoid prescriptive coaching instruction and feedback, which can stifle the development of decision-making.** Instead of immediately correcting errors as

they occur, we look to provide informational constraints that can help foster self-organisation. This might be through verbalising to learners *what* they could do (i.e., 'can we look to exploit wide areas when possible?'), as opposed to *how* to do it ('when you get the ball in this position, pass it out wide straight away').

**Questioning** is a key approach that can facilitate exploration, helping learners develop an enhanced awareness of their perception and actions. Examples of such questions might be: 'What happened when...?' 'How did it feel when...?', or questions that draw player attention to number overloads/underloads and tactical strategies used by the opposing team. Such questions elicit improved knowledge *about* the environment, by drawing attention to learner-environment interactions. Learners can then develop and apply such knowledge through '*doing*', in representative learning environments that promote decision-making.

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**Teaching is, in some ways, a myth. The greatest skill is learned, more than it is taught. And the great teacher realises this.**

**The great teacher introduces the student to a concept and allows him to make acquaintance with it. He leads him into the room and allows him to have a look around. Given the appropriate freedom, the student ambles through the room, visiting the corners and the layout. His brain develops a feel for the boundaries of the room and how to move within it without bumping into walls. With time, the student learns to live within the room and breathe its unique fragrance. Eventually, the room becomes home.**

**This is the way in which skill is developed.**

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