

Player Coach Curriculum

I AM 3RD



U4 / U5



Michael Lippert
Soccer Director

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>TEAM MANAGEMENT</u>	<u>2-3</u>
<u>CARE AND PREVENTION</u>	<u>4-5</u>
<u>UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLAYERS</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR PLAYERS</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>COACHING YOUR PLAYERS</u>	<u>8-9</u>
<u>WHAT TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS</u>	<u>10-11</u>
<u>PRACTICE DAY EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>GAME DAY EXPECTATIONS</u>	<u>13</u>

CURRICULUM INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this coaching curriculum is to help educate the novice U5 & U6 coach. We define the novice coach as someone who has limited or no experience working with players aged 4 and 5 years old. Many coaches have either played or coached at some ages but the U4/U5/U6 player is unique and to be a successful coach in this age group you will need a new skill set.

Before starting the manual, it is important to understand that our underlying philosophy for these ages is fun! It is important that players enjoy their first organized soccer experience.

We also believe that all soccer skills highlighted in the manual are taught in an indirect manor, which means, allow the activities to teach the players how to perform a skill.

The manual will examine the following areas:

- Team management
- Understanding your players
- What to expect from your players
- Coaching your players
- What to teach your players
- Practice day
- Game day
- Lesson Plans

In addition to this manual, we will also be offering coaches multiple resources for further learning. This includes online resources, informational handouts and hands on training for practice development.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

Before embarking on your season as a U5 or U6 coach there are some important things to think about.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Before you meet with your parents and start coaching your players it is important to think about your coaching philosophy. When composing your philosophy for coaching players at these ages, you should first read through this entire manual. Pay particular attention to I am 3rd's ministry and philosophy, which is to allow players at these ages to enjoy themselves and have fun, while developing skills through activities and games.

Soccer Beliefs

Why do you want to coach?

What are your responsibilities to each player, the team, yourself and the community?

What is a successful season?

Motivation

Why are you interested in coaching?

What do you enjoy most about coaching?

What do you like least about coaching?

Experiences

Past – Childhood? Enriching or inhibiting?

Coaches Equipment

- Cones: Try to get different color and size cones (flat and tower).
- Pinnies: These will help you and the players differentiate between teams.
- Portable Goals: although not essential, it would be ideal if you could get a set of portable goals
- Balls: Players should be required to bring a ball to practice, however, having some spare balls will help.
- Air Pump: It is guaranteed that players will show up to practice with flat soccer balls.
- First Aid Kit: Just in case.
- Extra Water: Again, just in case.

Assistant Coach(s)

It is important to have an assistant coach (or 2) to help you during the season. These coaches are critical to managing practices and games. Having an extra coach can help you with corralling players during practice, dealing with injured players and substitutions on game day. Also, if you must miss a training session or game, having another coach that the children are familiar with when you are not there is essential.

OTHER IMPORTANT ROLES

Other Important Roles

To help the season go smoothly, and to include different parents in the team dynamic, it is also a good idea to ask for the following helpers:

Team Parent

This person helps w/ the snack schedule, birthday celebrations, end of season picnic, etc

These positions are optional, however, the more help and organization the better

COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

Coaching your own child can become a strange dynamic. Below are some tips on how to handle certain situations as well as important areas to address before the start of the season:

1. Explain that when you both step out of the car onto the field, that you become a coach and your child becomes a soccer player.
2. Explain that, on the field, you will treat them like a player.
3. Explain to your child that they should treat you like one of their teachers.
4. Keep the discussions in the car light hearted. Don't try to coach your child on the car ride to and from games.
5. Some discussion points for after practices and games might include what your child best liked about practice or what might they want to do at the next practice.

PARENT MEETINGS

It is very important to recognize that each player comes with a parent(s). Effective communication with these parents will make your role as the coach more enjoyable. Coordinate a meeting prior to your first training session or game. We recommend inviting the parents to attend the first scheduled parent, to meet and then to watch. Communication of the meeting should be done as soon as you receive your contact list / roster. During the first meeting with the parents it is important to outline what you are going to be like as a coach (philosophy) and what you expect from them. Both areas will allow you to control any unrealistic expectations from parents as well as any potential problems from the side line.

Parent Meeting Topics should include:

1. Coach introduction, including any soccer back ground and why you are coaching.
2. What can parents expect from U4 & U5 soccer?
3. What is the structure for practice and games at your club? For instance, how long will each practice be, what is the format of the game on the weekend and what will you be working on?
4. Players Information: Medical Information, previous experience on other teams, family situation, etc.
5. Parent Information: Emergency contact info.
6. Players and parents are responsible for appropriate attire, shin guards, ball and water.
7. Snack Schedule! At these ages the snack can mean more to the player than actually playing
8. Parent guidelines: outline any boundaries you might have for training and games. For instance; what is the protocol when a player is injured, how do you want them to act on the sideline (no coaching), etc.

IAM3RD CARE AND PREVENTION

Before starting practices and games with your team, it is important to understand the following areas of Care and Prevention.

EMERGENCY ACTION PLANNING

Have and know how to use the following:

- First Aid Kit
- Ice and plastic bags for emergency use
- Team safety and information cards
- Stay calm and reassure the player

Do the primary survey ABC's:

- A = Airway
- B = Breathing
- C = Circulation

For Airway and Circulation:

- If the player is not breathing - begin rescue breathing (only if CPR certified)
- If the player has no pulse - start CPR (only if CPR certified)
- If necessary, send someone to call 911!

COMMON INJURIES

Cuts and Abrasions

To reduce the risk of infection ALWAYS wear protective gloves and wash your hands before and after contact. Protect yourself and the player. To treat, clean wound and surrounding area, wiping away from the wound. To stop the bleeding, place a sterile dressing over the wound and apply direct pressure. Elevate if necessary. If severe call 911.

Nose Bleed

Place the player in a sitting position with the head forward. Apply pressure to just below the bridge of the nose. Use ice when necessary. If you suspect a head or neck injury do not try to control the bleeding. Instead, stabilize the head and call 911.

Bruises/Contusions

A crushing injury to a muscle or tendon caused by an outside force, which causes hemorrhaging to surrounding tissue. To treat, apply ice.

Sprains & Strains

These are frequent injuries in soccer, but not at this age. A sprain is the stretching or tearing of the ligament beyond its normal limits. A strain is a tear to the muscle or tendon, commonly called a 'pull'. To treat use R.I.C.E; Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation.

Fractures

If a body part does not have a normal appearance or function, then suspect a fracture. DO NOT move the player, keep them warm and comfortable, then call 911.

Dislocation

The joint will have a marked deformity with intense pain. If a player can walk immobilize the joint and immediately transport them to hospital. If the player is unable to walk, then call 911.

Concussion

Usually due to a clash of heads (although this can be caused in different ways). Player will show signs of possible dizziness, headache, disorientation!

Injury Prevention

There are many precautions you can take as a coach to reduce the risk of injury to your players.

- Proper use of equipment (shin guards, no jewelry, uniforms designed for climate).
- Proper fitting shoes, proper type of shoe for surface.
- Upkeep and monitoring of playing service.
- Avoid scheduling training during the hottest periods of the day and when there is intense humidity.
- Adhere to age group recommendations practice and game durations
- Ample water supply and breaks to give player rest.
- Full rehabilitation of an injury prior to returning to play, determined by a physician.
- Recommended a physical exam by a physician prior to participating.

Heat Illness

Young children are still not as efficient as adults at dealing with heat or cold.

Heat Cramps

Brief severe cramps in the muscles of the leg, arm or abdomen that may occur during or after vigorous exercise in extreme heat. Lack of drinking fluids is a common cause. To treat, place players in a cool place where they can rest and rehydrate.

Heat Exhaustion

The player's body is having trouble keeping itself cool. This condition can come on very suddenly. The player's temperature is raised, and they may feel sick or dizzy. The player is still sweating and the skin feels clammy. To treat, call 911, place player in a cool place, loosen clothing, rest and rehydrate.

Heat Stroke

The most severe form of heat illness; a life-threatening emergency, that requires immediate medical attention. Body temperature is high, skin is hot, red and dry, sweating mechanism is blocked, pulse is rapid and strong, and player may lose consciousness. To treat, call 911 immediately, get player into a cool area, cool the player's body with spray or dousing with water and loosen clothing.

Summary

It is important to be prepared for all eventualities. Follow these general guidelines:

- Always err on the side of caution.
- Be First Aid and CPR certified.
- Record the incident and note all actions you took and how the injury occurred.
- Follow up with a phone call to check on the player's condition.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLAYERS

Before starting to coach, we believe it is important to get an understanding of the players you will be coaching. Below are some key elements to consider.

Why does a U4 & U5 child play soccer?

In most cases, the player has not asked to be signed up to play organized soccer, the players parent signed them up to play! This means you will get a variety of interest in playing, from the child who will love the environment to ones that do not want to be there.

Why do children enjoy playing?

They usually like playing soccer because they have fun, they have an older sibling that plays and / or some of their friends maybe playing.

Why do children dislike soccer or stop playing?

They will dislike practice or games and ultimately not want to continue playing if they are not having fun or enjoying themselves. We must ensure that they are able to play with their friends, make sure practice is exciting and fun, and allow them to have success in age appropriate activities.

What can they accomplish Physically?

They are in the fundamental movement stage, where locomotive movements such as running and jumping can be achieved, as well as stabilizing activities such as balancing and stopping. They also have high energy levels but only for short periods of time.

What is their cognitive state?

They are at the pre-operational stage of their cognitive development. They will have a limited understanding of time, space and boundaries. They will be imaginative and enjoy activities with simple rules. Long stoppages and instructions will not be processed, they only have short attention spans. Finally, they will only be able to concentrate on one task at a time during activities.

How will they interact with others?

They are very egocentric; their main focus is usually on themselves or one object (ball). This can mean they have difficulty sharing (ball), no understand of the team concept and are prone to exaggerate their own needs. It is important to remember that their parents are the most important people in their lives and they need lots of positive reinforcement and praise.

WHAT TO EXPECT OF YOUR PLAYERS

As well as getting an understanding of the player characteristics, we should also look at what we can expect from our players. If we identify some of the age group nuances, we should be able to reduce the amount of surprise when these things occur. Some things to expect include:

Some players may cry.

Prior, during and after practices and games we can, and probably will, have players crying. The reason behind this explosion of emotion can be for a variety of reasons. Don't be afraid to get the parents involved when this happens.

They will need to take potty breaks.

Be prepared for the sudden yell, "I need to go potty"! Having parents around for this is essential.

They will use their hands.

Due to the players lack of coordination and balance it is easier to stop the ball with their hands rather than their feet. Do not be surprised when players use their hands to stop the ball, change its direction and even score a goal!

They will be distracted easily.

Everything is a distraction for players at these ages. A police siren, rocket ship, airplane and in fact any loud noise will be more important than the game! Do not be afraid to stop and watch.

You will have to tie plenty of shoelaces.

You will have to tie shoelaces for your players. Get used to it!

They are very spontaneous.

Players at these ages are very spontaneous. They will come up with something that is out of the ordinary and funny. Remember, if you can't beat them, join them. Be prepared to laugh and be silly!

They will not stay inside the field boundaries.

They will have no concept of space. You will spend most of our time corralling players and keeping them inside the field. Employ the new ball theory here; have a spare ball in your hands and when the ball goes out of bounds, throw a new one in.

The best description of the game is bee hive soccer.

The 4v4/5v5 scrimmage or weekend game will not look like real soccer. Most, if not all, players will be attracted to the ball and will crowd around it. Players on the same team will steal the ball from each other. The players who are not attracted to the game, will not be making great supporting runs - instead they will most probably be picking daisies!

COACHING YOUR PLAYERS

The previous sections can be used to identify some areas that are important to remember when coaching players at these ages. Here are some great suggestions to make your season a great one!

Greet your players to practice.

This will help create a welcoming and safe atmosphere for your players. This can include greeting players to practice with a warm smile, a high five and using their name. Taking time before practice to talk and joke with them. Remember the number one priority is FUN!

Facilitator or coach?

At these ages the coach should act as a facilitator, present and guide players through the rules and boundaries of the activities. Allow activities to be the teacher. When you do make coaching points try guiding the players to the answer by asking questions. Finally, coach with high energy, players at these ages will respond better to someone who is outgoing!

Keep soccer fun, through active participation.

All aspects of practices and games should be fun for the players. Choose activities where every player can achieve success and the player to ball ration is 1 to 1. The only activity where this ratio should change is in your scrimmage. Also, don't be afraid to join in games and activities with them.

Keep it simple and silly.

All games and activities used should be simple to understand and easy to play. Also, the sillier the game, the more fun the players will have.

Keep is short and sweet.

Especially when introducing new activities or skills. Players have short attention spans and will focus more if the coach is expressive and exciting during practice. Give short, effective demonstrations while explaining the new activity or skill.

Keep praising players.

Give players consistent positive feedback, both verbally and non-verbally (high five, smile and a pat on the back).

Allow players to experiment.

Coaches should provide an environment in training and games where players can experiment with new soccer ideas. There should be a freedom to fail!

Do not focus on winning or losing.

Make sure you use activities where no one player can be singled out as a winner. Be creative in this aspect during practices and games.

Keep practices exciting, fresh, fun, and challenging.

Avoid static line drills at all costs. Activities where every player has a ball and is moving are ideal. Activities where players have to line up or share a ball will allow them to lose focus and interest in the game.

Remember no lines, no laps, and no lectures.

45 Minute Rule.

Soccer contacts should last 45 minutes. Players will go all out for short periods, while it will only take a short time for them to recuperate. Allow for lots of short breaks during your practices. As well as learning how to coach your players, it is also important to highlight areas of coaching that will restrict learning. We must try to remove these areas from our coaching in order to maximize the learning.

Fear of failing.

We must allow players to make mistakes, both in training and games.

Avoid shouting, sarcasm, and negative feedback.

Remember, try to catch them being good!

Over coaching and lecturing.

Remember the Chinese proverb:

I hear - I forget - Don't spend too much time in the introduction of activities.

I see - I remember - Briefly demonstrate what you want them to do....

I do - and I understand - Have them try the activity and then make rule changes / corrections....

Lack of success.

Pushing players into activities and skills that do not fit the age group or level of player, will cause frustration, decrease motivation and affect the fun that players have.

Finally, remember the old adage - 'if you are having fun, the players will be having fun'. If there are smiles on the players faces and they are enthusiastic during activities and games, you are doing a great job!"



WHAT TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS

Another key component for coaching in these age groups is to identify what we should teach the players. The characteristics of the players give us the following clues.

Balance, coordination and basic motor skills.

4 and 5-year olds are still learning how to control their bodies and now we are introducing a ball into the equation! Not only should we play games that allow for one ball per player, but we should also use activities that do not use a ball and concentrate on general movements of the body; running, changing direction, jumping, hopping, rolling, etc.

Dribbling, changing direction, turning and stopping with the ball.

With our ratio of one ball per player, dribbling is the number one technique players will use. All the games we use at these ages should have some component of dribbling, along with stopping, turning and changing direction. Although balance and coordination is an issue, particularly with the ball, we should still introduce elements of players changing direction, stopping and turning with the ball into our games. Players at these ages will find it difficult to change direction sharply and will do so in big arcs with different surfaces of their feet, which is fine. Stopping the ball with the sole of the foot will be difficult but should still be introduced as well as with the inside of the foot. With turning we should use the same surfaces as stopping the ball and introduce a drag back with the sole of the foot and an inside of the foot turn.

Introductory shooting and passing.

We can summarize these players as 'me' orientated, however, they will look to pass the ball occasionally but only if given plenty of time and space to do so (usually kick ins, kick offs and goal kicks). Although you will rarely see a player shooting the ball in a game (players will usually dribble into the goal), shooting or striking the ball with the laces (some will use toes!) should be encouraged through games used in practice. The progression into shooting and passing will become more important at the U6 age group. Players will be more used to dribbling the ball and have better balance at this age.

Just as important as what to teach we should also be aware of what not to teach! There also some important elements of the game that we shouldn't teach or expect kids to achieve.

Receiving the ball.

Since there is very little passing, there are few opportunities for players to receive a ball.

Heading.

Players at this age will not head the ball in dynamic (game) activities.

Support play.

Players will have no concept of supporting a teammate with the ball and your scrimmages will look like 'Bee Hive Soccer'.

Positional play.

Teaching positions is irrelevant and detrimental to the fun and enjoyment of the players. Expect disorganization and 'Bee Hive Soccer'!

Defending.

Players will naturally try to win the ball back after they lose possession. This is as complicated as defending should get!

In summary., we are looking at the following topics to be introduced and working on:

- Balance, Coordination and Basic Motor Skills.
- Dribbling, Changing Direction, Turning and Stopping with the Ball.
- Shooting and Passing.
- Defending
- Remember, we are trying to guide our players towards these skills by using activities and games that will require the players to execute them. Do not spend lots of time demonstration and breaking down their technique at this age. Facilitate and let the game be the teacher!



PRACTICE DAY EXPECTATIONS

It is very important that you are organized for practice. At these age groups, players have short attentions spans, so it is even more important to plan what activities you are going to use during the session and what progression you will be following.

To help with the planning phase of the practice we have printed lesson plans for you to use.

The activities used in these lesson plans follows a progression of simple to complex. An overview of the activities in each week can be viewed on the next few pages. The progression can be summarized as follows:

- **Activity 1 OR Warm Up:** Here we introduce movements that the players will use throughout the training session. Start with no soccer ball and add the ball once the players are used to the activity.
- **Activity 2 OR Free Space Game:** Once players are ready to practice both physically and mentally, we introduce an activity were players can explore the playing area. The ratio of player to ball is always 1 to 1.
- **Activity 3 OR Free Space Game:** This activity will be similar to the previous one, with some changes in rules and dimensions. This is done to present the same techniques as before but in a different format, to keep it challenging and fun for the players.
- **Activity 4 OR Directional Game:** Here we add some direction. We do this to replicate the game (in a very general sense) and have players moving in a defined direction, as they would in a game.
- **Activity 5 OR 3 v 3 Scrimmage:** We always end the practice with a game of soccer.

NOTE: Always have multiple activities in the back of your mind! The players may not enjoy certain activities and in this situation it is important to have 8-10 activities planned per practice to switch to!

Field organization will also help you to reduce the amount of time used to set up the grids for the activities and introducing them. We suggest getting to the practice site at least 10 minutes before training, this will allow you to survey the location for any safety issues and address the playing area. When laying out the field for the practice, we suggest setting up the biggest area first and then working inwards from there. At these ages the grid size remains the same and the only transitioning you will need is to add or remove cones in the center of the field. This can and should be done while players are having a brief water break.

Remember, players just want to enjoy practice and have fun. The points outlined above as well as the lesson plans included in the curriculum should help you to achieve that goal in every practice!

GAME DAY EXPECTATIONS

TACTICS

What will the game look like?

When analyzing how the game will look and why, we have to take into consideration the physical, cognitive and psycho-social characteristics we outlined earlier in the manual. When they have the ball they will go in one direction and not necessarily the correct one!

Players will have little to no concept of passing, their teammates, supporting teammates when not in possession of the ball and they will even take the ball away from their teammates.

The game will look nothing like 'real' soccer and that's ok. Do not try to fix this picture, allow the players to have FUN while playing and facilitate the game for them.

PREGAME

The pre-game will consist of you greeting players to the field and taking the "warm up." The warm up is used to prepare players for the game, however, at these ages it should consist of having players move around with the soccer ball and have fun!

GAME TIME

The game at these ages is usually 4v4 or 5v5 (depending on the league), with one coach allowed on the field to help facilitate the game for the players. It is important the the coach on the field allows them to play and only get involved if the ball needs to be restarted. The assistant(s) coach should be in charge of substitutes and keeping them organized. Try to play all players 50% of the time. Finally, be encouraging and provide lots of positive reinforcement!

POST GAME

This usually entails snack time for the players, do not try to impart any words of wisdom to the players on how the game went or the result! U4 and U5 players are more concerned with what snack they are getting rather than the game. Give everyone a high five and a good job!

CHRIST
FIRST
OTHERS
SECOND
I AM
THIRD

