

# Finally, a new approach to coaching



PAUL GARDNER

**NEW YORK** — Now, I don't usually get into this sort of thing, but ... exceptions have to be made in the wider interests of the overall good of the sport.

So, even though there are clearly commercial implications in what I'm about to describe, I feel obliged to put in a plug for what is, no question, an amazing new all-embracing, state-of-the-art, hi-tech coaching philosophy.

The man responsible for this, Coach Terry Bull, has been known to me for quite a while now. His qualifications are beyond question. He has a USSF Double A badge, as well as a license from the Netherlands. In fact, he has two licenses from the Netherlands, making him one of the few coaches able to bring an official and authoritative Double Dutch approach to the science of coaching.

(That needs explaining: There are plenty of coaches around who have tried the double Dutch approach, but they're small fry — this guy is something else.)

Like all great ideas, Terry's is so simple, so shinningly innocent in its purity, that you find yourself wondering why no one thought of it before.

Briefly: Terry Bull is saying that what stands in the way of producing a winning team is the undeniable fact that coaches are so desperate to produce exactly that, a winning team. Yet mostly this single-mindedness in pursuit of victory results in losing teams. After all, as Terry insightfully puts it, "there are far more losers than winners." Yes indeedly.



PAUL VREEKER/REUTERS

Coach Terry Bull has figured out why so many free kicks are hammered directly into the defensive wall.

Enter The TerryBull<sup>®</sup> Coaching Scenario (and no, I don't know why he calls it a Scenario, maybe it's a touch of genius or something). A method that will stand coaching on its head (Terry has been in touch with England's Lee Bowyer about an endorsement contract).

You train to win, says Terry, and you lose. Under the Scenario, therefore, you train to lose. And you win. This flash of brilliance occurred to Terry while watching Scotland: "I don't remember which particular Scottish team it was, or which tournament they were getting knocked out of," recalls Terry, "but it was like the Road to, where was it? Tabasco? Suddenly it was all clear, these guys were never going to score, hadn't a clue. You could only be that bad if you'd been *trained* to be clueless. There, that was it. Reverse the training."

This is incendiary stuff. But surely he's right, coaches are looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Now I can

make sense of all those coaches who've told me, "We're definitely an attacking team," right after they just played their 14th 0-0 tie of the season.

In no time at all, Terry produced what is now considered to be a defining volume in coaching annals — "Losing It," a masterful analysis of the intricacies of winning by losing.

There isn't space here to do justice to the subtlety of Terry's arguments, so let me focus on just one aspect of current coaching that Terry, it seems to me, has brutally exposed as a fraud: set plays.

"They're pathetic," he says, "Half the time they don't even get a shot off, and when they do, it hits the wall or the corner flag. Because they're *trying* to score, that's the big mistake here."

I recommend his chapter on "Screwing Up Set Plays" as a breath of fresh air on the topic. Equally invigorating are his views on the scoring of own goals: "Nobody should worry about own goals.

When you worry about something, you give it importance. An own goal now and then is relished by the wisest men — somebody said that once, a poet I think, one of those guys. Own goals keep everyone honest, I reckon one or two a game should be about right for a good losing team."

More subtlety there, for when Terry talks about a losing team, he's really saying a winning team. Of course, he faces an arduous uphill struggle in his attempt to revolutionize coaching: "Well, they laughed at Christopher Columbus didn't they, but he went right ahead and invented electricity anyway, so I'm ready to take a bit of abuse. There's always the no-nothings and the clever-dicks, even in soccer coaching."

It's not that Terry is saying that losing is beautiful, not a bit of that. Just that ... well, I guess it's the science of opposites that he's preaching, and he does get a bit preachy now and then. It's a philosophy, really, an assault on the comfortable and unquestioned theories that have led to the current atrophy of the collective coaching brain.

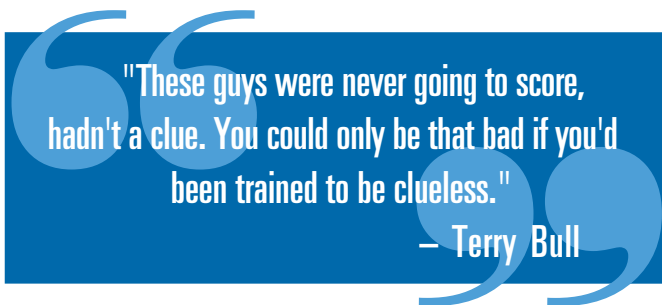
Terry's biggest difficulty, he

Get ready, the coaching earthquake is coming, and what a uproar it will create when the full TerryBull® Scenario is loosed on the world. Right now Terry is working with his brother Horatio "Horry" Bull to produce a whole range of TerryBull® products.

There will be TerryBull® coaching courses and TerryBull® drills and TerryBull® tapes, and a definitive manual on The Secrets of TerryBull® Coaching. An advance course for a Totally TerryBull license is being considered. While brother Horatio will be in charge of a network of HorryBull® camps for kids. Plans for a monthly newsletter, tentatively titled The Bull Sheet, are being pursued.

"I'm unorthodox you see," says Terry. "Where most people think in circles and squares, I think in parallelograms. I break the barriers, I go where no coach has dared to go ..."

Like I said, there's something of the preacher in Terry. He disagrees: "No, no, not a bit, no preaching, no lectures — that whole clinic-giving bit is the worst thing to happen to soccer since I got involved in the sport."



"These guys were never going to score, hadn't a clue. You could only be that bad if you'd been trained to be clueless."  
— Terry Bull

admits, will be in overcoming the resistance he anticipates from the "coaching industry."

"It won't be about my original and, may I say, brilliant, ideas, but about money," he says, "They'll be scared I'm gonna cut into their profits, make their camps and books and tapes look a bit silly. Damn right, I am."

Whatever. I wish the trail-blazing Terry well in his attempts to bring sanity to soccer coaching. He won't succeed, but the attempt is a valiant one.

Oh yes, Terry is also writing his autobiography. With a nod to Pele's "My Life and The Beautiful Game," it will be called "The Terry Bull Game." ■