



COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

2007

Alamo Heights Coaching Information;

“The Game is within the Child”

1. Considerations for Coaching players U8 and below

- The boys and girls must be regarded as young children – not mini adults
- Because they are so young and essentially self-orientated, they relate naturally to a friend or two and not to large groups of six or more
- They cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best in fits and starts
- Their concentration span is limited, so frequent changes of pace and activity are necessary
- The fun and activity factors must always be kept in mind, remember children love to learn, so skills development, team play and cooperation are important

2. Considerations for Coaching U10 players

- Boys and Girls tend to develop separately
- Play with a friend or several players rather than by themselves
- Pace factor is becoming developed and start to think ahead
- Ability to stay on task is prolonged
- Becoming more serious about their play
- Peer pressure starting to become a factor
- More inclined of wanting to play rather than being told

3. Considerations for Coaching U12 Players

- Beginning of strength and endurance activities
- Changes in the thought process the result of increased ability to acquire and apply knowledge
- Problem solving appears
- Begin to think in abstract terms and can solve tactical situations
- Popularity influences self esteem
- Still a need to stress skill development and learning enjoyment
- Kids begin to spend more time with friends and less time with parents

U-6 & U-8 PLAYER

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF TYPICAL U-6 & U-8 PLAYERS

The following is important so that the coach understands what type of audience with which he or she is working.

CATEGORY	U-6 PLAYERS	U-8 PLAYERS
1. Important persons of reference	Mom & Dad	Parents, family, and other associated adult guardians
2. Environment they feel most comfortable in	Home	Home, school, neighborhood
3. Physical dimensions	Immature-lack physical size and developed musculature	Change individually, with each player developing at his or her rate
4. Organizational ability (organize themselves and others)	Very low; anything complicated is confusing or boring	Low; can begin to teach difference between teammate and opponent
Motor ability (agility, balance, and pace)	Very low; pace is full tilt or a standing stop; can examine balance by observing stopping and starting, or standing on one foot	Low; some improvement because of increased body control and body awareness; leads to guided discovery of skill
Cognitive dimensions (evaluate, reason, and use judgment in decision making)	Beings of need, not reason; can begin to identify shapes, learning to count, alphabet	Low; learn by trial and error; simple problem solving improves
Perception of time and space on the soccer field	Perceive only the space their body occupies; one space away is another world; cluster around ball in "beehive"	Beginning to become aware of adjacent space in the immediate vicinity of their body; beginning to comprehend connection between themselves and the ball
Game they play	Size 3 ball; need lots of participation; no standing, no waiting; no offside or complicated rules; 3 vs. 3 activities	Small groups (3 vs. 3 to 5 vs. 5); size 3 ball; no offside or complicated rules; simplicity; encourage players to move freely over entire field area

B. THE U-6 PLAYER

Do You Know the Player?

Mental Development	
Imagination and pretend activities dominate play time	Problem solving situations usually attended to one task at a time
The relationship between time and space is only remotely comprehended -"big" could equal 10 or 100 million	Lengthy, sequential instructions are left unprocessed; grasp only small pieces of information
Rules of all activities are very uncomplicated	Beginning to assign meanings to symbols, symbols to environment, i.e. B = baaa = ball
Physical Development	
Body management is a top priority	Running should be for enjoyment only
The difference between males and females minimal	Increased usage of body parts occurring daily
Education through movement oriented activities -Show me how you might touch the ball. Can you show me your left foot?	Fatigue reached easily, with rapid recovery; average heart beat around 90 bpm for male & female
Advancement in motor development begins with head, down towards feet, and body center outward	Fundamental movement skills a priority: jumping, balancing, throwing, catching, etc.
Males and females weigh between 30 - 50 pounds. males approximately 35 - 45", females 37 - 45"	Body segments grow at different rates
Social and Emotional Development	
Need 'play" without pressure, with generous praise	World only perceived from their perspective
The concept of "team" or group play not understood, although it might be verbally expressed -Team consists of little more than wearing the same color shirt	Awareness of body, the self concept, and self image are developed through movement -nobody wants to share 'their' ball -good effort equals good performance
Psychologically, once past midfield, the game is almost "downhill;" no going back, full tilt	Mother or significant parent is most influential person in their life

B. THE U-8 PLAYER

Do You Know the Player?

Mental Development	
Limited capacity to attend multiple tasks; concept of space and time relationship minimal	Effort synonymous with performance, i.e. "If I tried hard then I performed well," regardless.
Categorizing of information beginning; do not recognize some relationships that exist, but assume others do, that actually do not	Since limited by capacity to attend multiple tasks, controlling the ball requires most attention, leaving little for tactical decisions
Physical Development	
Coordination and pace improved considerably since U-6 level, but still immature	Cardiovascular system still underdeveloped as child's heart rate peaks early, recovers late
Injuries near joints must be taken seriously since growth plates are there, skeleton is still growing	Temperature regulation system immature; core body temperature raises faster with movement yet takes longer to cool down than adults, i.e. "Put on your jacket." "But I'm not cold."
Social and Emotional Development	
Intrinsically motivated; soccer is purely "fun." Influential person likely father or only parent	Personal universe expanded to neighborhood
Effect of negative comments great; easily upset psychologically by peers and adults	Desire social acceptance; they want to be liked
Self-image, concept beginning to develop, but is very fragile	Begin to interact with true playmates, with an inclination towards small groups
Identification with team is very limited - "I play for Coach Jim," or, 'I play for the Sharks.' Awareness of club or leagues is remote.	Need for approval from parents, teachers and coaches is great

Youth Practices

“Learning occurs slowly and that is why patience is not only a virtue, but a teaching necessity”

- A practice session is a rehearsal for the game day routine
- Through repetition the players begin to reduce the number of errors in their performances
- Consistent exposure to a practice session will produce end results
- Ask yourself , does it happen in the game, if yes then do it in practice , if no, then don't do it in practice
- When players and balls are moving , learning is taking place
- Duplicate the excitement of the game in your practice session
- Good coaching is to make hard work fun
- Good coaching is having the ability to change the practice session during the session to make it work
- Create an atmosphere where players are allowed to teach themselves
- Allow the players to experiment and fail their way to success
- Teach them at practice what they can work on at home



Methods of Coaching

What is Soccer?

It is a competitive game, made difficult by the opponent.

It has an objective to achieve- to win the game.

It has rules to follow and a field to play on.

It is free flowing – no time outs or stoppages for coaching.

Players must solve the problems presented in the game – not the coach.

Why the Game is the best teacher?

The game presents the problems for the players.

Players must solve the problems.

It uses games in training which creates realism.

Players are motivated and challenged to learn through the game.

Why do we use small sided games to teach?

It allows players to develop creativity

It encompasses all aspects of the game-technique, tactics, fitness and psychology.

The number of touches on the ball is increased- Skill development.

Decision making is expanded-Tactical development.

Amount of goal scoring opportunities are expanded-Fun and Enjoyment.

Positional play is greatly expanded-Game understanding.

Transitional play is increased and becomes automatic-Intuitive Development.

What is player development?

It demand that's the player is central to all decisions made regarding training and competition by....

Games and activities that are used so that all players want to participate in because they are enjoyable.

Every player has a ball for training.

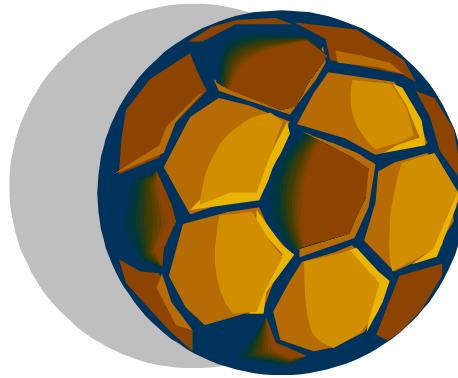
Games and activities which are designed to maximize the number of touches on the ball by each player.
Training sessions which are designed to improve a player's technical ability and tactical applications.
Competition which is the main ingredient within the practice to help to motivate and challenge the player.
Educating players to develop an appreciation for the game, teammates, opponents, referees and coaches

What is the role of the coach?

Coaches must understand the player development process and the differences that exist between age and ability.
The coach must set up the conditions and environment for learning
Players need to have fun and receive positive feedback.
The coach must be enthusiastic.
Practice should be conducted in the spirit of enjoyment and learning
Activities need to be geared toward achieving success.
Demonstrate respect for team members, opponent's referees, parents, spectators and opposing coaches.
Demonstrate a responsibility to the game itself. Recognize that children/players are not defined by age only. They mature and develop at their own pace. There are also growth differences between genders.
Treat each person as an individual.
Recognize that their needs are different and they participate for different reasons at any level.

How do players learn?

Players learn in different ways. Some are better at following verbal instructions while others need to see an example of what they should do. Some need to see and hear instructions. Some learn more quickly than others do.
Generally players learn in the following way;
Receive information – process it in order of importance
Block out unnecessary cues – attend to the most important
Concentrate on execution of decision
Initiate mechanical execution
Coaches must communicate information clearly to the player in a logical manner that can be easily understood. When talking to the player coaches must explain things in a realistic and simplistic manner
Coaches must provide information in a logical progression,
Correct sequence – simple to complex-general to specific
Technical- fundamental to match related to match conditions
Tactical – individual to group to team



How to teach

Preview

- What are you going to coach?
- Why are you going to do it?
- Where does it belong in the full game?

Time factors

- When in the training Session
- When during the weekly cycle
- When in the seasonal cycle

Explanation and /or demonstration

- Paint a clear picture
- Explain the rules of the activity
- Explain why you are doing this
- Remember: Show it-Talk it-Do it

Effective Communication - Coach to Player Basics

As you know, young kids have very short attention spans. This being true, it means:

- **don't** have players standing around in lines; if using lines; keep them to something like one player working, maybe three in line, but not waiting long.
- **Use** the K.I.S.S. principle - Keep It Short and Simple when speaking to the players;
- **Use** some "crowd control" tactics to help "get the message across" when communicating:
- Make sure the players are facing away from the sun - let the coach face the sun;
- When the coach is talking, all balls stop moving;
- Be sure to face the team away from activities behind the speaker - the last thing we want is players watching someone behind the speaker and not listening;
- When the coach talks, everyone listens; then when a player talks, everyone provides him the same respect;
- Talk with the wind at your back rather than into it;
- No one is to stand behind the speaker's peripheral vision; you don't want somebody making faces behind your back;
- When calling the team in, make it a competition to get them there faster - i.e... "THE LAST ONE BEHIND ME IS A ROTTEN EGG!" or, "THE LAST ONE BEHIND THE 'END-LINE' OWES ME A PUSH-UP!"
- Ask questions when you are done, like, "Billy, now what did I say the purpose of this game is?" or, "Sarah, which goal are you to score on?"
- Reward those who answer correctly with something like, "OK, whoever answers my questions right today gets a piece of bubble gum," or, "Whoever answers this question right gets to go first."
- **Use** demonstrations more than words - give the players a picture to look at and then ask them to do it.
- **Move** from activity to activity so that the kids do not get bored. Spend 10-20 minutes per activity, and then move on.
- **Remember** the first rule of communication: THE MESSAGE SENT IS NOT ALWAYS THE MESSAGE RECEIVED.
- **Avoid** screaming. It is better to call the players in to listen, than holler constantly to make yourself heard.
- **portray** yourself as in control and organized. Avoid fidgeting, kicking the dirt or grasping for notes when speaking.
- **When** speaking, be stationary - avoid running and talking at the same time. When making a point, being stationary helps.
- **Coaches** are less intimidating when they get down on the players physical level to make a point. Staring up at a giant in it can heighten anxiety. Calling 'em in? Get on a knee.
- **Ask** specific people specific questions after making a point. For instance, "So Jessica, what are you supposed to do after throwing a move?" When you ask a crowd, "Anybody got any questions?" many people say nothing out of fear of being embarrassed. Being specific keeps people involved and helps the communicator gauge reception.

Elements of the practice

- Organization- appropriate size space, location on the field, necessary equipment, training realistic to the full game
- Activities for training – too hard creates frustration: too easy becomes boring
- Starting the practice- allow players to play in the beginning to get the feel of the game and develop a rhythm, provides the coach an opportunity to see if they understand activity
- Coachable moments – opportunities during the practice to provide instruction.
- Starting and restarting the practice –where it was stopped by the coach or by the players
- Always have an objective – i.e. number of goals, consecutive passes, etc

Corrections

- Reasons to stop the practice
- Question by the player
- Natural stoppage in the practice
- Necessary correction
- Something good happens

Freeze concept – convey quick, clear correct information

Restarting exercise

- Rehearse correction – first at slow speed , then add speed and increase pressure
- Put back into the game- begin practice with reason for stoppage

Assessments/Adjustments

- Is my coaching having an effect on the game, the practice and the players
- Identify the specific problems, is it technical, tactical, physical or psychological
- Put into the game - always make practice as realistic to the game as possible

Components of Coaching Soccer

Technique – Tactics – Physical - Psychological

Teaching technique

Fundamental Stage

- No pressure from opponent
- Begin at slow speed and work towards execution at top speed
- Reduced strength and power

Match Related

- Introduce pressure of an opponent
- Incrementally add pressure based upon the players level of success

Match Condition

- All restrictions taken off the opponent
- Does not have to be 11v11 or an even numbered exercise
- Importance of small side games for technical training

Teaching tactics

Individual tactics [1v1]

- Player with the ball versus the pressuring defender

Group tactics

- Small groups of players around the ball becoming effective tactical units. Groups can be 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 4v2, 4v3 etc

Progression of teaching tactics

- Unrestricted space – Restricted space- to one large goal with counter goals – to two large goals
- Numbers up and numbers down

Team Tactics

- Team tactics are half field matches; 6v4, 6v5, 7v5, 7v6 and 8v8 through 11v11.
- In team tactics we teach individual players and groups of players about their role and responsibilities through the various thirds of the field for both attacking and defending
- Use of conditions to emphasize aspect of play is acceptable in team tactics e.g. 1-2 touch passing, all players must be in the attacking half to score, team must defend with low pressure, etc.
- Attacking and defending on restarts – training for individuals and group responsibilities.

Fitness for Soccer

- General Endurance - Endurance - Aerobic - Interval training - Local muscle endurance - Anaerobic - Flexibility - Agility
- Balance -Speed – Balance - Strength - Power

Psychological Aspects

- The continued development of a positive attitude for all aspects of the game
- The development of a responsible attitude within the player in regard to themselves and the game
- The development of a responsible attitude toward the team, coaches, referees, officials, etc
- The application and implementation of technique, tactics and fitness by individual players and the team



REASONS WHY CHILDREN PLAY - AND QUIT – SPORTS

Why Kids Play

- Fun - The adjective that must describe the time spent at practices and games
- To learn and improve skills - The coach must be a teacher; but first, the coach must become a student.
- To be with friends, and make new friends. Friendships are very important to players.
- Excitement The thrill of playing the game is a reward.
- To succeed or win - Notice that winning is not a very high priority - fun, learning, and being with friends are more important.

To exercise and improve fitness Feeling good physically leads to feeling good mentally

Why kids Quit?

- Not playing - Kids do not develop, or have fun, on the bench. They need lots of playing time.
- Being criticized and insulted - Making mistakes is a major part of the learning process. But players interpret insults and criticism as statements about their worth as human beings.
- Mismatching - When mismatched with someone of greater size or skills, fun evaporates.
- Stress - Stress derives not from the game, but from the reactions to it.
- Failure - Failure is frequently determined from the messages the children get from the coach. Criticism and placing too much emphasis on the outcome, rather than the effort, lead to a lowered self-esteem - and less interest in playing.
- Poor organization - A lack of activity at practice, or too much rigidity, become further reasons for children to drop out of the game.