



# HAMILTON-WENHAM YOUTH SOCCER

## Intramural and Academy - Coaches Guide

### Program Philosophy:

Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are important years for shaping a child's successful participation in soccer and enjoyment of the game. The ability of pre-adolescents to learn basic skills and develop an awareness of soccer allows for rapid gains in performance and understanding. As a result, it is essential the game is taught in stages and children receive coaching that takes into consideration the developmental stage of each child. Players develop competence in basic individual skills such as ball control, dribbling, passing, receiving, and shooting. They also begin to understand the essentials of attacking and defending, and the fundamental movements associated with the game.

As the game is taught in stages, each year builds on core skills, introduce new concepts, and is more challenging than the previous year. The progression from Pre-K to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade focuses more on individual skills and concepts than on team skills, and chosen activities reinforce this. It is important for families to understand this so that expectations are met.

Games, when played, are small-sided (few players) with small goals and no score keeping. Research has shown that in competitive game situations in this age group, many players rarely touch the ball. These games are usually dominated by one or two players either through their athletic skill, speed, or size. Therefore, the introduction of fully rostered teams, refereed games, larger goals, goalies, and team strategy does not take place until 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and beyond. This is in line with current U.S. Soccer player development initiatives and is the model used around much of the world. True player development provides a pathway, building the skills to be successful.

The objective of small-sided games is to maximize opportunities for contact with the ball, develop improved skills with the ball through improve confidence and comfort, develop intelligence with and without the ball through promoting faster decision making and better awareness, and develop partnerships within the team.

Since there is no referee, coaches manage the game environment using HWYSA standards of play and their best judgement. Remember, safety and fun are the top priorities, so coaches and parents are expected to create and promote a safe and fun environment for the players.

### **Pre-K Kick Start Program:**

The HWYSA Kick Start Program is an in-town co-ed program for players who are in Pre-K (4 to 5 years old). The focus of this program is to introduce our youngest players to the game of soccer through fun activities and mini-games.

Players in the Pre-K age group have (1) practice/game on Saturday.

This is designed to be all about fun for our youngest players. Any activities that have them moving with a ball and enjoying themselves will give the players a positive foundation for the future levels of play.

As you work with these four and five year olds, keep in mind:

- these players may have short attention spans
- these players may be playing soccer for the first time
- these players may be part of a team for the first time
- these players may not be excited to be playing soccer every Saturday

As you move through your sessions:

- no need for players to stay inside the lines
- no need to talk about positions
- if you find something that works, don't be afraid to repeat it again and again
- if something doesn't work, move on and try something else
- move onto a new activity before your players get tired of the one you are doing
- activities don't always need to include a soccer ball

Primary skill focus:

- dribbling (using both feet with no toe)
- introduce the idea of offense and defense (when our team has it, we go this way AND when we don't have the ball, we try to stop the other team)

Keep in mind that young children need very little activity to warm up. Stretching exercises can be harmful if the muscles are cold. As the weather gets cooler, we will want to start with small movement activities before moving into any activities at full speed.

Games/Scrimmages: 3 on 3, no goalies, loose out of bounds (depending on ability of kids), get ball back in quickly and keep game moving.

### **Kindergarten Program:**

The HWYSA Kindergarten Program is an in-town program for players who are in Kindergarten (5-6 years old). The focus of this program is to introduce our youngest players to the game of soccer through fun activities and mini games, and begin to introduce some basic skills the players can build upon.

Players in the Kindergarten age group have (1) practice during the week and (1) game on Saturday.

As you work with these kindergarteners, keep in mind:

- these players may have short attention spans
- these players may be playing soccer for the first time, although make sure to ask
- these players may be part of a team for the first time
- these players may not be excited to be playing soccer in an organized environment

As you move through your sessions:

- no need for players to stay inside the lines
- introduce basic attacking and defending concepts
- if you find something that works, don't be afraid to repeat it again and again
- if something doesn't work, move on and try something else
- move onto a new activity before your players get tired of the one you are doing
- activities don't always need to include a soccer ball

Some basic skills to introduce for the first time and attempt consistently at this age:

- dribbling straight with control
- dribbling with turns
- reversals
- receiving the ball
- two touch timing
- shooting with the inside of the foot

Keep in mind that young children need very little activity to warm up. Stretching exercises can be harmful if the muscles are cold. As the weather gets cooler, we will want to start with small movement activities before moving into any activities at full speed.

Games/Scrimmages: either 3 on 3 or 4 on 4, no goalies, loose out of bounds but marked with cones or lines, get ball back in quickly and keep game moving.

### **First Grade Intramural Program:**

The HWYSA First Grade Intramural Program is an in-town skills development program. The focus of the program is to introduce young children to the game of soccer and the concept of being on a team, improve confidence of ball skills, develop decision making, and promote good sportsmanship.

Players in the Grade 1 age group have (1) practice during the week and (1) game on Saturday.

As you work with the first graders, keep in mind:

- these players still have short attention spans
- some of these kids have played soccer before and some haven't, so be sure to find out and structure activities so the same one or two players don't dominate
- some of these players may still be nervous and apprehensive about the more structured sports environment and team sports might still be new

As you move through your sessions:

- reinforce basic attacking and defending concepts through offense and defense
- if you find something that works, don't be afraid to repeat it again and again
- if something doesn't work, move on and try something else
- move onto a new activity before your players get tired of the one you are doing
- activities don't always need to include a soccer ball, especially those that reinforce agility and freedom of movement

Previously introduced skills to reinforce and further develop at this age include: dribbling straight and with turns, reversals, receiving the ball, two touch timing, and shooting with the inside of the foot.

New skills to introduce for the first time include:

- dribbling straight with different parts of the foot
- dribbling turns with different parts of the foot
- dribbling under pressure
- receiving the ball with the outside of the foot
- two touch timing under pressure
- passing and shooting with the laces and outside of foot

Basic warm ups can be helpful to get the kids organized and to get them warm in cooler weather, but keep them moving and keep them brief.

Games/Scrimmages: 4 on 4, no goalies, coaches monitor out of bounds marked with cones or lines, get ball back in quickly and keep game moving.

## **Second Grade Academy Program:**

The HWYSA Second Grade Academy Program is an in-town skills development continuation and refinement program for players in Grade 2 (7 and 8 year olds). We designate this as an Academy Program because we make a concerted effort to teach players and coaches specific skills, rules, and respect for the game beyond the basic knowledge provided to younger players. We also partner with professional coaching programs to supplement the instruction.

Players in the Grade 2 age group have (2) practices during the week and (1) game on Saturday.

As you work with the second graders, keep in mind:

- some of these players still have short attention spans
- some of these kids have played a lot of soccer before and some haven't, so be sure to find out and structure activities so the same one or two players don't dominate
- players are starting to develop at very different rates so attention to individual skill instruction is extremely valuable

As you move through your sessions:

- reinforce attacking and defending concepts through offense and defense
- teach position responsibility
- repeat activities that work
- if a professional coaching partner is brought in to supplement the academy program, please attend those sessions to work with the players and learn the activities being taught so you can reinforce them in other practices

Previously introduced skills to reinforce and further develop include the following concepts: dribbling straight and with turns using different parts of the foot, dribbling with and without pressure, reversals with different parts of the foot, two touch timing, shooting with different parts of the foot, and passing with the inside and outside of the foot.

New skills to introduce for the first time include:

- shielding techniques
- using the bottom of the foot in turns
- learning the defensive stance
- decision making to tackle the ball
- movement for passing options
- one touch timing
- using words to receive ball
- receiving the ball with the chest and thigh
- step in and shield contested ball
- positioning to shield
- position responsibility with offense, defense, left, and right
- throw ins

Basic warm ups can be helpful to get the kids organized and to get them warm in cooler weather, but keep them moving and keep them brief. Static stretching is typically not recommended.

Games/Scrimmages: 4 on 4, no goalies, coaches monitor out of bounds, use proper goal kicks within general goal area, corner kicks, and introduce throw ins for side line restarts.