

YOUTH COACHING CERTIFICATE



926 Hemsath Rd. Suite 102, Saint Charles, MO 63303
Office: 636-946-0958 ☎ Fax: 636-946-0939 ☎ missourisoccer.org



MISSOURI YOUTH COACHING CERTIFICATE

The emphasis of the Missouri Youth Coaching Certificate is to assist the parent/coach who may or may not have prior coaching experience with youth soccer players. During this course you will be exposed to “best practices” to help ensure that we maximize the potential of all players, and at the same time, create a fun and safe environment that will make the players want to come back for more!

This course will offer guidelines as to what we can developmentally expect from kids at various ages. The more we understand the players physical capabilities, mental capabilities and social awareness, the more effective we can be as coaches. It is imperative that players are put in an environment that is appropriate for their developmental level.

Along with coaching, guiding and nurturing players, a successful soccer coach will also spend time educating parents. That is a VERY important aspect of coaching. How we help educate parents can “make or break” the youth sports experience for kids. It is critical that we as coaches make sure that parents understand what their role is. The positive support of parents will enhance the experience for all involved. It is important that coaches make sure all involved keep perspective on winning. Our emphasis, especially for the younger age groups, needs to be on developing skills and making sure that they are having an enjoyable experience, so we foster a love for the game of soccer.

In addition, this course should act as a “springboard” for those coaches that are planning to go on and further their development as coaches.

I want to personally thank you for sharing your time and talent with the kids. If I can ever be of assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Jeff Muhr
Director of Coaching & Player Development
Missouri Youth Soccer Association





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SOCCKER COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MISSOURI YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION (MYSA):

Youth Coaching Certificate - This course is an introduction to coaching and will cover the following:

- Understanding the age-appropriate stages of development
- Introduction to the United States Soccer Federation Play-Practice-Play Coaching Model through examples of coaching sessions
- Risk management
- Coaching conduct
- Parent engagement & expectations

UNITED STATES SOCCER FEDERATION (USSF):

Grassroots Licensing Courses - This course will focus on coaching fundamentals with respect to the United States Soccer Player Development Initiatives (PDI). Additional focus will be spent on empowering coaches through experiential learning and a player-centered approach.

- Four in-person courses (4v4, 7v7, 9v9, and 11v11)
- Four online courses (4v, 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11)

National “D” - This course is a progression of the Grassroots License with focus on Play-Practice-Play model within the 4v4, 7v7, 9v9, and 11v11 game. Additional emphasis will be placed on the following:

- Coaching Games
- Coaching Training Sessions
- Leading the Player
- Leading the Team
- Managing the Performance Environment
- Leadership

National “C” - This course will be an extension of the core concepts of coaching, including coaching games, coaching training sessions, leading the player, leading the team, managing the performance environment and leadership. The structure of the course includes:

- Course Meeting (7 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 1 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Assessment Meeting (3 days onsite with entire group)





National “B” - This course focuses on the principles of the long-term player development and developing a team. The structure of the course includes:

- Course Meeting 1 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 1 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Course Meeting 2 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 2 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Assessment Meeting (2 days onsite with entire group)

National “A” Youth Course - This course focusses on the development of the elite youth players as a part of the pathway to becoming a professional player. The structure of the course includes:

- Course Meeting 1 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 1 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Course Meeting 2 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 2 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Course Meeting 3 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 3 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Assessment Meeting (Individual assessment in candidate’s home environment)

National “A” Senior Course - This course focuses on creating a winning team in a high-performance environment, based on the development of attacking, defending, and transitioning of the coach’s own team relayed to upcoming opponents. The structure of the course includes:

- Course Meeting 1 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 1 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Course Meeting 2 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 2 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Course Meeting 3 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 3 (6-8 weeks assignments and mentoring)
- Assessment Meeting (Individual assessment in candidate’s home environment)





National “Pro” Course - The primary objectives of the current Pro Course are for each coach to develop and improve the habits of a coach learning from one’s own experiences, to work on and improve the individualized needs of each coach’s personal development, and to become more competent and proficient in their coaching tasks. The structure of the course includes:

- Course Meeting 1 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 1 (Assignments and mentoring & 6-day Club visit)
- Course Meeting 2 (5 days onsite with entire group)
- Development Period 2 (Assignments and mentoring & 6-day Club visit)
- Course Meeting 3 (5 days onsite with entire group & assessment: final presentation)

UNITED SOCCER COACHES (USC):

National Diploma - The objective of the National Diploma is to familiarize the coach with the technical and tactical needs of soccer players and provide an organized and progressive methodology of coaching the needs. The course is taught using a 7v7 model. The curriculum includes:

- The teaching process
- Psychological skills training
- Laws of the game

Advanced National Diploma - The objective of the Advanced National Diploma is in on training players within a team concept. The course is taught using a 9v9 model. The curriculum includes:

- Team organization and training
- Advanced methodology
- Analysis and understanding of systems of play
- Focus on tactics within the different thirds of the field
- Technical position overviews
- Match analysis
- The psychological aspect of coaching

Premier Diploma - This diploma is the top technical award of the United Soccer Coaches education. The curriculum includes:

- Examination of different systems of play, including technical and tactical implications
- 11v11 topics, including coaching the game, phase play and show play
- Nutrition
- Sportsmanship/Ethics
- Leadership, including team management, personal development, and the coaches’ role in game development in his/her community





RISK MANAGEMENT: KEEPING KIDS SAFE

Keeping kids safe should be at the top of the priority list. Keep the following in mind:

- Always be aware to the playing surface (wet, uneven playing surface, etc.)
- Make sure the player has proper equipment.
- Make sure to take plenty of water breaks
- Pay attention to the time of the day that you train (avoid hottest periods of the day)
- If possible, coaches should attend a first aid course
- Coaches should have a first aid kit at all practices and games
- Coaches should make sure to have appropriate medical waivers for all players (per league or state requirements)
- Be sure to notify a parent if a player gets hurts during training.
- Follow up with parents on injuries
- Put yourself in a position where you can always see what all of the players are doing.
- Never leave a player alone when at training or a game.
- Don't let players go to the bathroom without an adult (if their parent is not there, ask an assistant coach if available).
- ALWAYS walk players out to their parents or to the adult that is responsible for them.
- Avoid being left alone with a player (ask an assistant coach or another parent to wait with you).

Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017:

On February 14, 2018, the **Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017** was signed into law and became effective immediately. The legislation is available for download [HERE](#). The U.S. Center for SafeSport has released a fact sheet about the legislation which can be found [HERE](#).

In addition to the U.S. Center for SafeSport's factsheet, which provides information regarding the entire law, we wanted to provide additional detail on the specific mandatory reporting of child abuse requirements included in the new legislation because these requirements may impact you immediately:





- The bill amends the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990 to **extend the duty to report suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, within 24 hours to all adults who are authorized to interact with minor or amateur athletes** by a national governing body, a member of a national governing body, or an amateur sports organization that participates in interstate or international amateur athletic competition. These individuals are called "covered individuals" in the new legislation.
- Child abuse is defined as physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, or negligent treatment of a child.
- An individual who is required, but fails, to report suspected child sexual abuse is subject to criminal penalties including fines and up to one (1) year in jail.
- These obligations are in addition to any State law requirements that an individual may have in a particular jurisdiction.

If you make a report of child abuse to law enforcement, please also communicate this report to the U.S. Soccer integrity hotline at <https://www.ussoccer.com/integrity-hotline> or (312) 528-7004 and the U.S. Center for SafeSport at <https://safesport.org>. As a reminder, as a member or affiliate of U.S. Soccer, you may be subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Center for SafeSport under certain circumstances. The Center serves an important investigatory and remedial function where law enforcement may choose or be unable to act. If you have any questions, you can contact either Lydia Wahlke (lwahlke@ussoccer.org) or Greg Fike (gfake@ussoccer.org) in the U.S. Soccer legal department.

Terminology regarding Injuries:

- **SPRAIN** - Ligaments are bands of tissue that attach bone to bone and stabilize joints. A sprain is an injury to one or more ligaments.
- **STRAIN** - A tearing injury to a muscle or a tendon (tendons attach muscle to bone).
- **CONTUSION** — An impact injury to a muscle or tendon caused by an outside force, which causes hemorrhaging (heavy bleeding) to the surrounding tissue.
- **ABRASION** - A loss of surface area of the skin caused by sliding. Care: the area should be cleaned with an antiseptic to prevent infection. An antibiotic ointment should be applied to keep the wound moist and destroy bacteria.
- **HEAT CRAMPS** - An involuntary contraction of a muscle or a muscle group that is repetitive and rapid in nature. Care: rest, drink water and stretching.





- **HEAT EXHAUSTION** — The surface temperature is about normal, the skin is pale and clammy, profuse perspiration, fatigue and weakness, headache; perhaps cramps, nausea, dizziness, possible vomiting and possible fainting (the player will probably regain consciousness as the head is lowered).
 - **Immediate Care** - seek immediate medical care (Call 911)! While waiting, move person out of the heat and into a cool environment. Lay person down and elevate legs and feet. Remove tight or heavy clothing. Have person drink cool water. Monitor person's condition carefully.
- **HEAT STROKE** - The body temperature is high, the skin is hot, red and dry, the sweating mechanism is blocked, the pulse is rapid and strong; the player may lose consciousness.
 - **Immediate Care** - seek immediate medical care (Call 911)! While waiting, treat the same as with heat exhaustion, keeping in mind that if you reduce the body temperature too rapidly it can cause internal bleeding.

General principles when handling an injured player:

- Avoid panic.
- Use common sense.
- Seek professional help.
- Check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration and shock.
- Depending upon the nature of the injury, avoid moving the player, i.e., an obvious break, an unconscious player, and/or a head or neck injury. When in doubt, don't move them. Inspire confidence and reassure the player.
- Determine how the injury occurred.
- Use certified athletic trainers when available.
- Always err on the side of caution.
- If a player has had medical attention, he/she must have written permission from the doctor to return to activity.





COMMUNICATION

This will be one of the most important aspects of your coaching. Effective communication will make the entire experience more enjoyable for all. START the season with a coaches meeting (this will set the tone for the year). Below are items that should be covered in the meeting:

- Set player expectations
- Set parent expectations
- Explain your philosophy
- Discuss how you will communicate with them regarding schedule changes, location changes, cancellations, etc. (TeamSnap, email, etc.).
- Discuss training schedule (How early do you want them there?)
- Discuss game schedule (How early do you want them there?)
- Emergency Plan (Lightning/Storms)
- Parent Volunteers
- Basic laws of the game
- Contact information
- Players' name/number card (cheat sheet)

Player Expectations:

Have a sit down with the kids and discuss your expectations. Set parameters so the kids know what is expected of them. A good rule of thumb is to keep it short and keep it simple.

Example:

1. Be respectful of everyone (coaches, parents, teammates, opponents and referees)
2. Be safe
3. Eyes and ears on the coach when he/she is talking
4. Ball behind you when a coach is talking
5. Never leave training without an adult knowing
6. Work hard and give your best effort always
7. Have fun

Set team goals (it is a good idea to have the kids be a part of this, so they have ownership). Again, keep them simple and realistic. Make sure that the type of goals you set are appropriate and align with the age group you are coaching and their developmental capacity.





Parent Expectations:

This is the time and opportunity to make sure that you get them on the same page. Too often parents don't hear what is expected of them and this gives them "free reins" on the sidelines. For some of your parents this will be their first experience with youth sports. For others, this may be the first-time parent expectations have been given to them. In any case, make your expectations clear. It is evident now, more than ever, that parent behavior on the sidelines can be out of control. When this happens, it is embarrassing for the player, the coach, the other parents, the team and the club. Below are strong recommendations that should be included in your parent expectations:

1. Always/only cheer in a **POSITIVE** way.
2. Only "**cheer**," and avoid giving "**instruction**." The parents do not always know what a coach has been working on in training, or may not have soccer experience, so instruction can be counterproductive and confusing for the players.
3. Do not talk about players other than your own.
4. Do not be afraid to applaud a good play from the other team. This shows appreciation for the game and good sportsmanship.
5. Do not question the referees. Refereeing is a tough job and remember that **NO ONE** is perfect. It is hard to attract people to be referees. If we berate them, we will lose them, and we do not have enough as it is!
6. Send a weekly or bi-weekly update to your parents letting them know what skills you are working on, mention improvements that you have seen, etc. These "updates" will go a long way in keeping parents informed, as well as it being an opportunity to educate them.
7. Encourage them to **NOT** "replay" the game during the car ride home. Encourage them to have a parent/child relationship rather than a coach/child relationship. Good conversation for the ride home would include questions such as:
 - Did you have fun today?
 - What was fun about the game?
 - Did you work hard?





ROLE OF THE COACH

Coaching youth players can and should be a fun and rewarding experience. Youth coaches play a critical role in the development of kids and development of the game of soccer. I liken the role of early youth coaches to that of the kindergarten teacher. The kindergarten teacher lays the foundation for his/her students and gives them the tools and basic skills that their students will use the rest of their lives. The SUCCESSFUL kindergarten teacher fosters and creates a love for learning through fun activities, so much so, that the students want to come back to school for more. That is what our coaches need to do at the earliest of ages. One can argue that we should have our BEST coaches working with the youngest kids.

It is important that coaches understand the impact that they will have on the children they coach/lead, not only as soccer players, but more importantly as people. We will help them develop skills that they will use throughout their life (commitment, dedication, perseverance, teamwork, how to win, how to lose, how to communicate, etc.). Below are things that should be considered when we define the role of the coach:

1. Facilitate learning and create a FUN environment
2. Develop the individual player as well as the team (per developmental readiness...a 5 or 6-year-old player does not have much interest in sharing the ball. They are still in an egocentric stage of life. As kids get older, you will see more of a willingness to share the ball. And, there is NO absolute age for these developmental stages. Kids are all different. Boys and girls are different. That is why we as coaches must always have to have our “antennas” up, as to allow us to “**meet our players where they are**”).
3. Be a positive role model (kids often feed off the coach’s demeanor).
4. “Police” the game and help the referee.
5. Be an organized, enthusiastic and passionate leader.
6. Give positive and give SPECIFIC feedback...Example: Rather than say, “Good job dribbling Sam,” say, “I liked the way your head was up when you were dribbling so you could find the open space on the field.”
7. Encourage **problem solving** through **GUIDED QUESTIONS**. Dr. Ron Quinn, a highly regarded expert when it comes to coaching education offers, “*How can we expect to develop players who can solve problems on the field, if we never give them problems to solve in practice? Problem-solving and decision making is a skill, and just like any other soccer skill, needs to be practiced. It is only then, that players can begin to create and internalize the game for themselves.*”





8. Be a lifelong learner (educate yourself, go to clinics, collaborate with other coaches, find a mentor...we must always evolve as coaches).
9. Have a good understanding of the players' capabilities based on their developmental readiness.
10. Be an effective communicator.

I think some of the best advice someone once gave me was that the soccer experience for a child is **"marathon and not a sprint."** The below excerpt from **Zorba the Greek** by Nikos Kazantzakis summarizes what we all should keep in mind as we embark on this ever-important journey to coach youth soccer.

"I remember one morning when I discovered a cocoon in the bark of a tree, just as a butterfly was making a hole in its case and preparing to come out. I waited a while, but it was too long appearing, and I was impatient. I bent over it and breathed on it to warm it. I warmed it as quickly as I could, and the miracle began to happen before my eyes, faster than life. The case opened, the butterfly started slowly crawling out and I shall never forget my horror when I saw how its wings were folded and crumpled; the wretched butterfly tried with its whole trembling body to unfold them. Bending over it, I tried to help with my breath. In vain.

It needed to be hatched out patiently and the unfolding of the wings should be a gradual process in the sun. Now it was too late. My breath had forced the butterfly to appear all crumpled before its time. It struggled desperately and, a few seconds later it died in my hand.

That little body is, I do believe, the greatest weight I have on my conscience. For I realize today that it is a mortal sin to violate the great laws of nature. We should not hurry, we should not be impatient, but we should confidently obey the eternal rhythm."





General Characteristics by Age Group

General Characteristics of the U-6 Age Group:

- Catching skills not yet developed
- Constantly in motion – love to run, jump, roll and climb
- Eye-hand and/or eye-foot coordination is primitive at best – not ready for bouncing or flighted balls
- No sense of pace – go flat out
- Physical coordination is immature – can balance on dominant foot
- Controlling the ball is a complex task
- Prefer large soft balls and foam balls
- Only understand simple rules
- Individually oriented (me, my, mine) – little or no concern for team activities
- Believes in Santa Claus, but will not discuss with peers – lofty imagination
- Physical and psychological development of boys and girls are quite similar
- Psychologically, easily bruised – need generous praise
- Short attention span – tends to one task at a time
- Limited understanding of time and space

General Characteristics of the U-8 Age Group:

- Like to show skills – need approval
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a bicycle)
- Lack sense of pace – go flat out, chasing the ball until they drop
- Still in motion – twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements
- Still into running, jumping, climbing and rolling
- Boys and girls are still quite similar in physical and psychological development
- Attention span is a bit longer than the U-6 age group
- Developing playmates
- More into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important)
- Still very sensitive – Dislikes personal failure in front of peers, making ridicule from the coach in front of the group very destructive
- Still do not believe in the intensity of the team at all costs
- Inclined more toward small group activities





General Characteristics of the U-10 Age Group:

- Lengthened attention span - they are still in motion, but not as busy, only holding still long enough for a brief explanation
- More inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play
- Psychologically becoming slightly more firm and confident
- Some are becoming serious about their play
- Team oriented – prefer team type balls and equipment. Enjoy the uniforms and team association.
- Boys and girls beginning to develop separately
- Developing the pace factor – thinking ahead
- Gross and small motor skills becoming much more refined

General Characteristics of the U-12 Age Group:

- Better able to deal with flighted balls
- Can sequence thoughts and actions to perform more complex tasks
- Can use abstract thought to meet the demands of the game
- Should be able to simultaneously run, strike the ball and think
- Fertile period to learn – full of eagerness
- Important psychosocial implications for a child entering puberty
- Popularity influences self-esteem
- Improved coordination
- Significant physical differences exist between the genders now
- Strength and power becoming factors in their performance

General Characteristics of the U-14 Age Group:

- The more advanced U-14 players can execute the range of skills, but most others are still developing previously taught skills and are now being exposed to these additional skills
- Important psychosocial implications for a child entering puberty – early or late
- Popularity influences self-esteem
- Tests limits - a know-it-all attitude
- Fertile period to learn – full of eagerness
- Tend to be quite self-critical and may need regular positive reinforcement
- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance





General Characteristics of the U-14 Age Group (Cont.):

- There will be significant differences in physical maturation rates between individuals
- Rapid growth spurts of the skeleton leave ligaments, tendons and muscles catching up, so coordination and balance are astray. Temporary gangly movement may result in a loss of touch on the ball. Players do not always make the connection between their growth spurt and the temporary loss of form; they need help realizing that everything will come back into synch in six to 18 months.

Organization of the Training Environment:

Make sure you have a plan. Failure to plan, is a plan that is sure to fail. I would suggest to over plan. There is nothing worse than running out of activities and having energy-filled kids in your care.

The look of a training session will vary as the age of the players vary. The younger they are the shorter attention span they have. You may have the attention of a five or six-year-old for approximately ten-fifteen minutes. That means you will need to have about five different activities/games for them to play during a one-hour training session.

Things to consider when planning a training session:

1. Be **flexible and understanding**...kids will show up late, kids won't show up, kids will need to go to the bathroom, kids will get sick, and yes, the youngest kids will chase butterflies and watch airplanes in the sky.
2. Length of session
3. Let the game be the teacher
4. Make sure your training is player-centered. "Disguise" skill building in fun activities
5. Find activities where the kids have a ball at their feet
6. Activities should "meet the players where they are at developmentally"
7. Avoid lines, lectures and laps
8. "Get in and get out" when asking guided questions or giving information
9. The activities that you chose to do with your players should resemble the game. We need to create environments that are game-like.





10. When possible, lay out your “playing areas” before the kids get there. If you must pick-up and move cones do it quickly while the kids get a water break. If kids are waiting for you to move cones, they will become restless and rambunctious.
11. Don't be afraid to ask parents to participate in a training session, especially if it will help with organization and the flow of the session. Make sure they know your coaching points ahead of time, so they give useful information to the kids.

Recommended Training Sessions (per US Youth Soccer):

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Duration</u>
U6	1 day per week	45 minutes
U8	1 day per week	60 minutes
U10	2 days per week	60-75 minutes
U12	2-3 days per week	75 minutes
U14	3 days per week	75-90 minutes
U16	3 days per week	90 minutes
U18	4-5 days per week	90-120 minutes

Evaluating the effectiveness of training sessions:

In order to develop kids and help them maximize their potential, the youth coach needs to make sure training sessions are as effective as possible. To evaluate the effectiveness of a training session, we should ask ourselves the following:

1. Is the training session **organized** in the correct way (equipment, set up, space, etc.)?
2. Are the training activities **game-like** (goals, balls, competition, etc.)?
3. Is there **repetition** in the training session so the players get an ample opportunity to practice and the desired skill?
4. Is the training session **challenging** (players are having a balance between successful and unsuccessful)?
5. Is the coach getting an opportunity to **effectively coach** during the training session?
6. Are the activities **fun** during the training session?





Evaluating the efficiency of a training activity:

Try to make your activities as “**economical**” as possible. When making the activities economical, consider the following four components:

1. **Technical:** dribbling, shooting passing & receiving
2. **Tactical:** decision-making, depth, width, balance, movement off the ball, systems of play, individual responsibilities, etc.
3. **Psychological:** The part of the game that involves using the head...
 - a. How do we handle winning?
 - b. How do we handle losing?
 - c. How do we overcome obstacles?
 - d. How do we develop confidence?
4. **Fitness:** Speed, agility, flexibility, and strength

Principles of Team Play:

1. Attacking: Possession with build up to score goals
2. Loss of the ball
3. Defending: Prevent opposing team from buildup and prevent scoring opportunities
4. Winning the ball

Role of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Defender:

1st defender: Apply immediate **pressure** to the ball once it is lost (closest defender to the ball). Deny time and penetration of space.

2nd defender: While the ball is being pressured, all the other players should be getting into defensive positions. The positions taken should support the pressuring defender in case they get beat. This is **cover**.

3rd defender: As your team makes the area near the ball compact, players **balance** the distance between the ball and players they are defensively responsible for. Players that are in the role of “balance” must make sure that they cannot be beat by a penetrating ball or a penetrating run.





Role of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Attacker:

1st attacker: The role of the 1st attacker is to **penetrate forward** using either a shot, a pass or dribble. Taking a shot should be the first option. If a player is unable to shoot, pass or dribble they should keep possession of the ball.

2nd attacker: The role of the second attacker (player closest to the 1st attacker...player with ball) is to **support the 1st attacker**. This support can be offered from behind, square or forward to the ball. While offering support they must make sure that one defender cannot defend two attackers. They should work to “combine” with the 1st attacker to gain penetration through bent runs, overlapping runs, wall passes, takeovers, etc.

3rd attacker: The role of the 3rd attacker is to **unbalance or rip apart** the defense. This is done by making the field big and making runs into space. They should try to put themselves in a position to receive the ball.

Small-sided Games: Why play them?

The answer to the question is simple; **OPPORTUNITY!**

When we put our kids in an environment that utilizes small-sided games, we are giving our kids a chance to grow and develop in an exponential way. Small-sided games are more **developmentally appropriate** for our young players. Playing small-sided games allows coaches to create a **player-centered** environment.

Below is a list of specific areas of the game that will be positively impacted through the play of small-sided games:

- Reduced field size and reducing number of players means that the players will be more involved.
- Small-sided games greatly lessens the chance that players can “hide” in a game.
- Players will become more skillful, as they will be getting more touches on the ball due to a greater involvement in the game.
- Players’ opportunity to grow tactically will increase as they will be put in more situations that require them to make tactical decisions. These tactical situations will also be less complicated and more developmentally appropriate since small-sided games provide a more simplistic environment.





- Players will also have more opportunity to develop both offensive and defensive skills as they will be provided more opportunity on both sides of the ball.
- Players will have the opportunity to score more goals which is a very enjoyable and rewarding element of the game.
- Players will have the opportunity to receive more input/coaching because of smaller numbers.

The Role of Competition and Winning in Player Development:

First, we must acknowledge and accept that there is a difference between competition and winning. To compete means to take part in a contest. There are many fun activities that young kids can enjoy and compete in. Kids can still develop while competing.

Winning on the other hand, is when one tries to acquire or secure a result of a contest or match. The desire to “secure a result” is the part that can get in the way of development. When winning takes precedence over developing, we are failing in our role as a coach.

It is often tempting to play kids in one, and only one position because they are successful there and the team “has a better chance to win” while they play in those positions. Kids should not specialize in one position until U14+. Until U14 we should be training “**soccer players,**” not defenders, midfielders, or forwards. Young players should get exposure to all positions, including goalkeeper so they can learn about the game. Developing **well-rounded** soccer players is part of the job of youth coaches.

We need to make sure that our youngest players are getting equal playing time and that we don’t sacrifice this philosophy simply because we are in a close game.

It is critical that we as coaches ALWAYS keep perspective when it comes to winning. There is a time and place for winning, but it is not in the earliest of ages of our youth. We must make sure we educate the parents of your players about this philosophy/truth.





Basic Laws of the Game:

-No Hands, please

First, the rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder. Second, the proper way to look at this soccer rule is that a player cannot “handle” the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player’s hand or arm is not a handball. This means that the referee must judge whether a hand ball is accidental contact, or the player handled the ball on purpose to gain an advantage. There is also a situation in which the goalie cannot use his/her hands. This is sometimes called the back-pass rule. Goalkeepers cannot pick up a pass that came directly from one of their teammates. In this case, the goalkeeper must use his feet. If the goalie does pick-up the ball it will result in an indirect kick from where he/she touched the ball.

-Throw-ins

A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head.

-Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks

A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across the goal line – the end of the field. If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick. The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the “goal area box”. It can be taken by any player. The ball must leave the “Penalty Area” before anyone can touch the ball. If the ball does not leave the Penalty Area, then the kick must retake. The corner kick is taken from the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.

-Fouls

The common rule of thumb on fouls is “If it looks like a foul, it probably is.”

A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent.

Bumping, leaning or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is *not a foul* until the hands or elbows come up.





-Direct and Indirect Free Kicks

The simple difference between the two is this: On a **direct kick** you can score by kicking the ball *directly* into the goal. On an **indirect kick** you cannot score. An indirect kick must be touched by another player before it can go into the goal – that is the kicker and a second person. *You can tell whether the kick is direct or indirect by looking at the referee. For an indirect kick, the referee will hold one arm straight up in the air until the second person touches the ball. No arm up or pointing towards the goal, it's a direct kick.* In general, a direct kick comes from a contact foul or handball. Everything else is indirect.

-Penalty Kick

A penalty kick results from a contact foul or hand ball by the defending team within the penalty area – the large box on either end of the field. So it's a type of direct kick also. The ball is placed on the penalty spot, in front of the center of the goal. All players must remain outside the penalty area and the penalty arc until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must have both feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked. If after the ball is kicked, it rebounds off of the goal or the keeper and stays on the field, the ball is "live" and anyone can play it.

-Two-touch Rule

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will see this called many times in youth soccer. It applies everywhere. You will see it frequently on kickoffs or direct and indirect kicks. If a player barely hits the ball and decides to take another kick at it, that is a two-touch. This also applies to throw-ins. A player cannot throw the ball in and then kick it.

-Offside

You cannot be offside on a corner kick, goal kick, or throw-in. Also, it is not an offense for a player to be in an offside position. The player must be involved in active play as determined by the referee to be called offside.

****A player is in an offside position if:** he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent.





MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH SOCCER



GOAL Improve Dribbling forward to score goals	Key Qualities Take Initiative, Make Decisions
Age Group 8-U	Team Tactical Principles Dribble Forward

PLAY - SMALL SIDED GAMES

Objectives: Get the players to play the game. To dribble forward to get past opponents and score goals.

Organization: Set up 2-3 fields 15W x 20L w/a goal at each end. As players arrive to the field start to play 1v1, 2v1, up to 2v2 games.

Time: 4 games of 2 mins, 30 sec rest, activity duration is 10 min.

Rules: Start game w/a kick off. Out of bounds, pass or dribble ball in. Allow periods of free play.



Key Words: Find the opening, go to the goal, go score

Guided Questions: Are all the players engaged in playing the game? How can you tell players know the rules?

Answers: Have multiple fields for all players to play the game. Players are trying to keep the ball in play, trying to score goals.

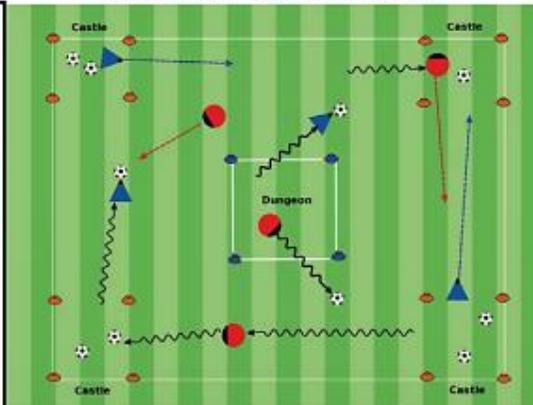
PRACTICE - CORE ACTIVITY



Less Challenging Activity

Organization: 20Wx25L field w/5yd end zone @ each end. Players dribble past opponents to each end zone & back. If defender steals the ball, switch roles.

Rules: Every player w/ a ball in an end zone. Coaches can be defenders. Coach says "Go" to start. How many end zones did you get to in 1 min, beat your score.



Activity Duration	20 min	# of Intervals	10
Time Active	1 min	Active Rest	1 min



More Challenging Activity

Organization: 20Wx25yd field w/ a small cone goal on each endline. Pick 3 defenders to start.

Rules: Coach says "Go" to start. Players w/a ball dribble to a goal & score by dribbling through the cone goal, then they go to the other goal, score, & repeat. If defender steals a ball & dribbles it in a goal, roles change. How many goals in 1 min.

Objective: Players dribble past opponents and score by putting their ball their corner box (castle).

Organization: In 20W x 25L field, w/a 5yd box (castle) in each corner & one box in the center of the field (dungeon). Make 4 equal teams, assign each team to a corner castle, name the castle.

Rules: Players start w/a ball in the dungeon. On Coach's "Go!", players will dribble to their castle & score by leaving their ball in the castle box. Players can then go and get balls out of other castles and dribble back to their castle, repeat. After 1 min which castle has the most balls in it.

Key Words: Look up, go around (the defender), get into space (an opening), go to goal.

Guided Questions: How can you get around or past a defender? How can a dribbler find space (an opening to the goal)?

Answers: Change direction and go faster (accelerate) to get around defenders and into space (an opening). Use little touches to keep the ball close and big touches after getting around defenders to go fast to goal. Describe "look up" as how to see where defenders are, where the opening to the goal is, where the goal is.

PLAY - LET THEM PLAY

Objective: Players with the ball try to dribble by opponents and score goals.

Organization: On a 25W x 35L field w/ a small goal at each end. Play 4v4.

Time: Play a game for 30 min, 2 halves of 12 min with 3 min of rest after each half.

Rules: All modified 4v4 rules apply.



Key Words: Look up, find an opening, move/go around & between defenders (through the opening) to the goal to score

Guided Questions: When should players dribble? How do you measure if practice was a success?

Answers: Dribble when there's space (an opening) in front, on the side, between or behind opponents to the goal. Players had fun. They tried to dribble forward past opponents to score.



LINKS AND SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Below is the link to additional training sessions like the one in this manual. Special thank you to Ian Mulliner, Technical Director of the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, for sharing his knowledge of the game with us through the well thought out training activities.

[Massachusetts Youth Soccer Session Plans](#)

Other useful links:

[US SOCCER PLAYER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES \(PDI\) – OCTOBER 2017](#)

[US SOCCER RECOGNIZE TO RECOVER CAMPAIGN](#)

[US SOCCER DIGITAL COACHING CENTER \(DCC\)](#)

[US SOCCER COACHING DEVELOPMENT](#)

[US YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION COACHING EDUCATION](#)

[UNITED SOCCER COACHES](#)

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