

Madison County Youth Soccer

Player Development Quick Guide for Recreational and Travel Coaches

"The needs of the child, while playing soccer, should be placed above the needs, convenience and self-interest of the adults. True player development focuses on the development of the player, not the development of the team. Up to age 12, this should be the only criteria used in designing and running (youth soccer) programs. – US YOUTH SOCCER COACHING MANUAL

Coaches-

This document was put together to help both new and experienced coaches get a sense of the guidance currently being given by US Youth Soccer to develop players into well rounded athletes with a passion for the game. The below information is derived from the US Youth Soccer Association Coaching Manual and Fundamental Soccer Skills Manuals. You can find these documents at:

<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org>. Please keep these points in mind when conducting practices and coaching games each season as they will help you develop Madison soccer players as they progress to higher levels of play. Your primary goal as a youth soccer coach, regardless of age group, should be to create a positive learning environment for all members of your team where each child learns the fundamentals of the sport and develops an enthusiasm for the game so they want to come back next season. Before your first practice, ask yourself -"Are you more concerned with what a player can do for you or what you can do for that player"?

This guide is broken down into four sections.

Section One: Basic skills each age group should learn to keep the players on par with other soccer organizations in the country.

Section Two: A series of coaching tips/recommendations from US Youth Soccer and relevant periodicals to help us ensure kids come back each season and that they are developing into well rounded players.

Section Three: A list of online resources and books that offer activities and ideas that can help improve the quality of practices and games and make the experience better for both coach and player.

Section Four: A couple coaching scenarios that discuss the "win at all costs mindset" vs. the "long-term development mindset". At the end of section 4 is a blank practice template. Use these to build your practice plans.

Section One:

Soccer technique should be taught in a progressive manner throughout a player's career. Every technique coached at one age must be reinforced at the next age. Techniques taught at U6 must be reinforced at U8, U10, U12 and U14. What was learned at a previous age group must be refined at the next age group. Below are fundamental soccer skills that should be introduced at the specified age group. Please ensure if you are coaching one of these age groups that you include activities to introduce these skills. For additional information reference the manual at the site above.

U-6 - dribbling; shooting; balance; running; jumping; movement education

U-8 - ball lifting & juggling; block tackle; receiving ground balls with the inside & sole of the foot; shoot with inside of the foot; toe pass & shot; introduce the push pass; throw-in; agility; eye-foot & eye-hand coordination; movement education

U-10 - range of motion flexibility; running with the ball; passing; instep drive; receiving ground balls with the instep & outside of foot; receiving bouncing balls with the instep (cushion) and sole or inside or outside of foot (wedge); fakes in dribbling; introduce crossing. For goalkeepers: ready stance; how to hold a ball after a save; diamond grip; catching shots at the keeper; punting & introduction to goal kicks & throwing

U-12 - feints with the ball; receiving bouncing & air balls with the thigh & chest; heading to score goals & for clearances while standing or jumping; outside of foot pass; bending shots; crossing to the near post space & the penalty spot space; heel pass; flick pass; introduce chipping to pass; introduce half volley & volley shooting; introduce slide tackle. For goalkeepers: footwork; W grip; bowling; low dives & forward diving; angle play; near post play; introduce deflecting & boxing; sidewinder kick

U-14 - chipping to pass; bending passes; crossing to the far post & top of the penalty area; half volley & volley shooting; slide tackles; heading to pass; diving headers; flick headers; receiving with outside of the instep; outside of foot shot; receiving bouncing & air balls with the head; dummy the ball; shoulder charge; introduce chipping to shoot. For goalkeepers far post play; medium & high diving; deflecting over the crossbar & around the posts; boxing & catching crosses; half-volley (drop kick); kick saves; long over arm throws; saving penalty kicks

Section Two:

Below is a selection of ten tips from the US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual and "Coaching Outside the Box" to help coaches get a sense of current recommend coaching practices. These "tips" offer a sample of the current mentality US Youth Soccer is hoping will spread throughout youth sports. Most of these were copied verbatim from the book and website.

1. Running laps, especially without a ball, is a waste of time. All practice activities should take place on the field, preferably with a ball. The more touches a child has on the ball the better.
2. It is important that children learn and have fun during practices. If either element is missing, the coach should relook their plan.
3. Be sure everyone plays an appropriate amount of time no matter the score or the "importance" of the game. Develop all your players regardless of skill.
4. To children, playing is more important than winning, while winning is more important to parents and coaches. Emphasize player development and having fun over winning. Allow the kids to be kids. There's no such thing as a loss if players do their best. You'll see wonderful progress if fun and skill development are your priorities.
5. Coaching players by talking for an extended period time serves no purpose other than to lose player interest and ruin the flow of a practice session. Keep teaching points to 45 seconds or less – otherwise keep it to yourself and just let them play. The game is the greatest teacher.

6. Responsible coaching requires deep knowledge of soccer. Know your X's and O's and age-appropriate activities.
7. Research shows that when coaches focus solely on the scoreboard, players' anxiety increases, which causes them to make more mistakes because they play timidly. Ultimately, anxiety undercuts self-confidence, which affects performance and takes the joy out of sports.
8. Yelling from the sideline throughout a game is not helpful for the team and can ruin the experience for all involved. We as coaches may think this behavior is what society requires from a "good" coach, but in truth we only increase player hesitation and fear during the game. Further, players need to make mistakes and make decisions on their own.
9. Don't limit a player to one position. Youth soccer players need to experience multiple positions to become well rounded players. Encourage players to try different positions on the field regardless of how it will affect the score of a game.
10. Try to view games as learning opportunities for players. Coaches have to refrain from getting caught up in the score and must remove any concern of how others, especially those who believe that a winning coach symbolizes a successful one, may perceive them. (Leading youth soccer coaches working within the academies of top European clubs use games primarily for learning; they do not use games in the same way as seen throughout US Youth soccer.)

Section Three:

Good Websites to help find activities to use during practice and also to help get ideas about how to coach in general (footy4kids is my favorite)

<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org>

<http://www.illinoisyouthsoccer.org/CoachesHome/CoachesCorner/790463.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOR5KywNsDTbXvLuLkAB8Dg>

http://www.washingtonyouthsoccer.org/coaches/coaching_tools/age_appropriate_training_sessions/

<http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/>

<http://www.onlinesocceracademy.com/>

Books worth Reading:

Note: If we as coaches and parents expect players to come to practice and give 100%, it is only fair that we try to do the same by becoming more informed about new activities to use during practice but also what constitutes "correct" coaching. Below is list of books that will not only help coaches understand the game, but how to coach the game while providing a positive learning environment. If you can only chose one of the below I recommend Coaching Outside the Box, no matter what age group you are coaching.

1. Coaching Outside the Box (Paul S.A. Mairs & Richard E. Shaw)
2. Soccer Skills for Young Players (Ted Buxton)
3. Teaching Soccer Fundamentals (Nelson McAvoy)

4. The Complete Book of Coaching Youth Soccer (Simon Whitehead)
5. Practical Soccer Tactics for Youth Coaches (Larry Maisner)
6. The Best of Soccer Journal: Techniques + Tactics (Jay Martin)
7. Instruct, Train, and Practice: Laying the Foundation for Coaching Travel Soccer (Billy Elias)
8. Soccer IQ (Dan Blank)
9. Youth Football Coaching (Simon Jay)
10. Coaching Youth Soccer (Denis Ford)

Section 4: A couple common coaching scenarios

US Youth Soccer and most progressive youth soccer organizations are trying to guide coaches and parents away from the traditional “win at all costs mindset” to the preferred “player development mindset”. The below two examples help highlight the differences.

1. Your team is playing a game and the score is 4-3 in favor of the other team. There are about 5 minutes left in the game. You have one player who is fast, skilled, and strong on the bench, he has played 20 minutes in this game so far. There is another player on the bench who is not as skilled, nor as fast, he has only played 10 minutes so far in this game. As coach, you know that if you play the stronger more skilled player, even for five minutes, there is a chance your team will tie and maybe win the game. However, if you are coaching for player development, to help every kid develop you will recognize the importance of playing the less skilled child. If you don't, your team may win but it will be at the expense of the other child's learning and enjoyment. A coach may think it is no big deal, but not getting enough playing time may be enough for that kid to not to feel like part of the team, and not to come back next season. He or she could have been a great soccer player later in life but the coach got in the way. *UEFA technical director states – “Of Course, coaches and players want to win, but not at the expense of the young player's health and development. The player's welfare and enjoyment supersedes team outcomes – in fact the win at all costs mentality has no place in grass roots soccer or, for that matter, in elite youth soccer.*

2. For three games you as the coach have played Jamie on defense. She is very good at it and very few attackers can get by her. You know if she plays defense your team has a good chance of winning. In this situation a coach who is thinking about player development will allow this child to play in other positions to develop other aspects of their game. Even though it may result in more losses for the team, it will give Jamie additional experiences and skills as she grows into more advanced soccer later in life.

Final thought- Build the passion and the rest will take care of itself.

“For some reason, adults-some who can't even kick a ball – think it's perfectly OK to scream at children while they're playing soccer. How normal would it seem if a mother gave a six year old some crayons and a coloring book and started screaming, “Use the red crayon! Stay in the lines! Don't use yellow!” Do you think that child would develop a passion for drawing?” - *Claudio Reyna, US Youth Soccer Technical Director*