

# Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association



Coaching School

## *F License Manual 8 Hour Course*

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[www.mayouthsoccer.org](http://www.mayouthsoccer.org)

The **Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association** (Mass Youth Soccer) is the official representative of the United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer), the national governing body for soccer in the United States, and United States Youth Soccer Association (US Youth Soccer) in Massachusetts. At the international level, Mass Youth Soccer is a member of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). FIFA is the worldwide governing body for soccer and is responsible for organizing, developing and promoting the game of soccer throughout the world. Despite the geographic size of Massachusetts, Mass Youth Soccer is the second largest of 55 state youth soccer associations with over 200,000 members.

Mass Youth Soccer exists to promote and enhance the game of soccer for the youth of Massachusetts and to encourage the healthy development of those players. It does so by offering and sponsoring a variety of programs designed to improve the quality of players, coaches and administrators. We strive to serve players and coaches at all levels:

- The recreational player and coach who are out solely to enjoy the game.
- The club or travel team player and coach who enjoy the spirit of competition.
- The premier player and coach who are looking to raise their play to its highest levels.

The Mass Youth Soccer membership is made up of more than 181,000 players and 24,000 adults. Members are affiliated by more than 427 separate soccer organizations throughout the state (towns or clubs). While these organizations administer their own local programs, they often take advantage of the assistance provided by Mass Youth Soccer (1) to develop and educate their coaches and players, (2) to provide insurance coverage for their participants, (3) for administrative assistance, (4) for board development, (5) as an encyclopedic resource for soccer, and (6) for help in setting organization goals in fitting with development of soccer in this state and the country.

Programs our Instructional Staff currently run to serve these goals include:

- Coaching Licensure Program---we are the **ONLY USSF approved coach licensing body** in the state .
- Coach Education Program---through 2 hour Specialty Clinics and working with specific teams and age groups for towns and clubs, we provide continued education year-round.
- Skills Academy---we run weekly sessions focused on technical training and allow coaches to shadow and ask questions to develop both coaches and players.
- GK clinics---we provide player and coach specific GK sessions as you need them.
- Board Education---our professional staff will attend your board meetings to help serve as an unbiased resource or to meet with board members to help focus organizational goals.
- Team/Player Development sessions---we will run age specific sessions for your team or all the players in your town or club to help with player development and educate coaches.
- Player Camps---we will come to your town to run day camps for your players.
- ODP Coaching Education---we allow coaches to join our Olympic Development Mini-Camp to apprentice with state, regional, and national staff coaches to learn what is being focused upon with our elite players.
- Online G Course---the interactive instructor insures coaches will increase their education.
- Website---provides a wealth of information, including session plans for each age group

Whatever your needs as an organization, we are happy to help you as we all hope to provide the best experience for everyone involved in this wonderful game!

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

F Course Schedule.....	5
Course Introduction.....	6
Methodology .....	7
Child Development.....	8
Challenging Situations .....	11
Learning.....	12
Gender Differences.....	13
Guided Discovery .....	14
Mosston’s Slanty Line Theory .....	16
Styles of Coaching.....	17
Ethics .....	18
Parent Education.....	20
Practice Considerations and Organization.....	23
Implementing a Lesson Plan .....	25
Sample Coaching Lesson Plan .....	26
Passing and Receiving Model Session .....	27
Shooting Model Session.....	28
Small Group Defending (Pressure and Cover) Model Session .....	29
Technical Skills .....	30
Basic Defensive Tactics .....	33
Basic Attacking Tactics.....	35
Goalkeeping.....	36
Game Day Considerations.....	39
Small-Sided Games .....	40
Proper Warm-Up and Stretching .....	41
US Youth Soccer Game Recommendations .....	42
US Youth Soccer Official Under 10 Playing Recommendations.....	43
US Youth Soccer Official Under 12 Playing Recommendations.....	45
Risk/Injury Management and Prevention.....	47
Conclusion.....	50
Mass Youth Soccer Coaches Code of Conduct.....	51
Frequently Asked Questions.....	52

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Coaching Instructional Program! Those of us who run this program are passionate about helping children enjoy the game of soccer. By taking this course, you are telling us that you share this passion. Thank you greatly for taking the time and committing the effort to provide a fun and positive experience for the young players throughout Massachusetts. At over 200,000 strong and growing, these children are fortunate to have caring people like you involved in their lives.

It is our hope that all of us can strive to provide young players with a fun and challenging atmosphere at every practice. We hope that we can help children enjoy every game they play, regardless of the score. Through soccer, we not only have the opportunity to teach the game, but also to facilitate the learning of social skills, sportsmanship, an understanding of commitment, discipline and the importance of teamwork. Throw in teaching techniques and other aspects of the game and it is clear we have quite a lot on our agenda. Have no worries however, just as we break the game down into its simplest components for our players, we will do the same in the coaching arena.

This course should provide you with: 1) an understanding of the specific demands of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker and defender; 2) the ability to develop and run a progressive, topical practice session; 3) the ability to teach both technique and tactics and identify breakdowns of each sort; 4) an understanding of the physical and psychological strengths and limitations of players between age 11 and 14; 5) a basic understanding of the tactical components within 8v8 and 11v11 games; and 6) an in depth understating of long-term player development.

Whereas we will have suggestions for activities to use and methods by which to coach, the most valuable skill you bring to coaching is your ability to relate with children. Your personality, your smile, and your enthusiasm are keys to creating an optimal environment for the players. By showing your character and being yourself you will prove to be the most effective coach and the children will benefit optimally. That being said, it is of ultimate importance that we realize players' limits and capabilities at these ages. Just because the game begins to look like "the real game" at these ages, it does not mean the children are capable of understanding all aspects of the game. We must always focus ourselves on what is best for these young children's long-term development.

Thank you very much for taking the time to make children's experience a positive and fun one. Hopefully, you will find this course to be a similar experience. We wish you the best of luck in your upcoming seasons and hope you enjoy coaching for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Tom Goodman, Technical Director Mass Youth Soccer.

## Mass Youth Soccer F Course Schedule

**Pre- F Course-** Log onto [www.mayouthsoccer.org](http://www.mayouthsoccer.org) and go to “Coaching Courses” to take the Pre-F Course. All F Course candidates must take the Pre-F Course in order to receive their F License.

Time Period	Topic
<b>0 – 10 minutes</b>	Course Introduction
<b>11 – 50 minutes</b>	Methodology --Review main points of G --4 components of the game
<b>51 -70 minutes</b>	Explaining the Coaches Booklet
<b>71 – 200 minutes</b>	Field Sessions --Passing and Receiving Session --Goalkeeping --Shooting Session
<b>201 – 240 minutes</b>	Small Work Groups / Q & A --Construct practice sessions (dribbling & passing) --Q & A
<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>
<b>241 – 285 minutes</b>	Group Discussion --Gender differences --Motivation & Teambuilding --Dropout
<b>286 – 350 minutes</b>	Field Sessions --Heading activities --Small Group Defending
<b>351 – 380 minutes</b>	Candidate Led Practice --Passing or Dribbling
<b>381 – 420 minutes</b>	Field Sessions --Small Sided Games—4v4 --Basic attacking and defending tactics
<b>421 – 460 minutes</b>	Group Discussion --Injury Management --Ethics
<b>461– 480 minutes</b>	Closing --Q & A / Thank You! --Relate course to bigger MYSA And US Youth Soccer picture

**THE PLAYER SHOULD ALWAYS COME FIRST!**

## COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course is specifically intended for coaches working with children in the U10 and U12 age groups. Beginning coaches will find this a vital course to help them not only get through the season, but to help them enjoy it. More experienced coaches already know that U10 and U12 players provide specific challenges that are unique to these age groups. This course is designed to help all of us understand what players of this age are capable of doing and to teach skill-sets helpful in making your experience and the players' experience as positive and fun as possible.

We are sure to see a wide range of abilities at these ages. Some children we coach will be able to perform skills we cannot do ourselves. However strong their technical skills, we need to recognize that **technical development** should still be a primary focus at these ages. At both U10 and U12, the players will understand fundamental tactical concepts that we will go over in detail later in this manual. Whether teaching technique or going over these fundamental tactical concepts, we must never waiver from our philosophy of coaching, *“The Game is the Greatest Teacher.”*

Children of all ages learn through playing. Through trial and error, players learn what works and what does not work. By playing the game, they will learn lessons to help them be more successful. Through our guidance, players need to experience those trials and errors in order to learn. Over-coaching, which seems to be an epidemic these days, must be avoided. We must fight that urge to tell players all the answers. One thing we know for sure is that children know how to play without adult instruction. All we need do to test this truth is to watch a group of children at the park or during recess. Our first task as a coach is to let the players play without too much intrusion.

Of course, typical practices will consist of a variety of activities. We sincerely hope one activity included in every practice is the actual game (6 vs. 6 for U10 and 8 vs. 8 for U12). After all, are we not practicing for the game itself? We need to allow the players to experience the game every time they play. On the Mass Youth website, you will find many activities with which to fill your practices. A few commonalities seen amongst these activities are that they always include a ball, do not include *lines*, and are constructed to give all players many touches on the ball. Lines typically require children to wait, sometimes minutes, before their chance to play. Children have told us resoundingly that they enjoy playing more than waiting, so we need to set up activities that allow them to do just that, not stand in a line. And yes, *laps* are counted amongst lines. A skilled and educated coach knows how to build fitness into the training session without laps.

Another fundamental truth of coaching which needs attention is that *lecturing* is not a recommended route of instruction. Children do not enjoy being lectured. If we do lecture, the lingering question is how much of our lecture the players actually listen to before tuning us out. One might liken us to the teacher on the Charlie Brown cartoon when we are lecturing. Does anyone remember one word that teacher uttered? If we put these “rules of thumb” together, we come up with the slogan, *“No laps, no lines, no lectures.”*

## **METHODOLOGY**

The game of soccer can be easily broken down into four components: technical, tactical, physical, and psychological. Whenever running a practice we should do our best to insure that our activities include all of these components. Although we should try to incorporate the four components into all of our activities, we also need to recognize it is important to teach and coach in a manner that is appropriate to both age and ability. Here is a description of each of the four components:

### ***Four Components of the Game***

#### ***Technical***

Technique is the mastery of the ball using various body parts. Skill is the application of that mastery during the course of a game. At the U10 and U12 age levels, players need to continue to work on their technical proficiency and should be placed into situations in which we hope will increase their ability to manipulate the ball when under pressure. Technical proficiency needs to be shown at full speed and with defensive pressure.

#### ***Tactical***

Tactics are the parts of the game in which players have to make on and off the ball decisions based upon the position of teammates, opponents, where the ball is, where they are on the field and where the goals are in relation to the ball or themselves. U10 players are capable of learning angles of support, how and when to spread the field and the roles of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker and defender. The U12 age group is often referred to as “the dawn of tactics.” Players in this group should recognize width, depth, support, combination play, and the roles of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> attacker and defender.

#### ***Physical***

Each player has physical attributes such as strength, speed, agility, size, quickness and endurance. These areas can be maximized but are limited by the genetics of the athlete. At different ages, the development of different parts of the physique should be emphasized. Players do not need strength training but do need to know how to stretch properly and we should focus upon aiding their balance, coordination, and agility.

#### ***Psychological***

The psychological aspect of the game refers to the mental portion of the game. This includes competitive mentality, optimism, leadership and overall attitude among many things. The mental make-up of athletes can have a vast effect upon their performance and their enjoyment of the sport. Coaches and parents can have a large affect upon young people’s attitude towards sport and their opportunity to enjoy the game. Teambuilding becomes important at these ages, as does teaching our players to be resilient. Between U12 and U14, roughly 75% of players will quit playing soccer. This dropout rate is seen across all sports and is a startling number that we need to be aware of at all times. These players need to be allowed to have fun and soccer should be enjoyable above all else. If we fail to create this environment, we need not talk about any of the components of the game, as we simply will not have children who are willing to play.

### ***Economy of Training***

Training economically means the inclusion of more than one of the four components of the game into the same activities within a training session. An example of an uneconomical practice would be running for a whole practice. Fitness might be improved (though injuries increase); however, players would not improve tactically or technically. An example of an economical activity is ball tag which includes manipulation of the ball (technical work), turning, stopping, and running (physical), decision making (tactical), and if the coach sets the environment for success, confidence can be built by the coach (psychological). With the little time we spend with players, economical training is a must.

### ***Age Specific Coaching***

These two age groups often prove to be the most gratifying for coaches. The children are typically enthusiastic, thirsty for information, and have yet to enter into some of the rebellion often seen in teenagers. What encourages us even more is the fact that we see hints of the “the real game” at these ages and we see ourselves having a direct effect on the game as we make tactical decisions that drastically effect the game. As exciting as this can be, we must not sacrifice each of our player’s long-term development for an immediate goal. These players still need **constant technical repetition** and we must halt our urge to overly stress tactics in our practices. If we are spending more than 20% of our practice time stressing tactics, we are overdoing it.

Every child has the right to develop and the right to our attention and care as coaches. Whatever the scenario may be, it is not acceptable to write off any players at this age. We cannot reliably determine who will ultimately be the best players at age 18 based on what we see at age 10 or 12. Our job, is to continue to help each and every player develop both technical skills and an understanding of the game while having fun. It is not appropriate to lose focus of this during any practice or game...even a championship game!

## **CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Occasionally players may ask us questions that seem quite mature and demonstrate a great deal of insight. However, this does not mean that 10 or 12 year-olds are mini-adults. They need time to intellectually, emotionally and physically develop before reaching adulthood. Many players of this age are still not completely able to understand abstract concepts or incorporate multiple variables into their decision making process. By simply looking out on the field, the vast physical differences are clearly apparent. You may see children on the same team who are one foot different in height and fifty pounds different in weight. Development is still happening at these ages and in order to fully understand these children and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U10 and U12 children.

### ***Typical Characteristics of U10 Players***

- Attention span lengthens from U8 and they start to show the ability to sequence thoughts and actions.
- They start to think ahead and think “If this, then that”.

- More inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play.
- Demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility.
- They start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts.
- Children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure.
- Players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”.
- Players at this age are extremely rule bound—remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like them to live.
- There is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams.
- This is still a crucial age for technical skill development.

### ***Typical Characteristics of U12 Players***

- All children are maturing at different rates and are sensitive to that fact.
- Need to warm-up and stretch as muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common
- Typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations.
- They like to solve problems.
- Peer evaluation is a constant.
- Egos are sensitive.
- Coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt.
- Technique still needs to be reinforced constantly.
- Playing too much can lead to overuse injuries.
- Playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out.
- This is the dawn of tactics!
- Keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks. We never want them to stop doing these things and they will enjoy the freedom of being creative.
- Ask for feedback from them. They will tell you how things are going.
- Try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them. They will enjoy leading and it will add to the learning environment.

### ***Technical and Tactical Development of 8-12 year olds***

It is important that each player be shown their own improvement and that we do not compare all players to the “best” player. This will be discussed further in this manual under “Mosston’s Slanty Line Concept”.

We must still stress technical development at these ages. In particular, players need to be able to perform ball skills when under pressure. This pressure may come in the form of speed of play or in the form of a defender. Below are recommended guidelines of skill priorities for you to follow in your work with these young players.

U-10	<u><i>Field Players</i></u> <b>Dribbling focus from U8</b> <b>Passing with inside and outside of both feet</b> <b>Shooting with both feet</b> <b>Receiving the ball with all parts of body</b> <b>Proper 1 vs 1 and 2 vs 1 attacking and defending</b> <b>Intro to 2 vs 2</b>	<u><i>Goalkeepers</i></u> <b>Basic catching technique</b> <b>Basic throwing technique</b> <b>Diving to both sides</b>
U-12	<u><i>Field Players</i></u> <b>Continue with all U-10 focus</b> <b>Basic combination play</b> <b>Proper 2 vs. 2 attacking and defending</b> <b>Ability to chip the ball</b> <b>Accurately play long passes</b> <b>Intro to 3 vs 3</b>	<u><i>Goalkeepers</i></u> <b>Proper positioning</b> <b>Breakaways</b> <b>Tipping High balls</b> <b>Punting</b> <b>Goalkicks</b> <b>Passbacks</b>

Players at the U-10/U-12 levels should be learning to combine with teammates around them, using short ground passes and wall passes to move the ball forward. Players should understand how to support teammates with the ball and be learning to recognize where defenders are not (and hence where to attack). It is fair to say that children exiting the U10 age group should know attacking and defending responsibilities of 1 vs. 1 and 2 vs. 1 play. In addition, they should have a decent understanding of 2 vs. 2. However, expect to see a wide range of understanding of the defensive responsibilities of a second defender amongst your players. This is quite typical and highlights the fact that players are all maturing at different rates. That process, not only affects them physically, but also cognitively and socially. Some children may understand the idea of a second defender and some will not. Do not stress about this, as it is expected.

Tactically, U12 players should be aware of basic support positions and be willing to communicate. They should know to be side-ways on when giving support, know to make their first touch active, and know to never deaden the ball. Teaching combination play, movement as well as how and when to change the point of attack should be priorities for coaches. Defensively, players should know the roles of the first and second defender and know when to tackle versus when to contain. In addition, players should have a basic understanding of the roles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> attacker and 3<sup>rd</sup> defender. Similar to what we see at U10, not all players will understand the roles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> attacker and defender and we should not stress over this as understanding will come in due time. However, we will recognize a larger proportion of our players do recognize these concepts as this is the dawn of tactics.

Goalkeepers at the U10 level should have a basic understanding of their positioning in the goal. Being on their “ball line” (imaginary line drawn from wherever the ball is on the field to the center of their goal) is important for the players to learn. U12 goalkeepers should further understand this important concept as well as test their limits on how far off their goal line they can come out. Their decision making of when to come out for breakaways, cutting down angles on shots, and tipping balls over the crossbar will come with plenty of repetition.

Recognize that just because one player understands some higher level tactical ideas at this age, does not mean all players do. Spending a lot of time teaching tactics will not only detract from skill/motor-control development but it will not guarantee tactical knowledge as children will only be able to comprehend a limited amount of knowledge. Even if we are the best coaches in the world, children have a limit of conceptual understanding at this age. Expecting too much will result in teaching very little.

## **CHALLENGING SITUATIONS**

Children all develop at their own pace. They develop in differing ways and react to the same situations differently. Despite certain coaching behaviors proving extremely effective for many players, we may find there are still other players who do not react to our coaching in this manner. Some young players may not react to the social situation created in practice or games in the way you might hope. At these ages, many children typically display aggression or hyperactivity. In addition, social cliques may cause great rifts in your team that may generate avoidance behaviors. Unfortunately, there is no easy recipe for controlling these behaviors as they may be present in many different forms. We can discuss general methods that have proven successful at times.

### ***Aggression***

- Children displaying aggressive behavior are often most alarming as they may endanger others. It is our duty as coaches to provide a safe environment for all.
- An aggressive child should never be allowed to repeatedly endanger others.
- If a player demonstrates overly aggressive behavior, we must immediately talk to them and make sure they understand the behavior is inappropriate. It is best to set up clear guidelines such as, “If you do that again, you are going to have to sit out.”
- Severity of the behavior will determine if you need to take the player off the field or if you could give him/her “3 strikes” before being taken out. Once the player reaches the condition you set, it is important that you take the action you promised as empty threats will not deter overly aggressive behavior.
- You can explain why (in a few words) and show them where they need to sit
- After a short time (3-4 min.), we recommend that you ask the removed player to tell you why they were taken off of the field. If they calmly tell you and agree to discontinue his/her behavior, then the player should be allowed back on the field. If the player is stubborn and will not reveal why they are sitting out, he/she is not ready to return to play and should be given more time to cool off.
- If the behavior does not improve, you should talk to the player’s parents and enlist their help and guidance. You should also make your age group director or the appropriate board member in charge of your program aware of this difficulty to make sure it is seen as a team difficulty and not seen as a personal conflict.

### ***Hyperactivity***

Children are often energetic. However some children are not only energetic but actually hyperactive. These children may constantly fidget, have attention spans that are extremely limited and may prove disruptive to the rest of the team at times. It is our task

to make sure we use their energy positively and try to minimize any disruption. If a player is fidgeting as you are giving directions and it is not bothering the other players, you do not need to stop the fidgeting. Once it begins to bother others to the point they are unable to pay attention, you need to put it to a stop.

- Be careful in your evaluation of hyperactivity, as often times what we believe is hyperactivity is simply the result of our being too long-winded or not allowing the children to play enough to utilize their abundant energy.
- Give brief descriptions of activities; keep the kids playing! As the game begins you can then give further instructions. If the child still does not comprehend what to do by watching others play. Take a moment to reiterate your explanation. Remember, give clear, concise and be direct in your communication.
- If a hyperactive child returns from water breaks faster than others you may wish to ask him/her to juggle the soccer ball and beat their record of the previous week by one. If setting up cones or picking up cones, utilize their help. Try to think of ways to use their energy as opposed to curbing or fighting it.

### ***Social Cliques***

These ages become more dominated by social cliques with time and we need to make every effort to form a team and not a collaboration of cliques. Watch your team during water breaks, during selection of partners (which we do not recommend) and before and after practices and games and you will recognize the cliques easily. By always selecting pairs or groups of players, and by purposely breaking up the cliques with your selection, you can help build the team environment. You may need to choose activities that players have to work together to accomplish a task. It may be best to have a couple non-soccer gatherings with your team and parents to help foster the team atmosphere and further develop a team environment with the parents as well.

## **LEARNING**

It is critical for us to recognize that children have varied learning styles. Some children (20-30% ) learn when they hear things described to them. Others (45%) learn best when they see things but the majority (nearly 80%) learn best by doing. Here are brief descriptions of the varied learning styles:

### ***Auditory Learners***

Auditory learners learn best by listening. They often understand the nuances of speech we convey through tone, speed, or pitch. On the field they will listen intently to your words. It is important you provide clear, concise, and direct instructions.

### ***Visual Learners***

Visual learners learn best by seeing. They will benefit most not from your description of activities, but rather by seeing a demonstration. The adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” is often very true to visual learners. In school, these children prefer diagrams and overheads. On the field, they prefer to see what they need to do.

### ***Kinesthetic Learners***

Kinesthetic learners learn best by doing. The large majority of your players will excel through this means of learning. They learn through exploration and touching. You may actually find some children who are easily distracted unless completely engaged.

Overall, we need to make sure all of our players understand the messages we are trying to provide. The important thing to note is that the large majority of players will understand most easily by doing. Therefore, we need to make sure they are active as much as possible. Giving brief directions, providing a clear and simple demonstration, and then having the players engage in the activity will prove the optimal method of teaching. By doing this we quickly cover all types of learning.

### ***Amount of Information***

Eight to twelve year-old children do not have the same information absorption capacity as adults. For this reason we must consider how much information we can expect them to retain in one practice session or during one season. Keep the focus of your practices to just a few points, typically points that all fall under the same topic.

Remember children need repetition. It is not necessary to come up with new activities and challenges every practice. This does not add to development as much as confused them. We need to place them into situations in which they are being given the opportunity to solve similar problems and practice similar actions, especially as we ask players to perform skills at a faster pace with more pressure. They need to be given many opportunities to learn how to perform skills under these demands. As we teach tactics, the players need to see a similar picture time and time again in order to be able to recognize the cues they will use to guide their decisions. If children walk away from a practice remembering 2-3 related things, we have done a fantastic job of coaching that day. Remember, developing a soccer player is a marathon, not a sprint.

## **GENDER DIFFERENCES**

Although differences between males and females at these younger ages are not as drastic as those differences we all recognize when older, we must nevertheless be aware of the differences that do exist. Girls tend to mature more quickly than boys both emotionally and physically. Girls may enter puberty as young as 8, while boys do not typically enter puberty until age 11 or older. This simple fact warrants our attention and sensitivity.

With puberty comes a host of physical changes. We see both girls and boys that grow early and others who seem not to grow until later in their teens. Height itself has social implication for both genders. Of course physical strength becomes a point of issue for both genders as well. For many children approaching their teens, physical size can be a point of continued worry or sensitivity.

As coaches, we need to be supportive of the players at all times and be aware of safety issues during our practices. We can do a lot to help these players by choosing our groups carefully and pairing up players of similar physical strength and size. Simply watching

their reactions to events during the practice and game and giving encouraging words can go a long way in helping children who are becoming acutely socially aware.

It is also apparent there are social and emotional differences often seen between boys and girls. Boys tend to be more individualistic than girls and are typically quite willing to accept individual feedback in front of their peers. They are also more comfortable with others being given feedback in front of them. This differs from girls who tend to be more social in their thinking. We must choose our words carefully and use extreme caution when addressing the individual player. Girls of these ages are much more aware socially and comparatively than boys and tend to be more sensitive of being singled out even when we are making a positive point when singling out.

Boys may need encouragement to sort out problems as a team, where as girls are more likely to need encouragement to stand out on their own and “be a star”. Further boys will tend to deflect feedback that is not personally directed at them, where as girls will tend to believe general feedback is typically directed at them.

These are a few of the most commonly recognized gender differences in children of these ages. All players can be equally competitive and aggressive regardless of their gender. However, the other characteristics are critical in determining how to motivate each individual within a team. Of course, we must also do this while coaching the entire team and not sacrificing team morale. This can become a delicate balance between understanding the characteristics of the players and knowing how to use them to help us communicated better with the player and the team.

## **GUIDED DISCOVERY**

If you ever attended a youth soccer game, you are likely to hear many specific directions from coaches and spectators alike. We then expect this young player to sort through the information and then make a quality decision. All the contradicting information interferes with the player’s ability to solve the problem. As a result, the player now tries to kick the ball as far as possible or lower their head and run with it. It’s simple and sometimes gets results however, that doesn’t make for better soccer players.

If we asked these players to explain their decisions to us at the end of the game, or even immediately after their actions, it is unlikely they would be able to provide us with a rational explanation. If these players are placed in the same situation at a later time, they will not have experience from which to draw upon when faced with a similar situation. Many times the player will continue make the same mistake or randomly try something else in order to please the adults. This creates frustration for the player and can cause the player to stop playing all together.

So what can we do as coaches to prevent players from making the same mistakes and sense of frustration? We could continue to yell louder and hope they are listening to us. Of course, that will continue to make the game less enjoyable for the player. A better choice is to provide the players with the tools to make these decisions for themselves. If

our players understand when it is best to kick the ball forward or to run forward with the ball and why they are making all the decisions they are making during a game, then they will be able to improve their own play and be rewarded with success. Further, if they become thoughtful, strategic players they will have more fun, gain confidence, and your team's performance is more likely to improve continually.

By asking our players questions to which they must come up with answers, we can insure that our players are thinking, as opposed to mindlessly following our directions. By asking guided questions, we can help maintain focus and direction for our team and help provide learning experiences for our players.

When referring to guided questions, we mean that our questions should place our players on the right track (guide) in order to be able to solve the questions we pose. Some such questions may be quite direct and simplistic such as:

- What part of the foot do you use to make a short pass?
- Where should you aim when shooting on goal?

Questions such as these are called “low order” questions as they demand factual, memorized answers. In contrast, we could ask “high order” questions that challenge our players a bit differently by asking them to weigh options within the framework of a larger process. High order questions beg interpretation and comprehension over memorization or recall. Examples of “high order” questions include:

- How can we get the ball down the field quickly?
- Why should we play high-pressure defense?

Utilizing questions such as these will help our players learn and retain information that will aid them in making optimal choices as they play. It is not better to ask “high order” or “low order” questions, as they both serve helpful roles in learning. Our task as coaches is to find the proper balance of “high order” vs. “low order” questions for each of our players. In consequence, rather than waiting for us coaches to fix errors of play at half-time, our players will likely look to solve errors immediately during the game.

Through the use of guided questions, players develop confidence and learn to trust their own decisions. Of course, we must temper the difficulty of our questions to insure they achieve the success necessary to help build their confidence. Players may be a bit uneasy when asked these types of questions (especially high order) at first. For this reason it is a good idea to provide a few positive words before asking a question. For example:

- Great...so how could we do it faster?
- I like that answer...what other skill can we use to get the ball to our teammates?
- Now you're getting the idea! Where could you position yourself so that you could see both the player you are defending as well as the ball?

Now armed with the confidence and skill to evaluate situations and make decisions on their own, these players will look within themselves (not toward the sideline) in order to determine what choice to make on the field. As they become skilled at answering these questions, they will be able to increase their quality and speed of play. This will allow us to sit back in our chairs during games and appreciate the fruits of our practice efforts.

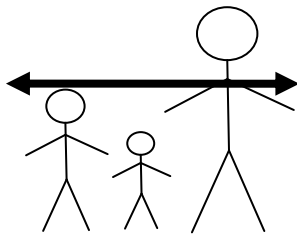
Using this method of coaching, we can help develop more competent players and more confident people. Although coaches and parents alike may find their sideline shouting ignored as players gain competence, I think both groups would be happy with that result. Here are a few more examples of guided questions to incorporate into your coaching:

- In a 3v3 situation, what's the best way to get the ball to your teammate? Try it!
- What happens when you pass the ball behind your teammate? Let's try it!
- Why didn't that pass work? So, how should we do it this time?
- How can we get the ball to the other side of the field?
- Why is it important for you to lift your head up when you have the ball?

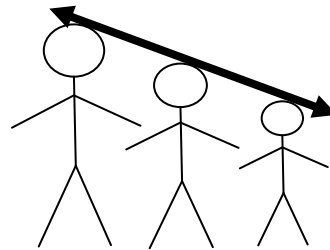
## **MOSSTON'S SLANTY LINE THEORY**

As mentioned previously you will find a great range of abilities amongst the players on your team. Because children are maturing at various rates, our most challenging task may be to find a way to run a practice in which we challenge each player at a level that befits their abilities. Do you set goals for all your players that are based on the performance of your best player? If so, do your lesser players have any chance of actually attaining these goals or are they constantly faced with failure? In contrast, do you set your goals according to the abilities of your lesser players in order that everyone on your team can reach the goals? If you do this it is likely your better players will find practice extremely boring and they will not develop or have fun. We are stuck with a problem if we do either of these things, so what do we do?

### **STRAIGHT LINE**



### **SLANTY LINE**



Think of practice as a jumping contest. If we hold a stick parallel to the ground and eight feet in the air (see picture above) and then ask all players to jump as high as they can and touch the stick with their hand, we will find most players have no chance of success. However, if we hold this stick at a slant and challenge players to touch the highest part of the stick they can reach, then each player can experience some success. Each time they jump, we can challenge them to try to improve the height they reach on that slanted stick. Therefore, they experience success and have reachable goals to strive for going forward.

This is Mosston's Slanty Line Theory in practice. By challenging each player in a manner that befits their abilities we will keep every player engaged and cognizant of challenging, yet reachable goals. By doing this, we are much more likely to aid in every player's development rather than challenging all players at a standard that only befit a few. Allowing each player to reach new goals will clearly enhance their enjoyment!

## **STYLES OF COACHING**

When working with players of any age it is most important to know that coaches need to adjust their styles of coaching to best fit the age level and personalities of the players. We suggested that a person who is an “activity leader” and facilitates fun and development would be an ideal fit for the U6 and U8 age groups. For the U10 and U12 age groups, we recommend that you serve as a “coach”. The primary role of the coach is as a person who leads players to discovering the options and optimal choices through the use of guided discovery. Coaches should not be telling players what they need to do, but rather be encouraging players to see all their options; allowing them to discover what choices is correct. Below are characteristics of a few common coaching styles.

### ***Activity Leader***

An activity leader is someone who sets an environment of play which allows “the game to be the teacher”. They choose the activities and what the object of the activity is, gauges and marks the size of the activity area, and figures out how many players should be involved. They will manipulate the duration of the activity, and how one activity transitions into another. An activity leader gives minimal feedback, and spends time watching to see if the activities are being successful. Success for U6 & U8 players can be measured by answering two questions. Are the players understanding and enjoying the game? Are the players touching the ball a lot? People working with U6 and U8 players need to be Activity Leaders.

### ***Coach***

A coach is a person who is not only able to be an activity leader, but who is also able to work with older players and make tactical and technical coaching points. Once players get to approximately eight years of age, they are ready to receive “some” coaching. It is still very important to let the players play as much as possible and not intrude on their playing too much in hopes of “coaching”. Coaches set up an appropriate environment and identify basic technical and tactical breakdowns to help players make improvements.

### ***Trainer***

The trainer is someone that is ready to work with teams who are playing 8v8 to 11v11, and who can make both tactical and technical points to boys and girls who are 12 and above. They tend to have high level coaching licenses and are able to teach tactics and general strategy to players in a very specific and educational manner. Trainers need to be able to analyze a game, identify team and individual problems, and be able to design practices that can re-create opportunities to correct and improve teams and individuals. They need to have a vision of what a good team/player is and what actions need to happen in order to get players and teams to that vision.

Whichever style of coach you are and whatever age level you are working with, it is important to be able to relate to the players so they recognize your ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Regardless of the activities you arrange or the points you make, you need to make a personal connection with players and make sure they realize their importance to the team.

## ETHICS

When talking about ethics, it is not always easy to know what is right or wrong, good or bad. All matters are not black and white and the gray area sometimes stretches quite far. Knowing as much as possible about the age group(s) you work with, your town/club philosophy, staying under those guidelines and understanding the laws of the game will provide you with a stable foundation from which to make most of your decisions. Understanding your duty, obligation and moral responsibility as a coach will add to your foundation. Remember, you also have the parents and players who can help you with individual circumstances.

According to Dr. David Carr, a (USYS) National Coaching Education staff member, and professor at Ohio University, there are five steps in making ethical decisions. These steps are obtaining and clarifying the important facts, identifying the ethical response, being sensitive to time, identifying extenuating circumstances and, finally, making a decision. If each time one of us is confronted with an ethical matter and we allow ourselves to analyze these five critical components and step accordingly, then some tough choices may be made easier.

You, as a coach, are assumed to have competence in the coaching arena. Many of us are given our coaching jobs based on proven skill and education. When thinking of coaching skill, we typically think of technical development, tactical guidance and physical development. People tend to look at a team's success or a player's success from the past. Sometimes the accomplishments seem great but are they still great if the coach sacrifices the integrity of the team or the players to achieve success?

Is it fair to say that along with the coaching skills mentioned above, there is still more needed to build a truly successful coach? A truly successful coach needs to build players' technical and tactical skill, physical abilities, and MENTAL skills. A focal part of building mental skills is teaching sportsmanship within and between teams. Thankfully, most coaches do demonstrate skill in building this area of need for players. Coaches often demonstrate integrity, show respect towards other coaches, players and referees, and have concern for the welfare of all involved in the game. However, if a coach has helped their team achieve many championships is it a fair trade for that same coach to sacrifice the individual player's development to ensure the win? Coaches may keep the strong player in the back who can 'boot' the ball really far to the fast forward up top. Thus, hoping they get as many 1v1's to goal and score as many goals as they can in the game. How does that affect the other players on the team? Are they getting the chance to improve and succeed? Coaches may play players in positions which they feel are best for the short term success of the team but are not beneficial for the long term development of each player. Is this an ethical concern?

What happens to the player who only receives minimal playing time? Is he/she being given a fair chance to develop? How about the player who only plays the last 5 minutes before the end of each half or after a game is "in hand" or "out of hand"? Are these players given the chance to understand the meaning of a close game and the excitement that goes with it? Will they learn how to perform under pressure if the coach constantly shields them from the challenges of the game?

Some situations may not seem to involve ethics, but they might if we spend some time thinking about them. Do you give extra help to the players with higher potential on your team? Do you applaud better player's performance more often? Is your tone of voice different with various players on your team because of their ability and the amount you like having them as players? Do you follow the same rules for players who miss games or practices, regardless of ability? We must be sensitive to these situations and make an effort to build our ethical skills, as much as we build our technical and tactical teaching skills. We are coaches of children first, players second.

To help us navigate through these gray seas, here are some scenarios to read, think about and come up with some possible solutions. The more we think about such scenarios, the better prepared we will be when we are confronted with ethical situations:

- 1) As an assistant coach, you notice the head coach's child is being given certain exceptions to the team policies, how do you handle this situation? How would you respond if the same child was not being given exceptions but had higher demands being placed on him/her?
- 2) A player on your team just moved into town and you put them on your roster. In the semifinals, you learn from a friend that the player is really one year older. If you win the game on Saturday you will go to the finals. The player has scored 90% of all goals. What do you do?
- 3) At the beginning of the season you told parents and players you would provide equal playing time throughout the season. It is now playoffs and two players truly "hurt" your team on the field. You make it through the first playoff game but know your team will not make it through another. This team is the best you have had and may be your only chance at a championship. Do you play those two players less now or still play everyone equally?
- 4) At training on Thursday the parent of your best player says that "Susie" is injured. The parent tells you that she will not be available to play in the game this weekend. You just start the game, look over at your bench and there is Susie dressed to go. When asked, Susie says, "my parents said it was ok and my aunt brought me to the game." As you look over to the side you see her bike near the field and know she only lives 3 blocks away. What do you do?

There is no simple right or wrong answer to these questions. If we always take a second to ask ourselves what is best for the CHILD and the integrity of the game, navigating will become much easier. Remember, not only are coaches expected to uphold a code of ethics, but so too are the player, parents, board members, referees and anyone else associated with the sport.

## **PARENT EDUCATION**

As players and parents are both often new to the game and the soccer world, it is extremely important to communicate with parents. This should be the job of both the team coach and the organization. Included in this section you will find guidelines and a sample parent handout for you as the coach.

At the start of the season, we recommend that you (the coach) hold a parent meeting to clarify goals and expectations for the team. Initiating this communication will help prevent confusion and stunt potential problems. It is recommended that you have something in writing to hand to parents at this meeting. By doing so you are insuring your words are not being misconstrued. If there is a concern down the line, you can reference the document to provide clarification.

In this document, it is important you list your coaching philosophy and your goals for the team and players. It is also important that you discuss attendance expectations and disciplinary measures as these areas are often the genesis of most problems. You may wish to inform parents how and when they can contact you if they have questions. Questions about players should not be asked in front of other players or other parents. Parents should not be asking questions during a game or practice or at any time you are with the team. Coaches have been known to have parents call at midnight or at 6 am to talk about their children. If you want to avoid this, make it clear in your meeting and on your handout. Finally, make sure to address sideline behavior. Parents need to remember they are role models for their children and uncontrolled behavior on the sideline is not acceptable. Each meeting will differ based on the age and level of the players you are coaching. However, here are sample handouts for a parent meeting:

## **Sample U10 Parent Meeting Agenda**

**Team Goals:** Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players. I hope to be able to teach the players needed skills that will help them improve in the game. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills and on basic tactics. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like “real soccer”. Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, game awareness, and enjoyment.

**Style of Play:** I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills in the game and show confidence with the ball. We will try to move up and down the field as a team, use combination plays and give proper offensive and defensive support. I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. We will not be spending a lot of time on tactics yet. We will spend most of our time on skill development and awareness; not positional duties and set plays.

**Attendance:** I will be at every practice and game foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 20 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

**Discipline:** I have been told I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior best without it detracting from the rest of the players’ experiences on the team.

**Communication:** I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at [soccercoach@sampleclub.com](mailto:soccercoach@sampleclub.com). Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 508-555-1234 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let’s schedule a time that works for both of us. Please do not ask to talk to me during a practice or game or immediately before or after the game or in front of your child. I do encourage open communication and questions as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

**Sideline Behavior:** Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

**Overall:** I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let’s all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let’s keep open communication. ☺

\*\*\* Have the schedule of all practices and games and the weather/medical emergency plan attached to this agenda.

## Sample U12 Parent Meeting Agenda

**Team Goals:** Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players. I hope to be able to teach the players to perform skills under pressure and at full speed, which will help them improve in the game. I also hope they learn how to make basic tactical decisions on their own during the games. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills and on basic tactics. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like “real soccer”. Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, tactical awareness, team-building, and enjoyment.

**Style of Play:** I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills and make tactical decisions in the game. We will try to move up and down the field as a team, use combination plays, and give proper offensive and defensive support. I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. It is my hope that the players will be coaches on the field for each other and will encourage each other as well.

**Attendance:** I will be at every practice and game foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 30 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

**Discipline:** I have been told I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior best without it detracting from the rest of the players’ experiences on the team.

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## **PRACTICE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **LENGTH**

- 75 minutes in length for U10
- 90 minutes in length for U12

### **ACTIVITY DURATION**

- U10 activities should last 10 - 20 minutes
  - in one practice there should be at most five activities
- U12 activities can last a bit longer, depending on the activity and level of engagement
  - in one practice there should be four or five activities

### **TRAINING FREQUENCY**

- U10 should train 2 times per week and have one game per week as well
- U12 should train 2 times per week and have one game per week as well

### **WATER BREAKS**

- Give water breaks every 15-20 minutes, more frequent if extremely hot.

### **BODY POSITION AND INTONATION**

- Always position yourself so that you can see all players
- Coaches should look into the sun or any distractions to help maintain player attention
- Let the wind carry your voice, do not talk into the wind
- Speak to the children at their level and make sure you have gained eye contact
- Only raise your voice with players when you need to show authority and gain control
- Change the tone of your voice and be animated—this helps makes activities fun and helps maintain focus

### **GENERAL COACHING GUIDELINES**

- Keep your instructions to a minimum. Talk for a **MAXIMUM** of 30 seconds at a time
- If you see players not understanding or enjoying a game, be flexible and change it
- Keep all players involved all the time. No players knocked out who then sit and watch
- Do not provide all the answers for the players. Allow them to solve problems and they will remember their solutions much more than your direction
- Coaching at these ages is best described as guiding discovery
- Encourage creativity
- **HAVE FUN!**

### **PRACTICE DAY PREPARATION**

- Make sure you prepare your lesson plan before arriving at the field
- Check the field for safety once arriving
  - make sure the goals are secure and will not blow over
  - make sure there are no dangerous holes in the ground
  - make sure there is no broken glass, rocks, or other dangerous objects on the field
  - make sure the ball, if shot, will not travel onto the road or into a dangerous area
- Set up your cones before players arrive. Do not have to take time during practice.

- Teach your players to get into an activity (such as keepaway) that they immediately begin playing when arriving at the field. You can then watch both arriving players and those playing. This helps the players focus for practice and is fun.
- Always finish your practices with a scrimmage

#### END OF PRACTICE

- Have players gather all cones, pennies and balls
- Check for injuries
- Ask players to teach you the main points of the day's practice
- Make sure everyone knows when and where the next practice or game is
- Insure every player has a ride home. Do not leave until all players are picked up
- Review the practice in your head
  - What went well? What would you change next time?
  - Did the players have fun? Did you have fun?
  - Were the activities appropriate?
  - Did the players learn what you hoped they would learn?

## **PRACTICE ORGANIZATION**

Coaches should organize the practice session in a progressive manner that becomes more like the actual game as practice continues. It must provide for individual, small group, large group and/or team activities. An example of a practice format would be:

A. Warm-Up – the warm-up prepares the player both physically and mentally for what is to follow in the training session. Warm-ups should incorporate a technical and/or tactical element as a lead in the training session. At the U12 age group, stretching should be integrated throughout the warm-up.

B. Small Sided Activity – small group games that provide a lead into larger group games. Small group activities will provide the majority of work within your coaching session and should cover your one chosen topic (Ex. dribbling OR shooting for one session). This activity may be non-directional (Ex. keepaway game) or directional (Ex. going to goals or targets) and will continue providing the technical repetitions as introduced in warm up.

C. Expanded Small Sided Activity - small sided games that now include more players and closely resemble the game of soccer. This activity must be directional and include a goal (can be multiple goals, end-lines or target players). Your topic still needs to be focused and taught during this activity.

D. Free Scrimmage – this does not necessarily mean 6v6 or 8v8. It means a game (without any manipulations) including as many players as you can up to the number that play in your league games.

E. Cool Down – following the training session a cool down of light, low intensity exercise and static stretching aids the player to recover from the training session. They have worked hard and this will help them to unwind physically and mentally.

## **IMPLEMENTING A LESSON PLAN**

During a session, a coach must recognize a “coachable moment” to give information to their players. A coachable moment is when a technical or tactical issue arises, based on the topic for the session. Each activity in a session plan will create a “coachable moment”.As coaches, we watch for these instances so that we can make our coaching points and teach our topics. With practice, coaches will learn how to find these coachable moments and recognize them in their sessions.

Once a coachable moment is recognized, there are several methods for giving information to the players. These methods are called “the coaches toolbox” and are listed from the least to the most intrusive. These methods are explained below.

### ***Coaching Methodology---The Coaches “Tool Box”***

- a) Allow the conditions of the game to coach the topic- touch restrictions, multiple goals, neutral players...
- b) Coach in the natural stoppages of the activity- ball goes out of play (ie., throw in, goal-kick...)
- c) Coach in the flow of the activity (large group)
- d) Coach individual players as the activity continues
- e) Coach using the “freeze” method

Regardless of the chosen method, remember to keep instructions short, detailed and topical (30 seconds for your coaching point). Paint a clear picture of what you want your players to do by reviewing what occurred during the run of play, rehearse the situation so your players gain success with what you are teaching them and then restart play using what you rehearsed with your players.

As we coach, we need to allow our players to play the game. Making a maximum of four coaching points per activity, using any of the methods discussed above, will help keep your activity flowing yet still providing instruction to your players. We do not need to coach every mistake that occurs as we would be stopping play too often. Pick your times to make your points and teach your players!

**SAMPLE COACHING LESSON PLAN**

**NAME:**

**TOPIC:**

**OBJECTIVE:**

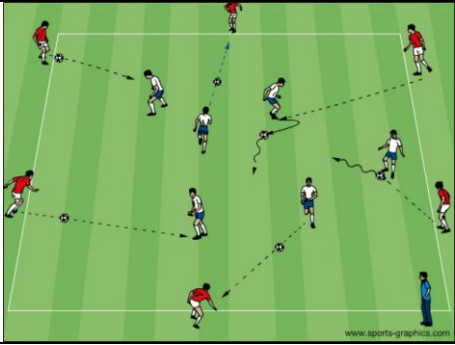
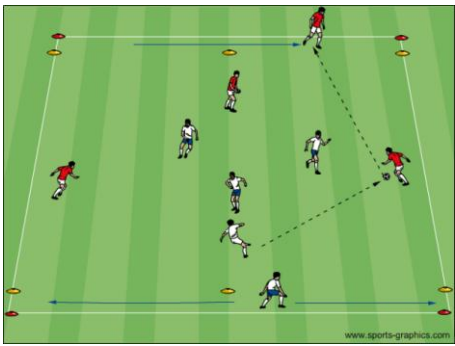
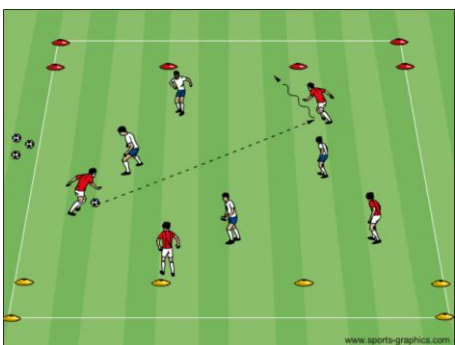
<b>Warm-up Activity</b>	<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>COACHING POINTS</b>
<b>Small Sided Activity</b>		
<b>Expanded Small Sided Activity</b>		
<b>Free Scrimmage</b>		
<b>6v6</b>		
<b>Cool-down</b>	<b>Light activity and Stretching</b>	

**F COURSE LESSON PLAN**

**NAME:** Instructor

**TOPIC:** Passing and Receiving

**OBJECTIVE:** To improve passing and receiving technique with the inside and outside of their feet.  
Recognize the correct timing and opportunity to pass.

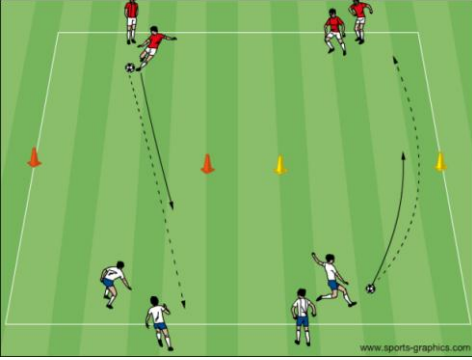
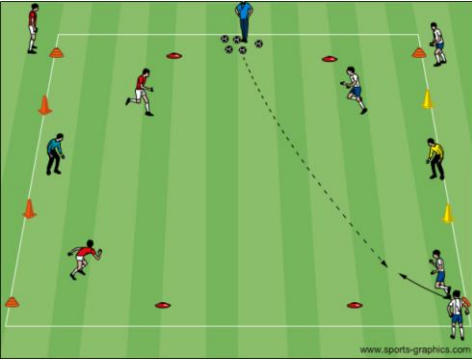

Warm-up Activity	ORGANIZATION	COACHING POINTS
	<p><b><u>Dutch Circle</u></b> Half the players on the inside (with soccer balls) of the circle, half on the outside. (20 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toe up (inside) or down &amp; turned in (outside)</li> <li>• Keep feet moving before ball arrives and go to it</li> <li>• Keep ankle of receiving foot locked and body behind ball</li> <li>• Eye on ball at instant of reception</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Small Sided Activity</b></p> 	<p><b><u>3v3+1 to Targets</u></b> To teams will try to connect passes and use the +1 players, the teams score a point when they connect with the target player. Coach must stress correct body position to receive and pass. (30 yards wide by 35 yards long) (15 minutes)</p>	<p>Same as above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft 1<sup>st</sup> touch receiving into space, away from pressure</li> <li>• Proper weight, accuracy and timing of passes</li> <li>• Proper angle and distance of support off the ball</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Expanded Small Sided Activity</b></p> 	<p><b><u>4v4 or 5v5 to end zones</u></b> Set up a 35 yard x 40 yard field with end-zones behind the 40 yd lines. Teams comprised of 4 players depending on numbers and space. The attacking team may dribble into the end-zone or pass to get into the end zone (marked with discs). (20 min)</p>	<p>All of the above Plus:</p> <p>1 pt for dribbling into the end-zone and 3pts for a well-timed pass into the end-zone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting position of players</li> <li>• Shape, width and depth</li> <li>• Body position open to field</li> <li>• Possession vs. Penetration</li> <li>• Dribbling vs. Passing</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Free Scrimmage</b></p>	<p align="center">Coach in the game (20 min)</p>	<p align="center">Same as above</p>
<p align="center">6v6</p>		
<p align="center"><b>Cool-down</b></p>	<p align="center">Light activity and Stretching</p>	

**F COURSE LESSON PLAN**

**NAME:** Instructor

**TOPIC:** Shooting

**OBJECTIVE:** Improve team’s ability to properly strike a ball. To foster the confidence to attack the goal and finish!


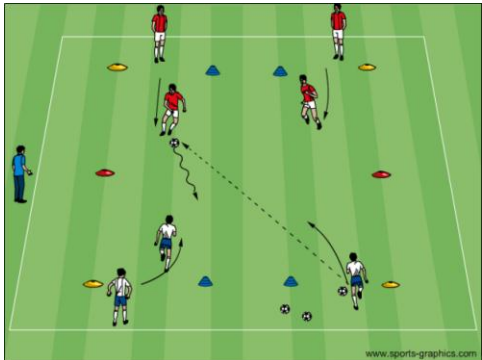
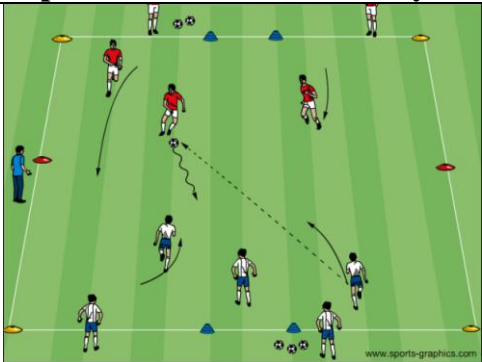
Warm-up Activity	ORGANIZATION	COACHING POINTS
	<p><b><u>Shooting Through the Cones</u></b>            Set up a line of cones about 6 yards apart (goals) for the players to shoot through. Position 2 to 4 players about 10-15 yards away from and on opposite sides of the line of cones. Players opposite each other proceed to shoot the ball through their cone goal and then follow their shot to the opposite side, working on correct shooting technique.  <i>(15 minutes)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep ankle of shooting foot locked with toe down</li> <li>• Slightly angled approach</li> <li>• Knees bent, body over the ball</li> <li>• Non kicking foot next to ball pointing towards the goal</li> <li>• Strike ball with laces</li> <li>• Strike through middle of ball</li> <li>• Follow through to target</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Small Sided Activity</b></p> 	<p><b><u>4 Corner Shooting</u></b>            On a field 20 yds wide by 25 yds long, position a goal on each end. Split group into two teams. Position half of red team in a line behind one corner of field, and the other corner of the field at the same end. Do same for blue team. Put a GK in each net. When a coach knocks a ball in at midfield, the 1<sup>st</sup> person in each (4) corner enters the field and plays 2v2 to goal. <i>(20 minutes)</i></p>	<p>All of the above plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation touch before taking a shot</li> <li>• Seeing opportunities to score and taking them (even half chances)</li> <li>• Get defenders to move to set up for a shot opportunity</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Expanded Small Sided Activity</b></p> 	<p><b><u>3v3/4v4 + Bumpers (Stand by players)</u></b>            3 Teams, two playing on serving as bumpers. As soon as one team scores the bumper team is in playing. Coach the opportunities of goals scoring. (30 yards wide by 35 yards long grid)  <i>(20 minutes)</i></p>	<p>All of the above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take shooting opportunities!</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Free Scrimmage</b></p>		
<p align="center"><b>6v6</b></p>	<p align="center">Coach in the game <i>(20 minutes)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as above</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Cool-down</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Light activity and Stretching</b></p>	

**F COURSE LESSON PLAN**

**NAME:** Instructor

**TOPIC:** Small Group Defending (Pressure and Cover)

**OBJECTIVE:** Improving the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defenders ability to defend

Warm-up Activity	ORGANIZATION	COACHING POINTS
	<p><b><u>1v1 to Small Goals</u></b>            One group of players will serve to the other and defend the player with the ball applying the principles of 1v1 defend. First attacker will try to dribble inside opposite goal. (12 yards wide by 15 yards long)  <i>(15 minutes)</i></p>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Defender should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Approach fast, arrive slow”,</li> <li>• bend run, correct stance, try to win ball off first touch of opponent, delay progress of opponent by jockeying the player with ball, try to force them out of play</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Small Sided Activity</b></p> 	<p><b><u>2v2 to Small Goals</u></b>            In a grid two teams will play to score in the goals. Player will defend applying the principles and roles of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> defending (20 yards wide by 25 yards long grid)  <i>(20 minutes)</i></p>	<p>All of the above, plus:  <b>2<sup>nd</sup>. Defender should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be at approximately a 30 degree backward angle to the 1st def.</li> <li>• Communicate with 1<sup>st</sup>. defender</li> <li>• Once ball is passed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker, the defenders’ roles change, and the previous 1<sup>st</sup> defender needs to drop off and cover (now serving as 2<sup>nd</sup> def.)</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Visual and verbal cues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When and how to switch</li> <li>○ Angle of coverage</li> <li>○ When and how to tackle</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Expanded Small Sided Activity</b></p> 	<p><b><u>3v3 to Small Goals</u></b>            In a grid two teams will play to score in the goals. Player will defend applying the principles and roles of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defenders. (30 yards wide by 35 yards long grid)  <i>(20 minutes)</i></p>	<p>All of the above plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing when to be the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defender</li> <li>• Shape, balance, communication</li> <li>• Visual and verbal cues               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ When and how to switch</li> <li>○ Angle of coverage</li> <li>○ When and how to tackle</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Free Scrimmage</b> 6v6</p>	<p align="center"><b>Coach in the game (20 minutes)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as above</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Cool-down</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Light activity and Stretching</b></p>	

## **TECHNICAL SKILLS**

### ***Dribbling Coaching Points***

- Bend knees and stay low
- Use arms for balance and to find out where opponents are
- Use insides, outsides and soles of the feet to dribble the ball
- Try to keep your head up once comfortable with ball at feet
- Change of direction and speed
- Body sideways between defender and the ball, ball on outside foot, with arm providing protection when shielding
- After performing a move, get away from pressure or go past the opponent quickly
- Balance and body control are of great importance
- Use outside of foot and toe for speed dribbling
- Creativity and instinctive play
- Encourage attacking soccer and taking players on—Role of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attacker

### ***Passing Coaching Points***

- Locked ankle
- Toe up (inside of foot) or down & turned in (outside of foot)
- Eyes on ball at instant of contact
- Placement foot pointed to target and parallel to ball
- Be on your toes and balanced
- Go to the ball, do not wait for it
- Follow through to partner
- Strike ball solid through the middle
- Knees bent and balanced
- Accuracy, weight and timing of pass to feet or space

### ***Shooting Coaching Points***

- Ankle locked, Angled approach to ball; non-kicking foot beside ball
- Knees bent, head down, hips and knee over ball, body slightly leaning over ball
- Eyes on ball at instant of impact
- Follow through to target
- Strike center of ball; move through ball and land on shooting foot
- Strike ball with laces so that ball strikes hard bone on top of foot
- Proper technique and body control
- Find a way to score and frame the goal!

### ***Receiving on the Ground Coaching Points***

- Ankle locked and get body behind the ball
- Be on your toes and go to the ball, do not wait for it
- Eyes on the ball at instant of reception
- Present outside of foot to the incoming ball pull the receiving foot back (to cushion)
- Keep feet moving before ball arrives, do not stop the ball
- Speed of play and fast, accurate decision making
- Non-kicking leg slightly bent, and kicking foot bent enough so that foot contacts the ball in the upper half

- Make your 1<sup>st</sup> touch active by pushing the ball in the direction in which you want to go (typically away from pressure)
- Practice with both feet and all parts of the foot (inside/outside)
- Always try to receive the ball facing the way you want to play

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Common Errors: reaching for the ball as opposed to getting body behind the ball, not being on toes and able to move quickly, pushing ball too far out in front of self, stopping the ball completely, not picking head up to see options before receiving, not keeping ankle locked, blocking ball as opposed to cushioning in

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***Receiving in the Air Coaching Points***

- Be on balls of feet and get body behind ball
- Move to the ball, do not wait for it
- Try to drop the ball in front of body so it is in your control but not under you

***Laces***

- when using laces, lift foot up to meet the ball
- as ball is about to make contact, drop foot down and cushion ball on top of foot (laces) to the ground

***Thigh***

- when using thigh (not knee), lift thigh up to meet ball
- once ball touches thigh, drop leg down to cushion the ball
- make sure you push ball slightly in front of you so you can handle it easily
- ball should not pop up as you cushion it
- make sure players use middle of thigh to cushion balls



**Proper Thigh Control**



**Improper Thigh Control**  
(eyes closed, arms not out for balance, leaning backwards, ball popping up)

***Chest:***

- when using chest, bend knees with feet staggered and slightly arch back while using arms for balance
- cushion ball (collapse chest) as it hits chest and guide it to feet
- do not push out chest to pop the ball out too far in front of you



**Proper Chest Control**



**Improper Chest Control**  
(eyes closed, arms not out for balance, feet parallel)

***Heading Coaching Points***

- Keep eyes open and focused on the ball, mouth closed
- Strike the ball, do not let the ball strike you
- Surface of contact should be upper half of forehead, NOT TOP OF HEAD
- Upper body and neck must be flexed and tight
- Players should snap neck and torso through ball for maximum power
- Use arms for balance, protection and to create space
- Keep feet staggered for balance

***Offensive Heading***

- Try to hit the top half of the ball in order to head the ball down
- Direct the ball to the corner of the goal closest to where the ball came from

***Defensive Heading***

- Try to hit the lower half of the ball to drive the ball far and wide
- Do not wait for the ball to come to you, jump and get to it as early as possible

## **BASIC DEFENSIVE TACTICS**

Defending is often the most ignored part of the game and yet is the area in which we can improve performance most quickly. Just as attacking is a skill, proper defending is as well. Although we often fall into the trap of thinking our defenders should “just work harder” it is not typically the case that effort is failing our players. More regularly they struggle defensively because they do not know how to defend appropriately. Nevertheless, there are some basics we can teach our team to improve our chances of seeing quality defending. There are a number of basic defending concepts that are fundamental in teaching defense:

**Pressure** - Immediate pressure (chase) on the opponent with the ball should be applied by the closest defender. Therefore delaying the opportunity to play the ball forward. Delaying this opportunity allows the defending team to recover and organize. *Role of the 1<sup>st</sup> Defender.*

**Cover** - With the 1<sup>st</sup> defender pressuring the ball to delay play, the other players should be recovering into defensive positions to provide cover. These players should be positioned so that they can not be easily penetrated if the 1<sup>st</sup> defender is to be beaten. *Role of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Defender(s).*

**Balance** - Defenders away from the ball position themselves to cover vital spaces (central areas) in order to prevent penetrating runs by attackers into goal scoring areas. See the ball, see the player away from the ball threatening space behind them. Travel to add pressure as the ball is in flight to that player or track the penetrating run away from the ball. *Role of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Defender(s).*

**Compactness** - Defenders recover centrally toward their own goal. They must reduce the spaces between them and be positioned to cover a team mate should the space be breached. (*Team*)

**Counterattack (Transition)** - On regaining possession the team should quickly look to penetrate the opponent’s defense maintaining possession. (*Team*)

\*\* Please understand it is important to teach your players how to defend 1 vs. 1 before you do anything else. It is recommended that you then build up your numbers from that point so players can learn the challenges of the defensive game at a pace that will allow them to fully understand these concepts. If we jump right in and ask our players to understand the roles of all defenders at once, they will be overwhelmed and both your team and individual defense will suffer.

Try not to stray to other topics when teaching defense. Keep the practice focused on defensive play. A basic concept of team defense is that you want your team to try to make the field as compact as possible when on defense. Before you can discuss this however, you need to talk about the roles of the individual defenders. If you follow these main coaching points, you will find your players will improve their defensive play:

- Defenders need to have the correct stance – be on their toes, with knees bent, one foot forward, one back, trying to anticipate when to close down their opponent
- 1st defender needs to bend their run to “take away” (block the path to) the goal, or force the ball in the direction of the second defender
- The 1st defender then needs to “approach fast, arrive slow”
- 1st defender orders of priority – a) try to win ball off first touch of opponent, b) delay progress of opponent by jockeying the player with the ball, and try to force them out of play or in the direction of the 2nd defender
- Once opponent goes where the defender wants them to go, they should tackle with front foot, not back foot
- 1st defender says “I have ball” and 2nd defender says “push left/right”
- Make sure that the 1st defender gets the head of the 1st attacker down by getting close (within arms length) to the 1st attacker ASAP
- 2nd defender needs to be at approximately a 30 degree backward angle to the first defender on the side to which the 1st defender is showing the ball towards
- 2nd defender tells 1<sup>st</sup> defender which way to push attacker and gets ready to step towards the 2nd attacker if the ball is passed to them
- The defenders’ roles will sometimes reverse when the ball is passed and the previous 1st defender needs to be ready to drop off and cover
- 3<sup>rd</sup> defenders serve as communicators and players who balance the field in order that your team does not get beat on “the back side”
- It is important that you do not play your 3<sup>rd</sup> defenders too deep as that will allow the offense more space and leads to more offensive success

There is a lot of information in these bullets and it will take months if not years to train your players to do all these things well. Please be patient and at the U10 level, try to make sure all your players understand the roles of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defender. By the time players leave the U12 age group they should thoroughly understand the role of the 3<sup>rd</sup> defender as well.

If your team looks to recover behind the ball immediately after a loss of possession, these defensive roles will take form quickly. However, our teams need to recover before these roles even become appropriate. If we have numbers down on defense all the time, we can only hope for the best before the bough breaks.

Once we have taught our team to recover and to slow down the other team’s attack as quickly as we can, our team can organize themselves to play strong team defense. As mentioned before, strong defensive teams typically keep the field compact (they do not let the offensive team spread out and use the entire field) in order to force the offense to play into tight spaces, which often results in giveaways. This is made quite easy if the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defenders are doing their jobs because the defense is then dictating what spaces the offense can play the ball into. This makes the game predictable for the rest of the defense and allows them to intercept passes much easier.

## **BASIC ATTACKING TACTICS**

We all love to see games in which our teams score multiple goals and demonstrate creative play. It is easy to recognize our appreciation of effective attacking play, however it is not so easy to teach. Unlike defense, in which strength comes from organization and structure, strong attacking play is birthed from creativity and dynamic change. Nevertheless, there are some basics we can teach our team to improve our chances of seeing quality attacking play. There are a number of basic attacking concepts that are fundamental in teaching attack:

**Penetration** – It is the responsibility of the player in possession. Depending on where the player is on the field, they should be looking to penetrate the opponent’s defense by passing, shooting, dribbling to feet or to space. *Role of the 1<sup>st</sup> Attacker.*

**Depth (Support)** – Depth in attack refer’s to support play. The support of the player in possession. Support has to be provided in advance, to the side or behind the ball. The first look of the player in possession should be forward. Angles and distances of support are important. Also the timing of supporting runs from the front, side or behind the ball. If your team consistently has more players near the ball than your opponent, you should be able to maintain possession. *Role of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Attacker(s).*

**Width/Length** - Successful teams use the full width and length of the field. This stretches the opponent’s defense. It also creates less pressure in the central areas of the field. *Role of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Attacker(s).*

**Mobility** - Creating space for one’s self or teammates is very important. Good movement both with and without the ball. Players without the ball should be looking to unbalance the opponent’s defense by threatening to move into goal scoring positions of space behind them.

**Improvisation** - Individual flair should be encouraged to create shooting or passing opportunities for themselves or team mates. Quick feet, and the ability to turn and change direction to create space. Being unpredictable is very hard to defend.

These fundamental principles are imperative if trying to maximize offensive opportunities. However, they are general attacking concepts and not specific coaching points. Just as we said we need to teach players the fundamental roles of the first and second defender before teaching team defense, we need to teach the roles of the first and second attacker before teaching team attacking tactics. Here are some useful coaching points:

- The 1st attacker is the player with the ball at their feet
- The 1st attacker usually looks to dribble into open space
- When taking on a defender, an attacker should dribble at speed at the defender
- The 2nd attacker should make a run in support of the 1st attacker

- This could be a straight run, a bent run, an overlapping run, a run in order to execute a take-over, a run to set up a wall pass, or many other options
- 2nd attackers should be allowed to be creative and explore various runs to see what works in various situations
- The 1st and 2nd attackers need to communicate either verbally or nonverbally
- The 3rd attacker is trying to make a run to unbalance or disorganize the defense

These straightforward coaching points do not need to be made more intricate or elaborate for our players. We need to make the game simple for our players offensively and allow them the freedom to see what works and does not work. It is reasonable to expect your U10 players to understand the roles of the first and second attacker and also reasonable for U12 players to thoroughly understand the role of the third attacker.

If your players know these roles, your attacking play will flow much more smoothly. In contrast to when playing defense, we will have more success offensively if we spread the field both wide and long to create gaps in the defense. We also need to recognize if the defense is not recovering quickly and try to attack with pace in order to take advantage of having a numbers up situation. As stated earlier, if we can get our players with the ball at their feet behind the defense, good things usually happen.

## **GOALKEEPING**

Quite often coaches wrestle with the question of when to encourage a player to specialize in the GK position. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer as the correct response will vary for each individual player. However, it is clear that whether a player has focused solely upon playing GK at the age of 10 or 11 or not is not the primary determining factor as to whether that young player becomes a top-level goalkeeper. It is also apparent goalkeepers need to have strong technical foot skills if they do wish to become top-level goalkeepers. For this reason we need to make sure we do not push young players to specialize as a GK at the cost of their overall technical development.

The primary determining factor in deciding whether or not a player should focus solely on the GK position is his desire. That is, the player's desire should take precedence over all else, including the coach's and parent's desires. If young players truly enjoy playing the position and find they enjoy the game most from that position, then by all means, let them play GK.

For the majority of teams at the U10 age group there may be a couple or handful of people wanting to play GK. In these situations it is best to rotate all those who would like to play. Some teams may suffer from having no one who wants to play the position. In these cases, you may need to make a master GK schedule for the entire season and have all the players play an even amount of time at the position.

At the U12 age group we typically see a couple children who express more of a desire to play the position often. Again, if it is their desire, then there is no reason why we should not allow these children to play the position more than other positions.

### ***Catching Technique for Goalkeepers***

- High "W" hand position. The "W" is formed by the thumbs and index fingers.
- "W" hand position for middle and high balls.
- Both palms of the hands must always be turned outwards to the ball. This means the body position will have to be adjusted to ensure that both palms get behind the ball. The object is to present the maximum amount of palm and fingers to the ball.
- Hands leading (bent elbows, giving a strong, shock-absorbing effect), shoulders square to the ball.
- Hands together, fingers pointed towards ground for low balls(scooping into body).

### ***Technical Points on Body Shape (ready position to catch shot)***

- Standing in a "Gorilla" shape-shoulders rounded, knees bent, feet square to body, arms out to sides and slightly forward with elbows slightly bent.
- Make sure when catching ball, the hands always lead, not the knees.

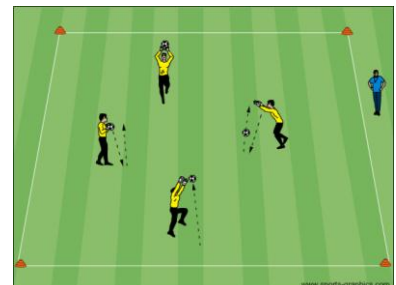
### ***Technical Points on Diving***

- Lead step forward to meet the ball
  - Lead with the hands, eyes on the ball
  - Catch the ball in a W grip with one hand on top and one hand behind the ball
  - Land on your side (hip and shoulder) with top leg up for protection
- 1) **Basic Diving:** Each GK is seated on the ground, with knees bent. They must place a ball about 2 steps away to the left or right at a 45 degree angle in front of them. The GK must roll down their side reaching out to make the save. (should hit on back of shoulder and side of body.) *Version 2:* players partner up and one partner working (sitting), one as server who is a few steps away. Server will roll the ball at a 45 degree angle, slightly in front of the keeper, alternating the left and right side.
  - 2) **Kneel Diving:** Each GK has left foot planted on the ground (leg closest to the ball) and right knee on the ground (kneeling on right knee). With ball about 2 steps away to the left at a 45 degree angle in front of them. Now a small step must be taken at a 45 degree angle towards the ball with their left foot which is planted before reaching hands first to ball. *Version 2:* Partner up, having ball rolled to them.
  - 3) **Standing Diving:** Each GK in a ready position with a ball 4-5 steps away to the right or left of them at a 45 degree angle out in front. GK must take a large poser step towards the ball and collapse in the direction of the ball, rolling down their side and reaching out to make the save. *Version 2:* Partner up, ball served to them.

### ***Goal Keeper Activities***

- 1) **Catching Warm-Up** – GK's walk around area bouncing ball on ground and catching with proper hand positioning. *Version 2:* GKs bounce ball to each other while walking around area.

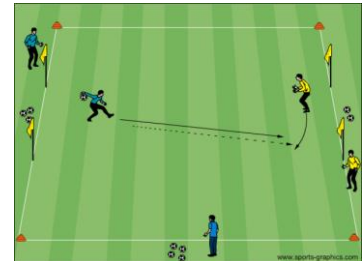
**Coaching PTS:** "W" hand position on any ball waist height and above (formed by thumbs and index fingers, for low balls have hands together with fingers pointing towards the ground (pinky's together like a shovel scooping into the body)



- 2) **High Catch Warm-Up** – Each GK with a ball walking around area and simply tossing ball in air to self and catches. Try to catch ball at highest point possible with proper hand positioning and knee up.

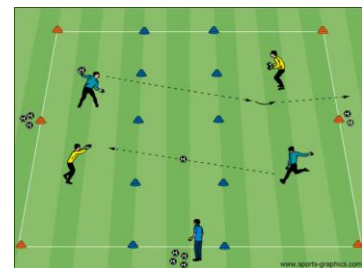
**Coaching PTS:** “W” hand position on any ball waist height and above (formed by thumbs and index fingers) Instruction points, drive up to reach ball at the highest point for themselves with one knee and both hands going upwards, communication (yell “Keeper”)

- 3) **Partner Catching** – In pairs, both in a goal, and roughly 10 yds apart, GK 1 rolls ball to GK 2. GK 2 comes forward, scoops ball up by getting hands behind ball and securing ball in chest while keeping momentum coming forward. GK2 then returns to starting position (rest time) and finally rolls ball back to GK 1 who performs the same task GK 2 just did. GKs alter service from low balls to medium height balls, to high balls. *Version 2:* Make it competitive and have goalies try to score on each other with throws.



**Coaching PTS:** go to the ball and carry momentum forward, quick lateral footwork to get body behind every ball to limit diving, be in a ready set position before every ball.

- 4) **Goalkeeper Tennis** – Teams of 2 GK’s on opposite sides of a grid, with a safety zone between sides of the grid. Serve is made by a punt. Play then continues by players catching balls played to their side by the other team and throwing the ball back in an attempt to have the ball bounce and exit the endline. Each time this happens a point is scored. *Version 2:* If a GK drops a ball played to them, it is an automatic PK for the opposing team, *Version 3:* Allow the ball to exit the sidelines (after bouncing) as well as the endline in order for a team to score.



**Coaching PTS:** service should be low since we would want low service to a field player’s foot in a real game, communication between keepers loud and early, decision making of where to distribute ball to and how to execute a throw.

- 5) **Goalkeeper Wars** – In an area 18yd long (depending upon ability level of GK's-you will need to adjust) with two goals on either end and a dividing line in between the distance, GK 1 can shoot or throw ball and try to get into GK 2's goal. GK 2 makes the save and can shoot, throw, or shoot the ball into GK 1's goal. GK's cannot go over dividing line. The first GK to score 10 goals wins.



**Coaching PTS:** feet set for shots, positioning on ball line and a few steps off goal line  
**Bowl:** ball must be cupped, GK stepping forward with opposite foot from serving hand, low body posture, release the ball low  
**Round House:** ball cupped in hand straight back behind GK, bring hand with ball up over your head with elbow locked and shoulder going forward then release the ball as hand comes up over the shoulder. Release early for a high service, or late for a low service  
**Baseball:** ball in palm of hand besides head and is thrown straight forward as GK steps into throw, let ball roll off fingertips, backspin will help settle ball quicker

## **GAME DAY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **BEFORE THE GAME**

- Make sure you have your medical kit and ice
- Welcome all your players individually as they arrive
- Organize the players into an appropriate warm-up (never start with stretching)
  - the warm-up should not include lines or laps
  - players should get a lot of touches on the ball
  - players should have to move in multiple directions (just like in the game)
  - players should develop a sweat before the game
- Make sure the players are properly hydrated
- Let the players know who is starting (and on what field if using the dual field set-up)
- Make a few coaching point reminders that pertain to the week's training
- Be enthusiastic and encouraging
- Relax and enjoy the game!

### **DURING THE GAME**

- Sit in a chair and relax if you are not needed to referee the game
- Encourage the players, do not shout instructions (you are a model for the parents)
- If there is a referee, be supportive of the referee
- If you must give instructions, make them simple and to an absolute minimum
  - better to give individuals one-on-one advice personally than to yell
- Manage your substitutes fairly
- Relax and let the kids play!

### **HALFTIME CONSIDERATIONS**

- Make sure there are no injuries
- Allow everyone to get some water
- Ask players if they are having fun, then ask what is going well and what to improve
  - focus on two or three points to improve upon at most
  - set performance goals (do better at a specific skill) not result-oriented goals (win)
- Make sure players know who is on the field to start the half
- Relax and enjoy the second half!

### **END OF GAME**

- You and your players should shake hands with the other team and the referee
- Make sure no one is injured
- Ask the players if they had fun
- Point out a few positives from the game
  - Give every player an individual complement after the game (not formally)
- Remind the players about the time, day and place of the next practice
- Make sure all the players have a ride home
- Relax and enjoy the rest of your day!

## SMALL-SIDED GAMES

As each year passes, we gain a better understanding of the game of soccer. Every year that passes, we understand child development more as well. It is because of this growing knowledge that soccer and child development professionals worldwide promote small-sided games for children. United States Youth Soccer promotes playing 6 vs. 6 with U10 players and 8 vs. 8 with U12 players. In fact, not only does the National Director of Coaching promote this, but also every men's and women's national team coach, every state director of coaching in our country does and soccer federations including France, England, Holland, Germany, Brazil, Canada and many more do as well. Virtually every country around the world is recognizing that small-sided games are better for children for a variety of reasons. The first reason is that children get to play more and have more fun. If that singular reason does not stand on its own to convince you that small-sided games are best for children, these other reasons will provide further rationale:

### *Enjoyment*

- Children enjoy participation more than observation
- Every player gets more exposure to the ball ---- more participation!
- In 6 vs. 6: 12 players per 1 ball. In 11 vs. 11: 22 players per 1 ball
- In a 60 minute game: each player in 6 vs. 6 averages 5 min 0 sec on the ball  
each player in 11 vs. 11 averages 2 min 43 sec on the ball
- Research shows seeing oneself improve is a large component of fun for youth players (With increased time on the ball, children are more likely to see improvement)

### *Technical Development*

Repetition is the key to technical development and in small-sided games players get more technical repetitions:

- More overall touches on ball
- More dribbling
- More shooting
- More receiving
- More passing

Defensive repetitions also occur more often:

- More stealing ball from opponent
- More intercepting ball
- More blocked shot attempts

### *Developmentally Appropriate*

*Small-sided games are physically more appropriate for young players*

- Children's legs are smaller—the field should be as well  
Average adult step = 2.5 → 3.5 feet  
Average child step = 1.5 (age 6) → 2 feet (age 14)
- Children essentially have to run twice as much as adults to cover the same space
- Their cooling systems are less developed in that young players heat up faster and cool down slower than adults → big fields make them overheat!

*Small-sided games are mentally more appropriate for young players*

- Players are forced to problem-solve more often in small-sided games
- Most importantly, players face reasonably difficult problems
- Young players have limited ability to conceptualize abstractly and think in terms of 1 to 2 degrees of separation from themselves...they need exposure to problems within these frames so they can experience problem-solving success
- In small-sided games, they have repeated exposure to reasonable problems
- Learning is dependent on repeated exposure. Small-sided games do just that.
- Players experience more problem-solving success and build confidence
- Success + confidence = FUN!

### ***Building Athletic Mentality***

- With fewer players on the field, players need to maintain focus
- No time for regrets; with small numbers you need to get back in the play immediately
- Immediate defensive recovery needed
- Second chances arrive quickly, more chances for success
- Smaller field and increased involvement fosters positive aggression

### ***Coaching Considerations***

- Allows for more individual coaching
- Helps build relationships
- Easier to see shape and paint pictures
- Do not have to worry about subs as much
- Can set up match-ups that allow children to play against others of equal ability

## **PROPER WARM-UP AND STRETCHING**

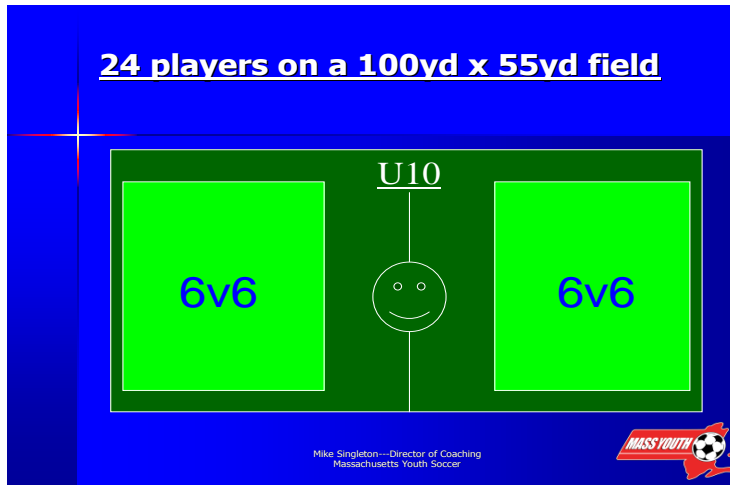
As children get older, we need to teach them to warm-up and stretch properly in order to minimize injury. It is very important that we teach the players a proper warm-up to avoid their natural tendency to run onto the field and kick the ball at the net as powerfully as possible.

We recommend utilizing a ball in all warm-ups for players. Have the players play a normal warm-up activity that does not require 100% pace. A simple game of tag will work great. Have the players all dribbling a ball and playing a normal game of tag. As the players get warm, stop them and have them perform a stretch, making sure they hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds. Then allow them to play again, possibly increasing the number of “taggers” to increase the pace of the game before stretching again.

We recommend the players begin stretching with the hamstrings and then work their way down the legs, before also stretching the upper body. It is useful to have a set routine for proper stretching for your team, as it becomes a unifying event for your team and also one that mentally activates them to start playing. One last note to remember is that players should always have run and played at full pace before starting a match. That means they should be in a game realistic warm-up in which they sweat. Ensuring this will help reduce their risk of injury once they start the match.

# US YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

## U10 Dual Field Arrangement



U10's play 6v6 (with a GK)

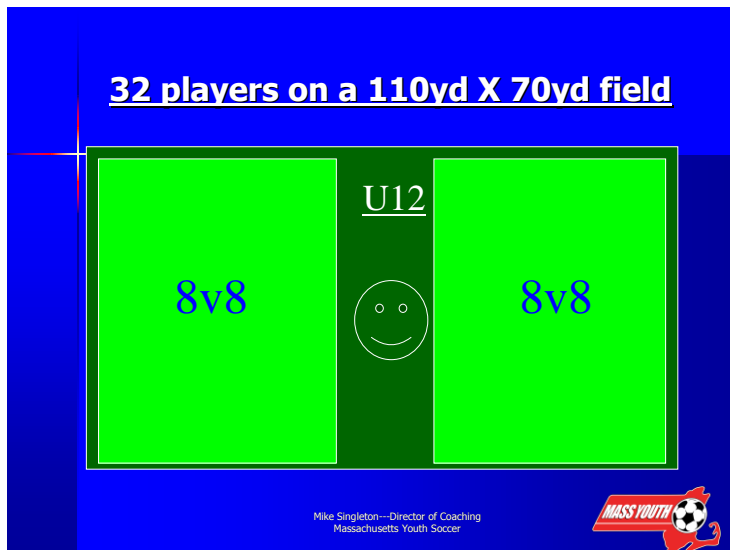
Field Size:

Length: 45 to 60yds

Width: 35 to 45yds

Ball: #4

## U12 Dual Field Arrangement



U12's play 8v8 (with a GK)

Field Size:

Length: 75 to 80yds

Width: 50 yds

Ball: #4

Small-sided games help with all aspects of development for young players and allow them to enjoy the game much more due to their increased involvement. It is true that there are some administrative challenges in switching over an entire program to small-sided games. However, the benefit to young players far outweighs the burden of those challenges. Feel free to contact the state office for any help in implementing small-sided games into your organization. Whether you need organizational guidance or educating your board or coaches, we are happy to help.

## **US Youth Soccer Official Under 10 Playing Recommendations**

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees)

### **Law 1 – The Field of Play**

*Dimensions:* The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

*Length:* minimum 45 yards / maximum 60 yards

*Width:* minimum 35 yards / maximum 45 yards

*Field Markings:* Distinctive lines not more than five (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of eight (8) yards is marked around it.

*The Goal Area:* Conform to FIFA.

*The Penalty Area:* A penalty area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, fourteen (14) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of fourteen (14) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the penalty area. Within each penalty area a penalty mark is made ten (10) yards from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them. An arc of a circle with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

*Flag Posts:* Conform to FIFA.

*The Corner Arc:* Conform to FIFA.

*Goals:* Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corner flag posts and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The maximum distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the maximum distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

*Safety:* Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

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*US Youth Soccer Rationale: Field dimensions are smaller to accommodate the six-versus-six game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of eight and nine year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful. The penalty area is marked, but is smaller than the adult field size penalty area. The center circle is two yards smaller in radius than the adult size field marking. All other markings are per FIFA. The recommended goal size, 6 x 18 feet, is the same for the U10 and U12 age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups, clubs will have to buy fewer goals.*

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**Law 2 – The Ball:** Size four (4).

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**Law 3 – *The Number of Players:*** A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than six players, one of whom is the goalkeeper.

*Substitutions:* At any stoppage and unlimited.

*Playing time:* Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. Teams and matches may be coed.

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**Law 4 – *The Players' Equipment:*** Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

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**Law 5 – *The Referee:*** Registered referee, especially Grade 9 or parent/coach or assistant coach. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player.

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**Law 6 – *The Assistant Referees:*** Not required. May use club linesmen/women if desired. This can be a good way to develop referees in training.

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**Law 7 – *The Duration of the Match:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception of the match being divided into two (2) equal halves of twenty-five (25) minutes each. There shall be a half-time interval of five (5) minutes.

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**Law 8 – *The Start and Restart of Play:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception of the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

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**Law 9 – *The Ball In and Out of Play:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 10 – *The Method of Scoring:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 11 – *Offside:*** None.

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**Law 12 – *Fouls and Misconduct:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 13 – *Free Kicks:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception that all opponents are at least eight (8) yards from the ball. Eight yards is the same distance as the radius of the center circle.

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**Law 14 – *The Penalty Kick:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 15 – *The Throw-In:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 16 – *The Goal Kick:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 17 – *The Corner Kick:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

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## **US Youth Soccer Official Under 12 Playing Recommendations**

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees)

### **Law 1 – The Field of Play**

*Dimensions:* The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

*Length:* minimum 60 yards / maximum 80 yards

*Width:* minimum 45 yards / maximum 55 yards

*Field Markings:* Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of eight (8) yards is marked around it.

*The Goal Area:* Conform to FIFA.

*The Penalty Area:* A penalty area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, fourteen (14) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of fourteen (14) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the penalty area. Within each penalty area, a penalty mark is made ten (10) yards from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them. An arc of a circle with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

*Flagposts:* Conform to FIFA.

*The Corner Arc:* Conform to FIFA.

*Goals:* Conform to FIFA with exception that the maximum distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the maximum distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

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### **Law 2 – The Ball: Size four (4).**

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**Law 3 – *The Number of Players:*** A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eight players, one of whom is the goalkeeper.

*Substitutions:* At any stoppage and unlimited.

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**Law 4 – *The Players Equipment:*** Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

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**Law 5 – *The Referee:*** Registered referee.

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**Law 6 – *The Assistant Referee:*** Use U.S.S.F. registered referees or club linesmen/women.

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**Law 7 – *The Duration of the Match:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception of the match being divided into two (2) halves of thirty (30) minutes each. There shall be a half-time interval of five (5) minutes.

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**Law 8 – *The Start and Restart of Play:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play. Eight yards is the same distance as the radius of the center circle.

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**Law 9 – *The Ball In and Out of Play:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 10 – *The Method of Scoring:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 11 – *Offside:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 12 – *Fouls and Misconduct:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 13 – *Free Kicks:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents are at least eight (8) yards from the ball.

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**Law 14 – *The Penalty Kick:*** Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is at ten yards and that players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight (8) yards from the penalty mark.

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**Law 15 – *The Throw-In:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 16 – *The Goal Kick:*** Conform to FIFA.

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**Law 17 – *The Corner Kick:*** Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards away from the ball until it is in play.

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## **RISK/ INJURY MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION**

An integral component of all coaching and playing activity throughout the season must be the prevention and management of injury to players (and coaches). There are numerous simple tasks a coach can and should do in order to secure the health of his or her players. Before the season begins, the coach should make sure all parents know the emergency procedures for all situations (injuries, accidents, weather problems). This procedure should be clear and simple. If it includes cell phone use, the coach should make sure he/she gets reception at all playing sites.

### ***Field Safety/Weather Conditions***

Before starting practice or a game, it is important to check the field for dangerous objects. Often glass and other sharp objects can be found on fields, as well as holes and other hazards. Goals need to be inspected and anchored properly, or moved away from the playing area if not being used. When moving goals, it is important to utilize adults and to supervise them, as often it is the first time they are moving goals. They may not know how to move them or realize how heavy they are.

At every field, look to see where you could go in case of lightning or heavy rain. Is there a building or public bathroom nearby where you could fit all the children? If not, do enough parents stay to watch practices and games in order that all the children could fit in their cars in case of severe weather? At the first sign of lightning, get the players into a safe environment. This is where your written emergency plan comes into use. Lightning detectors are already in use at many of the parks in which you play. Make sure you know the meaning of all signals coming from this system. If you do not have a lightning detection system, seek out ways to get one installed.

### ***Seeing all the Children***

Players can not be let out of your sight. Often times, young players need to go to the bathroom. Make sure they are supervised when they go (preferably by their parent). Never allow a child out of your sight without adult supervision.

### ***Second Adult Present***

Always have a minimum of two adults at every practice. This allows one person to care for injuries or bathroom breaks as the other tends to the rest of the team. It also provides for another witness in the case of injury or accident. Make sure that both of you are present until the parents of the last child arrive. You should stress to parents they should arrive on time to pick up their children.

### ***Injury Prevention***

Before the season starts, check to see if you have a player whose parent is a doctor or nurse. Also ask parents if their children have any pre-existing conditions and how they

normally deal with these conditions. Ideally, the coach is CPR and First Aid qualified. The coach should have a simple first aid kit and ice (or ice packs) at all events. It should be mandated that players always wear shin-pads and come to practice with water. Parents should be told to apply sunscreen on their children on sunny days. If players come to the field with a hat on to protect their head from the sun, ask that they wear a soft-brimmed hat, as baseball caps could cause eye injuries to other players.

### ***What to Do in Case of Injury***

When a player goes down with an injury, it is important to remain calm, and ask your assistant or a parent to take care of the team. If you have had to stop practice, it must be fairly serious. Even if you are qualified, you need to make sure that you get immediate assistance for the player. The most likely problems you may encounter are two children running into each other and banging heads, heat exhaustion, prior medical issues (i.e. inhalers) and dehydration. Make sure that the parents of an injured player know their son or daughter was hurt during practice. Err on the side of safety.

- Cuts – If blood is involved, always wear latex gloves for protection. Clean the wound and apply a clean, sterile bandage. If a deep cut, apply light pressure to the wound to control bleeding. Recommend that the parent immediately take the child to the hospital for a professional opinion.
- Head Injuries – When approaching a player who has suffered an apparent blow to the head, do not try and move them until you have been able to establish communication with them and can confirm they are conscious and in no immediate severe pain. If the player is unresponsive, **immediately call 911**. Do not move a player who has suffered a head trauma, as there may be internal damage. Only *consider* moving an unconscious player if their airway is obviously blocked due to the position of their head and body (i.e., face down with face in the grass). If the player is responsive, ask him/her to identify where he/she was struck (head, face, jaw or neck area) and if and where he/she is experiencing any pain. If the player is experiencing any pain, dizziness, or nausea, he/she should be removed from the field and not be considered for re-entry into the game. Immediately contact the parents so that they are aware of the nature of the injury and can decide to take their child to the hospital or doctor. It is best for both safety and liability issues to ask the player to provide a doctor's note clearing him to play before allowing a head injured player to participate in any future training or game.
- Heat Exhaustion – A player with heat exhaustion may feel sick and dizzy, have a high body temperature, and is still sweating. This may come on suddenly. Have the player stop playing, find some shade, and cool him/her down by using cool water on his/her clothes, head and neck. Ice may shock the body and can be dangerous. Use cool water to gradually reduce body temperature. If the player is able, it is alright to have him/her take sips of water.
- Nose Bleed - Place the player in a sitting position with the head forward. Apply pressure to just below the bridge of the nose. Use ice when necessary. Be sure to

wear latex gloves before you treat the player! If you suspect a head or neck injury, do not try to control the bleeding. Instead, stabilize the head and call 911.

- **Heat Stroke** – If a player shows signs of heat stroke their sweating will stop, the player may be confused or dizzy, have pale skin, an extremely dry mouth or be unconscious. It is important to call an ambulance immediately. This can be life threatening. While waiting for the ambulance, similar steps to that which are taken for heat exhaustion should be followed. Making sure your players are properly hydrated will help prevent heat injuries.
- **Fractures & Dislocations** - If a body part does not have a normal appearance or function, then suspect a fracture. Do not move the player, keep warm and make comfortable, call 911. With a possible dislocation, the joint will have a marked deformity with intense pain. If a player can walk, immobilize the joint and immediately transport to hospital. If the player is unable to walk, call 911.
- **Abrasions** - Abrasions are very common sports injuries that are usually caused by a fall on a hard surface. As the athlete falls or slides on the ground, friction causes layers of skin to rub off. General treatment of abrasions includes treating the area by cleaning the wound with mild soap and water or a mild antiseptic wash like hydrogen peroxide, and then covering the area with an antibiotic ointment and a dry dressing. Be sure to wear latex gloves before you treat the player!
- **Sprains, Strains and Contusions** - R.I.C.E. Principle (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) is the best method of dealing with these injuries. Using these four immediate first aid measures can relieve pain, limit swelling and protect the injured tissues.

#### **The R.I.C.E. Method of Acute Injury Treatment:**

- Rest*: Resting is important as it will allow the injured area the time to heal itself as well as help prevent further injury.
- Ice*: Use ice bags & cold packs to limit swelling by reducing blood flow to the injured area. Do not leave ice on an injury for more than 20 minutes at a time. Compress or wrap the area with an ACE bandage around the swollen part of your body. If throbbing occurs, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- Compression*: Compress or wrap the area with an ACE bandage around the swollen part of your body. If throbbing occurs, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- Elevation*: Elevating an injury reduces swelling. It's most effective when the injured area is raised above the level of the heart. For example, if you injure an ankle, try lying on your bed or sofa with your foot propped on a couple of pillows.

#### **Two important factors with dealing with field injuries of this nature:**

- 1) If you see clear visual evidence of abnormal deformity to the injured area, call emergency professional care immediately.
- 2) If symptoms persist (pain, swelling, severe bruising) after 24-48 hours of using the R.I.C.E. method, consult your doctor.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the game and about children. We sincerely hope you enjoyed this course and find coaching to be more enjoyable in your upcoming seasons. If you walk away from this course remembering only a couple things, we hope you remember these tenets:

- The game is the greatest teacher
- No laps, no lines, no lectures
- Let the players play
- Keep everything age appropriate—stress technique over tactics!
- HAVE FUN!!!

With these tenets as your guiding principles, both you and your players will have great seasons.

Just as life is a constant learning process, so is coaching soccer. We hope you continue your education by watching others, talking with friends from this course, seeking out information in books, videos or on websites, and attending clinics or future coaching courses. We have many practice plans and age appropriate activities on our webpage [www.mayouthsoccer.org](http://www.mayouthsoccer.org) that you can utilize at any time. You will also find more information about coaching, coaching clinics and other courses, and contact information so that you can call or email us with any questions. We are one big family promoting this game, so please do not hesitate to call on us if we can be of any help.

We wish you the very best and hope to see you in the future!



## **MASS YOUTH SOCCER COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Board of Directors of Mass Youth Soccer and the leaders of the affiliated leagues expect all coaches, adult volunteers, club administrators and referees to conduct themselves in a responsible and principled manner at all times, and to always keep the best interest and well being of the children they are responsible for as the highest priority.

We want to ensure that games are fair, positive and enjoyable experiences for all the children and adults involved. A soccer game should be friendly and unifying – a spirited athletic and social occasion for the players, coaches, referees and spectators.

We jointly expect all coaches to conform to this code of conduct.

- Before, during and after the game, be an example of dignity, patience and positive spirit.
- Before a game, introduce yourself to the opposing coach and to the referee.
- During the game, you are responsible for the sportsmanship of your players. If one of your players is disrespectful, irresponsible or overly aggressive, take the player out of the game at least long enough for him/her to calm down.
- During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of the parents of your players. It is imperative to explain acceptable player and parent behavior in a preseason meeting. Encourage them to applaud and cheer for good plays by either team. Discourage them (and you may need to be forceful and direct) from yelling at the players and the referee.
- During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of spectators rooting for your team.
- During the game, do not address the referee at all. If you have a small issue, discuss it with the referee calmly and patiently after the game. If you have a major complaint, or if you think the referee was unfair, biased, unfit or incompetent, report your opinion to your league. Your reactions will be taken seriously if they are presented objectively and formally.
- After the game, thank the referee and ask your players to do the same.

We stress two points:

Referees, especially young and inexperienced ones, are like your players and yourself in that they need time to develop. You can play an important role in helping them to improve by letting them concentrate on the game. You can help by encouraging them, by accepting their inevitable, occasional mistakes and by offering constructive post-game comments. On the other hand, you could discourage and demoralize the referees by criticizing their decisions, by verbally abusing them and inciting (or even accepting) your own players' overly aggressive behavior.

Your example is powerful, for better or worse. If you insist on fair play, concentrate on your players' enjoyment of the game and their overall, long term development, and support the referee; your players and their parents will notice. If you encourage (or allow) your players to play outside the rules, if you are overly concerned with results, and if you criticize the referee harshly, your players and their parents will also notice.

Think about what you are doing during a game! Uphold the spirit of the game! If you follow the expectations described above, the spirit of the game will be alive and well in Massachusetts and will grow, along with the enjoyment of all. Coaches who do not follow the expectations described above will be disciplined or removed.

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How do you deal with discipline problems?**
  - a. Model the behavior you want the kids to emulate.
  - b. Avoid potential discipline problems; create an active training environment with age appropriate activities.
  - c. Address the potential problem in timely fashion; do not let the behavior persist.
  - d. A time-out on the sideline is a way the child might change his/her behavior. Having a player sit on the side for a minute, without a soccer ball or friends around him/her, might make the child realize he/she needs to behave appropriately.
  - e. Talk to the child about why he/she is sitting out, so the child understands what he/she did is wrong and to encourage more appropriate behavior.
  
2. **How do you coach your own child?**
  - a. Have a discussion with your child and make it clear that no preferential treatment will be given to your son or daughter.
  - b. Avoid talking with your child about his/her performance before and after practice.
  - c. Keep roles of parent and coach separate. When you are on the field, be the coach and when you are in the car, at home, etc, be the parent.
  - d. Make it clear that your expectations and your child's expectations are the same. If the expectations are different, the child will feel different and isolated. Do not be overly tough with your child.
  - e. Try not to bring home things that happened in practice and games, unless the child initiates the topic of conversation.
  - f. You can also have your assistant coach actively involved in coaching all the players so your child hears a different voice.
  
3. **How do you deal with "Superstar Player" who dribbles through everyone and scores all the goals?**
  - a. At the very young ages, rotate him/her into both teams, so one team does not gain a huge advantage. You can also throw another ball into play so all players may participate.
  - b. Get players to recognize when is a good time to dribble or pass.
  - c. Putting the player in different positions will help him/her to be aware of different things he/she needs to learn about the game.

4. **How do you coach a team that has a wide range of ability?**
  - a. Do not compare your players with each other; measure them by their individual improvement and amount of effort they put out when they are in practices and games.
  - b. Coaches should challenge the more advanced players by asking them to play with only two touches or use the non-dominant foot.
  - c. Avoid separating players by skill; keep them playing and improving together.
  - d. Provide opportunities within the training session for players to play with others of their own ability level.
  - e. On the field of play, blend the more skilled and less skilled players in complementary positions that provide supportive opportunities.
  - f. Challenge the players to set their own personal bar higher every time an activity is run.
  - g. As a coach, try not to focus on just the good players. All players need attention. Recognize that simple words of praise will help motivate those players that may lag behind skill-wise.
  - h. A majority of the time you should use your best player(s) as neutral player(s) during scrimmages and small- sided games.
  
5. **At what age should a player specialize in one position?**

It is good to start specializing in one position between the ages of 13 and 14 years old.
  
6. **At what age should a player start to focus on one sport?**

Players should start focusing on one sport between the ages of 14 and 15 years old. They can absolutely continue to play other sports but should prioritize the sport they are serious about.
  
7. **At what age should GK skills be introduced and when should a player start focusing on just being a GK?**

9 years old is a good age to start introducing GK skill, and between the ages of 14-15 the player should start specializing in the position.