

I AM 3RD

Player Coach Curriculum

I AM 3RD



U6 / U8



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CURRICULUM INTRODUCTION

Coaches come in all shapes and sizes. Whether you played the game or not, coaching young kids can be a challenge for even the best soccer coaches. This guide will help you enjoy your season and assure the players are getting the right training regardless of your background. The purpose of this coaching curriculum is to help educate the novice U6, U7 and U8 coach. We define the novice coach as someone who has limited or no experience working with players aged 6,7 or 8 years old. Many coaches have either played or coached at some ages but the U8 player is unique. To be a successful coach in this age group, you will need to level your expectations and focus on a fun training program.

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 U6 or U8 coach there are some important things to think about.

COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Before you meet with you parents and start coaching your players is it 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

Either you volunteered to coach the team or you received 'The Call'!! Whatever the circumstances, you are now coaching your own child and this dynamic can have many pitfalls. Below are helpful guidelines:

FIRST, get their input

Before making the commitment it is important to keep your child involved in the decision-making process. Asking them their thoughts on the situation is key. Also, have them help with a list of positive and negative aspects that may come up with you being the team's coach. It is healthier to clarify things early, rather than two months into a long, emotional season.

Set boundaries

Explain that when you step out of the car and onto the field that you put your coaches hat on and they put their soccer player hat on, and when leaving the field you both take your hats off to become parent / child again. Highlight that you will treat them fairly and like the other players as well opposite perspective that your child should treat you like one of their teachers.

Separating home from the field

Don't over-practice, or over-coach, with your child at home. Since you are the parent, and the coach, this could lead to your child feeling a bit overwhelmed and confused. Another dynamic to think about is the car ride. This can quite easily become an extension of a practice or game. Don't let it.

Keep things fair and equal at all times

The ability to make fair and honest decisions when dealing with your children and other team members will strengthen the respect that your child will have for you, as well as the rest of the team.

Tell the truth

Be open and honest with other parents when dealing with team issues, even if they involve your own child. There will always be disagreements between kids, or feelings of jealousy because you are the coach.

Spread the praise around

Give your child praise, but avoid showing preferential treatment like giving extra playing time or special duties to your child. Conversely, avoid diminishing your child's playing time or giving less one-on-one time in an effort to show that you are not playing favorites, as your child will begin to feel unfairly treated.

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 U6/U8 soccer?
3. What is the structure for practice and games in your league? 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 U6/U8 child play soccer?

These reasons could be very similar to the U5 age group; including sibling(s) play, parents sign them up to play and friends are playing. In addition to these reasons, and one important to highlight, players will choose to play soccer if they had an enjoyable previous soccer experience. So in this age, you get some reinforcement that they like to play.

Why do children enjoy playing?

All children who participate at these ages are looking for the same basic outcome; they want to have FUN, have success, make friends and show their parents what they can do! Or maybe, just maybe... they had a great coach!

Why do children dislike soccer or stop playing?

The continuing themes here is soccer is not fun and they are not playing with friends. Some new elements include parents have had a bad experience with a coach and / or soccer organization, the players are constantly failing and they spend more time watch (sit out) than playing.

What can they accomplish Physically in this age?

1. Their body continues to grow, but they can still be awkward.
2. Genders are very similar in size and weight, which allows them to play co-ed soccer.
3. They have increased control over their body mechanics; balance has improved.
4. Improved but still immature eye, hand, and foot coordination.
5. They have poor temperature regulation.
6. Their cardiovascular system has improved but is still no where near as efficient as an adult.
7. They still have high energy levels but only for short periods of time.

What is their Cognitive state in this age?

1. Players at these ages have an increased ability to share.
2. No concerns for team concepts, however, players are becoming increasingly focused on me and a friend.
3. They are beginning to understand the concept of space and time.
4. They want to be accepted.
5. Limited ability to execute more than one task at a time.
6. Still prefer playing to watching.
7. Parents are still the biggest influence.
8. Need constant positive reinforcement and praise.
9. Fear of failure – they have easily bruised ego's.

What is their emotional state for this age?

1. Players are looking to establish relationships, there focus is no longer just on themselves.
2. They are becoming increasingly concerned with the concept of friends.
3. Although players do not identify with the idea of team, they are looking for acceptance from peers and coaches.
4. Players are easily hurt by negative comments, which transfers into a great need for positive feedback.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR PLAYERS

In order to effectively coach your players, we must take the lessons learned in the 'understanding your players' section of the curriculum and apply them in the following way.

Welcome your players to practice.

Simply asking players 'how's it going today', giving them a high five or smiling at them as they enter the practice area will create a welcoming and safe environment for players.

Are you a facilitator or coach?

As we move up through the ages there is more of a transition from facilitating practices and games to actual coaching. At these ages we should facilitate practices and games for players, while being able to teach soccer techniques and basic tactics (these are outlined in the 'what to teach your players' section). Soccer is different than many other sports... the game doesn't stop much! So you teach the players to make the decisions, the coach isn't making them!

Keeping soccer FUN!

Soccer will conform to a traditional soccer calendar at these ages, where practices and games are on separate days. Our goal as a coach should be to balance teaching with fun. Fun for these players is more than just goofy games, it includes actively participating in all games / scrimmages, playing with their friends and learning new appropriate level skills. We still have a responsibility to keep kids in the game at this age! We do this by having fun and assuring they want to come to practice!

SHORT and SWEET.

No matter how good you are or how awesome your words are... Players at these ages still have very short attention spans. Be aware that when addressing players before activities and games you only have their attention for seconds rather than minutes. Therefore it is key to keep activity explanations, team talks and wrap ups short and succinct. Providing a demonstration while talking will help you keep your players engaged for longer periods. Don't stop them to make a point... make your point while they are playing!

Allowing players to EXPERIMENT.

To encourage experiential learning and self development we must strive to provide an environment where the players have no fear of failure. THERE ARE NO WRONG ANSWERS, JUST "THINGS TO CONSIDER" OR BETTER ANSWERS... Activities you use during practice should allow for fun and success, yet be challenging. The most important element is that players feel comfortable to try new things and do not fear making mistakes. Players do not fulfill their potential without being able to try, fail and ultimately find their own success.

Winning vs. Development.

We understand that it is not fun to lose, so we must have some success or the kids will lose interest. However, we cannot sacrifice long term development for short term wins. Your focus should be on the development and not winning. Your most important job as a coach is to teach them the right things so they can accumulate wins when it matters! Players will forget about the result of the game shortly after it is over but will always remember whether they have had fun or not!

Duration - 1 Hour.

Although the duration of the practice has increased, players will still require lots of short breaks throughout. U6 is still once per week; U8 you might be able to get 2 practices if you have the opportunity.

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.

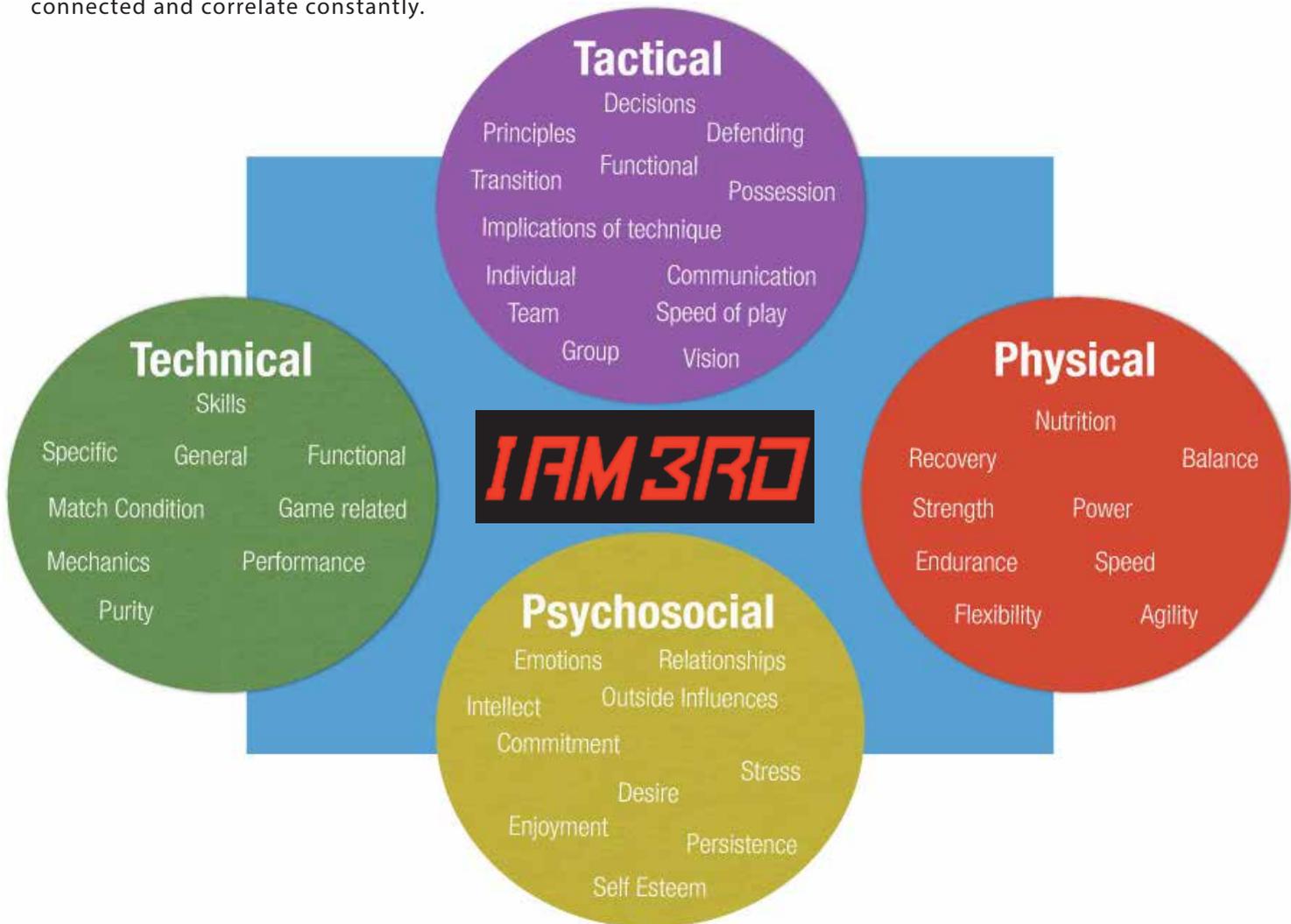
Pushing players into activities and skills that do not fit the age group or level of player, will cause frustration, decrease motivation and affect the fun that players have.

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



WHAT TO TEACH YOUR PLAYERS

When identifying what areas of the game we are going to teach our players we must take into consideration the age group characteristics as well as the four components of the game; psycho-social, physical, technical and tactical. It is important to remember that these components are not independent of each other but connected and correlate constantly.



Physical Component

At seven and eight coordination, balance and agility are developing rapidly. However, when considering the game of soccer, players still need lots of development in these areas. Activities used in practice, particularly in the warm up phase, should include movements that allow repetition in these areas with and without the ball.

Psycho-Social Component

Players are now beginning to learn how to share and recognize that they have teammates. This aspect should be worked on and developed during training and games. Players should be continually praised and rewarded for trying to use this concept.

Technical Component

Due to the physical and psycho-social changes in the age group we can start to expand on techniques implemented at the U6 ages. The player to ball ratio can now be expanded to 2:1, which will allow us to introduce passing and receiving techniques. However, the primary focus should still be on mastering individual techniques. Below are the recommended technical areas:

1. Dribbling and Changing Direction.
2. Running with the Ball.
3. Moves and Fakes:
 - Step & Double Step Fake.
 - Scissor & Double Scissor Move.
 - Cutting.
4. Turns:
 - Pull Back.
 - Inside Hook.
 - Outside Hook.
5. Shielding.
6. Passing the ball over short distances.
7. Receiving the ball.
8. Finishing with Laces.

Tactical Component

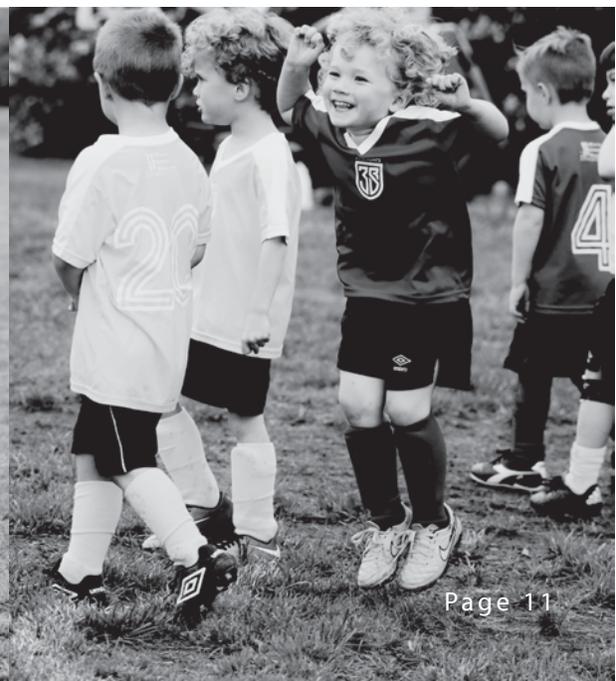
With a ratio of two players to one ball and the improvement in awareness of teammates at these ages we can start to introduce some basic tactical concepts. Below are the tactical areas we should look to cover:

1. When to dribble to beat a player.
2. When to dribble to keep the ball.
3. When to shield to protect the ball.
4. When to dribble, pass or shoot.
5. How and where to support a teammate with the ball.

Please note, the tactical concepts highlighted above should not take precedence over the importance of technique proficiency. Without technique, there is no tactics!

In summary....

- TECHNICAL: Dribbling & changing direction/ Running with the ball/ Moves & Fakes/ Turning & Shielding/ Passing & Receiving/ Ball Striking
- TACTICAL: When to dribble & When to Pass/ How to Support Your Teammates
- PHYSICAL: Coordination/ Balance/ Agility
- PSYCHO-SOCIAL: Working in Pairs/ Sharing the Ball / 2v1 or 2v2 Situations



PRACTICE DAY EXPECTATIONS

Practice plans are an important tool to assure you are having a good practice. Your plans should be laid out in blocks so your players can get the most out of the training. Research has shown that block planning enables teachers to be more focused on what they are teaching, especially with more intense subjects which require students to gain a more indepthknowledge.

In soccer, we have found that the more time we spend on a theme continuously, the more learning takes place n all four components of the game. This is because working in blocks of themes allow players to make a deeper connection with the topic and there implementation to the game. As long as practices remain fresh and fun, players learning and retention of the information given will increase. The underlying objective when implementing training blocks is to have a progression of themes that make sense to the age group and part of the season. In the following pages you will see a progression of themes from the fall of U7 to the spring of U8, that coincide with the player characteristics at each age.

U6 - PRACTICE THEMES

In the U6 age group we are trying to transition and expand on the concepts worked on in the spring of U5. Our focus during that age group was with a player to ball ratio of 1 to 1. Our primary focus in this season will be to continue with this ratio and start to introduce concepts and activities that include 2 players and 1 ball. The two themes we will concentrate on are Dribbling to Keep Possession and Dribbling to Penetrate. Within each topic there are multiple techniques and tactics that we can cover (see below).

Dribbling to Keep Possession

- Dribbling technique - Primary
- Turning with the ball - Primary
- Shielding the ball - Primary
- Decision, when to keep possession- Primary
- Passing Techniques - Secondary
- Receiving Techniques - Secondary
- Support from a teammate; when and where?

Dribbling to Penetrate

- Running with the ball - Primary
- Dribbling - Primary
- Moves to beat an opponent - Primary
- Decision when, when to penetrate - Primary
- Passing Technique - Secondary
- Shooting Techniques - Secondary
- Receiving Technique - Secondary
- Support from a teammate; when and where?

NOTES:

1. Within your team there will be a difference in ability level and it is the job of the coach to incorporate challenges for each level of player.
2. In the lesson plan progression we will vary the activities used to teach these themes as well as the pressure players are under.
3. As a coach you should expect players to increase the mastery and speed at which they execute the skills and decisions outlined in the blocks.

PRACTICE DAY EXPECTATIONS

U8 - PRACTICE THEMES

In the U8 age group we are trying to transition and expand on the concepts worked on in the U6 season. Our primary focus during that age group was dribbling and decisions in possession. Our primary focus in this season will continue to be on individual techniques, while introducing passing, receiving and support from a teammate.

The four themes we will concentrate on are Dribbling to Keep Possession, Dribbling to Penetrate, Keeping Possession and Dribbling to Finish. Within each topic there are multiple techniques and tactics that we can cover (highlighted below). Some are targeted as primary focuses for the training session, while others will be worked on as a byproduct of the activities we use.

Dribbling to Keep Possession

- Dribbling technique - Primary
- Turning with the ball - Primary
- Shielding the ball - Primary
- When to keep possession - Primary
- Passing Techniques - Secondary
- Receiving Techniques - Secondary
- Support from a teammate - Primary

Keeping Possession

- Passing Techniques - Primary
- Receiving Techniques - Primary
- Dribbling technique - Secondary
- Turning with the ball - Secondary
- Shielding the ball - Secondary
- When to keep possession - Primary
- Support from a teammate - Primary

Dribbling to Penetrate

- Running with the ball - Primary
- Dribbling - Primary
- Moves to beat an opponent - Primary
- When to penetrate - Primary
- Passing Technique - Secondary
- Shooting Techniques - Secondary
- Receiving Technique - Secondary
- Support from a teammate - Primary

Dribbling to Finish

- Finishing with Laces - Primary
- Finishing with Inside of the Foot - Primary
- Dribbling technique - Primary
- Moves to beat an opponent - Primary
- Receiving Techniques - Secondary
- When to penetrate - Primary
- Support from a teammate - Primary

NOTES:

1. Finishing: Some players will struggle with the technique of striking the ball and will often use their toes.
2. Passing: Some players will find it difficult to point their toes up and keep the heel down as well as the mechanics of turning their leg to open their foot up to strike the ball with the inside of the foot.
3. With both, coaches should continue to stress the angle of the foot to strike the ball and body mechanics.
4. With these blocks we are starting to put a little more emphasis on the players decision on the ball to either penetrate or keep possession.
5. We are also starting to put more thought into the players around the ball and how they support the player in possession.
6. HOWEVER, we must notice that technique is still the primary focus at these ages and this should remain our main emphasis.

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. Identify good decisions during the game... emphasize things you worked on in practice...

Players will not pass the ball much, but when they do... make it a big deal! Praise them for good positioning, praise them for their effort, praise them for doing something good!

The game will look more like real soccer, but still lots of errors. There may be a player or two who dominate the game, make sure you move them around and find different ways to challenge them. Let them play the game and remember high 5 both teams!

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! Remember, warmup time is extra practice time! Warmups should mean lots more touches on the ball!

GAME TIME

The games for U6 and U8 will be 5v5 with NO goalkeeper. U5 games have coaches on the field, while U8 games will have 1 referee and we encourage coaches to limit their time on the field. 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

Snack time is still important for the players, do not try to impart many words of wisdom to the players on how the game went or the result. Maybe share 1 thing they did well and identify 1 thing you need to work on at practice.

CHRIST
FIRST
OTHERS
SECOND
I AM
THIRD