



BANTAM DIVISION SUMMARY

Soccer for players at this age is seen as a fun activity, a chance for the kids to play with friends, laugh, get excited, score goals, learn and enjoy the game. It is our job as coaches to provide an environment for our players where all of these aspects are present. By no means do you have to follow word for word the sessions provided in this volume; soccer is a game that demands creativity from the players as well as the coaches. Feel free to adjust, amend, and change parts of the session to better suit your players.

With that said, we as coaches must encourage creativity from our players, encourage them to take chances, and encourage them to dribble. The number one priority with players at this age should be comfort with the ball. All too often, players lack the ability to control the ball at their feet, take on defenders, and dribble away from pressure because the coach always tells them to "pass" or "clear it" or "boot it." While these tactics may prevent a goal, the Rush believes that we are doing our players a disservice with these "directions." Will your players mindlessly just "boot it?" Absolutely, but it should not be rewarded, rather reward the player who chooses to dribble the ball and take on a defender, for the development of this skill will go a lot farther than the ability to "boot it." To be sure that the players have as much time on the ball as possible, have each player bring a size 4 ball (properly inflated) to practice, the ratio of balls to players should at least be 1:1.

As you already know, there are players on your team that have a greater capacity to stay focused compared to others. This is true at any level, so coaches must keep explanations short, and to the point. The longer we address players in a group the quicker they lose interest. Remember, you are speaking to 8-10 year olds, try to speak with enthusiasm and excitement, this will carry over to your players during training.

As you have probably noticed when looking at the session plans, you will see the phrase, "make it a competition." It is important that we understand what this means so we do not relay the wrong message to the players. Although the Rush firmly believes that competition is healthy and a great way to provide fun and excitement, winning and losing must not be our focal point. Playing creatively, trying to apply newly learned skills, and performance at this age certainly outweighs the benefits of going undefeated throughout the season. Do not keep your "stronger" players in the back for fear that you will get scored on. Everyone on the team is a "soccer player", they attack and defend and moving players to different positions on game day will expose them to new situations and problems that they must try to deal with in a creative manner. It will make them better soccer players and it will make you a better coach.

This volume will help you in organizing a training session but you get the fun part of motivating and exciting your players to enjoy the game of soccer. Stay positive throughout the sessions and remember for every coaching point made ("make sure your ankle is locked when you pass"), you need to make four (4) positive comments ("awesome", "great job"). Good luck and have fun!