

Delaware Union



Middletown & Dover
Recreational
U4 Coaching Manual

Congratulations! (or “What, me coach?)

Congratulations! It seems that you have volunteered, or perhaps been asked, convinced, or maybe even coerced into coaching U4 soccer! This guide will provide you with everything you need to prepare yourself to create a successful season whether a first time coach or a seasoned veteran.

The Delaware Union Soccer Family greatly appreciates you pledging your time and dedication as a coach in our club. As a coach you are given a great opportunity to create life-long memories for a group of young athletes and their parents and teach them the “beautiful game” of soccer. This is not a journey for the faint of heart or those who are only half committed to parenting and coaching. This is a journey for those who are looking to make a positive difference in the lives of their child and/or the children of others. Trust me you will be greatly rewarded by the smiles and energy of your players as they rapidly improve their skills and have fun throughout the season.

Using this manual and the additional aids/info provided by DU as your guide, we will give you insight, advice, detailed practice plans, and tips and tricks to teach along the way to ensure your season is a smashing success. Have fun, have passion for your team, stay open when talking with the parents, and keep focused on the big picture – instilling a passion and love for the game of soccer in each team member!

Delaware Union Recreational Player Development Philosophy

At Delaware Union Soccer, we stress a player-centered developmental approach. Our philosophy is to create an environment at the early age groups where players can begin to develop an individual mastery of the ball and the creativity that comes with it. Coaches act as a guide to instill a passion for the game of soccer, but allow each player to develop the key technical soccer skills through small-sided games and fun interactive training sessions. Each session is geared around maximizing the number of touches of each player. Each touch of the ball is a learning experience toward the player’s development and ball mastery. This approach is intended to mimic in a more organized fashion the development of players in some of the powerhouse soccer nations around the world.

To foster individual ball mastery and creativity within DU, we have developed curriculums for each age level that support our philosophy. This was done to create uniformity across the coaching ranks in the recreational program and make it easier for new coaches to join the coaching ranks. We believe with this approach Delaware Union will continue to develop well rounded and creative soccer players as they progress through the ranks of the club and into high school and college.

What Did I get Myself Into? (Understanding U4 Players)

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.

U4 Characteristics

- Short attention span
- Individually oriented (me, my, mine), do not expect players to purposely pass the ball to each other
- Constantly in motion
- Psychologically easily bruised
- Little or no concern for team activities
- Physical and psychological development for boys and girls quite similar.
- Eye/hand or eye/foot coordination most primitive
- Love to run and jump.
- Catching skills not developed
- Can balance on good foot.
- No sense of pace (race about until complete exhaustion sets in, at which point they stop, breathe, then restart in a torrid pace again)

Goals of the season

The primary goal with this age group is to make playing soccer fun for the kids. The emphasis should be on fun, and not competition.

Three “goals” for the season:

1. Teach the players what direction to run, and to stay within the white lines
2. Teach the players not to use their hands to touch the ball
3. Teach the players to stop playing when the coach stops play

Plan for a Successful Season

Team Rosters

Team rosters will be emailed to the team coaches. Team coaches are selected on a first come first selected basis. (Put in information about team selection, keeping players together with prior season teams and parent/player requests)

Contacting Your Team for the First Time

Plan on contacting your team as soon as you receive your roster, this is important, as soon as parents start talking about hearing from their coach, they will be wondering why they haven't been contacted. Information to include in your first email:

Coach Introduction

- If there are two or more coaches selected, contact each other and agree upon the roles each one will have, game day coach (there needs to be one head coach on game day, this eliminates confusion when the referee has questions), communications, etc...
- Define roles of each coach if multiple coaches are assigned
- Establish a clear line of communication, if you need to update your contact information in Blue Sombrero please do so IMMEDIATELY, parents/players should have an email address and telephone number to contact you
- Explain the objectives for the season
- Briefly explain the rules pertaining to the specific division you are coaching in (rules are posted on the Delaware Union website)
- Inform parents/players of practice time and location
- Establish the practice/game day parent rules, you don't want parents giving direction during practice/game day, this will confuse the player and undermine what you expect out of the player
- Ask to be notified of any medical conditions that child may have that could have an impact during play, i.e. diabetic, broken bones, glasses (players may not play with normal glasses, they need to be made of shatter proof plastic)

Team Guidelines/Management

- Discuss how parents/players MUST respect opponents, coaches, officials and the game itself
- Player and Parent Code of Conduct is location on the Delaware Union web site, ask parents/players to review
- Practice schedule, days and times

- Game schedule (the schedule for U10 and below will be available shortly after you receive your roster, U12 and above are distributed thru the Delaware Youth Soccer Association or DYSA, and these schedules are out of our control on when they are distributed, as soon as we confirm the schedules the club will pass along this information)
- Snack Schedule; determine if you are going to have an after game snack, if you do establish a schedule early on
- **Are we doing concession stand assignments**
- Inherent risks (soccer IS a contact sport, although a relatively safe one injuries do occur, be aware that concussions do occur and to be aware of the warning signs)
- Required equipment (practice uniform/equipment, game day equipment, cleats are not mandatory but SHIN GUARDS are)
- Ask that players bring a soccer ball
- All players need to bring water to all practices and game

Coaches' Responsibilities

- Arrive at practice on time and remain with each player until every child is picked up (if a parent is not picking up the player make sure they inform you of who will be)
- Organize practices and teach players age appropriate techniques, build each practice session upon the previous one
- Give precise direction; push up, drop back, look up, carry
- Avoid the following directions; kick it, move, what are you doing
- Develop each players' self-esteem thru positive feedback
- Allow each player to play half of the game
- Respect referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself with respect on the field
- Inform referees of any medical issues with any player, i.e. diabetic, broken bones
- Continue to seek coaching education

Code of Conduct

Coaches, Parents/Spectators, and Players

Being part of the United States Youth Soccer Association and the Delaware Union Soccer Club is a privilege. The actions as a coach will ALWAYS reflect upon the Delaware Union Soccer Club. Because this is a game coached by humans, played by humans and officiated by humans, mistakes will be made, it is how we handle those mistakes will define you as a coach, parent/spectator, or player. Coaches lead by example, and players will follow that example weather it is a positive or negative.

Coach's Equipment

What to Have in Your Equipment Bag

- Extra soccer balls, make sure you have the correct size for your division
- Air pump
- First Aid Kit; should have a couple of cold packs, Band-Aids, gauze pads and tape
- Goalkeepers' jersey; keepers need to wear a contrasting color than every other player/referee on the field
- Players' jersey; have the players wear their designated color but bring their other color as a backup
- Shin guards, an inexpensive spare set will save a player who forgets; players may NOT play without shin guards.
- Cones or pylons; practice schedules do get mixed up, when a goal is not available, cones or pylons make a difficult situation easier
- Pennies; used primarily for practice
- Water; having an extra water bottle is always a good idea
- Clipboard or Notepad

Player's Equipment

What Every Player Needs to Have Before Walking Onto the Field

- Encourage all your players to bring their own ball and ask them if they are using it not just on practice days. Promote practicing outside of the scheduled practice, give incentives for improvement
- Shin Guards; MUST be under socks and worn at every practice and game
- Water Bottle; for the younger players make sure their names are on their bottle
- Soccer Shoes; cleats are recommended but are not required, sneakers are fine, but absolutely NO baseball or football type of shoes with rectangular or square cleats are allowed, no metal studs and no toe stud
- Uniform; practice uniform is anything comfortable that will provide some level of protection, if a hood is worn it MUST be tucked under a shirt

Game Day Guidelines and Preparation

Game Preparation

Three Days Before the Game Day; you should reach out to the opposing coach to introduce yourself and to verify game time and location, along with team colors and any important information that needs to be passed down, i.e. parking issues, field location changes, etc

The Day Before the Game Day; the day before game day you should have a roster of who will be at the game and who will not. Establish a game roster to include your initial line up and who will be substituting for what position and at what times. Setup your substitutions to occur at specific intervals, intervals can be different for offensive and defensive players. Select two captains for the coin toss and to convey any problems to the referee.

Game Day

Field Preparation; depending upon the time of your game you may be responsible for setting up or tearing down field to include moving goals, corner flags

Rules; it is the responsibility of the coach to know the rules or “laws” of the club you are playing and to prepare your players to play within those rules.

Warming up the Team; keeping it simple is best, simple touching, dribbling, passing, and shooting with the emphasis on maximizing the proper touch is important. In the beginning of the season the coach should lead the warm up as the season progresses begin selecting players to lead the warm up

Referee; if the referee doesn't introduce himself to you introduce yourself to him/her. Verify some of the general rules, including game duration, when is a substitution allowed and inform the referee if any of your players have medical concerns i.e. diabetes, broken bones, etc

Coaching from the Technical Area

As coaches we must manage game day coaching from coaching during a practice session. The saying “let them play” is a very important saying. As coaches we want our players to develop and grow, they must be able to make mistakes and have the chance to repair a mistake without the immediate commands coming from the touchline.

Coaches should give specific directions to their players, take notes during the game and address issues at half time and after the game, but keep the instructions to a minimum.

Encouragement works better than a coach talking about the problems that occurred.

Convey changes or specific actions to substitutes. Have your substitutes ready at the mid-field line, this not only prepares the player to enter the field of play but also indicates to the referee that you want a substitution

Parents and spectators should be informed no to instruct the players during the game, few parents see the overall picture that as a coach you are trying to accomplish and most time will not only confuse the player but will also undo all the training that you have been doing.

Parents and spectators should also be informed not to communicate their dissatisfaction towards the referee and under no circumstances are they to confront the referee during or after the game.

During the game, parents should adhere to the following instructions:

- Do NOT yell at the referee
- Do NOT yell at the opposing coach
- Do NOT yell at the opposing players
- Let the coaches coach and do not instruct players, cheers are hear by all so please cheer for all the players

Halftime

- ALL players should grab their water bottles and meet somewhere where the players are out of ear-shot of parents and the other team
- Give positive remarks concerning the team's performance, do not call out specific players about a poor performance
- Only make a few statements, too much talking and the players will start to lose their focus
- Ask the players if they have any questions about the game
- Before the start of the second half have you team huddle together and perform a cheer

After the Game

- Immediately after the game have your team line up and shake hands with the opponents
- Shake the hands of the opposing coach
- Shake the hands of the referees
- Players should also shake the hands of the officials
- Do not criticize the opposing team or the officials
- Clean up the area, check for forgotten equipment
- Verify your players know of the next practice session and remind them to keep practicing whenever they get a chance