

# KOOPZAI SITION COACHES WITH 2008



The Kentucky Youth Soccer Association  
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# Welcome to Kentucky Youth Soccer



We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association, the state governing body for the sport of youth soccer in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Kentucky Youth Soccer is a proud member of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and the United States Youth Soccer Association (US Youth Soccer). USSF is the national governing body for soccer in the United States and a member of the US Olympic Committee.

We represent approximately 45,000 players, coaches, administrators, and volunteers through 81 member associations across the Commonwealth of Kentucky and are justifiably proud of the many programs we offer to our participants.

The guiding philosophy of the Kentucky Youth Soccer is to organize and promote the sport of soccer across the Commonwealth. We seek to offer an interesting, educational, and challenging atmosphere in which children may develop their soccer skills while learning good sportsmanship and fair play. We endeavor to provide a positive environment for our players, as we firmly believe that all children have a right to participate in our programs.

We furnish our affiliates with instructional materials, an internet based player/volunteer registration software program, a comprehensive insurance program, awards programs for coaches, referees, players and parents, workshops, and player camps, in addition to recreational and select-level tournaments.

We provide, under the auspices of US Youth Soccer, a program that seeks to develop individual players for State, Regional, and National teams and offer camps that will lead to their selection on teams which represent the United States in the Olympics, Pan American Games, and other national and international competitions. We offer, under the auspices of US Soccer, programs for

coaching education and referee training at all levels.

To learn more about the many programs and services offered by the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association, please visit our website: <http://www.kysoccer.net> Inside our site, you will find information on our various programs, services and educational programs, all of which will allow you to become familiar with the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association and its various activities..

We regard our coaches as one of our most valuable resources. Each youth soccer coach enjoys a rare privilege--becoming a surrogate parent to a team of kids who are looking to have fun. Kentucky Youth Soccer needs all of its member coaches to be their BEST-as leaders, teachers, and friends to every player.

The "Kentucky Youth Soccer Coach's Handbook" is designed to assist you, "the coach", in creating an environment in which each child can reach his/her full potential as a soccer player and as a child. You are an assistant to the GAME in teaching players and an assistant to players in their understanding of the GAME. This handbook provides the support that you, the coach, need to best accomplish these goals.

The Coach's Handbook is broken into several sections to make your job easier. If you are coaching an age group, you can go through the basic information on coaching theory and skip directly to your age group and skip the age groups that you are not working with. Once you have covered your age group, skip the intervening age groups and go to the back of the handbook for important reference information.

Good luck with your team this year! If you need help, do not hesitate to contact us on our website at [www.KYSoccer.net](http://www.KYSoccer.net) or by email to [Info@kysoccer.net](mailto:Info@kysoccer.net) or by phone to our state office at 859-268-1254.

# What is a Good Coach?

A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports.

**PATIENCE**-This is probably the most important characteristic. Let's face it—12 active boys or girls together require a lot of attention. A good coach is one who doesn't expect angels on the soccer field.

**TOLERANCE** - This quality goes hand-in-hand with patience. Kids are going to be rowdy, or moody or lazy. Tolerance takes the different mind-sets and turns the focus to the tasks "afoot".

**ACCEPTANCE** - Children are so very different. Each one has varied potential and skill levels. A good coach is one who recognizes each child as an individual and he/she encourages that child to perform at his/her very best level. Perfection is not required!

**MOTIVATION** - Soccer can be viewed as kids kicking a ball across the field, or it can be viewed as an opportunity for growth. The true test lies in sparking a child's interest to learn and grow and keeping that spark alive each season.

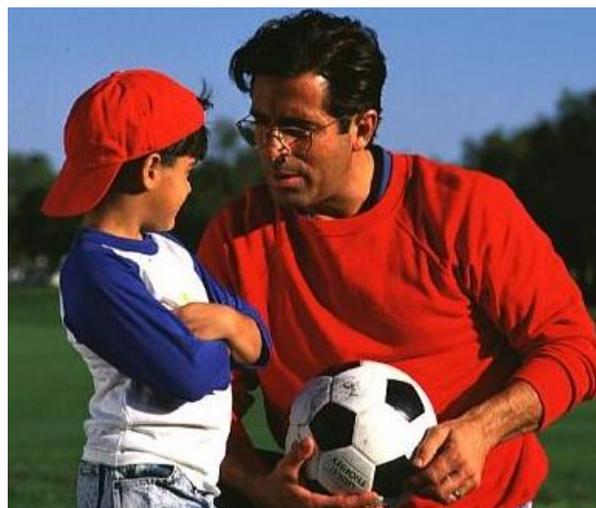
**RESPECT** – At so many games, coaches, and sometimes parents, of the other teams berate and belittle their players for making "mistakes". Sometimes they even go as far as criticizing opposing team members. Good grief! We're playing U-10 soccer! This isn't the World Cup. A good Coach never singles out a child for making a mistake and he/she does not allow parents or the other team members to do so either.

**SPORTSMANSHIP**—perhaps this should have been on top of the list, but being toward the end does not lessen the importance. My definition of sportsmanship is to teach kids to work together as a team in order to achieve a common goal. It also means teaching kids to respect other players as well as each other. Insults are not tolerated. Mistakes are team mistakes, and they are used as teaching tools for the next game.

**ABILITY TO TEACH** - Sounds simple, right? It's not. How many times has a parent signed up a child for a sport, only to have a well-intentioned father decide to coach? He may or may not know the sport. He may or may not relate well to his players. There is a huge difference between the team whose members do what is yelled at them, and the team whose members actually understand what to do and why. A good coach teaches his players basic fundamentals, explains concepts and enables his/her players to think logically when making a play.

**LOVE OF KIDS** - They have the energy to make every practice and every game a new experience for coaches and parents alike. Without their vision and energy, sports would be dull and unappreciated. They offer a day-to-day challenge for coaches, which is contagious and which is motivation for everyone involved in athletics at all levels.

**LOVE OF THE GAME** - Coaches must love their sport, and, more importantly, must show their players enthusiasm for every aspect of the game. This would include techniques and tactics. The love of the game must also show to the players the love for fair-play, respect for the opponents, officials, and spectators, and positive reinforcement for team mates. Only a good coach who loves the game can provide the correct aspects involved in the winning and losing of competition.



# Theory of Coaching

## What is Player Development?

The game is already in each child; we as coaches need to create a game environment:

Activities that the child wants to participate in because they are fun.

- Players being exposed to playing all positions.
- Every player has a ball for practice.
- Activities designed to maximize the number of touches by each player at practice.
- Rules modified for players according to their age group characteristics.
- Equipment modified for players according to their age group characteristics.
- Activities designed to promote thinking, not doing drills.
- De-emphasize winning/losing. We do not need to keep standings, statistics, etc.
- Kids at the beginning of practice are waiting for the coach to tell them what to do. This is extremely negative. What we as coaches should be doing is creating an environment where the kids play the game
- What a coach can do to create this environment at the beginning of practice:
  - As the first kids arrive at practice place 2 small goals so they can play 1 vs. 1.
  - As another child arrives have them jump in and make it 2 vs. 1.
  - Keep adjusting the field size as new players show until they are all playing a game.
  - Do this for about 15 minutes, and then begin practice.

## Role of the Coach

### Facilitator

Reason for facilitator is that most parent/coaches have not been exposed to a soccer environment.

## Objectives

- Set up the condition and environment for learning.
- Facilitate the learning.
- Players must have fun.
- Players need to receive positive feedback from the coach.
- Coach must be enthusiastic about what they are doing.
- It should all be done in the "Spirit" of Play.
- Activities need to be geared towards the players achieving success, with success measured by FUN.

### As a Positive Role Model

Demonstrate respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators, and opposing coaches. To have a responsibility to the game itself.

### As one who understands whom they are coaching

- Children are not defined by chronological age only.
- Each child matures and develops at his/her own pace.
- Treat each child as an individual. Not all children participate for the same reasons.



## Components of the Game

### Technique (Definition: The Skills of the Game; dribbling, kicking, heading, etc.)

Most important at the younger age groups because it is the introduction of the player to the ball.

Activities must be FUN and game-like and learning takes place through self-discovery.

### Psychology

The development of a positive attitude about all aspects of the game.

### Tactics (Definition: Player Decisions)

At the younger age groups the emphasis is not placed upon teaching tactics due to the lack of technical ability of players and also to psychological development.

Decision-making is to be observed by the coach - not stopping to analyze, describe, or dissect. All of this can lead to bored young players.

### Fitness

Appropriately organized technique enhancing activities and small sided games will provide players at this level with the necessary physical requirements to meet the necessary physical demands of their game.

## "Truths" About Children and Sports

The four underlying concepts provide a number of truths about children and sports that have been identified in other research.

Fun is pivotal; if it's not "fun," young people won't play a sport.

Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun; it is more important than winning even among the best athletes.

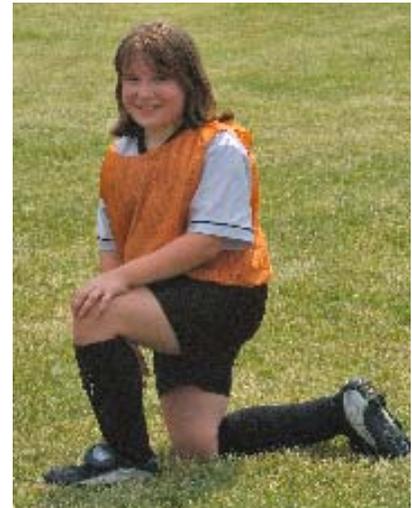
When a coach forces kids to play a certain position there is a certain type of grounding

that is established in that player that might take a year to get out of. We are restricting players at a very young age by putting them into positions. We need to let them have free play. The worst thing that could happen is they could get scored on.

The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to self-knowledge.

Coaches need to incorporate as much DECISION MAKING into their practice as possible.

Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self-competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others).



Kids can learn about themselves through the game. This is why we as coaches need to do activities that enhance the imagination.

Our present game/sport structure is based on games of elimination. We must remove games of elimination at the youth level.

## Coaching Resources

Coaches are expected to be familiar with and comply with the various rules of the governing bodies for youth soccer. Most Kentucky Youth Soccer Association Affiliate Member's have adopted their own association rules, which are generally available in printed form from the association.

Kentucky Youth Soccer has adopted State Rules, which govern the game within the state. These rules are available in printed form and on the web at <http://kysoccer.net>.



Many resources are available through both the Kentucky Youth Soccer and US Youth Soccer. Kentucky Youth Soccer has its entire Coaching handbook, informative articles and links to many other coaching

resources available on its website [www.kysoccer.net](http://www.kysoccer.net)

The web site also contains information on state programs such as the Commonwealth Cup Tournament and the Kohl's American Cup Tournament for Recreational Teams and the Eurosport Challenge and Open Cup for Competitive Teams.

The US Youth Soccer has numerous publications available for sale on their web site - [www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org).

US Soccer has a number of topical articles on coaching and information on the coaching courses they conduct available on their web site - [www.us-soccer.com](http://www.us-soccer.com).

Each Affiliate's Coaching Director is an invaluable resource. Coaches should always seek advice when confronted with issues that they may be unsure of both as to rules and player development. Other experienced coaches within your club are also a valuable resource in seeking the best way to develop players.

### **The Novice Coach: An Introduction to Coaching Youth Soccer (DVD Set and coaching manuals)**

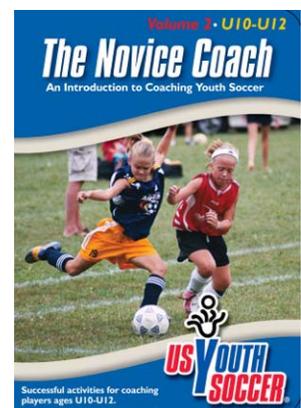
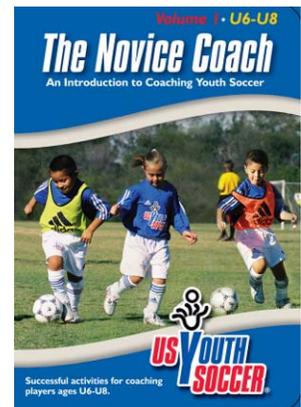
The US Youth Soccer "The Novice Coach" DVD set of videos is a teaching tool to adults to

assist them in providing positive learning environment for our children. "The Novice Coach" DVD will show all coaches, with varying levels of experience, how to appropriately facilitate a child's soccer learning experience.

"Regardless of what coaching background you bring, The Novice Coach DVD from US Youth Soccer provides a tool to better assist a coach to grow the spirit without limiting the child," said Sam Snow, director of coaching education for US Youth Soccer. "Even if you've coached players at a high-level this tool is designed to assist you in coaching the youngest players at the recreational level."

The Novice Coach features over 45 minutes of actual training sessions and activities with specific steps to organizing and conduct training sessions for each age group: Under-6, Under-8, Under-10 and Under-12 boys and girls. In addition to the DVDs a downloadable companion book is also included in each DVD.

"Developing these young athletes' abilities is fundamental in how the game will continue to progress and more importantly instilling the passion and character building blocks for our future generations," said Larry Monaco, president of US Youth Soccer. "Our Coaching Education department as well as those on our recreation and coaching committees seek to promote the growth of the game in the United States and we must properly prepare coaches to encourage children to find the game within."



The DVDs can be ordered online at <http://store.usyouthsoccer.org>

# Dealing with Parents

Coaching is exciting and rewarding, but occasionally you may experience difficulty with parents. Some parents may want their child to play more; others may question your judgment as a coach. Whatever the concern, the parent is generally just looking out for their child, often times at your expense. Don't be discouraged. There are some things you can do to open up communication and make dealing with parents a positive aspect of your coaching duties.



Have a parent meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. See the section, "Parent Orientation Meeting" for tips on how to do this well. Encourage questions from parents and let them know that you have given them a lot of thought to the upcoming season. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.

Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement. (If you have a preferred time for them to voice those concerns, let them know at the Parent Orientation Meeting).

Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. No coach can please everyone. Know the club and game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and explain them to the parents. Handle any confrontation in a one-

on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustration just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, and then thank them for it.

Resist unfair pressure. It is your responsibility as a coach to make the final decision. This does not mean that you still can't listen to the parents. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you. Ask the parents not to criticize their children during games or practices. Don't let players be humiliated, especially by their own parents. Don't blame the players for their parent's actions.

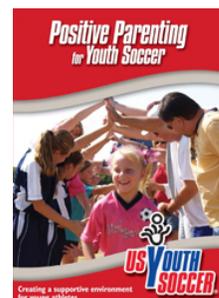
Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any changes as soon as possible.

Most importantly, be fair. If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect and that of their parents as well.

Remember that you will be dealing with all types of children, and with parents having different backgrounds and ideals. The challenge for you as a coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so that the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

## The Positive Parenting DVD from US Youth Soccer

The DVD provides a unique blend of psychology/philosophy and interviews with children of various ages. This video provides insight on: Why children play; Teaching sportsmanship by example; How to be supportive soccer parents; Developing vs. winning; Red cards for parents, Emotional needs of players and Keeping it all in perspective,



Shop [www.store.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.store.usyouthsoccer.org) to buy your copy.

# Team Organization

## Parent Orientation Meeting

All coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion in your living room, or could be combined with a team picnic. Show the Positive Parenting DVD if you can. Whatever the format, the time you invest will pay dividends for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, the following information could be put into a letter to parents/players, but a face-to-face meeting is preferable.

### Purpose of a Parent Orientation Meeting

- Enables parents to understand the objectives and goals of the program.
- Enables parents to become acquainted with you, the coach.
- Inform parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport.
- Inform parents of your expectations of them and of their children.
- Enables you to address any concerns of the parents.
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players.
- Allow you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.)

### Things to Consider when Organizing the Meeting

Hold it early in the season, preferably before the first team practice.

- Having the players present is optional.
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
  - Team roster
  - Schedule of practice and games
  - Club rules
  - Team goals/rules
- Summary or outline of the meeting

- Be prepared and be organized to conduct the meeting efficiently.

## Important Points to Cover

### Coach introduction

- Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time)
- Give some background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience)

### Coaching philosophy

- Discuss what you consider to be the value of the sport
- Discuss your methods for teaching skills
- State the importance you assign to having fun and developing skills
- State the importance you assign to winning and losing
- Discuss any team rules and guidelines, disciplinary procedures
- Discuss your philosophy regarding player rotation, substitution, playing time
- Specifics of the program
- Practice schedule (how many per week? how long?)
- Game schedule (how many? when do they begin?)
- Minimum playing time (what is the rule in your local club?)
- Equipment required (shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards)
- Or recommended (ball, soccer shoes, water bottle)
- Inherent risks (soccer is a contact sport, albeit a relatively safe one)
- Medical insurance (KYSA insurance provides secondary coverage)



## Team Management

- Ask for volunteers as assistant coaches
- Ask for volunteers as team parents (snack schedule, help with nets/flags)
- Set up telephone tree and /or car pooling system

## Coaches Responsibilities

- Demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship
- Treat each player fairly
- Have organized practices and teach soccer fundamentals appropriate to the age group
- Provide a safe environment (arrive at practice on time and remain after practice until every child is picked up by an authorized adult, ensure that the players' equipment conforms to the club guidelines).
- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem
- Help each player set individual and team goals that are attainable
- Give parents a schedule of practices and games in a timely fashion
- Allow each player to play half of every game
- Respect the referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself in a controlled manner on the field



## Player Responsibilities

- Attend practices/games regularly, and arrive on time
- Bring proper equipment to each practice and game
- Inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a practice or game
- Make each practice challenging
- Work toward good sportsmanship and teamwork
- Respect the referees
- Be supportive of teammates all of the time



## Parent Responsibilities

- Transport your child to and from practice and games on time
- Be supportive of all the players (criticism does not improve performance)
- Help your child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- Focus on mastering skills and having fun, not winning
- Avoid material rewards for your child (the reward is the fun of playing!)
- Attend games and cheer the team
- Refrain from criticizing the opponents; be positive with all players
- Respect the referees (They will make mistakes, but they are doing their best. If you feel you are better qualified, see you club's referee coordinator- he/she could easily find work for you)
- Refrain from coaching your child during games (try to understand and respect the difference between the roles of the coach and parent.

Answer Any Questions from the Parents

# Player's Equipment

**BALL** - Encourage each player to have his or her own ball and to use it often, not just during team practice. Players will not derive maximum benefit from practice unless they each have their own ball for warm-ups and individual drills.



Soccer balls come in a variety of sizes, each designated by a number: Size #3 - smallest standard size, for the youngest players (e.g. U-6 to U-8), Size #4 - intermediate size, appropriate for U-9 through U-12 and Size #5 - largest standard size, for U-13 to adult

**SOCCER BAG** – An athletic bag or backpack size appropriate to the player. Bag should be large enough to accommodate the player's equipment, shoes and uniform or practice gear. It is easier for the coach if each child has a way to organize and keep track of the player's own gear.

**SHIN GUARDS** - An absolute requirement for games, should also be worn for all practices, the pull-on "legging" type with foam padding protecting the front of the leg from ankle to shin is an excellent shin guard. Those with plastic inserts offer additional protection,

especially for the older player. Consider washability when selecting a shin guard.

**SOCCER SHOES** - Recommended, but not required by most clubs. Baseball or football type shoes with square or rectangular cleats are not legal for soccer. Soccer cleats for most recreational play must be rubber or molded plastic (no metal cleats), and no less than 3/8 inch in diameter. Check your club's regulations, then check your players' shoes for illegal cleats, protruding nails, or sharp edges, and correct any problem before a referee discovers a violation and one of your players is forced to sit out a game.

**WATER BOTTLE** (with player's name on it) - Fresh water should be available to your players at each practice and game. It is easier for the coach if each player provides his or her own water bottle.

**SHIRTS, SOCKS, SHORTS** - One or more of these items may be provided for each player by your local club. Be sure that you are aware of your club's policies with respect to uniforms and inform your players and parents of any requirements.



# Coach's Equipment

A large **BAG** for all of the items listed below!

Players' **MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS** - you must have these with you at all practices and games; verify that the emergency information is there.

**MEDICAL KITS** - A simple kit for games and practices is a good idea for every coach. A kit should include:

- Ice and "zip-lock bags
- Band aids
- Sterile Pads
- Adhesive Tape
- Elastic wraps
- Vaseline
- Bee sting relief ointment
- Antibiotic ointment



**BALLS** - if possible, have a good quality ball available at the game. This will serve for team warm-ups and can be used as a game ball if none is provided.

The leather or synthetic leather soccer balls are best; avoid the hard plastic-skinned balls which are unpleasant to kick or head.

Each player should have his own ball and bring it to practice; but bring any old spares that you may have to practice because someone is likely to forget theirs

**PUMP** and inflating needle - sometimes the game ball is as hard as a rock or too soft and may need a little "tuning", the same goes for the balls kids bring to practice.

**SHIN GUARDS** - a spare pair of old ones will cover for a forgetful player!

**SPARE SHIRTS** (2) for your goalkeepers - having two extra shirts of different colors (each contrasting with your team shirts) insures that you will always have a keeper's shirt that contrasts with the opposition colors. Scrimmage vests or pennies are a useful addition if funds allow. Pennies help players recognize groups in small games.

**GOALKEEPER'S GLOVES** - an inexpensive pair is a useful addition to your game bag.

**CONES or pylons** (about a dozen) to set up small areas for practice drills, as obstacles for dribbling drills, or to mark boundaries for a scrimmage field. Cones of a different color (or with some added duct tape) will make a distinctive goal.

**WHISTLE** and a **CLIPBOARD** (for practice plans, medical release forms, and substitution schedules) are helpful items.

**WATER** should be available during practice and at the game. Have the players bring their own water bottles (but keep an extra bottle in your bag or cooler for the occasional forgetful player).

Alternatively, have your team parent organize a schedule among the parents to provide water and cups.



# Care, Prevention, and Safety

## Prevention of Injuries

The first line of defense in the treatment of athletic injuries is to prevent them. This is accomplished by a well-planned program; competition among equal ability groups, proper warm-up and adherence to the Laws of the Game. Other factors that can lead to the prevention of injuries are as follows:

- Proper use of equipment (shin guards, no jewelry, uniforms designed for climate)
- Upkeep and monitoring of playing surfaces
- Proper fitting shoes, proper type of shoe for surface
- Ample water supply and sufficient number of rests and length of rests
- Avoid scheduling training during the hottest periods of the day and when there is intense humidity
- Full rehabilitation of an injury prior to return to play, determined by a physician
- Recommendation of a physical exam by qualified personnel prior to participation
- The coach or assistant coach should be responsible for assisting with injuries, which should include attending a certified first aid course and knowledge of state and local ordinances.
- It is recommended that the coach follow-up a player's injury with a conversation with the player's parent.



Each coach should have and know how to use a First Aid Kit that includes, but is not limited to: Team Safety and Information Card, plastic bags, and ties for ice, ice, tape, band aids, antiseptic, sterile pads, towelettes, gauze pads, elastic wrap, antibiotic cream and rubber gloves (care should be given to avoid contact with blood and body fluids and to use proper disposal of items soaked with such fluids).



## Care of Injured Athletes

The care of the injured athlete should begin the moment an injury occurs. Immediate care will reduce the severity of the injury and possibility of long term disability. The coach, upon seeing an injured player on the field should:

- Make sure that the airway is clear
- Determine if the player is conscious
- Ask how the injury occurred
- Ask the player where it hurts
- If the player is unable to continue, he should be checked to determine the extent of the injury
- After determining that the injury IS NOT life threatening, the nature of the injury can be further determined.
- Note the position of the injured part
- Look for swelling and deformity
- Compare it with the opposite side

Treatment for minor injuries such as sprains, strains, and contusions is referred to as R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation). The R.I.C.E. treatment is the only first aid treatment that is safe treatment for a sports injury without professional advice. The treatment helps in three different ways. R.I.C.E. treatments, limited to 20 minutes,

can do no harm to any type of injury. Almost anything else (including heat applications) can cause harm in some instances.

- Applying ice chills the injured area causing the blood vessels to contract, closing circulation to the injured area
- Applying pressure with an elastic bandage inhibits the accumulation of blood and fluids in the area, thereby minimizing pain and swelling
- Elevating the injured area decreases fluid accumulation to the injured area, puts the area to rest, and helps to reduce painful muscle spasms

### Some Familiar terms coaches should know:



**Sprain** – ligaments are bands of tissue that attach bone to bone and stabilize joints. A sprain is an injury to one or more ligaments.

**Strain** – a tearing injury to a muscle or a tendon (tendons attach muscle to bone). Athlete may hear the muscle tearing, muscle

fatigue, and spasm before loss of muscle function.

**Contusion** – a crushing injury to a muscle or tendon caused by an outside force, which causes hemorrhaging to surrounding tissue.

**Abrasion** – a loss of surface area of skin caused by sliding. Care – the area should be cleaned with an antiseptic to prevent infection. An antibiotic ointment should be applied to keep the wound moist and destroy any bacteria present.

## Heat Injuries coaches should be aware of:

**Heat Cramps** – an involuntary contraction of muscle or a muscle group that is repetitive and rapid in nature. Care – rest, drink water, and stretching.

**Heat Exhaustion** – surface temperature approximately normal, skin pale and clammy, profuse perspiration, tired, and weak, headache – perhaps cramps, nausea, dizziness, possible vomiting and possible fainting (the player will most likely regain consciousness as the head is lowered). Immediate Care – move to a cool area, air-conditioning best, have the player lie down with feet elevated, remove restrictive apparel as appropriate, cool with wet cloths or by fanning, if alert – water may be given (1/2 glass per 15 minutes), if player vomits – take to hospital immediately and always refer to physician for further diagnosis, treatment and prior to return to activity.

**Heat Stroke** – body temperature is high, skin is hot, red and dry, sweating mechanism is blocked, pulse is rapid and strong, player may lose consciousness. Immediate Care – seek immediate medical care (Call 911), while waiting; treat as above for heat exhaustion keeping in mind that if you reduce the body temperature too rapidly it can cause internal bleeding.



## General principles when handling an injured player:

- avoid panic > use common sense > seek professional help
- check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration and shock
- dependent upon the nature of the injury, avoid moving the player
- inspire confidence and reassure the player > determine how the injury occurred
- use certified athletic trainers when available > always ERR on the side of caution
- It is recommended that if a player has had medical attention, he/she must have written permission from the doctor to return to activity



## Coach Liability and Player Safety

As a volunteer coach you will have the care, custody and control of someone else's children for 30-50 hours this season. In this capacity you have the potential both to create and to prevent accidents and injuries.

You should be aware of your legal responsibilities as a coach. Attention to these duties will help minimize your personal risk, prevent sports-related injuries, and avoid claims of coaching negligence. Your legal duties include:

- Providing adequate supervision (general and specific to the game) - The health and safety of your team members are entrusted to your care.

- You must provide adequate supervision to avoid foreseeable accidents and injuries. NEVER leave players unattended! NEVER leave after a game or practice until parents or guardians safely pick all up!
- Sound planning - Carefully plan your practices and drills so players progress and learn new skills at a safe pace; don't move too rapidly by forcing improvement. Make written practice plans and keep them on record for the duration of the season.
- Warning Players of inherent risks - Players and parents must know, understand, and appreciate the risks they are likely to encounter in soccer. YOU MUST TELL THEM! (The parent orientation meeting is the time to do this). Warn your players about potentially dangerous techniques.
- Providing a safe playing environment - Be certain that practice and playing fields are free of hazards (e.g. holes, rocks, broken glass or other debris) and that equipment (e.g. goal posts) is in proper condition. Warn your players NOT to hang from the goal cross bar!
- Evaluating players and determining any limitation required participation - Be sure players are physically capable of performing the required skills. This includes mental, physical, and even child abuse situations, Evaluate old injuries as carefully as you can before letting players return to action.
- Matching or equating opponents - Fairly match players for practices and games, giving consideration to body weight, skill level, and maturity.





Providing proper first aid - Have a first aid kit available along with a plan, which outlines emergency procedures. Know where to find emergency help and a telephone (put a couple of quarters in your first aid kit or have a cellular phone on hand). Don't attempt to provide aid beyond your qualifications. ALWAYS have your players' medical release forms with you - they should provide emergency phone numbers as well as permission for you to obtain emergency medical aid in the event a parent/guardian cannot be reached. Be aware of problems concerning transportation. Carry adequate personal liability insurance. Accepting money for transportation may void your personal auto liability insurance - check with your insurance agent or carrier.

Respect the civil rights of your players on and off the field. Consider the factors of the game as it relates to officials and spectators. Keep good records of an event especially in the case of an injury.

Finally, it is to your advantage to have a second adult in attendance at your practices this reduces the risk that you could unjustly be accused of inappropriate behavior. Coaches who successfully perform the above duties not only reduce their personal risk, but also demonstrate to parents and other coaches a desire and willingness to act responsibly for the benefit of the kids.

## Negligence and a Coach's Legal Duties

The risks of the game (called inherent risks) are acceptable as long as a coach acts prudently and as long as these inherent risks are known, appreciated, understood and consciously accepted by the participants.

NEGLIGENCE: The failure to act in a manner that a reasonable and prudent coach would normally act in a similar situation.

Four Factors in Determining Negligence, All four must be present to prove negligence:

- The presence of a duty: Do you have duty/duties to your players?
- Breaching the duty: Failing to act necessarily, acting wrongly or acting properly but in a wrong fashion.
- Cause of the injury: Your breach of duty?
- Extent of injuries.



# Practice

## General Practice Guidelines

### Planning

Planning is the key to having successful practices. Your practice planning should begin before you first get together with the team and should continue throughout the season as you plan for each practice.

### Pre-Season Planning

Find out from your club when and where you can practice. Younger teams (U6) should limit practice to about 45 minutes to 1 hour per week. As the players get older, practices can be increased in frequency and length. U7 and U8 teams may practice twice a week for about an hour each time, older teams may extend twice-a-week practices to 90 min.

Your club may have guidelines about the frequency and duration of practices, so check there first.

The two main objectives for any soccer practice are to have fun, and to learn to become better soccer players.

In order to achieve the second objective, it is important that you develop teaching goals for the season before you start. You will ordinarily have only four to six practices before the first game. Since you will not have time to teach everything, choose topics you want to focus on and build your practices around these topics.



Some of the topics you should consider include:

RULES:	Kick-off * Penalty kick	Offside Drop ball	Throw-in * Corner kick *	Goal kick * Indirect free- kick *
CONDITIONING:	Speed	Endurance	Strength	
TECHNIQUES:	Dribbling * Juggling Shooting Curving Fakes	Foot trap * Tackling * Pull back Shielding	Heading Thigh trap Chipping Chest trap	Turning * Pass (inside foot) * Pass (outside foot) Volleying (half & full)
GOALIE	Catching Punching	Throwing	Punting	Diving
TACTICS:	Positions Wall pass  Defensive wall	Crossing Double team  Overlap	Channeling Marking  Support	Passing Set play

\* These topics are good ones to emphasize for the younger kids.

Be realistic in selecting your objectives! Consider the age and experience of your players. Decide on your priorities - what are the most important things you want to cover before the games begin? If you have doubts about whether your team is ready for a new tactic, skill or concept, introduce it after you have seen it used by some of your players.

Identify one or more assistant coaches. Assistant coaches are extremely valuable. They make it possible to divide players into smaller groups so that each player gets individual attention. Parents who would like to help but feel they lack the necessary skills should be encouraged to attend practice to help shag balls and direct traffic. It is hard to have too many helpers, especially with younger players. The preseason Parent Orientation Meeting is an excellent time to solicit help!

Prepare a bad weather contingency plan. Inform your players and parents before the season whether you will practice in the rain or cancel practice. Even if you plan to practice in the rain, you should not have practice when conditions are dangerous, for example when there is lightning or if the field has become too wet to permit safe play. If you do need to cancel practice due to adverse weather, have an organized plan to inform parents. Again, the Parent Orientation Meeting is the time to set up a telephone tree, which can make this job much easier.

## Practice Plans

Have a written lesson plan for each training session or practice. You cannot have a good practice if you do not have an idea of what you want to accomplish during that practice. The plan may be written out in detail on a practice planning form (see sample available at [www.kysoccer.net Lesson Plan Form](http://www.kysoccer.net/LessonPlanForm)). Writing down your plan will help you think through the equipment and setup you will need for the topics to be covered.

As you plan your practices, remember these TIPS TO KEEP PLAYERS' INTEREST AND AVOID BOREDOM:

- Give players many touches on the ball.
- Get all of the players involved.
- Turn "Drills" into games
- Let the kids PLAY!
- Practices should follow a progression: warm-up, individual activities, group activities and "The Game".
- Finally, perform the skill in the way it would be used in a game.
- Minimize the amount of talking that you do



After the season starts, it is helpful to take a few minutes of practice to discuss the previous game, emphasizing what your team did well, what can be improved upon, and what the goals should be for the coming week.

For more information on planning a practice or for sample practice plans, visit The Coach's Corner at [www.kysoccer.net/coaches](http://www.kysoccer.net/coaches). The Coach's Corner has an extensive selection of useful plans and articles online

# Sample Lesson Planning Form



## Kentucky Youth Soccer Association – Lesson Plan



TOPIC =	COACH =	DATE =
<b>FUNDAMENTAL - WARM UP</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>KEY COACHING POINTS</b>
	• • • • • •	• • • • • •
<b>MATCH RELATED</b>	• • • • • •	• • • • • •
<b>MATCH RELATED</b>	• • • • • •	• • • • • •
<b>MATCH CONDITION</b>	• • • • • •	• • • • • •
<b>COOL DOWN</b>		

[WWW.KYSOCCER.NET](http://WWW.KYSOCCER.NET)

## Coaching Practice Methodology

"If you aren't 15 minutes early, you are 15 minutes late"

### No-No's

- don't allow your players to pick their own teams
- false praise
- prolonged stoppages
- associating fitness with punishment
- lines, laps, and drills
- idle time

### Yeses

- Incorporate games that players are already familiar with, into your training session (playground games, physical education games, etc.)
- Stretching, and selecting certain players to lead stretches, are chances to develop leadership in your players
- Do you refer to what you worked on in your last practice before your next game?
- Pause for brief coaching messages
- Coach the positive!
- Encourage decision making and problem solving by allowing groups to "strategize" before beginning and in between activities
- Send them away with "soccer homework"

### Principles and Methodology of Coaching

- Developmentally appropriate
- Clear, concise, and correct information: Brevity – Clarity – Relevance
- Simple to complex: there should be a flow that is appropriate to the age of the players and the topic of the practice – in some instances this will proceed from a warm-up to individual activities to small group activities to large group activities (THE GAME) – While the progression may vary, every practice should start with a warm-up and end with "The Game."

## Designing a Training Session

Helpful questions to ask yourself when planning a training session

- are the activities fun?
- are the activities organized?
- are all of the players involved in all of the activities?
- is creativity and decision making being used?
- are the spaces being used appropriate?
- is the coach's feedback appropriate?
- are there implications for the game?
- Are the players having fun?



### Variations, Restrictions, and Alterations to keep you players excited about training:

- Number of balls
- Number of teams (instead of the traditional 2 teams, why not play with three!)
- Size of field (short in length and wide in width and vice versa)
- Number of goals

- Size of goals
- Various ways of scoring a goal (passing, shooting, dribbling, etc.)
- Size of balls
- Touch restrictions (maximums and minimums)



## The Main Areas of a Practice Session

### Warm-up:

Enthusiastically set the tone for fun.

The warm-up prepares the mind and body for upcoming activities. Ball gymnastics greatly enhance motor skills (i.e. coordination, balance, agility, and flexibility).

Young players need very little stretching, but it is a good habit for them to begin at an early age.

Plan warm-ups so that each player uses a ball. Incorporate games and exercises that emphasize a lot of touches and dribbling,

If possible, use or create conditioning exercises that require the players to work with a ball rather than just running. The kids will have more fun and they will learn more soccer skills!

### Individual Activities:

Fun filled activities that emphasize technical development. "GAMES" Remember this is the discovery age. Lots of ball contacts.

Activities should be appropriate for the skills you are teaching. Limit the number of activities in a given practice, and don't spend too long on any one activity. Remember that a child's attention span is limited!

### Group Activities:

Group games that are an extension of the individual activity. Groups are small to again allow for ball contacts. Activities should emphasize fun while challenging the players in a non-drill manner.

Keep it varied and interesting with a minimum of oral instruction (don't lecture!). Demonstrate as much as possible, if you feel uncomfortable demonstrating techniques, don't hesitate to enlist your more skillful players, or perhaps older soccer players, to help you. Depending on the level you are coaching, junior high or high school players may be useful for this purpose.

MAXIMIZE the number of touches for each player by running activities with several small groups at the same time; no child likes to stand in line waiting!



## "The Game":

This portion of the practice session is designed to familiarize the players with the varying aspects of the game. Kids want to play and have fun. After a brief explanation and/or demonstration quickly get the players playing.



Small-sided games (e.g. 4 v 4) are an excellent practice tool they help keep everyone involved and, by reducing the size of each playing field, you can have two games going at the same time. Drills should be organized to progress into

scrimmages (e.g. no shots until at least four consecutive passes have been made). Follow up a controlled scrimmage with an open scrimmage. Remember, the kids signed up to play soccer!

Be prepared to change your plans! Weather, field conditions, the number of players who come to practice, can all affect your plans.

Be flexible and adjust to conditions.

You may also need to extend the time spent on a particular drill if the players are having difficulty acquiring a particular skill. If it is especially hot, allow for more frequent water breaks and reduce the physical intensity of practice.

## Player Management

### Look Out for the Kids!

Come to practices a few minutes early to set up and to be there for early drop-offs. The coach (or another parent) must stay at the practice site until all children are picked up. If parents are persistently late, then settle the problem with the parents; don't gamble with the safety of the kids. Consider having a contingency plan (e.g. pickup the player at your house?) and announce it at the Parent Orientation Meeting. If a player must leave

the field to use a rest room, send an assistant coach or another parent along.

## Team Discipline

At the first practice it is valuable to establish team rules concerning attendance, listening carefully, respecting teammates, etc. You will be most successful if you do this with the cooperation and consent of the players themselves. Make it clear to all what the penalty will be for breaking team rules (e.g. time out from practice or a scrimmage). This is also a good time to set realistic team goals for the season (e.g. to have fun, to work together as a team, to practice good sportsmanship).

Some other ideas on team discipline:

- Keep your players busy so they don't have time for mischief if you have kids standing in line all the time, you are inviting disaster!
- Be positive: say, "Please walk" instead of "Don't run".
- Try to deal with problems before they get worse.
- Speak with the culprit first, before resorting to other disciplinary measures.



If time outs don't work, then talk to the parents. Ask them to attend practice if necessary.



Work on your communication skills. Many coaches can speak clearly, use appropriate words well enough and have content that is appropriate to young players. However, most coaches need a great deal of work on listening to young players, controlling and reading nonverbal cues, and understanding the emotional responses of different athletes to what they say. The better you understand your players, the less trouble you are likely to have with misbehavior.

### **The MAIN POINTS to remember for a successful practice are:**

**BE PREPARED.** Have a plan for what you will cover during the practice.

**Keep it SIMPLE.** Give a short demonstration with a minimum of talk, and then have the players work on the drill. **MAXIMIZE** touches for each player.

**Make it FUN.** Sometimes the drills in books just don't work for you and/or your players. Don't fight it to the point of frustration. Be prepared to switch to something you know they can handle.

Strive for a **PROGRESSIVE** acquisition of basic skills. Begin with relatively simple drills. Add movement and then opposition to simulate game conditions. Always consider the age and skill level of your players. The percentage of time spent on practice without opposition should decrease as players become older and more skillful. Restricting space and number of

touches are other ways to make drills more demanding.

Always have time when the players **JUST PLAY** ("THE GAME").

Always **BE SAFETY CONSCIOUS** with your players.

Every once in a while **ASK YOURSELF**, "Why am I coaching?" and "HOW do I measure my success?" This will help you evaluate your techniques and your progress.

Ask yourself repeatedly "Are the kids having fun? If the answer is yes, you are achieving success.



# Coaching the U-6 Player

"Theories and goals of education don't matter a whit if you don't consider your students to be human beings."

## Characteristics of U - 6 Players

U6 | 3 against 3 no goal keepers

- Short attention span.
- Can attend to only one problem at a time.
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated.
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for. Need to be patient and laugh with them as they get 'lost' on the field.
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Give "hints", don't criticize.
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals, etc.) should be given for winning.
- Prefer "parallel play" (Will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates. Thus, a 3 against 3 games is, in reality, a 1 against 5 games because they all want the ball at the same time.
- Very individually oriented (me, mine, my).
- Constantly in motion, but, with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop. They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly.
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar.
- Physical coordination limited. Eye - hand and eye - foot coordination is not developed. Need to explore qualities of a rolling ball.
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc.
- Prefer large, soft balls.
- Catching or throwing skills not developed.
- Can balance on their "good" foot.

# Involving the Parents of U-6s

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-6 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:



- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing the entire calling. (Phone chains.)
- Choosing a team administrator- someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (Cleats are not mandatory.)
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-6 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are



there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.

- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?

Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

## Things You Can Expect from U-6s



As coaches of these younger players there are things that we know that we can expect during training and games. If we know what to expect, we will be more effective in dealing with the hundreds of

situations that come up. This will help us relax, and, in turn, allow us to enjoy the unpredictable nature of working with these children even more.

Here are some of the things that we can expect.

- Most players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- No matter how loud we shout, or how much we "practice" it, they cannot or will not pass the ball.
- Somebody will come off the field in need of a toilet. Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet.
- The only player to hold a position is the goalkeeper (if you play with one). Don't even consider teaching positional play.
- Twenty seconds after the start of a game, every player will be within 5 yards of the ball.
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that.

- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the player's attention. By all means, stop whatever you are doing and go watch for a couple of minutes!
- During a season, you will end up tying at least 40 - 50 shoe laces.
- They will do something that is absolutely hysterical. Make sure that you laugh!

## U-6 Coaching Rational

It is important to understand at the outset that players coming to any sport prior to the age of 6 years old, in general, do not do so by their own choice. As a result, their coaches need to give them something about which to get excited. Further, at this age, learning to play soccer is secondary to most other things in their lives.

With the above assumptions, let's look at some things that we can do to energize the U-6 players, and, hopefully, get them to the point where they will enthusiastically initiate the sign up for next year!

- Each session should be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible. Involve the ball in as many activities as possible. Basic movements such as running, skipping, hopping, etc. need to be emphasized. If these can be done while kicking, catching, rolling, or dribbling a ball... all the better!
- Training should not last for more than one hour. This is primarily due to physical fatigue and attention span considerations. Train once or twice a week. Any more than this may lead to their and your burnout.
- Have as many different kinds of activities ready as you can get into one hour. Emphasis needs to be placed on what is FUN!
- Every player should bring his or her own size #3 ball.



- Remember, although they may have very similar birth dates, their physical and / or mental maturity may vary as much as 36 months. Activities need to accommodate these individual differences whenever possible.
- Team play and passing is an alien concept to these players. They know that if they pass the ball, they may never get it back. In fact, they often will steal it from their own teammates. Do not get uptight if they do not pass, let them dribble to their heart's content.
- Plan for at least 4, 90 second drink breaks, especially in warmer weather. Their "cooling system" is not as efficient as in older players.

## Individual Technical and Tactical Issues for U-6 Players

### Coordination and Basic Motor Skills

Four and five year olds are learning to coordinate and control their body movements and dynamic balance, and are generally not very nimble or agile. Practice activities that develop these basic motor skills, with and without the soccer ball will be beneficial and fun for all young children. In addition to soccer-specific activities, practice activities for five and six year-olds should target directional sense, spatial awareness, and basic motor patterns, such as hopping, skipping, jumping, bounding and running.

### Contacting the Ball

There are six surfaces (inside, outside, instep, sole, toe and heel) used for kicking, dribbling or controlling a soccer ball. For most U-5 and U-6 players, the toes and the laces are the most commonly used surfaces. Practice activities should encourage these players to experiment with different surfaces and ask them to "imagine" new ways to kick and dribble the ball. Games that cater to discovery learning and imitation are the recommended approaches to "teaching" new skills to young children.



### Dribbling

Dribbling the ball is arguably the most important soccer skill at any level, and practice activities should encourage all young players to dribble and stop and turn the ball with different surfaces and to move in different directions with the ball under control.

### Passing

Players as young as five will look to pass the ball to teammates, and they will do so with purpose if they are given enough time and space to consider their options. In many cases, young children are still learning how to coordinate their perception of a game situation with the muscle actions necessary to make contact with the ball. It is important to encourage beginners to take extra touches when controlling the ball so that passes (or dribbles) are attempted with a purpose in

mind, rather than as a means of kicking the ball to safety.



## Shooting

A player's first thought in possession should always be "Can I score a goal from here?" Goals in practice should be wide and high enough to encourage shots from various distances and angles, and coaches should reinforce to players through their practice activities that the objective of the game is to score more goals than the opponents in the time allowed. Soccer games and other activities with no stated "outcome" are less motivating than activities that provide a way to win.

## Ball Control

Time, space and repetition are the most important elements for improving comfort level and reducing the number of touches necessary to control the ball. Small-sided games and complementary one-player/one-ball activities provide opportunities for young players to begin to associate the techniques of dribbling and controlling the soccer ball with the three tactical applications of dribbling: moving away from pressure, running into open space, and dribbling towards goal. Beginning level players will rarely try to control balls coming out of the air, and bouncing balls present another very difficult coordination and emotional problem for five and six year-olds. The secret of good ball control is a soft first touch; the most damaging coaching advice to give five and six year-olds is to kick the ball away.

## Heading

Five and six year olds will not head the ball.

## Support

Young players should not be restricted in their movements on the field and moving should become a natural extension of passing. Passing to other players should be expected and encouraged at this age, although dribbling the ball is the most likely method of advancing the ball. Instruction that limits players to a particular area of the field does not allow for the natural emergence of supporting positions and angles that become so important for positional play in later years.

## Spaces versus Positions

For all players under the age of eight, positional coaching of any kind is irrelevant and detrimental to their fun, enjoyment and progress. Rather than be told what position to play, young players should be encouraged to "find" new supporting positions away from teammates so that passes can be exchanged.

## Vision

Most young players have little or no visual awareness of their immediate surroundings, and, in particular, the



proximity of teammates and opponents not directly in front of them. Receiving passes when facing away from the opponent's goal is a difficult skill, even for accomplished players, and most children will not look up until they have received the ball, secured possession, and turned to face forward. Often, young players will simply let the ball run past them into what they hope will be open space.

## Defending

"Defending" at this age should be no more complicated than encouraging the children to

try and win the ball back when possession is lost. Players will often naturally transition from attack to defense and recover towards their goal, but it is also true that young children will often stop playing when the ball is lost. While these players should be “gently” encouraged to participate in the game, they should never be scolded for their decision to “take a rest.” When the ball comes their way they will become involved again. Because players should be encouraged to move forward when attacking, there will be many situations when no one is at the back of the team when the opponents gain possession. This should be anticipated as a natural aspect of play for young children and one reason why scores are generally much higher in small-sided games.



## Transition

When the ball turns over from the attacker to the defender or from the defender to the attacker, the game offers chances to demonstrate awareness of two very important concepts: immediate recovery of the ball and immediate counter-attack to goal. Players should be assessed on how well they understand these concepts and encouraged to react as quickly as possible to any change in possession.

## Creativity

Because five and six year-olds are learning to coordinate ball manipulation with body control, “creativity” is more likely to appear as good ball control or faking or feinting movements. Players who can change speed and direction and retain control of the ball are applying their techniques in a creative way.

Players who can move their bodies from side to side in an effort to unbalance a defender are showing signs of creativity. Players, who experiment with different parts of their feet or control the ball with different body parts, are showing signs of creativity. At this age, allowing children to think and to fantasize and to create their own solutions to the game’s problems is a critical element of coaching.



## Typical U-6 Training Session

Here are some items that should be included in a U-6 training session:

**WARM-UP:** A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. They can chase their ball as it is thrown by the coach, bringing it back with different parts of their body. Or, they can chase someone with their ball at their feet. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, again, hopefully done with the ball. “Soccernastics” activities are very appropriate, like: rolling the ball with the bottom of their feet, with their elbows, backwards, with the back of their neck while holding on to it; throwing it up and catching it; keeping it up with their feet while sitting.

**INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES:** Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not a real 1 v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a

game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or "Red Light - Green Light", or a game where players are trying to knock their ball through gates. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "looser sits".

**PLAY THE GAME:** Move on to the real game, but, make sure it is a 2 v. 2, 3 v. 3, or 4 v. 4 game. Switch the game every 5 minutes or so. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. It is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

**WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK:** Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their thigh and then catch it. It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

## Appropriate Training for U-6 Players

- "Try this." activities may include, but not limited to, stretching, twisting, jumping, and balancing.
- Dribbling the ball with their feet, have the players stop the ball with various part of the body parts such as foot, back, belly, knee or butt, while the ball is on the ground on command.
- "I can do something without the ball, can you?" such as skipping, then kids lead. Moving to "I can do something with the ball, can you" such as tossing the ball and catching with clapping or footwork on the ball. As before, give the lead to the kids as the challenge increases.
- Four goal games with gates. A player is assigned to each goal. They are to act as a gate to close or open the goal when directed by the coach. The other

players play to score on any open goal.

- "The Game" 4V4 to goals. The coach is the "boss of the balls", serving balls into play until they are all out of play. Player must return the balls to the coach to resume play.

## U-6 Practice Ideas

### "Keep Your Yard Clean"

Here is a game that involves kicking and is a good example of parallel play. It involves all players on the team at one time, but they are all acting as individuals during the game. This allows for individual differences in skill. The game is simple, fun, and easy to adapt to account for team size and experience.



**THE GAME:**

- Create a 'neutral area' between the two teams where no player is allowed into. This area can be as small as one yard and as big as 10 yards wide. The width is determined by how far the players can kick the ball.
- Each player starts with a ball at his / her feet.
- On command, each team tries to keep their side of the game free of balls by kicking their ball over to the other team's side.
- After an appropriate amount of time (when the balls become too scattered, or, the players are losing focus), call the game and count which side has the most balls on their side.
- Distribute the balls evenly for another try if the players are still interested.
- After players have found some success with this basic game, try these variations:
  - Players can only use their left foot.
  - Throw the ball back.
  - Punt the ball back.

- Dribble ball around cone that has been set up in the middle of their "yard", then, kick ball back.

### **"Red Light...Green Light"**

Here is a game that should be familiar to most U-6's. Again, the game is fun, simple to set up, and has direct application to the game. The skill that it is targeting is dribbling.

#### THE GAME:

- Each player has a ball, except the one player that is designated as the "light".
- Lines from start to finish should be approximately 20 - 30 yds.
- Players start from the line opposite the "light".
- The "light" then turns away from the group shouting out "GREEN LIGHT". At this signal, the players start to dribble towards the "light".
- When the "light" turns back around, calling out "RED LIGHT", players must freeze their bodies and their ball.
- If the "light" catches players or a ball still moving, that player must take 5 steps back.
- The first player to cross the line where the "light" is standing is the winner and becomes the new "light".
- You can start the game without using balls for younger players, then have them roll the ball with their hands, then use their feet.

### **"I Can Do Something, Can You?"**

The coach begins the activity by saying "I can do something can you?" and demonstrating a physical activity such as jumping jacks.

The children then do the same.

- The coach demonstrates several other physical activities such as: skips, one-legged bounces; star jumps, rolls, etc.
- After demonstrating several times the coach asked the children, "What can you do?" and takes their suggestions.
- Body movement from skipping to balancing on one leg.

The important thing is to allow the children to explore how their body moves.

### **"Ball Master"**

The players dribble to the coach and hand him/her the ball.

The coach tosses away the ball and the players retrieve the ball and dribble it back to the coach.

The coach can give a different dribbling challenge to the players when he/she tosses out the ball.

The activity promotes:

- Listening skills
- Problem solving
- Dynamic dribbling

### **"Balls All Over"**

Play on a normal U6 game field with goals. Play a normal 3v3 game with the exception of playing with more than one ball. The coach can add in more soccer balls as he/she sees fit.

Gradually take out balls until the game is left with only one ball and then move directly into the match in activity number five below.



# Coaching the U-8 Player

"A good teacher, like a good entertainer, first must hold his audience's attention. Then he can teach his lesson."

## Characteristics of U - 8 Players

U8 | 4 against 4 no goal keepers

- Attention span is a bit longer than U-6 players but still not at a "competitive" stage
- Inclined towards small group activities.
- Always in motion: scratching; blinking; jerking; rocking....
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give "hints".
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence. (Most are able to ride a two-wheeler.)
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same "gear" as them.
- Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. Make sure that they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. "If they try hard, they performed well" regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be encouraged constantly, and asked, "Now, can you do this?"
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play and remembering what goal they are going for... but, in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget. They still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.



## Involving the Parents of U-8s

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-8 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing the entire calling. (Phone chains.)
- Choosing a team administrator- someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (Cleats are not mandatory.)
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-8 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to

ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.

- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

## Things You Can Expect from U-8s

The 6, 7, and 8 year old players are a bit more compliant than their U-6 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a "game". They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by the fact that they occasionally, and I mean occasionally, will pass the ball to a teammate, on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase "I can't do that!", but, will quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think that they can.

Some other things that you can expect to happen during a season with this age group are:

- There will be at least 200-300 falls, but now they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in your bag, as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or the coach tells them that it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They will still want to wear a pinnie, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is whose best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up. Please, let them go (they must face their teachers five days a week).
- They will wear their uniform to bed.

## U-8 Coaching Rational



Some of the players that are playing as a 7 year old have had two years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a few thousand times in their lives. This, however, does not mean that these players are ready for the mental demands of tactical team soccer. True,

they do have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his/her body. They are still there to have fun, and because some of the players may be brand new to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation.

Following are some more items that a coach of U-8 players should consider.

- Small-sided soccer is the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but also, it is an easier game to understand.
- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through times when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient.
- Passing is not an important part of their game, no matter how much anybody yells at them to do otherwise, it is much more fun to dribble and shoot. Let them.
- Training once or twice a week is plenty, and should not last longer than 1-¼ hours.
- Each player should bring his or her own size #4 ball to training. Learning how to control it should be the main objective. They need to touch it, as many times as possible during fun activities that will engage them.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn

by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.

- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation. Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottle included), cooperate, listen, behave, and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.

## Individual Technical and Tactical Issues for U-8's



### Contacting the Ball

How many ways can the player kick or dribble or control the ball? There are six surfaces (inside, outside, instep, sole, toe and heel) used for kicking, dribbling or controlling a soccer ball. The ball can also

be driven, chipped, volleyed, half-volleyed, side-volleyed, curled and lofted. The U-8 player should be challenged to expand their range of surfaces in an ongoing process of technical experimentation, with half-volleys and techniques for bending the ball least likely to appear at this age.

Is the player two footed? Juggling and dribbling practice should always involve the use of both feet and young players must be encouraged to experiment with all six contact surfaces. For the more motivated players, juggling, kicking and Coerver's\* are essential "homework" activities for developing a comfort level with the ball.

\*Coerver's are individual dribbling moves named after the Dutchman, Wiel Coerver, who created the training program.

## Passing

Does the player purposely pass the ball towards teammates? Players should be asked to control the ball and look for teammates rather than imply kicking the ball forward or to safety. It is often necessary to remind young players that the goalkeeper is always the most open player to pass to when they are under pressure and no obvious forward passing or dribbling options are available. At



this age, the "thinking" behind a passing decision is often more telling than the outcome and young players must be encouraged to attempt to maintain possession by passing (or dribbling) even as their limited range of techniques fail them.

How far can the player kick the ball accurately? Players should be encouraged to pass within their technical range. Technique, physical strength, and the size and weight of the ball all impact kicking distance and accuracy. In the small-sided games environment, shorter passes should be expected and encouraged, with aimless "boots" to safety, or to the opposition regarded as wasted possessions.

Does the player use disguise and deception when passing? Encouraging more frequent passing (and dribbling) with the outside of the foot will help improve the level of subtlety in young players.

## Shooting

Does the player shoot, when possible? A player's first thought in possession should always be "Can I score a goal from here?" Goals in practice should be wide and high enough to encourage shots from various distances and angles, and coaches should reinforce to players through their practice activities that the objective of the game is to score more goals than the opponents in the time allowed. Soccer games and other activities with no stated "outcome" are less

motivating than activities that provide a way to win.

## Ball Control

How many touches does the player take to control the ball? The earlier a player decides what to do with the ball, the faster they will play; however, virtually all U-8 players will not look up before they have secured possession because their skill level will not allow them to concentrate on two things (the ball and the next action) at once. Time, space and repetition are the most important elements for improving comfort level and reducing the number of touches necessary to control the ball.

## Dribbling

Does the player have the skill to dribble out of pressure, or past an opponent? Dribbling practices should include activities that encourage children to use changes in pace and direction to maintain possession or beat an opponent. While presenting a variety of moves to young players certainly has long-term benefits, creating a positive attitude towards dribbling is a more important element to coaching U-5/6's. As the most artistic aspect of soccer, young children must not be discouraged from learning to dribble the ball through early and repeated failures.

Does the player run into open space with the ball? Running forward with the ball is important for making defenders commit to the ball, for shortening passing distances, for changing the rhythm of play, and for creating shooting possibilities. Players must be encouraged to quickly dribble the ball into open space, with the outside of the foot recommended as the best technique for improving "speed dribbling."

Does the player dribble with their head down and rarely look to pass or shoot? While it is important to encourage young players to quickly dribble the ball into open space, past an opponent, or away from an opponent, players must also be aware of their passing and shooting options. Given that the ball can travel faster when kicked, it is important to encourage dribbling players to look up during

those moments when they are in open space and not touching the ball, and when they are momentarily clear of opponents.

Does the player use disguise and deception when dribbling? The most difficult opponents are "wrigglers" who are unpredictable in their dribbling. Players should be encouraged to combine dribbling moves and become comfortable making multiple, abrupt changes in direction.



## Heading

Does the player head the ball? Heading becomes more likely by ages nine and ten and, while casually practicing with lighter balls can help overcome some of the initial fears associated with performing this "fear" skill, heading should not be an important aspect of coaching U-7/8 players. It should also be stressed that there is NO credible medical evidence supporting the claim that heading a soccer ball is dangerous to the participants.

## Support

Does the player move with the game or do they pass and stand still? Young players should not be restricted in their movements on the field, and moving should become a natural extension of passing. Passing to other players should be expected and encouraged at this age, although dribbling the ball is still the most likely method of advancing the ball.

Does the player move into open spaces when not in possession? Instruction that limits young players to a particular area of the field

does not allow for the natural emergence of supporting positions and angles that become so important for positional play in later years. For all players under the age of eight, positional coaching is irrelevant and detrimental to their fun and enjoyment. Rather than be told what position to play, young players should be encouraged to “find” new supporting positions away from teammates so that passes can be exchanged. Smaller teams eliminate the need for an organized midfield, meaning that one or two well-intentioned passes can often result in a teammate being played through to goal.



Is the player aware of the position of teammates and opponents? Most young players have little or no visual awareness of their immediate surroundings, and, in particular, the proximity of teammates and opponents not directly in front of them. Receiving passes when facing away from the opponent’s goal is a difficult skill, even for accomplished players, and most children will not look up until they have received the ball, secured possession, and turned to face forward. Often, young players will simply let the ball run past them into what they hope will be open space.

## Defending

Does the player try to recover the ball when possession is lost? “Defending” at this age should be no more complicated than encouraging the children to try and win the ball back when possession is lost. Any emphasis on “team” defending, or scolding individual players for not getting back when the ball is lost, is detrimental to the fun and enjoyment of the players. Because players should be encouraged to move forward when attacking, there will be many situations when no one is at the back of the team when the opponents gain possession. This should be anticipated as a natural aspect of play for young children and one reason why scores are usually higher in small-sided games.

Does the player simply kick at the ball when an opponent is in possession? Tackling for the ball can and should include efforts to regain possession, but slide tackling to dispossess an opponent is dangerous to both the attacker and defender and should not be allowed until U-10. Defenders should be encouraged to try to dispossess opponents rather than simply kicking the ball away, or to safety.

## Transition

Does the player mentally transition after a change in possession? When the ball turns over from the attacker to the defender or from the defender to the attacker, the game offers chances to demonstrate awareness of two very important concepts: immediate recovery of the ball and immediate counter-attack to goal. Players should be assessed on how well they understand these concepts and encouraged to react as quickly as possible to any change in possession.

## Creativity

Does the player improvise when solving tactical problems? Those players who use non-standard techniques to solve tactical problems are demonstrating signs of creativity. A “good” pass gets to its target at a pace that can be controlled, regardless of the technique used in the delivery; similarly, a goal is a goal, regardless of how it was propelled into the net. Young players who

improvise should be encouraged, not scolded, and it must be remembered that for young players, the "thought" behind an action is generally more telling than the outcome, which is often limited by experience and technical range.

## Typical U-8 Training Session

Here are some items that should be included in a U-8 training session:

**WARM-UP:** A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. They can chase their ball as it is thrown by the coach, bringing it back with different parts of their body. Or, they can chase someone with their ball at their feet. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, again, hopefully done with the ball. "Soccernastics" activities are very appropriate, like: dribbling the ball with the bottom of their feet, with their elbows, backwards, with the back of their neck while holding on to it; keeping the ball up with their thighs; keeping it up with their feet while sitting.



### INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP

**ACTIVITIES:** Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a game where players are trying to work with a partner or small group to obtain

a goal. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" (where everyone plays), instead of games where the "loser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.



### PLAY THE GAME:

Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 1v.1 up to 5v.5. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball

over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

**WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK:** Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then thigh and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return

## Appropriate Training for U-8 Players

**Math dribble.** Each player with a ball dribbles, avoiding the other players. On direction from the coach, they form into groups such as "two", "2 + 1".

- Players dribble the ball and stop with the body part the coach calls out. On restart, players change direction.
- Players toss ball in the air and touch it before it hits the ground, then dribble four touches prior to tossing the ball in the air again.

**Shadow dribble.** In pairs, front player carries the ball and the other player follows while dribbling the ball. Roles are reversed.

**Everybody's it.** Each player with a ball. Players try to tag each other while dribbling.

**Pac-man.** One player with a ball and the other players in a designated space. The pac-man tries to tag the other players with the ball. As the other players are tagged, they get a ball and become PAC-men and join in.

**"The Game" 4V4,** two goals. Each player with a ball, dribbling. On direction from the coach, the players try to score on their own goal. Next the team that scores their four goals first, wins. Next player with four balls total. Next, player with one ball.

## U-8 Practice Ideas



### "GET EM"

Here is a game, which involves both passing and dribbling that is fun and engages players quickly. Also, although primarily an individual exercise that allows for differences in ability level, if the players are ready, it can quickly become a cooperative game where players work together to solve a challenge.

#### THE GAME:

- Each player will need a ball.
- Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. All the other players are around the outside of the girded space.
- Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'.
- The game is over when all of the players have been caught.

- The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game.
- If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It".
- Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard.
- Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other; use the outside of the foot.
- Players not caught should run, jump, and use zigzag movements.

### "RUNNING BASES"

Here is another game that emphasizes dribbling that is fun and challenging for players. Again, primarily, it is an individual game that could lend itself to small group cooperation if the players are ready.

#### THE GAME:

- Each player will need a ball, except those that have been designated as "It". Players that are "It" need to carry a colored pinnie or flag in their hand.
- Players with a ball try to dribble without being tagged. If they are, they exchange places with the "tagger" (The "tagger" hands the pinnie to the dribbler and takes their ball).
- Dribblers are safe in one of the designated bases. Only one player is allowed in a base at a time. If a new player enters a base, the old player must leave the base.
- Add "taggers" when the players find the game to be easy.
- It seems about right to have one base for every 3 players, but, this number can be adjusted either way to make the game constantly interesting.
- This game can also be played by only allowing the "tagger" to "get" someone by kicking their ball away, not just "tagging" the person. Experiment with different combinations of "taggers" and bases to keep the players engaged.

# Coaching the U-10 Player

## Characteristics of U-10 Players

U10 | 6 against 6 with goal keepers

- Gross and small motor skills becoming more refined and reliable. Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- Ability to stay on task is lengthened. They have the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity.
- Skills are emerging. Becoming more predictable and recognizable.
- Some children begin moving from concrete thinking to abstract thinking.
- Able to pace themselves, to plan ahead.

- Increased self-responsibility. They remember to bring their own equipment.
- Starting to recognize basic tactical concepts, but not exactly sure why certain decisions are better.
- Repetition of technique is very important, but it must be dynamic, not static.
- Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- Explanations must be brief, concise, and mention "why."
- Becoming more "serious". Openly, intensively competitive, without intention of fouling.
- Still mostly intrinsically motivated. Peer pressure starting to be a factor.



- Adult outside of the family may take on added significance.
- Prefer identification with a team. Like to have good uniforms, equipment, and balls.
- More inclined towards wanting to play instead of being told to play. Will initiate play more.



## Involving the Parents of U-10s

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-10 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed.

Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing the entire calling. (Phone chains)
- Choosing a team administrator, someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.

- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards cleats or sneakers.
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-10 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.

What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?

Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

## Things You Can Expect from U-10s

Some coaches say that the 9 and 10 year-old players are beginning to "turn the corner" and starting to look like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and unpredictable for the most part. These players are starting to find out how much fun it is to play the game skillfully, but they will still stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They start to understand offsides, but still forget themselves when the goal is in front of them.
- They will really beat up on each other during practice... especially boy's teams.
- During a game, the parents will scream out "HAND BALL" or "COME ON REF, CALL IT BOTH WAYS" at least fifteen times.
- They might cry after a game if they lose, but will forget it if you ask them to go for burgers and fries.
- You might actually catch them practicing on their own without you telling them to do so.
- Their parents are telling them to do one thing during the game, you are

telling them another thing, but what they end up doing might be what their friend is telling them to do.

- You will see a pass that is deliberate. You might even see a "back pass".
- You will see your first \$100 pair of cleats during practice.
- They will call the other team bad names... really bad names



## U-10 Coaching Rational

Some of the players that are playing as U - 10's are seasoned veterans of the youth soccer scene. Some of them may have already been involved in traveling to play in tournaments. As a result, some of them might be very nervous about the whole process. It is our job to keep things in perspective for these young, developing players. True, some of them are becoming quite skillful and are seeing how fun it is to play the game when they can really control the ball. However, many of them are still learning the ropes. Even the more experienced players need to have the game be fun!!!

Emphasis is still placed on players learning to control the ball with his/her body, but now, they need to find themselves in more game-like situations. Training is more dynamic and starts to have players make simple, basic decisions such as "Which way is there more space?" or "Who should I pass to?"



- Following are some more items that a coach of U-10 players should consider:
- Use small-sided games as the main teaching vehicle. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but also the full 11-a-side game is still too complicated for them to understand.
- How we group players during training takes on even added significance because of the wide margins of ability levels. We need to mix players up often.

- Stretching becomes more important, along with a good warm-up. Since the game is faster, make sure they also have good shin guards. Safety and prevention takes on added significance.
- Training twice a week is plenty. Sessions need not go longer than one hour, fifteen minutes.
- They should all come with their own size #4 ball. In fact, they still need to be encouraged to play with it by themselves.
- Put them into competitive environments as much as possible. This will not only keep them focused, but, will allow the game itself to teach them. It also keeps things fun for them, and allows you to deal with issues such as 'winning' and 'losing' which is now a very big concern for them.
- Now it is possible to teach them positional play with the expectation they will get it some of the time. However, it is absolutely necessary that you do not allow players to specialize in any one position. They need to learn basic principles of the game, first. Having them play all of the positions is best for their individual development. Remember, our first responsibility is to develop players and let them have fun.
- Whenever possible, allow them to solve their own puzzles. Don't immediately give them solutions on how they can play better.

## Individual Technical and Tactical Issues for U-10's

### Contacting the Ball

How many ways can the player kick or dribble or control the ball? There are six surfaces (inside, outside, instep, sole, toe and heel) used for kicking, dribbling or controlling a soccer ball. The ball can also be driven, chipped, volleyed, half-volleyed, side-volleyed, curled and lofted. The U-9/10 player should be challenged to expand their range of surfaces and textures (weights and spins) in an ongoing process of technical refinement.

Is the player two footed? Juggling and dribbling practice should always involve the use of both feet and young players must be encouraged to experiment with all six contact surfaces. For the more motivated players, juggling, kicking and Coerver's\* are essential "homework" activities for developing a comfort level with the ball.

\*Coerver's are individual dribbling moves named after the Dutchman, Wiel Coerver, who created the training program.

## Passing

Does the player purposely pass the ball towards teammates? Players should be asked to control the ball and look for teammates rather than simply kicking the ball forward or to safety; it is often necessary to remind young players that the goalkeeper is always the most open player on the team when they are under pressure or no obvious forward passing options are available. At this age, the "thinking" behind a passing decision is often more telling than the outcome, and young players must be encouraged to attempt to maintain possession by passing (or dribbling) even as their limited range of techniques fail them.

How far can the player kick the ball accurately? Players should be encouraged to pass within their technical range. Technique, physical strength and the size and weight of the ball all impact kicking distance and accuracy. In the small-sided games environment, shorter passes should be expected and encouraged, with aimless "boots" to safety, or to the opposition regarded as wasted possessions.

Does the player use disguise and deception when passing? Encouraging more frequent passing (and dribbling) with the outside of the foot will help improve the level of subtlety in young players. The use of the hips to deceive opponents can also become a feature of play for nine and ten year olds.

## Shooting

Does the player shoot, when possible? A player's first thought in possession should

always be "Can I score a goal from here?" Goals in practice should be wide and high enough to encourage shots from various distances and angles and young players should be reminded that the objective of the game is to score more goals than the opponent in the time provided. Shots can be placed, driven, chipped, curled, volleyed, half-volleyed, side-volleyed, or improvised using any other legal body part.



## Ball Control

How many touches does the player take to control the ball? The earlier a player decides what to do with the ball, the faster they will play; however, many U-9 and U-10 players will not look up before they have secured possession because their skill level will not allow them to concentrate on two things (the ball and the next action) at once. Time, space, vision of the field, and a comfort level with the ball are the most important elements in reducing the number of touches necessary to control the ball.

Does the player understand their tactical options before the ball is controlled? Vision for "What next?" is a key element in the positive use of the "first touch," and coaches should challenge players to appreciate their immediate tactical situation as early as possible during play. Coaching should attempt to develop "pre-control" vision whenever possible by asking players to assess the availability of space around them before receiving a pass.

Does the player open their body when possible when controlling the ball? Players who open their body towards the opponent's goal before receiving the ball take fewer touches and play faster. Players should only open their bodies when they have space to do so. This skill begins to emerge at the U-10 level, although some younger players can grasp the concept.



## Dribbling

Does the player have the skill to dribble out of pressure, or past an opponent? Dribbling practice should include basic moves to turn away from pressure and also ideas on how to use changes in pace and direction to maintain possession or beat an opponent. As the most artistic aspect of soccer, young players must not be discouraged from learning to dribble the ball through early and repeated failures. At this age, repetition in practicing dribbling moves in isolation and in live tactical contexts is critical for developing touch and creativity.

Does the player run into open space with the ball? Running forward with the ball is important for making defenders commit to the ball, for shortening passing distances, for changing the rhythm of play and for creating

shooting possibilities. Players must be encouraged to quickly dribble the ball into open space and also encouraged to use the outside surface of the foot when "speed dribbling."

Does the player dribble with their head down and rarely look to pass or shoot? While it is important to encourage young players to quickly dribble the ball into open space, players must also be aware of their passing and shooting options. Given that the ball can travel faster when kicked, it is important to encourage dribbling players to look up during those moments when they are in open space and not touching the ball, and when they are momentarily clear of opponents.

Does the player use disguise and deception when dribbling? The most difficult opponents are "wrigglers" who are unpredictable in their dribbling. Players should be encouraged to combine dribbling moves and become comfortable making multiple, abrupt changes in direction.

## Heading

Does the player head the ball? Heading becomes more common by ages nine and ten and practicing and playing with lighter balls will help overcome any initial fears of performing this difficult skill. It should also be stressed that there is NO medical evidence supporting the claim that heading a soccer ball is dangerous to the participants.

## Support

Does the player move with the game or do they pass and stand still? Young players should not be restricted in their movements on the field and moving "with the game" should become a natural extension of passing. Passing sequences involving two and three players should be encouraged and can be expected at this age. These beginning attempts at combination play will become essential elements of mature play. At the U-9 and U-10 levels, an increase in the speed of ball circulation, coupled with a more controlled rhythm of play can be expected from competent players.



Does the player move into open spaces when not in possession? Players should be encouraged to “find” new supporting positions away from teammates rather than be told where and when to move. By age ten, some children have started to think more abstractly about the use of space away from the ball; however many others do not yet demonstrate this spatial awareness, making large-group positional instruction irrelevant for the vast majority of nine and ten year-olds. More advanced nine and ten year-olds will often appreciate supporting positions to the side of the field (width) while failing to demonstrate the importance of creating space downfield and ahead of the ball (depth).

Is the player more comfortable when facing the opponent’s goal than when playing with their back to the opponent’s goal? Some players are uncomfortable checking and receiving the ball with their back to goal. While older players will ultimately be selected to positions based on this skill, all young players should regularly experience this challenge as a natural part of their soccer education. Before the ability to play effectively with “back to goal” develops, young children must first learn to find passing lanes, judge when and how to run for the ball, learn how to control and turn with the ball, and learn how to disguise their movements. Because of the reduced technical and tactical demands, small-sided games create the only natural environments that

provide repeated experiences in learning this difficult aspect of soccer.

## Defending

Does the player try to recover the ball when possession is lost? “Defending” at this age should be no more complicated than encouraging young players to try and win the ball back when lost. The better players can grasp the concept of “marking” an opponent and “picking up” opponents when not in possession, and they will recover behind the ball as a group. However, in deference to the technical difficulties associated with attacking play for most nine and ten year-olds, any concentrated emphasis on “team” defending should be delayed until at least U-11.

Does the player simply kick at the ball when an opponent is in possession? Tackling for the ball can and should include efforts to regain possession. The player who routinely kicks the ball away should be encouraged to use their body and the open space away from the opponent to attempt to win the ball back.

## Transition

Does the player mentally transition after a change in possession? When the ball turns over from the attacker to the defender or from the defender to the attacker, the game offers chances to demonstrate awareness of two very important concepts: immediate recovery of the ball and immediate counter-attack to goal. Players

should be assessed on how well they understand these concepts and encouraged to react as quickly as possible to any change in possession. By extension, the players immediately in support of the ball can also be



assessed on how well they react to help their teammates.

## Creativity

Does the player improvise when solving tactical problems? Those players who use non-standard techniques to solve tactical problems are demonstrating signs of creativity. A "good" pass gets to its target at a pace that can be controlled, regardless of the technique used in the delivered; similarly, a goal is a goal, regardless of how it was propelled into the net. Young players who improvise should be encouraged, not scolded, and it must be remembered that for young players, the "thought" behind an action is generally more telling than the outcome, which is often limited by experience and technical range. Three elements impact creativity. The first is technique, the second is tactical awareness, and the third is confidence. Players who have the audacity to think and act out of the ordinary may be future stars of the game, and, while their techniques will be refined over time, their willingness to take risks must be nurtured at every level. Creative players are not always the easiest individuals to coach.

## Typical U-10 Training Session

Here are some items that should be included in a U-10 training session:

**WARM-UP:** A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that involve the ball. Since there can be one theme to the session, hopefully, the warm-up will lead into the theme of the day. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time after the players have broken a sweat, again, hopefully done with the ball. Again, the warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.

## INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP

**ACTIVITIES:** Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a keep-away game. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "loser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

**PLAY THE GAME:** Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4 v.4 up to 8 v.8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.



**WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK:** Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball

trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then thigh, then foot, and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? Can they do that with their heads? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

## Appropriate Training for U-10 Players

**Players in pairs.** Coach tosses the ball and each pair must bring it back with a specific number of touches as determined by the coach. Then the pairs must accomplish the task with alternating touches by passing.

**Groups of four.** As before, the coach tosses the ball and designates the number of touches to return the ball. Requirements can include: maintain a 10 yard distance apart, each person in the group must touch the ball at least once; the group must keep the ball in the air, keep the ball in the air with one-touches, one-touch passing with a time limit, changing who you pass to each time.

**Partners with a ball.** Partner serves ball in a variety of ways to be returned, such as overhead or between the feet.

**Groups of eight.** Coach tosses the ball for return with requirements as above for partners and groups of four.

**One touch passing.** Two dynamic lines are formed. Upon pass, player goes to the end of the other line. The lines must adjust their position to stay in the part of the ball. Challenge is to string as many completed passes together as possible.

**4 V 4.** score by dribbling past the goal line, score by passing to a teammate on the goal lines.

**"The Game".** 4 V 4, two goals. The game may start with conditions, but it must finish without restrictions.



## U-10 Practice Ideas

### 'TEAM KNOCK OUT'

Here is a game to use in the 'Small Group Activity' phase of the practice. It is an engaging game that is fun to play and challenges players in almost all aspects of the game.

#### THE GAME:

- Divide the squad up into two teams.
- To start, each player on the team that is inside the field will need a ball. Those on the outside of the field do not need a ball.
- When ready, players on the outside run into the grid, attempt to steal any ball they can and put it through any one of the goals that are marked by the cones.
- Players with the ball attempt to keep the ball away from the defenders by dribbling or passing to a teammate that has lost their ball.
- If an attacking player loses a ball, they immediately try to 'steal' it back.

- The game stops when all of the balls have been kicked through the goals. Then the two teams switch roles.
- Keep track of how long it takes each team to steal all of the balls.
- If a ball is kicked out of bounds it goes over to the other team for a throw-in.



This game is good for teaching dribbling skills as players find themselves in situations where they have to dribble to keep possession as well as dribble to beat an opponent. Also, they find themselves in situations where they may have to pass to a teammate as well as find themselves playing defense as well. Because there are so many balls, and so many goals, it is just a crazy enough game to be appreciated and enjoyed by a typical nine-year-old.

### "END ZONE GAME"

Here is a 4 v.4 game that is free flowing and gives players a lot of problems to solve. It is a good game to use towards the end of the session as it is very close to the 'real' thing.

One particularly good thing about this game is that since teams end up attacking in two different directions, it forces players to play in different positions. They are at the back of the team when their team attacks one end zone, while they will find themselves at the

top of the team when they attack in the other direction. This is great for their development.

### THE GAME:

- Set up the field as shown with a seven yard 'End-Zone' at each end.
- Score a goal by getting the ball from one 'End-Zone' to the other by passing or dribbling.
- Once a goal is scored, immediately attack going in the other direction.
- Do not give the ball to the other team.
- The 'End-Zones' are free, only the attacking team can enter these areas.
- This game also encourages players to "SPREAD OUT" and work together, which, players are starting to be able to do at this age. At first, players will be tempted to just kick the ball up the field instead of passing. With patience, and demonstration of what is possible, this game could have a dramatic impact on their ability to play attractive, skillful soccer.



# Coaching the U-12 Player

"A good teacher, like a good entertainer, first must hold his audience's attention. Then he can teach his lesson."

## Characteristics of U - 12 Players

U12 | 8 against 8 with goal keepers

- They begin to develop the abilities to sustain complex, coordinated skill sequences.
- Some of the players have reached puberty. Girls, in general, arrive earlier than boys.
- Most players are able to think abstractly and are thus able to understand some team concepts that are fundamental to the game.
- They are beginning to be able to address hypothetical situations, and to solve problems systematically.
- They are spending more time with friends and less time with their parents. They are susceptible to conformity to peer pressure.
- They are developing a conscience, morality and scale of values.
- Players tend to be highly self-critical. Instruction needs to be enabling. Show them what can be done instead of telling them what not to do.
- Although they are more serious with their play, they are still mainly involved because it is fun.
- They are openly competitive. A few may foul on purpose.
- They are looking towards their role models and heroes in order to know how to act.
- They have a more complex and developed sense of humor.

## Involving the Parents of U-12s

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-12 player

still relies on their parents for support and encouragement. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:



- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing the entire calling. (Phone chains)
- Choosing a team administrator, someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards cleats or sneakers.

- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-12 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?

Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do, they probably will too.

## Things You Can Expect from U-12s



Some coaches say that the 10 and 12 year-old players have "turned the corner" and are looking like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and a bit unpredictable for the most part. These players know how much fun it is to play the game skillfully. As a result, we begin to see some the players drop out who recognize the importance of skill and become discouraged with their

lack of it. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They will yell at their teammates when they make a mistake.
- They will openly question the referee's decisions.
- Players will encourage each other.
- They will pass the ball even when they know that they will not get it back.
- Team cooperation is emerging. They will run to a spot, away from the play, even when they know that they might not get the ball.

- They will point out inconsistencies between what you say and what you do. They are "moral watchdogs".
- The difference in skill levels between the players is very pronounced.
- Some players might be as big as you are, some might be half your size.
- Not only will some of the players come to training with expensive cleats, but some will also come with matching uniforms, sweat suits, and bag.
- Parents, during games, can be brutal. Some will yell at the referee at almost every call.
- They will get together with their friends and be able to set up and play their own game.



## U12 Coaching Rational

Coaching at this age level is a challenge because many of the players view themselves as real soccer players; while others are at the point where it is not as much fun as it used to be because they feel that their lack of skill development does not enable them to have an impact on the game. They see their skillful

friends able to do magical things with the ball and since they can not do this themselves, they start to drop out. Our challenges then, if the players are willing, is to keep all of the players engaged, involved, and make them feel important. (as though they are improving.) Skills still need to be the primary focus of training and players need to be put into environments where they are under pressure so that they learn how to use their skills in a variety of contexts. Here are a few other considerations as we think about working with this aged youngster:



Our goal is to develop players in a fun, engaging environment. Winning has its place but must be balanced with the other goals of teaching them to play properly. Some decisions will need to be made that might not necessarily lead to wins (i.e.: having players play different positions, or asking players to try to play the ball "out of the back".)

Smaller, skilled players cannot be ignored. Although it may be tempting to "win" by playing only the bigger players in key positions, the smaller, skilled players must be put into areas of responsibility.

Small sided games are still the preferred method of teaching the game. This makes learning fun and more efficient.

Flexibility training is essential. Have them stretch after they have broken a sweat, and, perhaps most importantly, at the end of the workout at a "warm-down".

Overuse injuries, burnout and high attrition rates are associated with programs that do not emphasize skill development and learning enjoyment.

Playing 8-a-side games is now appropriate.

Single sexed teams are appropriate.

Train for one and one-half hours, two to three times a week. Training pace needs to replicate the demands of the game itself.

They are ready to have a preferred position, but, it is essential for their development for them to occasionally play out of their preferred spot, in training, as well as during games.

Training is now best if it focuses on one, perhaps two topics a session. Activities should be geared to progressing from fundamental activities that have little or no pressure from an opponent to activities that are game like in their intensity and pressure.

## Individual Technical and Tactical Issues for U-12's

### Contacting the Ball

How many ways can the player kick or dribble or control the ball? There are six surfaces (inside, outside, instep, sole, toe and heel) used for kicking, dribbling or controlling a soccer



ball. The ball can also be driven, chipped, volleyed, half-volleyed, side-volleyed, curled and lofted. The U-11/12 player should be proficient in using a majority of surfaces with both feet, and be challenged to expand their ability to use different textures (weights and spins). The coach of the motivated U-11/12 player should intensify the refinement of these basic contacting skills through warm-up activities and tactically challenging practice games.

## Finishing

How proficient is the player in front of goal? Shots can be placed, driven, chipped, curled, volleyed, half-volleyed, side-volleyed, or improvised using any other legal body part. Practice activities should refine these skills through individual, small group and small-sided activities.

## Vision and Ball Control

How quickly does the player assess tactical options and execute ball control skills? Vision for "What next?" is a key element in the positive use of the "first touch," and for improving speed of play. Coaches should challenge players to appreciate their immediate tactical situation as early, and as often, as possible by looking around and turning their bodies sideways-on to the game, whenever possible. The earlier a player decides what to do with the ball, the fewer touches they will take and the faster they will play. Practice activities should involve possession games and other live, competitive games in order to improve decision-making and speed of play.



## Dribbling

Does the player have the skill and creativity to dribble out of pressure, or past an opponent? At the U-11/12

level, evading pressure and beating opponents are critical skills for complementing the passing game as team play emerges. Rapid and abrupt changes in speed and direction, and the use of the shoulders and hips to disguise intentions, become critical subtleties as dribbling sophistication responds to the improved skills of defenders.

Does the player maintain vision while dribbling? Improving speed of play, through cleaner technique and faster reading of the game, is the primary role of the coach at this stage. Dribbling should now be considered very much a means to an end, with the balance between shooting, passing and dribbling (decision-making) related to time and space and position on the field.

## Heading

How diverse are the player's heading skills? Heading to goal and heading away from goal are basic applications of this technique. In addition, the

use of heading as a passing technique and as a response to crossing situations should also be stressed as viable applications of this difficult skill. The timing of heading techniques,



relative to the balls' pace, trajectory and time of flight, is the critical "next level" for most players of age eleven and beyond. Soccer balls should be kicked in the air over varying distances, whenever possible, to approximate realistic match situations, with hand-serves utilized as seldom as possible.

It should also be stressed that there is NO medical evidence supporting the claim that heading a soccer ball is dangerous to the participants.

## Tackling

How competent is the player in applying sliding techniques? In addition to tackling for the ball, sliding skills can be used to keep balls in play, to reach wayward passes, to cross balls from the goal line, and to extend reach. Players should be instructed in tackling techniques with both the inside and outside legs (relative to a defender), and in sliding to maintain possession, pass, or clear.

## Combination Play: Support and Movement with the Game

Does the player move with the game and combine with others? At the U-10 level, an increase in the speed of ball circulation, coupled with a more controlled rhythm of play are common features of play. At the U-11/12 level, those qualities can be taken a step further with the expectation of more formal combination play. At eleven, take-overs, wall passes and double passes are much more universal, and up-back-through combinations can be developed over time. Because of their still growing appreciation for midfield width and rhythm of play in large numbers, overlaps are still much less probable. All other combinations (passes to feet, passes to space, dribbling, and one-three's) are already established at this age, meaning that eleven and twelve becomes the period when most of the combining elements in the game can be performed for the first time.

## Use of Space

Does the player move with the game when not in possession? In general, attacking players try to open up the field in order to create possibilities for small-group play, while defenders try to limit the amount of time and space available for the attackers to either penetrate by passing or dribbling, or change the point of attack to a more open area. In both cases, individual players have responsibilities to move with the game relative to their position. Attacking players should be instructed how to play with their immediate small group or stay away from the ball, and defenders should be instructed how

to move as a defensive block. The attacking concepts of width, depth, support and mobility are critical applications of spatial awareness, as are the defensive concepts of cover, balance and compactness.

## Playing with "Back to Goal"

Is the player more comfortable when facing the opponent's goal than when playing with their back to the opponent's goal? Many young players are uncomfortable checking and receiving the ball with their back to goal; however, 8v8 games provide many opportunities to expose young players to this important and difficult skill within a positional structure. To play effectively with back to goal, players must be aware of the tactical possibilities for receiving the ball to feet or into open space; they must learn to identify passing lanes or open spaces; they must learn to judge when and how to run for the ball; they must learn how to lay the ball off to a supporting player or turn with the ball; and they must learn how to disguise their movements and intentions. Playing with back to goal is an important concept for both midfielders and forwards and it is a disservice to encourage kickball, or exclusively direct soccer at this age.

## Defending

Does the player understand basic defensive concepts? When the ball is lost, a defender's first instinct should be to try to win it back. If this is not possible, they should either look to recover goal-side behind the ball, or take up a new position for any counter-attacking possibilities. Individual decision-making in defense follows a basic hierarchy of thinking. First, try to win the ball and keep possession when it is passed to an immediate opponent. Second, try to knock the ball away from the immediate opponent. Third, try to deny the immediate opponent space to turn with the ball. Fourth, try to keep the immediate attacker running towards a sideline or into other defenders. Finally, when not in position to achieve any of the above, recover behind the ball and help the team defend.

## Transition

Does the player mentally transition after a change in possession? At all levels, speed of transition is often a critical element in the scoring and preventing of goals. With that said, it is beneficial to use live practice activities that incorporate transition to and from goal. The issue of vision is closely related to transition in that a player's first attacking thought should be to score a goal; if that is not possible, passing to the furthest player possible is the next best option.

## Decision-Making



By U-11, many players can read the game with some degree of sophistication and can be helped to identify the "best" option for play, based on the following hierarchy. First, can the player shoot at goal? Second, can the player dribble into position to shoot at goal? Third, can the player pass to someone who can score a goal? Fourth, can the player pass the ball forward to a teammate to maintain possession?

Fifth, can the player pass the ball sideways or backwards to a teammate to maintain possession? Sixth, is the player under enough pressure to warrant a clearance?

## Creativity

What is a creative team player? Three elements impact creativity. The first is technique, the second is tactical awareness, and the third is self-confidence. Players who have the audacity to think and act out of the ordinary may be future stars of the game and their willingness to take risks must be nurtured at every level. As players move

towards the teen years, a critical paradox enters the coaching challenge. Creative players are necessary for making teams unpredictable and creative players are often frustrating to coach and play with because they rarely conform to standard team concepts. Creative players are not always the easiest individuals to coach, but creative players are worth their weight in gold and America has yet to produce a creative genius.

## Typical U12 Training Session

Here are some items that should be included in a U-12 training session:

**WARM-UP:** A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual or small group activities that involve the ball. Since there can be one theme to the session, hopefully, the warm-up will lead into the theme of the day. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, after the players have broken a sweat, again, hopefully done with the ball. The warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast-paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.



## INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES:

Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of keep-away game, or small sided games that bring out or emphasize a specific skill or topic. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "looser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.



### PLAY THE GAME:

Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4v4 up to 8v8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible. Finish this stage with a real game with regular rules. Players need to apply their newly learned abilities to the real game.



### WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK:

Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Challenge them with some ball trick. Can they complete a juggling pattern? Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? Can they do that with their heads? How many times can they do it back and forth? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

## Appropriate Training for U-12 Players

- Each player dribbling a ball. Players change direction on direction from coach. Players demonstrate different ways to change direction, providing a challenge to each other. Intermittent stops for stretching change of direction on hand signals from the coach. Play opposite.
- Group of four in a rectangular grid. Imagine that the ball is a paintbrush. Can you paint the entire floor with passes? Then with pass restrictions. Then with two groups of four in the grid.
- 4 V 4 in a rectangular grid; a goal is scored by dribbling across your designated goal line.
- 4 V 4 in a rectangular grid; a goal is scored when you pass the ball to a

teammate who is on your designated goal line.

- "The Game". 4 V 4 to goals.

## U-12 Training Ideas

### 'NUMBERS PASSING'

Here is a good warm-up that will get players prepared for a session on passing and receiving skills. It is an example of how players can be challenged in an environment that is dynamic and can demand a specific, targeted technique that has direct implications to the demands placed upon players during the real game. Since there is no pressure from an opponent, it is appropriate to use this activity during the warm-up.

#### THE GAME:

- Assign each player a number.
- Players pass the ball to the player with the number one higher than their own number (e.g.: 5 passes to 6, 11 to 1.)
- All balls travel through the entire team.
- After they pass a ball, they must run to a different spot on the field.
- Players are first allowed unlimited touches, then only two touches, then one touch if they are able.
- Ask the players not to let the ball stop, or to let their pass hit other players or balls.
- Try these variations:
  - Left foot only.
  - Outside of foot only.
  - No talking allowed.
- Ask the players to:
  - Make eye contact with the person they are passing to.
  - Perform good passing technique.
  - Keep their body and vision open to the field of play.
  - Keep the person they are passing to in their line of sight.
- Be active. Look like a soccer player.

### 'CORNER GOAL GAME'

Here is a game that can be used in the middle phases of the training session. This game involves passing and receiving skills and is

also a good activity for showing players the benefits of 'spreading out'. It is a dynamic game with a lot of running. It provides a lot of 'puzzles' for players to figure out and demands that they cooperate.

#### THE GAME:

Set up the field on approximately half-field, depending on how many players are on your team. (16 players: It is OK if one team has an extra player. If there is an odd # of players on the team, that gives the players a different puzzle to solve.)

- 10 yd. 'squares' are set up in each corner.
- Goals are scored when the ball is passed into the square and then out to a teammate.
- Each team can attack any one of the four goals.
- Whoever has the ball is on offense until they loose possession, or if they kick it out of bounds.
- Score can be kept.
- Play with two balls at once to make the game exciting. (This will actually make the game two, separate smaller games going on at the same time.)
- Ask the players to keep spread out and to try to attack the goal that is 'open'. Keep possession; make the other team earn the ball. See if the players can recognize where pressure is coming from.



# Coaching the U-14 Player

## Development of Individual Skills, Individual and Small Group Tactics

HIGH PRIORITY: The importance of possession: DO NOT GIVE THE BALL AWAY!!!  
Development of individual skill.

All practices must challenge the player in competition.

- Understanding of combination play:
- Support
- Takeovers
- Wall pass
- Individual and small group defending.
- One session in three devoted to 1v1's, 2v2's, 3v3's.
- Develop an understanding of:
- Delay
- Tracking back
- Depth
- Balance

LOWER EMPHASIS Functional play, Team play, Set Plays.

All activities should be challenging, motivating and involve TRANSITION!!!

## Characteristics of U14s

Under 13 and under 14 players are in a period of dramatic change. They have reached their teens and things are evolving in their social and physical lives.

- "We" becoming more important than "Me" – emergence of the social group.
- Transitioning from elementary to high school education,
- Able to be alone – no longer require tight adult supervision.
- Aware of the opposite sex,
- May be beginning work role, part time jobs, lawn care, baby sitting, increased responsibility at home.

- Body transforming from adolescent to adult form.
- The transitional age from the youth into the adult game.
- Now using the full size ball, field and longer game times.
- Greater focus on how ball skill and decisions influence success on the field.
- Begin to make decision on their own and reduce reliance on adults – coaches and parents.



## Involving the Parents of U-14s

The parents are no longer as strongly involved and the players are beginning to see themselves as more independent. Most players are dropped off at practice as parents no longer feel the need to watch and observe.

Information now flows from the coach to the players and then from the players to the parents.

Parents still participate but the level is reduced as the player are emerging as young adults and beginning to assert their independence.

## U-14 Coaching Rational

At these ages, ball skills, enjoyment and insight into the game, with a gradual introduction to fitness, mental toughness, and results are the keys. Success in winning matches should begin to be the product of a consistent and systematic approach to the game that focuses more on player development than on team building.

The players should be developing an understanding and familiarity with each other on the field, but the desire to get a result on Saturday should not hamper their instincts for the game, or their desire to experiment and explore the game. These players are a long way from being "complete."

Encourage them to play in different positions. Don't pigeonhole players based only on what is best for getting the result. Balance your players match experiences so that some games will allow experimentation without necessarily sacrificing the result.

## Practice

Practices should consist of up to 75 minutes of structured; adult-guided soccer with an additional 15 to 30 minutes allotted for free play/self expression and self-improvement.

At this point, most of the exercises and games that the players play in practice should be competitive, with a winning and losing team(s). Their focus should be on how their decisions and their ball skill help or hinder their team's ability to win at whatever game or exercise that they play.

Two critical and interrelated themes in every practice should be recognizing when and how to get the ball out of pressure with the goal of getting forward and recognizing when and how to win the ball back, both as an individual and as a group. Games and exercises should be set up that encourage players to make decisions based on the cues

and clues that exist in the game. Players should experience a variety of games, from 4 v 4 to 8 v 8: some with and some without goalkeepers, some to small goals, some to large goals, some with 2 goals and some with 4 to 6 small goals. Each set up will encourage different challenges for the players to address – all within the basic framework of keeping the ball and winning the ball back – and going to goal, and winning the game.

The coach needs to consider the players' technical development because without sound technique, good ideas on the field are useless. Putting players in small-sided games where they have to solve a problem by application of their technique is a critical part of training this age. At times, success or failure in these games and this environment are the direct result of the players' ability with the ball.

In training sessions play small-sided games with different demands and challenges. The games should be fast. To keep up with the speed of play, good technical ability and habits on and off the ball are necessary. The players need to stay tuned in mentally, to read the game, deal with the demands of the game, and to make decisions that help their team win. The goal is to help their personalities to grow and for them to begin to solve problems as a group. Therefore, give the players some freedom to make decisions, to solve problems, and to experiment with the game. Be more concerned with them developing into better players who can figure out how to win than with telling them exactly what to do.



# Coaching The U-16 Player

## Development of Group Skill/Tactics

HIGH PRIORITY: Development of individual skill should be covered in the warm-up.

- Understanding of combination play:
  - Support
  - Takeovers
  - Wall pass
  - Third man running
  - Overlap
  - DO NOT GIVE THE BALL AWAY!!!
  - One session in three devoted to 3v3's, 4v4's, 5v5's.
- Develop an understanding of:
  - Depth - role of strong side defenders.
  - Balance - role of weak side defenders
  - Compactness
  - Communication - who, what, when.
  - LOWER EMPHASIS: Functional play, team play, set plays.

All activities should be challenging, motivating, and involve TRANSITION!!!

## Characteristics of the U16

By 15 and 16 years old, the players should be comfortable dealing with the ball in a variety of situations. With this in mind, the coach should look to address several issues over the course of the two year cycle that address how basic tactical issues can influence the game:

- Small group ideas on both sides of the ball (Moving forward together on the attack, realistic pressure, and how to help your team win the ball back).
- How the small group ideas tie into larger team concepts. Such as the similarities and differences between high and low pressure, keeping your back line connected with your attacking players during possession in your attacking half of the field, or rhythm of play issues (when to speed up and when to slow down).

- Some basic positional responsibilities and how, as a team, these responsibilities are interconnected. For example, how the backs share defensive responsibilities, how decisions that the defending line makes are related to the decisions of the players in front of them, or the role of the holding midfielder in your team's possession.



- Accountability for their execution and decisions with the ball. Players at this age must aspire to have technical precision. Players need to be made aware of how their ability to collect and pass the ball has a direct impact on all aspects of the game.

Note: These concepts and goals are all based on the assumption that the players are good enough with the ball to be able to begin dealing this next level of soccer. If they do not possess the requisite skills to begin taking on these new challenges, it is the responsibility of the coach to make sure they continue to work on the tools that they lack.

## U16 Coaching Rational

At the U-16 age coaches should continue to address principles and themes of the game in generic situations i.e., not position-based, as well as in functional (positional) scenarios. Coaches can set up small-sided games to multiple goals where players and teams (of 6's or 7's) are dealing with pretty tight spaces, but with several goals. Defensively the players and teams are focusing on getting pressure to the ball so that they limit the number of goals that they need to actively defend.

As these principles are being addressed, it should begin to make some sense to the players how to translate these concepts into team issues, such as how the backs work together in different parts of the field or the relationship between the different lines of the team (defenders and midfielders, midfielders and forwards, etc.).

Creating games where these larger team issues are introduced, experienced and discussed is also important at this age.

### Practice

Practices should consist of up to 75 minutes of structured, adult-guided soccer with an additional 15 to 30 minutes allotted for free play/self expression and self-improvement.

Players at these ages still need to learn by experiencing the game. The majority of the game should still be taught by putting the players in realistic soccer environments and allowing them to feel their way through the challenges that the game presents to them. As much as possible, these concepts and themes should be taught in competitions where the games or exercises end with a winning and a losing team.

### Games

The matches should be an extension of the themes that are being addressed on a daily and weekly basis. There should be an awareness by the players and a discussion prompted by the coach about performance based on the players' ability to recognize

themes during the game, and the players' technical ability to act on what they see.

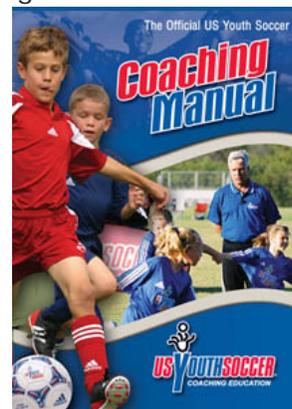


### Practice Ideas

The Kentucky Youth Soccer Coach's Corner on [www.kysoccer.net/coaches](http://www.kysoccer.net/coaches) has a wide variety of lesson plans for training the advanced player. In addition, the "Corner" contains many helpful articles.

A further source for ideas and information is the Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual.

The manual is available by visiting the US Youth Soccer Store at [www.store.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.store.usyouthsoccer.org)



# Coaching The U-19 Player

## Development of Positional Play

- Individual and group skill should be covered in the warm-up.
- Functional Play:
  - Attacking roles and responsibilities.
  - Defending roles and responsibilities. One in three practices devoted to defending principles of play.
- Match - related practice: offense vs. defense.
- Crossing: Develop a complete understanding of:
  - Crossing angle.
  - Overlaps.
  - Near and far post runs.
- Set Plays: Develop a complete understanding of:
  - Attacking and defending responsibilities at corner kicks and all other restarts.
- The importance of possession from throw-ins in defensive and mid field third of field versus possession and creativity in the final third
- All activities should be challenging, motivating, and involve **TRANSITION!!!**

## Development of Team Play

- Individual and group skill should be covered in the warm - up.
- Functional play.
- Training players for specific positions and roles.
- Team Play:
  - Match - related practice ; offense vs. defense
  - Match conditioned. One in three practices devoted to the defensive aspects of the game.
- Players should have a complete understanding of the principles of team play.



## Characteristics of U19 Players

At this age, the technical blueprint of who the player will be as an adult soccer player is almost complete.

- any growth is largely determined by how well the player has developed up to this point.
- fine-tuning the qualities that already exist.
- Areas that can still be influenced greatly are game insight, physical conditioning and attitude.

Coaches should continue to place consistent focus on these three areas of the player's game:

- Technical proficiency and precision
- Game insight and
- Individual's responsibility for improving his or her game.

## U19 Coaching Rational

There are also several match related tactical issues on which the coach can now begin to place more focus. For example, playing

different systems, preparing for matches and employing tactics based on the strength of your opponent.

At these ages, players should be able to recognize the needs of a particular game and how to make the appropriate adjustments. There are several recurring themes during the course of a game that the coach can use to help the players focus their energies

Some time should also be spent addressing how players and the team manage the game. Not only in terms of executing the game plan, but how to address different scenarios such as playing in the final 15 or 20 minutes of a game with a lead, when the game is tied, or when your team is losing.

## Practices

Practices should always contain the following elements: competition, critical thinking and technical repetition

Practices should consist of up to 75 minutes of structured; adult-guided soccer with an additional 15 to 30 minutes allotted for free play/self expression and self-improvement. At this age, the physical (fitness) side of the game begins to play a larger role than before.

Practices and matches should continue to focus on improving the players' understanding of the tactical issues, such as how to control the rhythm of the game, as well as getting the group working not only functionally within the group but also as 11 players moving together on both sides of the ball

- All aspects of practice should involve player accountability. As mentioned earlier, players will benefit from:
- Generic, non-functional exercises that emphasize principles of the game.
- More specific, functional exercises that address working together within a "line" of the team or between "lines" of the team toward some soccer objective.

## Matches

Matches are the time for the players to apply the lessons from their week of practices, from their most recent match and as well as from the season thus far.

Most of the coach's role in the match occurred during the prior week.

By game time, the coach's role is to give the players some organizational focus during the pre game period and then make the appropriate adjustments during the match through substitutions and during the halftime break.



The Kentucky Youth Soccer Coach's Corner on [www.kysoccer.net/coaches](http://www.kysoccer.net/coaches) has a wide variety of lesson plans for training the advanced player. In addition, the "Corner" contains many helpful articles.

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# Teaching Soccer Techniques

Soccer players do not automatically know how to execute the various techniques (skills) associated with the game. Even after learning the basic skills, players need instruction on how and when to use the techniques they have learned in a game situation. Our job as coaches is to teach our players the basic techniques and give them the knowledge of the game and confidence in themselves that will help them reach their full potential as soccer players.

Here are some tips to help you teach the fundamentals to your players:

- Explain the importance of the technique (keep it short)... (The players are more apt to want to learn if you tell them how and when the technique fits into a game setting.)
- Give 3 or 4 key points to help the players perform the technique... (See Key Points for Teaching Soccer Techniques below for some guidelines)
- Demonstrate the technique... (If you are unable to do it, ask one of your better players to do it for you).
- Organize the team into smaller groups... (The smaller the better, depending upon the technique and the amount of help you have.)
- Practice the technique ... (Observe the players trying to do the technique.)
- Make corrections as necessary ... (Be POSITIVE and try to point out when the technique is being done well; however, you must correct technique that is being done wrong. You can do this without directing your corrections at any particular player. If none of your players can perform the technique, you need to reconsider whether it is appropriate for their age and experience level.)
- Practice under match conditions... (In order to tell if the players can do the technique in a game situation, increase the difficulty by adding a defender, making their space smaller, or by speeding up the pace of the

activity. Small-sided games work well to show whether a technique has been learned.)



## Teach Using Progressions

The basic idea in teaching soccer techniques is to start simple and increase the level of difficulty.

- Start with the simplest elements of the technique. Let players learn initially without any pressure.
- Gradually add more elements of the skill.
- Gradually increase the difficulty level of the activity. Increase difficulty (pressure) by:
- Increasing the number of players executing the skill in a limited area
- Reducing the space available for executing the drill
- Specifying the direction the player must move
- Adding a passive defender ("shadow defense")
- Adding an active defender

- Finally, perform the skill in the way it would be used in a game.

## Key Points for Soccer Techniques

Focus your attention on the listed points for each technique as you observe your players. It is important for your players to learn to



practice techniques properly, but remember that this may take some time—more for some techniques and less for others, and more for some players than others. Again, be patient and be encouraging!

Practice all foot skills with both right and left feet!

## Dribbling, Turning, Faking:

### A. Techniques

- Dribbling with inside of foot (R and L)
- Dribbling with outside of foot (R and L)
- Running with the ball for speed
- Turning with the inside of foot (R and L)
- Small controlled steps, ball should be kept approximately 2-3 feet in front of you
- Change speed and direction

### B. Principle

- Close control in close space
- Keep head up to see the ball and developing play

## Shielding:

### A. Techniques

- Legs bent
- Shoulders down
- Arms at sides

### B. Principle

- Used as a means of keeping opponents away from the ball, or to stall time waiting for a teammate to get open.

## Shooting:

### A. Techniques

- Strike the ball with the laces of the shoe with both feet (R and L)
- One-touch shooting

### B. Principle

- Accuracy before power (avoid shooting directly at the goalkeeper)
- Head down
- Ankle locked with foot pointing downward at toe



## Passing:

### A. Techniques

- Lace kick for power (R and L)
- Heading
- Inside of the Foot Pass:
- Ankle locked
- Foot slightly up at the toe
- Thigh turned outward
- Look up to establish eye contact
- Connect with the middle of the ball just before the instep
- Follow through (contributes to the direction and tempo of the pass)

## Outside of the Foot Pass:

- Ankle locked
- Foot pointing slightly downward at the toe
- Leg swings across the ball
- Ball should spin when kicked

### B. Principle

- Discourage kicking with the toes
- Pass and immediately move to support

## Controlling (trapping):

### A. Techniques

- Inside of foot (R and L)
- Thigh (R and L)
- Chest
- Head
- Outside of foot (R and L)

### B. Principle

- Use relaxed stance, knees slightly bent
- Cushion control is the key
- Control the ball using any legal part of the body (NO HANDS unless you are the goalie)
- The controlling surface must "give" on contact to cushion the ball
- Ball should stay close to the player (not bounce away)
- If using a chest trap, bend the body backward slightly so that the ball rolls down onto the ground at the feet

## Receiving a Pass:

### A. Techniques

Move toward the ball (don't wait for it to come to you)

Inside or outside of foot used more often

Foot surface first touching the ball should be withdrawn slightly on contact to take the momentum out of the ball (cushioning)

Ball should not be stopped immediately, but under close control

Redirect ball in front or to side in anticipation of moving in that direction to pass or dribble

## Heading

### A. Techniques

- Lean back at the waist
- Lunge into the ball
- Strike the ball with middle of forehead

## Ball Juggling:

Continuous bouncing of ball off head, shoulders, thigh, foot, chest, etc., without the ball



## Defending

### A. Techniques

- Staying goal side
- Challenging
- Tackling
- Clearing

### B. Principle

Decrease space and time (for the opponent)

# Positions and Systems of Play:

## A. Techniques

- Attackers (forwards, wings)
- Defenders (fullbacks)

## B. Principle

- All positions have offensive and defensive responsibilities
- Players must learn to recognize when direction of play changes

# Creating and Exploiting Space on the Attack:

## A. Techniques

- Spreading out, side to side and end to end
- Attacking the flanks
- Crossing the ball

## B. Principles

- Simplest way to create space is to spread out and increase distance between defenders
- Players should be spread out quickly when possession is achieved

# Restarts and Set Plays:

## A. Techniques

- Kick offs
- Throw ins
- Goal kicks

## B. Principle

Possession is everything on restarts

# Throw ins:

## Techniques

- Ball must go directly over head
- Both hands must remain on the ball (R and L thumbs meet behind ball,

thumbs and fingers of both hands form a W)

- Both feet must be on the ground (not necessarily flat; it is permissible to drag trailing foot)
- As soon as ball is released, player should get back on field (often to receive a return pass)

# Key Points for Teaching Soccer Tactics



Remember, tactics are not important for the U6/U8 player and should not be stressed. As the players mature, and the concept of team play begins to develop, the tactical elements can begin to be introduced. Listed below are some basic guidelines, which fall into the realm of tactics.

## General:

- Play positions (the various roles can be understood even as players rotate positions)
- Get open and call for the ball
- Look and listen for passing opportunities
- Pass and move to space and/or to support
- Work to build and maintain triangles- the basic structure for passing and support
- Always support the player with the ball (forward and rear support within passing distance)

## Team Offense:

- Maintain possession of the ball
- Keep offense wide to spread (and weaken) opponents' defense and create space for scoring opportunities

- Penetrate as deeply as possible with every pass, without unduly risking loss of possession
- Finish attacks with shots on goal

#### **Team Defense:**

- Support and communication are critical
- Pressure opponents to decrease their "pressure zone"
- Delay opponents' attack when team first loses possession of ball to permit defense to regroup
- Mark "goal side" to defend against shots on goal
- Mark "ball side" to defend against easy passes
- Maintain defensive balance on the field; guard against reversing the ball (crossing passes)
- Mark tighter as you get closer to your own goal
- Concentrate defense in front of goal as ball approaches goal (limiting space for shots on goal) and direct ball away from goal

#### **Kick off:**

- Short pass and dribble
- Short pass and pass back (triangle) (note that the long boot is not encouraged!)

#### **Throw in:**

- Throw to an open teammate if possible (first look for the farthest unmarked player)
- Throw toward the other team's goal
- Throw down the touchline
- Throw to your goalkeeper (this is not considered an illegal pass back)
- Take throw ins quickly (before the defense can set up) but under control
- Throw the ball so that it can be controlled in the air
- Thrower should reenter field quickly to be open for a return pass

#### **Goal Kick:**

- Big kick up the side of the field
- Avoid kicking the ball across the front of your own goal
- Consider having a defender take goal kicks while the goalie maintains position to guard goal

#### **Free Kick:**

- Close to goal, direct - SHOOT!
- Close to goal, indirect - short pass and shoot
- Far from goal - big kick toward the front of the opponents' goal

#### **Corner Kick:**

Big kick into the opponents' goal area

Short pass and dribble and cross



# Guidelines For Practice Activities Selection

## Skill Games

There are countless drills and many videos and books available. You can obtain books at the KYSA office in Lexington; also check your local library and bookstores. Some popular skill games are included here for your immediate use.

You don't need 100 drills. Pick a few (about 10) and work at them.

- Step 1 - explain the drill (why and how it is done)
- Step 2 - demonstrate the drill (slowly, step by step)
- Step 3 - execute the drill
- Step 4 - figure out what went wrong (it's often the instructions); fix it, and start over!

Remember: showing is better than talking.

Some drills will not work well at first. Maybe they need a small adjustment (e.g. too many players or players standing too close or too far apart).

Repetition of drills builds skills. It can also be boring. So use variations of drills, don't repeat the same drill too often. If your players are not enjoying or not learning from a particular drill, find another that focuses on the same skills.

Start a drill simple and move to the harder stuff. For example, begin with a simple passing drill, and then introduce a defender.

Play with the kids! Sometimes you should join the drill as a participant rather than a coach. Not only will the kids enjoy it, but also you will gain a better appreciation of the skill you are asking them to master.

IDEA: Call a parent from their sidelines to be a goalkeeper for a shooting drill.

Experiment! Don't be afraid to try new ideas.

Split the team into small groups for you and your assistants to teach a drill; then rotate. This keeps more players busy and allows more individual attention.

When organizing kids into groups, consider their abilities. For example, in some dribbling or passing drills it might be best to have pairs with similar abilities. Conversely, in competition (e.g. 2v2) you might pair stronger and weaker players for balance.

Start a drill slowly. WALK through it first, then move to half speed, and finally at full speed.

## Individual Skill Games

### Dribbling

Dribbling is the act of an individual moving the ball with a series of gentle touches. It is important for the player to keep the ball close to his body. Stress soft touches, and encourage them to use the "fingers" of their feet: inside of big toe, outside of small toe, and top of the toes. It is important for players to keep their heads up and look away from the ball when dribbling. Instruct players on how to fake in one direction and then dribble in the other direction.



Instruct players on how to fake in one direction and then dribble in the other direction.

**Beehive** - Provide a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid (or approximately 1 sq. yd. per player). Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside grid randomly using correct techniques and avoiding other players. Players should practice inside and outside foot dribbling, stopping, changing direction and pace, and maintaining control while in the beehive.

**King of the Ring** - Provide a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid with each player has a ball. One player or coach is "it" without a ball. Players start to dribble inside the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it." Players may reenter grid after retrieving their ball and completing

some small skill penalty activity, like juggling twice on their feet or something similar.

**Red Light - Green Light** - Just like traditional game except players dribble their balls and learn to stop and control balls on red light command. Line all players up. Coach is traffic cop. Send out-of-control players back to starting line.

**Attack and Protect** - Provide a 20 yd. by 20 yd. grid. Each player has a ball. Players dribble around the grid trying to kick each other's ball out of the grid while protecting their own ball. Provide players with a skill condition that they must complete before they reenter the grid.

**Spiderman** - Provide a 20 yd. by 30 yd. grid. Each player with a ball. Coach starts as first spider. Players dribble around grid while trying to avoid the tag of the spider. When a player is tagged, they join hands and go after a new player. Each new player makes the web grow bigger, but less organized. Young player will request this game frequently.

**Shadow Dribbling** - Have players pair up, each player with a ball. Leader dribbles while second player follows, also dribbling. Remind players to keep their heads up. Encourage creative dribbling - changes in direction, pace, and technique. Stress control and change leaders frequently.

**One-on-One** - Players pair up, each couple with a ball in a grid. Player with ball is "on the attack" and other player is defender. Attacking player tries to dribble to any of the cones (aside from the one behind him/her) and touch the cone with the ball. Defending player tries to prevent this. Players switch possession of ball when attacker accomplishes his goal or when ball goes out of bounds.

**Crab Monsters** - Half of players are "crab monsters" (who are in a crab walk position on ground) and half are dribblers. Dribblers attempt to maneuver ball from one end of grid to the other while crab monsters try to prevent this by kicking balls away. Dribblers who lose their ball become crabs.

**Musical Balls** - Each player, except one, has a ball within grid. Player without ball attempts

to steal ball from other players. Once a player loses his ball, he attempts to steal ball from another player. A player cannot steal ball from person who has just stolen his ball.

**Slalom** - Split players into two groups, giving each group a ball. Set up a line of four to ten spaced cones in front of each group. One at a time, have players dribble between cones, up and back, leaving the ball at the foot of the next player. The half that finishes the drill first wins.

## Passing

Passing allows a team to keep possession of the ball. Explain that accurate passing is more important than just kicking the ball in one direction. Kicking with the inside of the foot is the most accurate way for a player at this age to pass. The best passes to focus on are simple passes on the ground, to the teammate's feet. When passing, the player's shoulders should be over the ball, and he should follow his passing foot through to the target. When receiving a pass, the player should watch the ball into his possession. When making a pass, the player should watch the ball into the receiver's possession.



**Keep Away Circle** - Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle of cones. One player or coach stands inside the circle and tries to intercept passes made between the players. Passes made between the players count as goals. Change the players in the circle after a pass is intercepted or after a short time.

**Cone Game** - Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle. Set up 6 or 8 cones in the middle of the circle as targets. Players try to knock over the cones in the middle with accurate passes.

**Triangle Pass** - Set up a three-player triangle. Each group has one ball. Players try to pass around the triangle shape. Make sure

they reverse the direction of the passes from time to time. After a certain level of proficiency is reached, add a defender to try and intercept the passes.

**Four Corner Pass** - Set up a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid with cones at each of the corners. Four players work with one ball, one on each side of the grid. A fifth player defends inside the grid. Players may only run on their sides of the grid between the cones. They then attempt to pass the ball across the grid. Change the middle defender frequently.

**Star Wars** - This classic game is very exciting for younger players. Set up a 10 yd. x 20 yd. grid. Have all players line up at one end prepared to run to the other end. The coach or player stands just outside the grid with several balls at the ready. On command the players attempt to run to the end line while evading balls kicked at them by the coach. All shots should be kept below waist level. Players hit by shooting balls become additional shooters until only one player is left.

**Basic Passing** - Split the team up into partners, giving each pair a ball. Have the players pass and trap the ball, while you evaluate their skill. Later, introduce one touch control passing.

**Wall Pass** - Divide the team into pairs. Each pair needs one ball and one cone. The first player passes the ball to the second and then runs past the cone (as if it were a defender). This first player then receives the pass on the other side of the cone. Change roles frequently.

**Passing Through the Gap** - Partners are required, with one ball and two cones for each pair. Set the cones up about two feet away from one another (moving them closer as accuracy improves). Have the players pass back and forth to one another, making sure that the ball goes between the two cones. Develop a scoring system.



**Two against One** - For this game, use a goalkeeper and two attackers. Set up a goal with cones, and require the pair to pass the ball at least three times before taking a shot. Change positions frequently.

**Return Passing** - Divide the team into pairs, giving each pair one ball and two cones. One player will initiate passes, the other will return them. The player making the pass will pass alternately to one of the two cones, where the other player will run to make the return pass. Reverse the roles often.

**Monkey in the Middle** - Form a circle using all of the players, except for three, who will go in the middle. The players on the outside pass the ball to one another, trying to keep it away from the monkeys. When a monkey gets the ball, he switches places with the player who last touched the ball. The players on the circle may not pass to players directly next to them.

## Shooting

Shooting is a skill that children will enjoy learning. Some basic instructions will help the players learn the skill properly. Show them how to place their non-kicking foot next to the ball and aim at the target. Demonstrate that the shoulders should be over the ball, and that you should be leaning slightly

forward. Explain how the foot should be "locked" when the ball is kicked. Use the label on the ball to demonstrate where the ball should be kicked (just above the midline) to keep a shot low.

**Marbles** - Players are organized into pairs, each with a ball. Standing with his back to the field of play, the first player throws his ball over his head. The second player then kicks his ball from the starting point and tries to hit the ball that was thrown. Play alternates by kicks until one ball is hit. The players then reverse and start again. Coaches should emphasize instep kicks for length and the side of the foot for accuracy. Make it a condition that every other game is left foot only.

**Four Goal Game** - Set up four 2 cone goals in each corner of a 20 yd x 30 yd grid. Divide players into two equal teams. Players may score at any of the four goals. The game encourages teamwork and results in lots of shooting.



#### **Shoot Between Cones**

- Set up a cone row with cones spaced 3 to 5 yards apart. Pair up players and put one player on each side of the cone row facing cones and each other. Players should start close to the row of cones at first, striking the ball between the cones. The partner receives ball and passes it back through the cones. Move players farther apart as their technique and accuracy improve.

**Go For Goal** - Players form two lines on either side of the coach who is standing 18 to 20 yards from a goal that is any size. The coach serves the ball toward the goal line while one player races to win the ball and shoot. As skills progress, add a goalkeeper. The coach should encourage correct shooting technique and a good first touch on the ball.

**Dribble Cones and Shoot** - Set up two cone lines for a dribble weave about 30 yards with a 2 yard goal at the end. Divide players into two lines or teams. Players must dribble

through the cones and score at the goal at the end before the next player in line starts.

**The Numbers Game** - Young players will play this game for hours! Set up a 20 yd. x 30 yd. grid with goals at each end. Divide players into two teams and place each team on one of the end lines. Number players 1-6 (or use colors for very young players). Coach stands at the half-line and serves a ball into the grid while calling a number. Players who are called sprint off their end line to win the ball, 1v1, and try to score. Players standing on the end line may keep the ball in play but may not protect the goal! The coach should try 2, 3, 4, etc. numbers. Ball can be served on the ground or in the air.

**5v5 Pass and Strike** - Set up a 30 yd. x 30 yd. grid with two opposing goals. Divide players into two 5 person teams. Players must pass the ball to each team member or make 4 complete passes before they can shoot on goal. If the opponent takes the ball the team must start over in its pass count.

**Crab Soccer** - Set up a 20 yd. x 30 yd. grid with goals at each end. Divide the players into two teams or a minimum of 5v5. Players must walk on their hands and feet simultaneously while trying to pass the ball to teammates and scoring. This game really encourages teamwork because of the difficulty in movement by the players.

**Hit the Cone** - Set up cones in a line, with three feet between each cone. Line up two players on opposing sides of each cone, facing one another. Give one of the opposing players a ball. The object of the game is to knock down the cone, in as few shots as possible. When the first shooter misses the cone, the partner should trap the ball and take a shot. When the cone is knocked over, one player should set it back up and continue playing. For a variation, play this game for one-minute intervals, and encourage the players to improve their record each time.

**Pass and Shoot** - Set up two cones as a goal at one end of the grid and divide the team in half. Pick one player to start as goalie. Then line one group up behind the goal, with one ball for each player. Line the other group up fifteen feet in front of the goal, in the center.

The first player in line should pass the ball to the first player in the center line. This person then traps the ball and takes a shot on goal. After their turns, the players should get in the end of the alternate line (players who took shots need to retrieve the ball if needed). Switch goalies often. For large groups, two games can be set up at opposite ends of the grid. Later, have the shooting line take their shots with only one touch.

**Quick Shot** - Divide players into groups of three, and give each group one ball and two cones. Set the cones up as a goal, and have one player be the goalie. The remaining two players should be on opposite sides of the goal, facing each other. They take turns shooting on goal. When the goalie makes a save, he should turn and roll the ball to the other player. Switch goalies often.

**Shot Against Goalie** - Divide the team into pairs. Give each pair one ball and four cones. Set the cones up as two separate goals, about 10 yards apart. One partner will stand in either goal, and will then take turns shooting and being the goalie, in alternating turns. Initially, have the players shoot a stationary ball. Then have them stand behind their goal line and dribble up to it before shooting or have the goalie roll the ball to the shooter for a one-touch shot

**Cone Kick Down** - This is played just like a regular scrimmage, but instead of having a goal to shoot at, set up five cones, spaced along each goal line. The first team to knock down all five cones wins. There are no goalies.

## Ball Control

Ball control is one of the essential skills of soccer. In order to execute a good pass, score a goal, stop a breakaway, or dribble through defenders, players must be able to control the ball. Players must learn to control the ball quickly so that they have time to do something positive. Impress on the young players that they can use their foot, thigh, chest, or head to control the ball. Explain that when the ball comes to them, they must create a soft cushion for the ball to land on. Tell them to treat the ball like an egg. When the ball (egg) comes to them, they have to

cushion it so that it doesn't break and get everything gooey.



Warm-ups for ball control may include breaking your team into pairs, each pair with a ball. Have each pair make two-touch passes to each other. Make sure they trap the ball using both the inside and outside of their feet. This warm-up will enable you to see how good their trapping skills are. If they are mastering trapping with both the left and right foot, you can work up to thigh and chest traps by having them serve lobs to each other.

**Pig-in-the-Middle** - Break the team up into groups of three, with one ball to a group. Volunteer one player to be the pig-in-the-middle. The two other players try to pass the ball past the pig without letting him control it. Once the pig traps the ball, one of the other players takes his place. The two outside players must control the ball, or they will have to switch with the pig.

**Rapid Fire** - Have the team form a circle around a single player. Every player except the middleman should have a ball. Have each team member take turns passing the ball to the player in the center. This player tries to trap and control the ball, and then passes it

back to the original player. Have each team member take a turn as the middleman.

**Continue Down the Line** - Divide team members into groups of four players, with one ball to a group. Select one player to be the server. The three remaining players should line up, side by side, facing the server. The server will take turns serving the ball to each player, who must trap and control before returning it to the server. Continue in this fashion, alternating the server.



**Intermediate Threes** - Break the team into groups of three, with two balls to a group. Designate two servers and a runner. As shown in the example, have server A throw the ball to C, who traps and returns the ball to A, and then runs to repeat the sequence with server B. Variations of throw height and strength should be used by the servers. Alternate positions frequently.

**Flight Ball** - Divide team into pairs, giving each pair one ball and a grid. One player will be the server, who is to serve the ball in the air to any location in the other player's half of the grid. This player must move to the ball, trap it, and return it to the server. Alternate roles after every 10 servers.

## Volleying

Volleying is a skill seldom used by young players. Their soccer instincts tell them that they have to let the ball hit the ground because that's where their feet are. Learning to volley will make players more aggressive, and help them realize that they can attack the ball wherever it is, even in the air. When volleying, the player should strike the ball

with the laces of the shoe. He must also learn to "open up" his body to the ball and follow through to the target as in a normal shot. In order to keep a volley low, the player must kick the ball above its midline.

**Juggling** - Have each player toss the ball and "juggle" it with his feet. Have them see how many times they can do it without letting the ball touch the ground. Repeat to see improvement.

**Cone Shots** - Divide the team in half, choosing one person to be goalie. On both sides of a goal, put a cone about 10 yards out. Have each half line up behind a cone, with their balls. In turn, the first player in line will put his ball on top of the cone, and take a shot. The two sides will take turns as the goalie alternates facing the two lines. Change goalies frequently.

**Air shots** - Set up is the same as above, except that now the players should toss the ball and let it bounce once, prior to taking the shot. The ball should be kicked while it is in the air. As a variation, have someone else toss the ball into play. The players can be stationary, or can be "on the run".



## Goalkeeping

Goalkeeping is a combination of three basic skills: securing, distributing, and positioning. The goalkeeper must first know how to use his unique position to his team's advantage by gaining and keeping control of the ball with his hands. He must also know the various methods of releasing the ball that are

helpful to his team. He must choose the best method of getting the ball to a teammate who is out of the "danger zone". Another important skill for a goalkeeper to master is positioning. Being in the right place at the right time is the best way to prevent goals from being scored.



**Goalie Passing** - Have the players pair up, with one ball to each pair. Line them up about 10 yards apart, and have them pass to one another. Each pass is assumed to be from a goalie to a field player. First have them bowl the ball to each other's feet: explaining that this is the most accurate goalie pass. Then have them throw it overhand, which will give the goalie a bit more distance. Then have them punt passes, and explain that this is the longest but least accurate pass.

**Fielding Ground Balls** - Divide the team into pairs, giving each pair four cones

and one ball. Set the cones up as two goals, parallel to one another (about 10 yards apart). Have the players roll the ball to each other, "scooping" the ball up when it comes to them, without getting on their knees. Start with rolls directly to the partner, and then move them to either side of the partner. See example below.

**Fielding High Balls** - Same set up as above, but have the goalies throw high balls to each other.

**Save the Breakaway** - Divide players into pairs, each pair having one ball, four cones, and a grid. Set the cones up as goals on opposite ends of the grid and assign one player to each goal. The player with the ball should dribble forward from his goal line, and try to score on the other goalie, by either dribbling or shooting past him. Long-range shots are not permitted and both goalkeepers should return to their respective goals after each save or score, before starting the next round. Continue for set number of minutes or goals.

**Three on one** - Break the team into groups of four, with one goalie and three attacking players. Set up two cones as a goal on one end of the grid and give the attacking player in the center a ball. The attacking player must pass the ball to one of the wings, who will shoot. The object is to get the goalie to shift to whichever side the ball is passed to, in order to cut off the angle. If the team is not evenly divided by four, some groups of three can be used. Shift positions frequently.



# Ball Gymnastics

Definition: Any fun, warm-up activity with a ball.

Purpose: Used for warming-up, introducing the theme of a practice, and introducing the idea of warming-up, preparing for physical activity.

Emphasis: FUN, with secondary consideration on developing balance, coordination, quick movements, and building confidence in handling a ball. NO TEACHING, these are fun activities intended to provide movement exploration and self-discovery.



## Individual Ball Gymnastics

### 1. Throwing ball up in the air.

- throw ball up and catch, without moving feet.
- Throw ball up and overhead and catch behind back.

- Same as b, but without letting go of ball bring hands and ball back in front.
- Same as b, but once having caught the ball toss it back overhead and catch in front.
- From a kneeling, sitting, or lying position throw ball up... stand... and catch ball before it hits the ground.

### 2. Weaving ball in and around and through legs.

- Standing with legs apart, roll ball in a figure around and through legs.
- Same as a, but rolling ball in a circle.
- Same as a, but legs together, rolling ball in circle, small then larger circles.
- Same as a, but now holding ball off ground.
- Holding ball off ground, between legs, one hand in front and the other from behind legs, without letting ball touch ground, change positions of hands.

### 3. Throw-in position, standing with ball behind head, legs.

- Let go of ball, swing arms down and catch ball behind back, before it hits the ground.
- Same as a, but let ball bounce on ground, bend at the waist and catch ball between legs.
- Same as b, but once having caught ball behind and between legs toss back overhead and catch in front.

### 4. Standing with ball on ground in front

- One foot on ball, alternate feet, toe tapping on top of the ball. Coach can lead, so players must keep their heads up and watch the coach and not the ball.
- Ball in front, jump over ball, turn, face ball again and jump over.
- Standing with ball beside, jump over ball side to side.

### 5. Sitting on ground, legs straight out in front.

- Legs together, place ball on lower shins, raise legs slowly so ball rolls to

stomach, put legs down, raise, hips off grounds to roll ball back to feet.

- Firmly holding ball with feet, raise ball 6 inches off the ground, bend knees, bringing ball in then straighten legs again, this rowing action can be led by the coach. Start off slow, speed up then slow down.
- Firmly holding ball with feet, roll onto back while lifting legs, bring legs all the way overhead and deposit ball on ground.

#### 6. Sitting, legs straight.

- Roll ball around in a circle around feet then behind back, keeping legs straight.
- Same as a, but with legs apart.
- Legs together, lift legs and roll ball under, then carry ball over, then under again.
- Lying on ground, lift buttocks and roll ball under, then lift ball over, circular movement. The coach can call out change of direction.



#### 7. Standing, legs apart

- Roll ball between legs behind, turn run and get ball as quickly as possible.
- Bounce ball between legs, turn and catch, if possible before next bounce.
- Throwing ball in air and controlling. (Introduction to controlling the ball)
- Throw ball in air and catch with two hands.
- Same as a, but catch with one hand.
- Same as a & b, but hold out one foot and let ball hit foot. Important that the coach assesses player's ability at this point, continuation may be an exercise in futility.
- After throwing ball in the air try to use side of foot, or shin, or even buttocks, to trap ball after it has bounced.

#### 8. Kicking ball in the air. (Introduction to juggling)

- Holding ball, try to kick it up in the air.
- Dropping ball to foot kick ball back up and catch
- Dropping ball to thigh, raise thigh to meet the ball & bumping it into the air, then catch. BE SURE TO ALTERNATE FEET AND LEGS.
- If possible, have players try using their heads to bump ball into the air to catch.

## Ball Gymnastics with a Partner

#### 1. Standing, facing each other, approx. 1 yard apart.

- Toss ball back and forth.
- Roll ball back and forth.
- One player tosses the other rolls, later change.
- These exercises can also be done sitting or lying on stomachs.
- One player turns and faces away from partner, with legs apart rolls ball between legs to partner, turn to receive ball back.
- Pass ball back and forth using only inside of either foot.



2. Standing back to back approx. 1 yard apart

- Keeping feet still twist and pass ball with hands to partner. After receiving ball turn and pass on opposite side. Coach calls out, "Speed up," "slow down," change direction."
- Same as a, except now players pass ball overhead and between legs, over-under-over-under... same commands as above are called out by coach.
- 3. Standing, facing each other, players both holding the same ball between them.
- Kneel down then sit down without letting go of ball, once both are sitting have them stand again. Partners can try this three to five times. Speed up and slow down commands can also be used.
- Same as above except that partners now place hands on each other's shoulders and balance the ball on their arms.
- Same as above, now partners press ball between their foreheads, no hands allowed to touch the ball.

Same as above but now partners sit back-to-back, locking arms, and balancing ball behind their heads.

4. Pass and fetch.

Both partners stand facing each other, one holds a ball, for thirty seconds the player with the ball drops the ball in any direction, the other player quickly gets the ball and gives it back to partner, who then drops it again in another direction. After 30 seconds players switch roles.

Same as a, except player without the ball faces away from partner with the ball. Player with the ball rolls ball past partner on their left or right side. Player tossing the ball can also call out left or right as they toss the ball.



# Game Guidelines

## Scrimmages

### General:

Not the best for improving skills (many players, only one ball); the kids love scrimmage and it is great fun for them: allow plenty of time for scrimmage during every practice, but don't make it the only activity.



Excellent for learning positions and game simulation

Good way to teach the rules (you are the referee) but try not to stop play too often.

### Small-sided scrimmage:

- Fewer players, therefore each player gets more touches on the ball
- Small field requires more control and more passing
- Small goal encourages accuracy
- Highly recommended in practice for all ages
- If you have a large team and sufficient space, run two games simultaneously

### Scrimmage with Conditions:

- Maximum 5 touches: to encourage passing
- Minimum 2 touches: to encourage control (no one touch passing)
- Minimum 5 touches: to encourage dribbling
- Must pass three times before allowed to shoot: rewards passing and good spacing

### Uneven Scrimmage:

5v2 with no goals: forces passing (the larger team counts passes)

- Offense vs. Defense:
- Good to practice action at the mouth of the goal
- Good to work on set plays (goal kicks, corner kicks, free kicks)
- Have 2 or 3 extra players on offense to keep action around goal
- Give defenders two goals at mid field near touchline

### Freeze!

- Blow the whistle and call freeze
- All players must stop where they are
- Coach makes observations, e.g. players open on the right flank
- Excellent teaching tool (if not used too often)

### Open Scrimmage:

- Full game simulation
- All players, one game
- Enforce rules more strictly to encourage fair play; it also gives players free kick practices
- Play another team occasionally, if possible; practice subs and positions



## Game Preparation

### The Day Before The Game -

Prepare the lineup and substitution schedule. Remember that over the course of the season, all players should have the chance to: 1) play different positions; 2) be captain; 3) start and finish games. These things are important to your players (ask them!); they will notice.

Check team equipment (balls, net, flags).  
Check the field location!

**Game Day** - Remember to bring your equipment bag and substitution schedule, Have a good quality ball with you to use as a game ball (some clubs will provide the game ball).

Have your team arrive at least 15-20 minutes before your scheduled kick-off time to allow an adequate warm-up period. It is important to stress this message to parents as well as players.

A team parent should organize a simple SNACK schedule for game days. Discourage turning snacks into a financial hardship for some parents. Orange or apple slices, or seedless grapes are good choices. Make sure that all orange peels, apple cores, and grape stems are picked up and placed in an appropriate receptacle.

**Field Preparation** - Check your local club rules to determine who is responsible for setting up and taking down the nets and corner flags, If the responsibility is yours, arrive early enough to get the job done before warming up your team. You may want to organize the team parents to handle the net and flags for you.

**Team Warm-Up** - Simple passing, dribbling, shooting drills; maximize touches. Have an assistant work with the players who will be goalkeepers for this game.

**Rules** - Your local club may have rules, which amend or modify the FIFA Laws of the Game to accommodate the age and skill level of your players. It is your responsibility as a

coach to know what is expected of you, your players, the officials, and the spectators. You should know the rules and should carefully consider the spirit, which underlies them.

**Referee** - Meet the referee and make note of his or her name. Ask any questions you may have about game duration, allowable substitution times, etc.



## Soccer Game Etiquette

Another aspect of sideline coaching is finding the best place to do it. Just as good fences make good neighbors, when teams establish themselves on opposite sides of the field it is often more enjoyable for both parties. It significantly reduces the potential for friction between the sides.

If circumstances require teams to share one side of the field (sun in the eyes, or shade or shelter from the rain, for example), coaches need to be aware and temper their coaching methods accordingly.

Pacing up and down the touchline, which is not a great idea under the best of circumstances, is extremely irritating if it means running in front of the opposing coach and screaming over his coaching. The best solution is just to quit pacing. But if you must pace, or burst, then you should be the one to move to the less desirable side since you are the problem. A little consideration for others will increase everyone's enjoyment of the game.

After the game, give the other team a proper cheer (discourage cheers such as "Two, four, six, eight, who did we eliminate!", they are

both arrogant and unsportsmanlike), then line up your squad and lead them across the field to congratulate the opposing players and coach. Teach your players to win humbly and to lose graciously.

**Winning and losing:** The outcome of the game will not be a life-or-death matter for your players unless adults teach them that it is. The kids come to play; it is only adults who come to keep score. If you don't believe that, ask some players coming off the field what the score is - they often don't know (and don't really care that much) who is ahead. If your team is typical, you will have players at the end of games asking "Did we win?" even if the game was completely one-sided, and, by the time of the next team practice, many of your players will not remember who won on the previous Saturday, much less remember the score.

It is, after all, only a game. What is important is that the players have fun, give a good effort, and accept the result in a sportsmanlike manner.

Finally, remember that, as coach, you are responsible for the behavior of your spectators (parents and others) as well as your own and that of your team. Spectators must be educated about the proper place to stand to watch the game. All spectators should remain between the two 18-yard lines (marking the penalty area) and 2 yards behind the touchline. This provides a clear line of sight for the assistant referee (even if you don't use assistant referees at your level of play, it is a good idea to get the spectators into the habit of watching from well off the touchline! ). No one should ever be closer to the goal than 18 yards, and never directly behind the goal area.

## Coaching From the Touchline

Coaching responsibilities can be rotated with assistants if you desire. Naturally, the assistant coaches are not expected to remain mute during the game. They should join with the other parents in cheering and encouraging the players. Enlisting assistants to help on the sidelines with player substitutions is generally acceptable, but only

the designated coach should communicate with the referee.

It is important to realize that although we as coaches are permitted to instruct from the sideline, this is not a license to take over the game from the players. Coaching is best done during practice time, not during the game.



## A Few Things to AVOID:

Don't continually shout instructions - they often reach the players too late (the action has moved to a new situation), and may be distracting.

Don't send one of your assistants to instruct from the opposite touchline to "cover the field". It is doubly distracting to the players (often the instructions coming from opposite sides of the field differ!), it is irritating to the other team if they are located there, and it is also against the rules if only one coach is allowed to instruct.

Don't send a parent or assistant to coach from behind the goal line; coaches and

spectators do not belong there! The coach can be "carded" for permitting such a violation of the rules.

## A Few GOOD IDEAS:

Your sideline coaching should be limited. Prepare your players to think for themselves as much as possible. Take notes of situations and skills that your team has problems with and work on them during practice.

Watch how the opposition plays and point out to your substitutes anything that can be to your team's advantage (e.g. all their goal kicks go to a certain area, their defense plays far back or far forward, etc.).

Remind the players going in who they are substituting for and what their duties are at that position.

The less time spent shouting and the more time observing, the better understanding you will develop of your team, and the more information you will have to help them during your next practices.

Remember that as coaches we are in a supporting role. It is the kids' show!

## Positions

In the younger age groups, each player should be given the opportunity to play both offense and defense. The idea of a 7 or 8-year-old defensive specialist is absurd.

Don't emphasize positions too much. Sometimes players will ask you if a particular position (such as fullback) is allowed to score, or if a fullback is ever allowed to cross midfield, not as a matter of tactics but as a matter of rules. Younger players often get the erroneous belief that they are assigned to a particular place on the field and can't leave it, no matter what the situation. This does not mean that players should all wildly chase the ball, but don't inadvertently teach your players inflexibility in the name of positions.

In the younger (8 on a side) games, you have 3 basic formations. One is 3 fullbacks, 2 halfbacks, and 2 forwards. The problem is,

the halfbacks often will leave the midfield and not return - they will reposition themselves either as forwards or defenders, instead of being links between the offense and the defense.

The other formation is 3 forwards and 4 defenders. Again, a caution against inflexibility: your forwards should know that they may at times have to help the defense, and that they shouldn't stay so far up field that the defenders can't clear the ball to them. Also, a defender should know that if he or she has the ball in midfield and has a clear path into the attacking area, the defender doesn't have to relinquish the ball but can continue into the attacking zone. The defender should retreat after giving up the ball.

Don't make the mistake of placing your "aces" all on offense. If you have only weak players on defense, the other team may spend most of the game in front of your goal while your forwards wait in vain for the ball that never comes.



Another common mistake: don't play your defenders too far back. If they are positioned at the edge of the penalty area while the ball is down at the other end of the field, when the other team clears the ball you will have given up a significant amount of real estate with a contest. Play your defenders up and contest the turf. Also, defenders too near

your goalkeeper often block the view of or otherwise hinder your goalkeeper, and they also keep the forwards on the other team onside at all times. If one of your defenders is standing next to the goalkeeper, an opposing forward can be stationed near your goal without any fear of offsides.



## Substituting

The coach's main duty beside watching out for the welfare of his or her players is to keep track of playing time and to substitute players in and out so every player plays a comparable amount of time. Know the situations when it is permissible to substitute.

Kentucky Youth Soccer requires that each player play at least 50% of a game in recreational soccer. Know the club rules and abide by them. Explain to your parents (e.g. at the Parent Meeting) the restrictions that are placed on you in terms of when you can legally substitute players during a game.

Prepare a fair substitution schedule before each game, follow it as best you can, and keep it on file for the season.

We strongly recommend that coaches prepare their lineups before the game and substitute between periods or, for older players, midway in each half and at half time. Remember; keep an eye on your watch!

TIP: To keep the subs interested in the game (a) ask them to observe the position where they will play next; (b) have them keep statistics (e.g. number of passes made/missed, shots on goal).

ROTATE players, particularly in young age groups. Don't limit forward positions to a few; everyone should have a chance to play defender, midfield, and forward. Every player should be encouraged to try goalkeeping, but no player should be forced to play this position. If you have difficulty getting volunteers, try to spread the task among a few players who can be rewarded by playing forward for the rest of their playing time. Giving each player some goalkeeping experience during practice scrimmages will increase their confidence to try it during a game.

## After The Game

You should be the first in line when your team goes to the center of the field to shake hands at the end of the game. Also, a good rule to follow regarding any post game verbal exchanges with the other team is: Don't say anything to the other team that you would not want said to you if the score were reversed. Do not permit anything that remotely resembles teasing of a defeated team. Do not belittle another team's victory by attributing it to luck or a biased referee.



# Additional Resources for Coaches

"The second you stop getting better, is the second you stop being any good."

## Helpful Websites

- [www.kysoccer.net/coaches](http://www.kysoccer.net/coaches)
- [www.socceronline.com](http://www.socceronline.com)
- [www.soccercoaching.net](http://www.soccercoaching.net)
- [www.soccerperformance.org](http://www.soccerperformance.org)
- [www.worldclasscoaching.com](http://www.worldclasscoaching.com)
- [www.mnyouthsoccer.com/coaches/articles.cfm](http://www.mnyouthsoccer.com/coaches/articles.cfm)
- [www.successinsoccer.com](http://www.successinsoccer.com)
- [www.worldclasscoaching.com](http://www.worldclasscoaching.com)
- [www.the-fa.org](http://www.the-fa.org)
- [www.uefa.com](http://www.uefa.com)
- [www.soccerclinics.com](http://www.soccerclinics.com)
- [www.socceracademy.com](http://www.socceracademy.com)
- [www.soccerclub.com](http://www.soccerclub.com)
- [www.decatursports.com](http://www.decatursports.com)
- [www.betersoccermorefun.com](http://www.betersoccermorefun.com)
- [www.worldofsoccer.com](http://www.worldofsoccer.com)
- [www.facoachingcourses.org.uk/](http://www.facoachingcourses.org.uk/)
- [www.soccermom.com](http://www.soccermom.com)
- [www.nscaa.com](http://www.nscaa.com)
- [www.ussoccer.com](http://www.ussoccer.com)
- [www.usysa.org](http://www.usysa.org)

## Soccer Resources



**Coaches Connection** - The Coaches Connection provides members with a link to the US

Youth Soccer Coaching Education Network: The National Director of Coaching Education and staff, plus 55 State Association Directors of Coaching Education and their staff, as well as guest lectures from around the world.

Get connected with leaders in the field of coaching, referee education and player development. Stay current with discussions on such hot topics as small-sided games;

recreation vs. competitive soccer; parent education, ethics and morals in sport. For more information, please visit [www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org).



Subscribe to Kentucky Youth Soccer's online coaching newsletter – **Coach's Corner**.. Prepared monthly and distributed free by the State Coaching Staff, Coach's Corner provides a wealth of information ranging from monthly lesson plans for effective practices to practical article on coaching youth to book and video reviews. For more information or to subscribe, visit [www.KYsoccer.net](http://www.KYsoccer.net).

[www.reedswain.com](http://www.reedswain.com) or 1-800-331-5191. Get a 10% discount when you mention that you have attended a Kentucky Youth Soccer Coaching Course!

[www.soccerlearningsystems.com](http://www.soccerlearningsystems.com) or 1-800-762-2376. Get a 10% discount when you mention that you have attended a Kentucky Youth Soccer Coaching Course

[WWW.store.usyouthsoccer.com](http://WWW.store.usyouthsoccer.com) or 1-800-4Soccer. Complete collection of US Youth Soccer coaching books, DVDs, Videos and other coaching materials.

## Soccer Gear and Uniforms

[www.adidas.com](http://www.adidas.com) – complete selection of soccer clothing, shoes, socks, shorts, and equipment.

[www.soccer.com](http://www.soccer.com) – Eurosport – Fabled Soccer Traders – World's Largest Online store of soccer clothing, equipment, gear, coaching books and videos. All you could ever need for soccer. Join the Goal Club and earn points on every purchase that can be redeemed for merchandise in the store.





## Coaches Education Program

Kentucky Youth Soccer Association (KYSA) presents a complete program of coaching courses that are offered throughout the year. Affiliated communities, clubs and leagues may host coaching courses for the U6, U8 & U10 Youth Modules, an E course for "U-11-U12", coaches and the D level for the U13 and above coaches. Both E and D licenses are non-expiring and are awarded following the completion of both theoretical and practical testing. Candidates wishing to attend a US Soccer National Coaching School to take the "C" License course must have earned and held a National "D" License for a minimum of 12 months. It is recommended that member organizations conduct coaching schools annually to introduce new coaches to the education process and to provide continuing education for others.

**The Youth Module** is a five hour courses (approximately), recommended for parents, new coaches, working with children in the ages of U6, U8 & U10. All applicants must be 16 years of age or older to attend course. The course is free for members and \$25 for non-members. (A member is any parent, player who participate within a Kentucky Youth Soccer Association member organization. Non-members are those who participate through an organization that does not belong to KYSA such as a school, a parks &

For more information, please contact the State Office or email [Info@kysoccer.net](mailto:Info@kysoccer.net) or check for information on our website at <http://kysoccer.net/coaches>.

Candidates at a D License Course pose for a picture



recreation program, a YMCA or church program.)

**The E license** is an eighteen-hour (approximately) course, normally scheduled from Friday (6pm-10pm), Saturday (9am-5pm) Sunday (9am-3pm). The courses consist of theoretical and practical instruction on the teaching of techniques and tactics of small-sided games between 1v1 and 6v6. The emphasis will be to build on the player's technical development by applying tactical concepts with game situations. All applicants must be 18 years of age or older to attend course. The cost of the course is \$50 for member, \$75 for non-nonmembers.

**The D License** is a thirty-six hour (approximately) course typically held over two full weekends. The course consists of theoretical and practical instruction on teaching the four components of soccer - technique, tactics, fitness and psychology - as they relate to games. It is recommended that all competitive/select level coaches working in the 11-a-side game hold a "D" License. Coaches are required to pass two written tests and a practical field test in order to obtain this award. Three outcomes are possible at the "D" level. Coaches can pass outright (National "D") and proceed to the national courses (C-B-A) after a mandatory one year wait.

Kentucky Youth Soccer maintains a schedule on [www.KYsoccer.net](http://www.KYsoccer.net) that is always current. The schedule is available in the Coaching Education of the website which is accessible from the main menu on the left

# Referee Relations

The referees in your program probably have various degrees of experience and ability. There may be times when your game is in the hands of a novice referee, possibly handling a game for the first time. Go easy on the referee! He or she has a hard job and they are usually teenagers. Just remember, it could be your child out there someday - how would you want them to be treated?



Set the example by treating all referees with respect, and insist that your players and parents do the same. Accept their decisions as part of the game. Don't make calls for them, shout at or argue with them. Teach your players to focus on improving their own play and that of the team, not on criticizing the officials.

If the referee's conduct of the game is, in your opinion, endangering your players, then find the home club's field director (or other club administrator, if one is available) and ask him or her to observe play. He will then make a determination whether the play warrants intervention and he may then approach the referee and discuss the handling of the game. If no club administrator is in attendance, you may have to act in the best interests of your players. Any discussion with the referee should occur between quarters or at half-time.

Coaches need to be careful not to overreact to some of the inevitable bumping and incidental contact that occurs in a soccer game. Contrary to some misconceptions, soccer is a contact sport. Legal contact is clearly defined in the rules of the game. Before questioning the referee's handling of the game, be certain that he or she is consistently failing to control illegal contact. There will inevitably be calls with which you disagree. Don't let it become a distraction for you or your team. Over the course of the game the "bad" calls will probably even out.

If the referee does a good job, be sure to let him/her know and thank them after the game. If you find that one of your referees is consistently missing calls, contact your club's Referee Coordinator who will monitor and work with any referees needing help. Referee Coordinators should welcome any input from coaches regarding referee performance.

The rules and officiating of soccer are rooted in the philosophy and spirit of the game. Soccer is played by gentlemen (and gentlewomen). The referee is always right. Dissent is not allowed or tolerated. Unfair or unsportsmanlike advantage is not sought nor taken.



# Soccer Glossary

**ASSISTANT REFEREE** – Person, often a parent volunteer who assists the referee, one assistant referee is assigned to each touchline. Their primary responsibility is to indicate when the ball is out of play or when the whole of the ball crosses the whole of the touchline or end line. The assistant referee also signals which team has the right to put the ball in play again by using their flag to show the direction of play for the restart. Positioned to call offsides.

**CHARGING** - A method of unbalancing the player who has possession or is attempting to gain possession of the ball. The maneuver of using a shoulder (actually from the elbow and up to and including the shoulder) against the opponent's shoulder to gain an advantage; permissible only when the ball is playable (i.e. within three feet).

**CLEARING** - The act of moving the ball out of the vicinity of one's own goal by throwing (goalkeeper only) or kicking it (generally up the sideline).

**CORNER KICK** - A kick made by the attacking team from the corner arc on the side of the field where the ball went out of play. A corner kick is awarded when the ball is last touched by a defender and goes over the goal line without resulting in a goal. Opponents must be at least ten yards away from the ball when the kick is taken. A goal may be scored directly (without being touched by another player) from a corner kick.

**CROSS** - A pass in which the ball is kicked from one side of the field to the other side.

**DANGEROUS PLAY** - Play that is likely to cause injury. Examples are high kicking, playing while lying on the ground, or playing the ball while it is in possession of the goalkeeper.

**DEFENDER** - Also called fullback. A player who functions primarily in the defensive third of the field and whose major role is to repel attacks on the goal by the opposing team.

**DIRECT FREE KICK** - A free kick from which a goal can be scored directly (i.e. without being first touched by another player). It is awarded for substantial infractions of the rules.

Opponents must be at least ten yards away from the ball (opposing players may stand on their own goal line between the posts), but the player taking the kick may do so without waiting if he/she wishes. The ball is not in play until it has traveled its own circumference. The ball must be stationary when kicked and the kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has been played by another player (of either team).

**DROP BALL** - A ball held by the referee and allowed to fall directly to the ground between the two opponents. The ball is in play after it touches the ground. A drop ball restarts the game after play is stopped for no penalty situation (e.g. after an injury). The ball is dropped where it was last in play or at the nearest point outside the penalty area. A goal may be scored directly from a drop ball.

**EQUIPMENT** - All-purpose shoe with square or rectangular cleats are not permitted. No hard cast is permitted. No jewelry is permitted, including watches, bracelets, necklaces, hair clips and earrings. If players intend to get their ears pierced, we suggest that they do so a month before games begin, or after the season is over.

**FORWARD** - Player who functions primarily in the attacking third of the field and whose major responsibility is to score goals.

**FREE KICKS** - Infractions result in free kicks awarded to the offended team. They are either direct or indirect kicks. On a direct free kick, the kicker can put the ball directly into the goal for a score. On an indirect free kick, another player on either team must touch the ball before it can score. The referee will indicate an indirect free kick by holding one arm directly overhead. A penalty kick is awarded for a direct free kick infraction committed by the defense in its own penalty area. This call is determined by the position of the defending player; the ball need not have advanced into the penalty area.

**FULLBACK** - see Defender

**GOAL** - A one point score occurring when the whole of the ball passes entirely over the goal line, between the vertical goal posts and under the horizontal crossbar. A goal is not scored if the ball was not touched by another player (of either team) after an indirect free kick, goal kick, kick off, or throw in.

**GOAL AREA** - Area (20 x 8 yd. on a full size field) marked within the penalty area, and directly in front of the goal, from which all goal kicks originate.

**GOALKEEPER** - Player who functions primarily in the penalty area and whose major responsibility is to prevent the opponents' shots from entering the goal for a score. The goalkeeper is the only player allowed to touch or pick up the ball with his/her hands, and may only do so when the ball is in his/her penalty area. The keeper is the team's last line of defense.

**GOAL KICK** - Taken by any defending player to restart the game after the ball goes out of play over the end line, having last been touched by an attacking player. It may be taken from any point within the half of the goal area nearest where the ball went out. All opposing players must stand outside the penalty area. To be in play, the ball must leave the penalty area (inbounds); otherwise the kick is taken again.

**HALFBACK** - see Midfielder

**INDIRECT FREE KICK** - A free kick from which a goal cannot be scored until the ball is touched by another player. It is awarded for technical and minor infractions of the rules (see Summary of the FIFA Laws of the Game, Law XII, this section). Opponents must be at least 10 yards away from the ball (opposing players may stand on their between the goal posts), but the player taking the kick may do so if he/she wishes. The ball is not in play until it has traveled its own circumference. The ball must be stationary when kicked and the kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player (of either team).

**INFRACTIONS** - Conduct infractions are listed elsewhere. "Handling" the ball prohibits

intentionally playing the ball with the hand or arm. Accidental contact is not an infraction. No player, except the goalie, is allowed to put himself or other in danger of injury; thus the rule against dangerous play. Most calls for dangerous play are the result of a high kick or a low head. High kick is defined in relation to the other player's head, not the kicker's waist. You can't kick the ball while you are on the ground in traffic because you place your head in danger. If, in the judgment of the referee, the team offended by an infraction has a clear advantage which could lead to a scoring opportunity, the advantage rule may be invoked with the clear call of "Advantage, play on!" and a forward sweep of the hands.

**KICK OFF** - Officially begins the game at each half and restarts the game after a goal has been scored. The kick-off must travel toward the opponent's goal. The ball is in play when the ball is kicked and moves in a forward direction. The ball must go forward into the opponents half of the field and is in play after rolling its own circumference. The player kicking off must not play the ball again until another player of either team has played it. If the ball is kicked backward, then it never went into play and the kick is retaken. If the kicker touches the ball a second time without another player touching it, then the opposing team is awarded a free kick. Opponents must be at least 10 yards away from the ball in their own half of the field when the kick off is taken.

**LINESPERSON** – Now called assistant referees. See assistant referee.

**MARKING** - Guarding or covering an opposing player with or without the ball when he/she moves into your area of play.

**MIDFIELDER** - Player who functions primarily in the center or neutral third of the field and whose principal job is to link the defense and the attack through ball control and passing.

**OFFSIDE** - Offside is defined as occurring at the moment the ball is played by one of the attacking players to a teammate. To be in an offside position the player must be: in the attacking half of the field, even with or behind the ball, even with the second to last

defender (normally, but not necessarily the goalie and a fullback).

A player is penalized if in an offside position and if, in the judgment of the referee, the player is: a) interfering with play or with an opponent, or b) seeking to gain an advantage by being in that position.

A player is not declared offside a) merely by being in an offside position; b) if he/she receives the ball directly from a goal kick, a corner kick, a throw in, or a drop ball; or c) if the ball is last played by an opposing player.

**OUT OF BOUNDS** - The ball is in play unless the entire ball passes beyond all of the sideline (touchline) or goal line (end line). If the ball is out over the sideline, the team opposite the last touch throws it in. If the ball is over the goal line and not in the goal it is kicked off the ground by the opposing team from the corner if last touched by a defender, or from the goal area if last touched by an attacker. A corner kick can go directly into the goal for a score. If the goalie, in possession of the ball, falls or rolls into the goal carrying the entire ball over the goal line, a score results. If play is stopped for any reason while the ball is in play, it is restarted with a drop ball.

**PENALTY ARC** - The arc at the top of the penalty area; no player may be within this area while a penalty kick is being taken.

**PENALTY AREA** - Large area, 18 x 44 yd. on a full size field, in front of goal in which any of the "direct kick" fouls by the defending team result in a penalty kick. Also limits the area where the goalie can use his/her hands. The penalty area includes the goal area.

**PENALTY KICK** - Awarded to the attacking team if the defending team commits a direct free kick violation within the penalty area. Penalty kicks are taken from the penalty mark. All players of both teams except the kicker and opposing goalkeeper must remain on the field of play outside the penalty area and penalty arc. Goalkeepers are allowed to move laterally along the goal line while waiting for the kick to be taken. The player taking the kick must kick the ball forward and

may not touch the ball a second time until another player of either team has played it. A goal may be scored directly from a penalty kick.

For any infringement of the penalty kick rules by: a) the defending team, the referee will allow the kick to proceed, but if a goal does not result, the kick will be retaken; b) the attacking team, other than the player designated to take the kick, if a goal is not scored it will be disallowed and the kick retaken; c) by the player taking the penalty kick, committed after the ball is in play, an opposing player will take an indirect free kick at the point where the infraction occurred.

The referee's whistle always starts the taking of a penalty kick. Any penalty kick taken prior to the referee's whistle will be retaken using the referee's whistle as the proper start for the kick.

**PENALTY MARK** - A mark on the field from which penalty kicks are taken; also called the penalty spot. It is located 12 yards from the goal line, equally spaced between the goal posts.

**REFEREE** - The official who is in complete charge of the soccer game. The safety of the players is the referee's main concern. He or she is responsible for keeping time, enforcing the Laws of the Game (see Summary of the FIFA Laws of the Game, this section), stopping and restarting the game for penalties or injuries, cautioning or banishing offenders (including coaches or spectators) and ending the game, if necessary. All decisions by the referee are final! The referee is assisted by two assistant referees.

**SUBSTITUTIONS** - KYSA rules dictate that each player must play at least half of each game. ((Recreational Only) Coaches, however, are permitted to substitute only in certain situations, including: half-time (quarters for younger players), after a goal is scored, on a goal kick, on their own throw-in, or after an injury (for the injured player).

**TACKLING** - A method of gaining possession of the ball by use of the feet. Unnecessary

roughness and use of the hands are not permitted.

**THROW IN** - Taken to restart the game after the whole of the ball crosses the outside edge of the touchline. The throw in, taken by any member of the team that did not touch the ball last, is taken at the point where the ball went out of play. The thrower must face the field and throw the ball with equal strength by both hands, in one continuous motion from the back of the head and over the top of the head. When the ball is released, the thrower must have some part of both of his/her feet on the ground on or behind the touchline.

## **SOCCER GOVERNING BODIES**



FIFA – Federation Internationale de Football Association – the world governing body for soccer. Known best as the sponsor of the World Cup and the originator of the “Laws of the Game” FIFA can be reached on the world wide web at <http://www.fifa.com>.



USSF - The United States Soccer Federation is the national governing body for soccer in the United States. The Kentucky Youth Soccer Association is a member of USSF. The USSF offers a wide diversity of programs for all levels of soccer in the United States. Kentucky YSA offers two USSF programs - Coaching Education and Referee Education.

The USSF can be found on the web at [www.ussoccer.com](http://www.ussoccer.com).



USYSA – The United State Youth Soccer Association – a cooperative association of the 55 State Youth Soccer Associations in the United States. Kentucky YSA is a member of the USYSA and offers many USYSA programs such as The American Cup, Olympic Development Program, TOPSoccer, Snickers National Championship and others. The USYSA is a member of the USSF Youth Council. The USYSA can be found on the World Wide Web at [www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org).



Kentucky Youth Soccer -a cooperative association of the 81 local Youth Soccer Associations in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Information can be found on the World Wide Web at [www.kysoccer.net](http://www.kysoccer.net)

The Kentucky Youth Soccer Association maintains a state office at:

443 South Ashland Avenue, Suite 201  
Lexington, KY 40502  
Phone: 859-268-1254  
Fax: 859-269-0456  
Email: [StateOffice@kysoccer.net](mailto:StateOffice@kysoccer.net)  
Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. Easter Time.



## Code of Conduct

### Coaches, Players, Parents/Spectators and Referees

It is a privilege to be a part of the United States Soccer Federation, United States Youth Soccer Association, and Kentucky Youth Soccer Association. My action shall always reflection credit upon these organizations and their affiliates.

### Coaches:

Coaches and assistance coaches are expected to maintain a higher level of sportsmanship, professionalism and integrity both off and on the field. Coaches' primary responsibility is for his/her players to have fun, to develop soccer players and to instill a passion for the game. Your performance as a coach is not measured in win and loses but rather in what you teaches your players in terms of technique, sportsmanship and fair play. Coaches must maintain respect for the game as well as the referees. Coaches are charged with the responsibility of controlling their players and parents at all times during a match. Coaches lead and teach by example; your players will be a reflection of you.

Coaches and assistance coaches are expected to have a basic knowledge of the game and to pursue licensing that will allow them to better develop their players.

Coaches and assistance coaches should use positive reinforcement when dealing with players, never use foul or abusive language and never abuse a player mentally, orally or physically.

Coaches and assistance coaches are expected to have respect for the authority of the referee and his/her assistance's. They will not harass, abuse or berate the referee during or after the match. They shall not enter the field of play with out the referee's permission.

Coaches and assistance coaches are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship both off and on the field. They are to teach his/her players the rules of the game, rules of fair play and proper match behavior.

### Players:

Players play soccer to have fun, to learn and develop a passion for the game as well as to improve their skills. Players have a responsibility to their team, coach and soccer organization. They are representative of the club as well as the team, coach, parents and the community. Players must maintain a high level of sportsmanship and fair play. Players must have respect for their coach, opponents and the authority of the referee and his/her assistance's.

Players will play within the laws of the game and spirit of the game.

Players are expected to be on time and prepared for matches and training sessions.

Players will display self-control in all situations and will not use foul or abusive language at any time before, during or after a match or training session.

Players shall train and play to the best of their ability, have a positive attitude and encourage other to do the same.

Players will show respect towards the referee and his/her assistants as well as towards the opponents. They will not harass, abuse or berate a referee for any reason.

### Parents/Spectators:

Parents/Spectators must set the example for the children by exemplifying the highest standards of sportsmanship. Parents/Spectators participate in a match by watching, cheering and supporting the efforts of all participants of the match. Soccer must be Fun. The game is for the children, their participation and enjoyment of the game is the most important element.

Parents have responsibilities to the coach, team and soccer organization they are a part of. Parents/Spectators must have respect for their coach, all children on the team and the authority of the referee and his/her assistance's.

Parents/Spectators are expected to have respect for the authority of the referee and his/her assistants. They will not harass, abuse or berate the referee during or after the match. They shall not enter the field of play with out the referee's permission.

Parents/Spectators are expected to have respect for the coach and his/her assistants; they should never criticize a coach in a public manner. Do not coach from the sideline; let the coach do his/her job no matter how much you may disagree. If there is a problem talk to the coaching director or a director of your organization.

Parents/Spectators are expected to have respect for all players. Cheer in a positive manner not negative. Encourage your team, don't berate the other team. Cheer in a way to reward the good play of both teams and promote fair play.

Parents/Spectators are not to use foul or abusive language towards any one for any reason.

Parents/Spectators have a responsibility to learn the laws of the game, and the spirit of the game.

Parents/Spectators are encouraged to get involved with the organization and promote the game in a positive way.

Parents/Spectators must demonstrate the utmost in sportsmanship and integrity; they are the role models for their children.

## Referees

Referees (including Assistant Referees) are responsible for the safety of the players and coaches during a match. Referees must know the laws of the game and enforce them fairly.

They have the responsibility for upholding the laws and spirit of the game. Referees must show respect for the players, coaches and the game itself.

Referees are expected to always maintain the utmost respect for the game.

Referees are expected to conduct themselves honorably at all time and maintain the dignity of his/her position.

Referees are expected to always honor an assignment or any other contractual obligation.

Referees are expected to attend training sessions, meetings and clinics so as to know the Laws of the game, their proper interpretation and their application.

Referees are expected to strive to achieve maximum teamwork with fellow officials.

Referees are expected to show respect for other referees, coaches and players and never promote criticism of them.

Referees are expected to be in good physical shape.

Referees are expected to control players, coaches and Parents/Spectators effectively by being courteous and considerate without sacrificing fairness.

Referees are expected to do their utmost to assist fellow officials to better themselves and their work.

Referees are expected to not make statement about any game except to clarify an interpretation of the Laws of the Game.

Referees are expected to not discriminate against nor take any undo advantage of any individual group on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

\*Referee section taken in part from the National Referee Handbook Policy 531-11, Part III, Subpart C



# Olympic Development Program

US Youth Soccer ODP is a national program to identify and develop youth players to represent their State, Region, and country in soccer competitions.

Olympic Development Programs aim to identify and advance the most talented and passionate youth players through state, regional, and national team selection and competitions. The pinnacle is US National Teams from 16 year olds and up that represent all of us on the international stage.

## Purpose

The Olympic Development Program was formed to identify a pool of players in each age group from which a National Team will be selected for international competition; to provide high-level training to benefit and enhance the development of players at all levels; and, through the use of carefully selected and licensed coaches, develop a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and curriculum to improve all levels of coaching.

## Program Description History

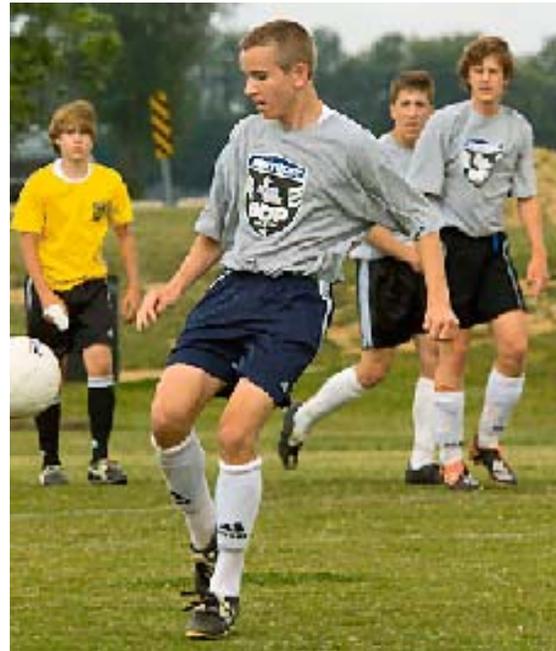
In 1977 the program expanded, the organization became more efficient and multi-year plans were developed. State Associations were encouraged to develop programs which supported and worked in tandem with National and Regional programs. At the beginning of 1982 a formalized program for girls was created, with the addition of a full committee (one member from each Region).

## Current Organization

From 1982 until the present, international events for youth national teams have increased substantially and the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program has kept pace by instituting trials and player pools for five age groups in the boys' program, and five age groups in the girls' program.

## The ODP try-out process

Each State Association holds ODP try-outs on an annual basis. Age Groups and try-out dates may be different from state to state, based on seasonal and state considerations. Your first contact should be to your State Association for try-out information.



## How are Players Selected?

Players are selected, in most states, on the basis of open tryouts. These tryouts are conducted by state association coaches who are recognized for their ability to identify and train players with superior skills. Some state associations combine scouting techniques and invitations to certain players with the open tryouts. Selection of these players is not an easy task. The state association head coach or State Coach will, in most cases, be assisted in the selection process by several other qualified coaches from the club or league level. Players are evaluated on the four components that make up a soccer player:

- Technique
- Tactics
- Fitness and Athletic Ability
- Psychological Component (attitude)

For more information, please contact the State Office or email [Coach@kysoccer.net](mailto:Coach@kysoccer.net) or check for information on our website at <http://kysoccer.net>.

# Player Development Camps

## Recreational Camp (Recreational players 6 to 16 years old)

The Recreational Camp is a fun filled week open to recreational players who wish to learn more fundamental techniques and tactics necessary to play the game. Players will be given the opportunity to learn elite dribbling skills; perfect their passing ability; score stunning goals and develop their whole game in preparation for the soccer season.

During the week players will be challenged through skill tests and have the opportunity to play soccer with old and new friends in small sided games.

Each child who attends will receive a Kentucky Youth Soccer Association Camp T-Shirt, Soccer Ball, Water Bottle, Participation Certificate and the opportunity to win lots of fun prizes.

## Select Camp (Select players 9 to 16 years old)

The Select Camp is open for players currently playing select soccer who are dedicated and serious about progressing to the next level. The curriculum will simulate the sessions taught to the Olympic Development Program players.

The coaches will teach the players individual skills and technique by breaking them down and explaining through small group practices. Once the skills have been mastered we will introduce higher intensity half pitch and game related practices, which incorporate decision-making and develop player's tactical awareness.

Each child who attends will receive a Kentucky Youth Soccer Association Camp T-Shirt, Soccer Ball, Water Bottle and a Player Evaluation.

For more information regarding camps, please visit [www.KYsoccer.net](http://www.KYsoccer.net)

# TOPSoccer



US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a

community-based training and team placement program for young athletes with disabilities, organized by youth soccer association volunteers. The program is designed to bring the opportunity of learning and playing soccer to any boy or girl, who has a mental or physical disability. Our goal is to enable the thousands of young athletes with disabilities to become valued and successful members of the US YOUTH SOCCER family. How do I participate? Contact your local US Youth Soccer State Association office to find out more about getting involved with a local US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer program. You can find State Association by clicking here. Or, simply contact your respective US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer Committee member by using the e-mail addresses listed below.

## Why do we need a TOPSoccer Program?

TOPSOCCER was formed to perpetuate the US YOUTH SOCCER mission statement which is, in part, "to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development



of America's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition." There are thousands of children with disabilities who need, and can be provided with, the opportunity to play soccer through the TOPSoccer program.

For more information regarding TOPSoccer in Kentucky, please visit [www.KYsoccer.net](http://www.KYsoccer.net) or contact the state office via email at [info@kysoccer.net](mailto:info@kysoccer.net) or by phone at 859-268-1264.

# Tournaments

The Kentucky Youth Soccer sponsors four major tournaments each year for the players in the Commonwealth:

- The Commonwealth Cup (Recreational) each fall
- The American Cup (Recreational) each spring
- The Kentucky Open Cup (Open) each spring
- Eurosport Challenge Cup (Open) each spring

For additional information on the state sponsored tournaments, you can access the latest information:

Kentucky Youth Soccer Association website:  
[www.KYsoccer.net/tournaments](http://www.KYsoccer.net/tournaments)

email the State Office at [info@KYsoccer.net](mailto:info@KYsoccer.net)  
or contact the State Office at (859) 268-1254.

Each year affiliate member associations host tournaments with the permission of the State all around the Commonwealth, information on these are always posted on the website.

These tournaments are both recreational and competitive.

Most are open to every team that wishes to apply and who can meet the tournament's entry requirements.

For further information on these affiliate-sponsored tournaments, you should contact the person listed for the tournament.

A copy of the tournament list is available on the web at [www.kysoccer.net/tournaments](http://www.kysoccer.net/tournaments) or can be obtained from the state office.

## The Commonwealth and American Cups

The Kentucky Youth Soccer Association spring and fall Recreational Tournaments were initiated and organized to enhance the

accomplishments recreational players achieve by participating in a state championship tournament. The development of all players within Kentucky Youth Soccer is advanced when the player meets personal challenges.

The Cups are designed to encourage and honor the recreational player by allowing the player to compete for both team and personal goals.



This tournament is structured so that, regardless of ability, all players can realistically strive for the goal of becoming a state champion.

Every recreational player shall have an equal opportunity to participate in every game.

The formation of recreational teams follows a controlled registration policy where every player is accepted and assigned to a roster regardless of ability.

A philosophy of player participation in a low-stress, fun filled environment is promoted. Only recreational players registered with the Kentucky Youth Soccer, through an affiliate member recreational league are eligible to participate in The Recreational Cups.

No all-star teams or guest players are allowed.

Any league, club or association found to have substituted ineligible players on a roster will forfeit their games at this tournament and may be subject to further sanctions.

Additionally, any team or player entered in or rostered for State Open Cup is not eligible.



## Eurosport Challenge Cup

The Kentucky Youth Soccer Association (KYSA) State Open Cup and Eurosport

Challenge Cup were initiated and organized to enhance the accomplishments competitive players achieve by participating in a state championship tournament that can lead to regional and national play. The development of all players within KYSA is advanced when the player meets personal challenges.

Only teams registered with the Kentucky Youth Soccer through an affiliate member league are eligible to participate in the Kentucky State Open Cup. Teams may be recreational or competitive. No all-star teams or guest players are allowed. Any league, club or association found to have substituted ineligible players on a roster will forfeit their games at this tournament and may be subject to further sanctions.

Additionally, any team or player entered in or rostered for State Open Cup is not eligible to participate in the American Cup.



## Open Cup

The US Youth Soccer National Championship Series is designed to encourage and honor the most skillful player

by allowing the player to compete for both team and personal goals. This tournament is structured so that the best team in each age group from each state is chosen to advance to regional play. At the Midwest Regional Championship, one team in each group from Under 14 and up who wins the Regional Championship advances to the US Youth Soccer National Championship where the US National Champions are determined. This is the largest soccer tournament for youth in the world and involves all 55 USYSA member states.

Under 9 thru Under 12 participate in the Eurosport Challenge Cup, a companion tournament for the State Open Cup, which leads to regional and national play for Under 13 thru Under 19.

## Philosophy

It is the National Championship philosophy that all players should receive equal opportunities and benefits within their level of play. Further, all players have the right to participate in competitions where they can be honored as winners.

## Basic Guidelines

The entire National Championship Series program is played under the same basic rules regarding team formation. Guidelines are contained in the Competitive Manual and within the Cup Rules available from the Kentucky State Office. The rules are also available online at [www.kysoccer.net](http://www.kysoccer.net).





# What Does "Small Sided Games" Mean?

## Why the New Rules?

These are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer players are sharing one ball.

All ages can play "Small Sided Games", but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger soccer players.

US Youth Soccer recommendations for "number of players" at the various age groups are as follows:

- U6 | 3 against 3 no goal keepers
- U8 | 4 against 4 no goal keepers
- U10 | 6 against 6 with goal keepers
- U12 | 8 against 8 with goal keepers
- U13+ | 11 against 11 with goal keepers

Kentucky Youth Soccer has adopted the US Youth Soccer Official Rules for Small Sided Games effective as of 9/1/2005. (for full information, visit <http://usyouthsoccer.org>)

Here are some of the reasons why we believe, as soccer coaches, administrators and parents, that we must guarantee that our young soccer players play small-sided games:

- Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become more skillful with it! (Individual technical development)
- Because we want our young soccer players to make more, less-complicated decisions during the game! (Tactical development)
- Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically efficient in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more individual teaching time with the coach! Less players on the field and less players on

- the team will guarantee this! (Need to feel worthy and need to feel important)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more, involved playing time in the game! (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball! (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to score goals! (Pure excitement) these are the reasons why we adults must foster "Small-Sided Games" in our youth soccer programs. The "Small-Sided" environment is a developmentally appropriate environment for our young soccer players. It's a FUN environment that focuses on the young soccer player. It just makes sense doesn't it?

## Small Sided Games Frequently Asked Question's

**Why make the change?** It makes the game of soccer a better experience for children. More touches on the ball, more opportunities to make decisions, more actual play. Energetic workouts due to playing both attacking and defensive roles. While learning both offense and defense, a player will become more complete and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates.

**Whose idea was this?** US Youth Soccer has been a proponent of small sided games since the 1980's. Small sided games are endorsed by our national coaching committee, the State Directors of Coaching, US National Team Coaches for Men & Women, including many foreign soccer organizations: England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France, Korea to name a few!

**Why can't they play 11v11 like "real" soccer?** The 11v11 format is the adult version of the game. Using an adult size field and goals makes little sense for children under the age of twelve.

**Other sports don't alter their game- why does soccer?** It's not a good comparison with football or baseball- neither has the element of transition that soccer does. Look at basketball- how many kids play basketball 5 on 5? Most basketball is played 1v1, 2v1 or 2v2 in a driveway! Kids don't wait until they have nine friends to have a game! Playing on a small field is a more efficient use of space, it takes less time to advance for a shot on goal, and children are more actively involved for a longer period of time.

**I didn't grow up playing this way!** True! Whether you grew up in the USA or another country, soccer was traditionally played 11v11 for all age groups. This isn't true any longer- small sided game formats are in use all over the world- not just in the US.

**How will they learn to play 11v11?** Progressing from 3v3, 4v4, 6v6, to 8v8 BEFORE 11v11 is a sound educational method. The problem is that young players were forced into 11v11 before their bodies were physically developed to play the adult version of the game. Any notion that players will be less prepared to play 11v11 is not justified.

**Does competitive or travel have to play by this new rule?** Yes. The decision to play small sided games is based on "age appropriate" philosophy- the level of play is not a factor. All players of that age group should play the same format.

**This will never work!** Sure it will! A number of State Associations have been playing 3v3 at under 6 & 4v4 at Under-8 successfully for more than a dozen years! Adopting 8v8 for under 11's and under 12's is the fastest growing trend in youth soccer.

**Where do I find rules?** The US Youth Soccer website [usyouthsoccer.org](http://usyouthsoccer.org) has playing rules posted in the Coaches, Referees and Download Center pages. A free brochure, "Official Handbook: Introductory Rules for Small Sided Games U6 & U8" is also available on the US Youth soccer website. The Rules for Kentucky are posted on the state website [www.kysoccer.net](http://www.kysoccer.net).

## **Why is it said that Small-Sided Games are good for development of players?**

by Don Gemmell, Former Director of Coaching, Michigan State Youth Soccer Association

As we have all heard over the past twelve months the one obvious fact is players will touch the ball more. The importance of this fact is often over-looked and misunderstood. By touching the ball more, the player not only has more opportunities to improve his or her skill under the pressure of the game; he or she also has many more opportunities to make decisions as the game demands.

Of equal importance is the fact that each player is required to play a bigger role in each game. No player can be assigned a purely offensive or defensive role. All of the players must be involved in quickly transitioning from defense to offense when the ball is won, and from offense to defense, when the ball is lost. When a player's team has the ball, he or she must become much more involved as part of the group that is attacking than is required in the 11 v 11 game. Similarly, when his or her team loses the ball, the player cannot expect others to carry the full responsibility of defending and winning the ball back. The game played on the world level often is won or lost by quick transition from offense to defense, or vice versa.

When players compete in age-appropriate small-sided games, they have greater involvement in the action. For players, this means doing more of what they love most about soccer – shooting, dribbling, passing, scoring goals, blocking shots, and simply running after the ball. And in terms of their

development, this increased involvement results in improved technique, clearer decision making, active participation in both the attack and defense, and a greater appreciation for game

## **Benefits of Small Sided Soccer**

- Allows for greater opportunities for players to touch the ball - increases "participation" for each player - player participation = player retention
- Reduces the size of teams allowing for more individual instruction for team members
- Makes it difficult for players to "hide" - in small side soccer all players must attack and defend in order for the team to be successful

## **Goals of the Small-Sided Soccer Format**

- Provide an enriching and developmentally appropriate environment for kids to learn and enjoy playing soccer.
- Provide a playing format that simplifies the game, creating a developmentally appropriate environment for the player to develop his/her decision making and problem solving abilities.
- Emphasize development over winning.
- Promote the development of the 'complete' player, balancing physical skills with decision making, and attacking play with transitional and defensive play.

## **Advantages of Small-Sided Soccer**

- More opportunities for touches on the ball
- Better environment for developing essential soccer skills
- Less complex game situations foster greater confidence, creativity and decision making
- Opportunity to learn basic tactics and refine tactical skill through progressively more complex game situations

- Quicker, more fluid game puts greater emphasis on total player development and active transition from offense to defense
- Fewer players on the field means each player can contribute more completely
- Fewer players on the field provides a coach with better opportunities to assess strengths and weaknesses of players
- The small-sided game provides more opportunities for players to learn individual and small-group positioning relative to the ball, e.g., offensive and defensive support and movement without the ball

## **Getting the Most out of Small-Sided Soccer**

- The goals and advantages of the small-sided format can be reinforced each week at practice when coaches:
- Ensure all kids are active with a ball, either offensively or defensively, all of the time
- Foster an atmosphere of creativity by encouraging kids to experiment and allowing them to make mistakes
- Limit their focus to a few basic themes or age-appropriate skills during the course of a season
- Use games that allow the players to discover and explore the skills you want them to learn rather than relying on lectures, repetitive activities or demonstrations.
- On game-day, with fewer kids on any one field, small-sided soccer gives coaches greater opportunity to:
- Let the kids play, suppressing the urge to yell instructions throughout the game
- Observe and evaluate each player to identify their strengths and to guide their development
- Encourage kids to play in multiple positions during the course of each game and each season
- Create balanced teams, in the simultaneous-game format, that allow each player an opportunity for achievement in a fair and competitive contest.

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