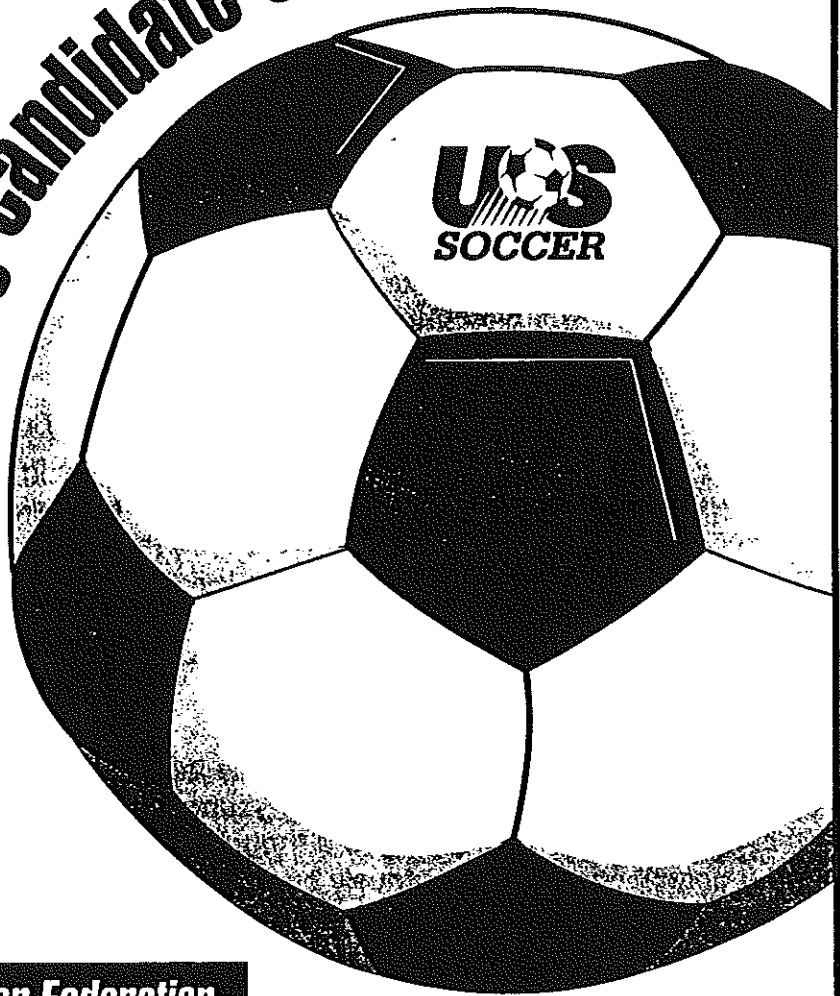


Coaching Candidate's Workbook



United States Soccer Federation

National Coaching Program

State "F" Certificate

A MESSAGE TO BEGINNING YOUTH COACHES

Dear Coach,

We are pleased you have volunteered and agreed to coach a youth team. Some of you, we are sure, just can't wait to start. However, for most of you this is probably your first encounter with soccer coaching and you are understandably very apprehensive about the season ahead.

Coaching young children is a challenge in patience and understanding and in creating an atmosphere on the practice field, which is conducive to learning.

As a youth coach with a new coaching license there is a danger that you may be more interested in teaching what you know than the children are in learning what you have to offer. Young children are really more concerned about having fun and being in a happy environment than they are in learning how to become good soccer players.


If you have ever watched a good elementary school teacher, especially a good gym teacher, you will notice that his or her success in teaching depends a great deal upon their ability to create the proper learning environment. The children are comfortable, having fun and not feeling threatened. The children are under control and interested in what they are being taught. The fact that the teacher is well prepared, organized, knows the subject matter and communicates effectively is important. These are the factors that go to make a proper learning environment.

After completing this introductory course and coaching for a season or more, you may discover the joy of helping young children and decide to continue in this role. If this is the case, give a thought to your own growth and development as a coach. Since you obviously care about your players and want a good experience for them, you need to allocate time and effort towards your own development as a coach.

Enroll in coaching courses and attend as many clinics as possible. Watch the highest level of soccer available in your area and on TV. Read coaching books, study videos. All these activities will help add to your soccer knowledge and effectiveness as a coach.

Please do not hesitate to contact North Texas State Soccer Association any time you need advice or help.

Enjoy the course and good luck in your coaching endeavors.


Gary Williamson
State Coach NTSSA

Characteristics of U-8 Children

PSYCHOMOTOR DEVELOPMENT OF U-8 SOCCER PLAYERS

- > Skeletal system is still growing; growth plates are near joints, thus injuries to those areas merit special consideration.
- > Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adult's; a child's heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover to full resting rate.
- > Temperature regulation system is less efficient than adults; children elevate their core body temperature more quickly with activity and take longer to cool down than adults.
- > There is perceivable improvement in pace and coordination from U-6 to U-8, however the immaturity of a U-8's physical ability is obvious.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

6 - 9 YEARS

CONCRETE OPERATIONAL PHASE

THINKING TIED TO CONCRETE OBJECTS



Characteristics of U-8 Children

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF U-8 SOCCER PLAYERS

- > Concrete operational stage of development (see Piaget).
- > Limited ability to attend to more than one task at a time; the simple task of controlling the ball demands most of their attention capacity, thereby leaving little or no capacity for making additional decisions.
- > Concept of time and space relationship is just beginning to develop and will be limited by capacity to attend to multiple tasks.
- > Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with performance, "if I try hard, then I performed well" regardless of the actual performance.
- > Beginning to categorize information; some relationships that "do" exist are not recognized and some relationships that "do not" exist are assumed.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

6 - 9 YEARS

COGNITIVE, PHYSICAL, SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE,
BEHAVIORAL CONDUCT

DO HAVE A SENSE OF SELF-WORTH THAT IS
BASED ON A CONCRETE, AND POSITIVE VERSION
OF REALITY

PERCEIVED SUCCESS - EFFORT IS SUCCESS!!



Characteristics of U-8 Children

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF U-8 SOCCER PLAYERS

- > Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop; very fragile.
- > Great need for approval from adults such as parents, teachers and coaches. They like to show individual skills.
- > Easily bruised psychologically by both peers and adults; negative comments carry great weight.
- > Like to play soccer because it is "fun"; intrinsically motivated.
- > Their universe is expanding from home to the neighborhood.
- > True playmates emerge with the inclination toward partner activities.
- > Team identity is limited; "I play on Coach Bob's team" or "I play on the Tigers" - club and league concepts are non-existent.
- > There is desire for social acceptance; they want everybody to like them.
- > The influential person is most likely their father or significant parent.

MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

7 - 10 YEARS

SPECIALIZED MOVEMENT PHASE

**TRANSITIONAL; APPLICATION; LIFELONG
UTILIZATION**

**COMBINE FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS IN THE
PERFORMANCE OF SPECIALIZED SPORT
SKILLS**



Characteristics of U-10 Children

PSYCHOMOTOR DEVELOPMENT OF U-10 SOCCER PLAYERS

- > Gross and small motor skills become more refined.
- > Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- > Ability to stay on task is lengthened.
- > Greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity, physically mature individuals demonstrate stronger motor skills.
- > More prone than adults to heat injury.
- > Accelerated heat loss, increased risk of hypothermia.

Characteristics of U-10 Children

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF U-10 SOCCER PLAYERS

- > Some children begin moving from concrete operational to formal operational stage (see Piaget).
- > Lengthened attention span, ability to sequence thought and actions.
- > Pace factor becoming developed (starting to think ahead).
- > More inclined towards wanting to play rather than being told to play.
- > Demonstrate increased self-responsibility, bring ball, water, tuck in jersey, pull socks up.
- > Starting to recognize fundamental tactical concepts, such as changing direction of ball, but not always sure why.
- > Repetitive technique very important, but it must be dynamic not static.

Characteristics of U-10 Children

PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF U-10 SOCCER PLAYERS

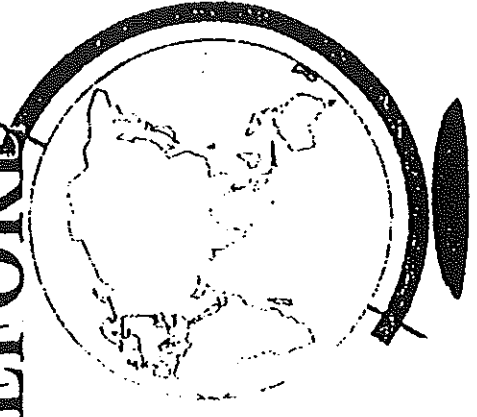
- > More likely to initiate play on their own.
- > Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- > Explanations must still be brief, concise and indicate purpose.
- > Becoming more serious about "their play"
- > Still intrinsically motivated.
- > Peer pressure starting to be a factor.
- > Prefer identification with team, i.e. uniform, balls, equipment.
- > Adult/s outside of the family may take on added significance.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

10 - 11 YEARS

FORMAL OPERATIONAL PHASE

ABILITY TO ENGAGE IN ABSTRACT
THOUGHT, e.g., IMAGINE THE VARIABLES
THAT DETERMINE OUTCOMES BEFORE
S/SHE BEGINS, CAN KEEP SCORE
CORRECTLY



PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

9 - 11 YEARS

SOCIAL COMPARISON IMPORTANT

MORE COMPONENTS OF SELF EMERGE

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE SELF EVALUATIONS,

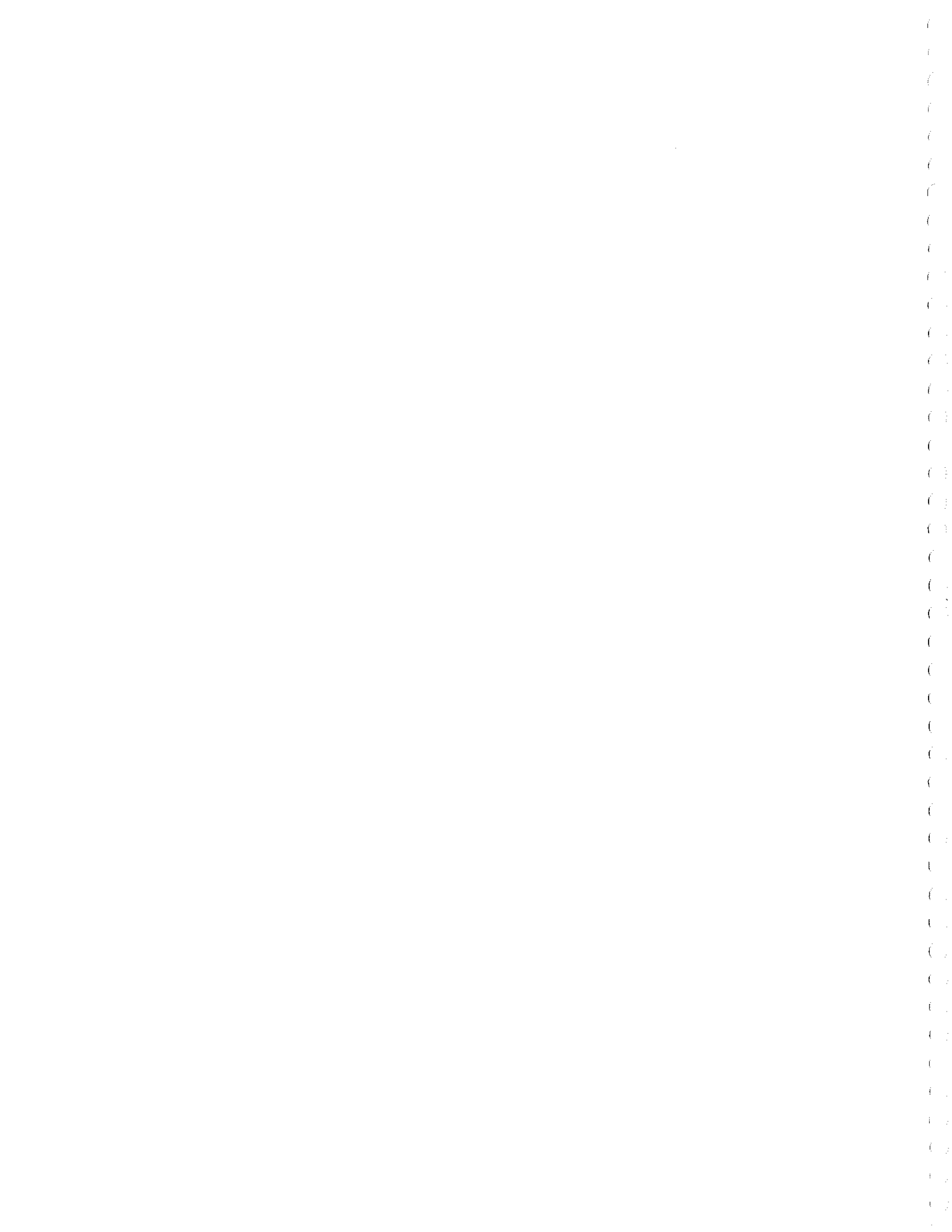
PERCEIVED SUCCESS - EFFORT AND ABILITY
BECOME PARTIALLY DIFFERENTIATED



Appropriate Training for U-10 Players

The following is a sample training session for U-10's. Space is also provided for note taking on the session your instructor presents.

1. **Players in pairs.** Coach tosses the ball and each pair must bring it back with a specific number of touches as determined by the coach. Then the pairs must accomplish the task with alternating touches by passing.
2. **Groups of four.** As before, the coach tosses the ball and designates the number of touches to return the ball. Requirements can include; maintain a 10yd distance apart, each person in the group must touch the ball at least once, the group must keep the ball in the air, keep the ball in the air with one-touches, one touch passing with a time limit, changing who you pass to each time.
3. **Partners with a ball.** Partner serves ball in a variety of ways to be returned, such as over head or between the feet.
4. **Groups of eight.** Coach tosses the ball for return with requirements as above for partners and groups of four.
5. **One touch passing.** Two dynamic lines are formed. Upon pass player goes to the end of the other line. The lines must adjust their position to stay in the path of the ball. Challenge is to string as many completed passes together as possible.
6. **4V4.** Score by dribbling past the goal line, score by passing to a teammate on the goal line.
7. **"The Game"** 4V4, two goals. The game may start with conditions, but it must finish without restrictions.



“F” COURSE

THEORY

METHODS OF COACHING

1. EMPHASIS OF “F” CURRICULUM

Methods of coaching players at the Under-8 and Under-10 level, some of whom may be experiencing the game and are being coached for the first time.

For the parent/Coach who is now coaching for the first time. To help reduce the fear of coaching.

Upon completion of the course, it is hoped that you will be able to understand the characteristics and needs of U-8 and U-10 players and will understand the rationale behind the small-sided soccer format.

You will become familiar with the key coaching points for the proper execution of basic techniques such as dribbling, passing, shooting and heading, and you will be able to plan and conduct practice sessions appropriate for these age groups.

2. DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY

The “F” course philosophy is: “Player Development”

What is Player Development?

- Activities that the child wants to participate in because they are fun.
- Players being exposed to playing all positions.
- Every player has a ball for practice.
- Activities designed to maximize the number of touches by each player at practice.
- Rules modified for players according to their age group characteristics.
- Equipment modified for players according to their age group characteristics.
- Activities designed to promote thinking, not doing drills like robots.
- De-emphasize winning/losing. We do not need to keep standing, statistics, etc.

PARENT ORIENTATION

It is advisable to convey the philosophy of "PLAYER DEVELOPMENT" to all players and parents through either a Team-Parents meeting or written communications to parents. It is extremely important for the parents and the coach to reach a consensus on the philosophy of player development. Lack of consensus could increase potential for conflict down the road.

To help you, the coach, articulate the player development philosophy to your team's parents, we have included in Appendix II a number of articles from local and national publications regarding these issues. Feel free to distribute copies of these articles together with the discussions below to all the parents.

Why should we expose players to all playing positions?

'Locking' players into a single position at the beginner stage is akin to separating grade 1 school children into classes of 'future doctors', 'future lawyers', 'future accountants' etc., each with its own curriculum. The reason all the young elementary school children are taught the same basic curriculum is to provide them with the important foundation for later years. The same principle of providing a foundation applies to a soccer program at the 5-9-year-old level, a level denoted as the critical stage of fun, discovery and development.

The modern game de-emphasizes positional specialization as players interchange positions constantly within the flow of the game. Today a defender needs to be as fluent in his control, passing, dribbling, shooting, and crossing as a midfielder or a forward. Eighty percent of the technical and tactical demands of the game are identical for all the 10 outfield players. This trend is supported by the fact that the leading scorer in some teams is actually a defender. In North America, collegiate and national coaches are forced to convert midfielders into defenders due to a lack of skillful genuine defenders. Many defenders who are trying to advance into the top level do not possess the necessary skills since at the club level they were discouraged from joining the attack during their formative stage and, as a result, did not reach their full potential.

There is a misconception among youth coaches that they are supposed to teach their players positions and formations. What the coaches really need to teach their players is the sound principles of attack and defense such as how to support the player with the ball or how to cover for each other. A player's movement and positioning depend more on the specific location of the ball and of the other players rather than on his designated 'position'. In other words, players need to learn how to **read the game**. This presents a dilemma for beginner coaches who are not yet familiar with the principles of the game and are therefore, not able to 'read the game'. These coaches tend to rely too

heavily on the literal definitions of each “position” and to over emphasize the adherence to formations.

A classic example of the misuse of “Formations” is when defenders are instructed by their coach to remain at the edge of their penalty area even when play moves into the other team’s half. The sight of these ‘defenders’ standing 50 yards from the action, picking their noses, bored out of their wits, makes one cringe. In the first place, keeping defenders close to their own goal breaches a key principle of sound defending which calls for maintaining **team compactness**. Team compactness means that the defenders stay ‘connected’ to the midfielders who, in turn, stay ‘connected’ to the forwards. Keeping all three lines (defenders, midfielders and forwards) close together allows players to support and cover each other and renders penetration by opponents more difficult.

Some coaches argue that if they allow their defenders to move up with the play, they become vulnerable to the long through ball and the opponent’s speed. What these coaches are really saying is that they don’t trust their defenders to make the right decisions regarding safe marking distances, reading the flight of the ball and covering for each other. These coaches are depriving their players of the opportunities to learn from their mistakes, which is the essence of any educational process. Any type of game is the ultimate “Learning Tool”. The coaches’ implied attitude here is that the result is more important than allowing their players to develop fully by learning from their mistakes.

Why should we de-emphasize winning/losing?

In the past, young players developed their soccer skills by playing pick-up games and practicing in the streets. There was no formal coaching until they joined the professional clubs in their teen. Yet, the lack of youth coaching didn’t seem to harm Pelé, George Best, Maradona, Beckenbauer, Cruyff or any of the other soccer generations of yesteryear. In fact, the spontaneity and creativity of youth, away from the restrictions and structure imposed by adults, has helped develop players with flair and skill.

With affluence and living standards on the increase, children now have many options on how to spend their free time. In Europe, for example, every kid still dreams of becoming a professional soccer player. Yet, young players do not play and practice in the streets as they once did. This means that the valuable time spent playing with the ball is drastically reduced.

Soccer associations and professional clubs in Europe and South America have realized that they need to take responsibility for providing young players with an environment that encourages flair and experimentation in much the same way that street soccer used to provide. They also realized how important it is to ensure that their young players practice, learn and apply all the basic and advance techniques. To that end, there has been over the last twenty years

more emphasis given to developing coaches with the ability and the philosophy of guiding young talent by de-emphasizing winning and encouraging the acquisition of new techniques. By doing so, young players would be more inclined to try things without feeling undue pressure if they should fail. This approach is especially effective on young players between the ages of 5 to 12 where coordination is being mastered and a love for the sport nurtured. Pressure to win makes all players wary of making mistakes, which obviously inhibits the desire to try new things. With young players it can stifle that creative, adventurous side of their soccer nature which differentiates the great from the average.

We in the United States have an even bigger challenge. We need to attract more young players to the game at a time when many parents and coaches force ever-younger children into highly competitive situations, based on the ambition of the adult. When competition is emphasized, the pressure to win is not far behind. One consequence is that youth coaches figure out very quickly that at their players' level, the long kick up the field will produce better results and is easier to teach than controlled penetration based on interpassing. As the players mature, the long kick up the field loses its effectiveness but many players are not equipped with the necessary skills to use a more subtle approach. The long kick up the field is generally very popular with parents and coaches who are not familiar with the finer points of the game. They greet every long punt or kick with an approving "wow!!" roar or a shout of "great ball Johnnie!". These same parents/coaches would not approve if Johnnie threw the ball aimlessly up the court in a game of basketball, would they? Possession of the ball in soccer is just as precious as in basketball. Unfortunately possession in soccer is a lot harder to maintain. But that's the challenge for the coach, isn't it?

Player development is a long process that is made all the more complicated by the varying rates of physical and mental development. A relatively successful player at age 12 may be surpassed by his teammates by age 16. The early physical maturers lose their advantage with time if their skill base is low. Eventually they will be left behind. This is why game results at the youth level are misleading and irrelevant, and why in Europe, youth coaches don't boast of trophies won, but rather, count how many of their players advanced to the pro level. The early emphasis on competition can stifle development, lead to players' burnout and turn off players who just want to have fun.

The foundation of any worthwhile coaching philosophy for young players must be the development of skill and techniques. Although winning should be de-emphasized, the aim of the game is still to beat your opponents. But instead of the "win at all cost" approach, a coach should encourage and teach his players to play with skill, flair, good techniques, and well-executed principles of play. The manner of the win is just as important as the win itself. When all is said and done, seeing one of your players playing for the national team will give you a lot more satisfaction than cleaning the dust off your trophies.

So please think long and hard about what player development really means to you and which philosophy you should adopt. If you all dedicate yourselves to raising the standard of our youth players and help produce more players of high quality, then American soccer will be able to win recognition as a "Soccer Nation".

What the experts say

As the coach, you can make the parents aware that there is a lot of research and expert opinion by child psychologists and professional youth coaches behind the above statements regarding the player development philosophy. The Suggested Reading Section lists a number of publications specifically aimed at parents of youth league players. The following excerpts were taken from the book "Good Sports" by Rick Wolff:

"Too often it's the head coach who causes the problems for the youngster. Indeed, for the coach who takes his sports seriously, the idea of making a victory a second priority to the enjoyment of the game is not only a foreign concept, it's downright treasonous.

But if the coach really understands - and accepts - that, for kids, playing is more fun than winning or losing, then he is on his way to making the season a productive and enjoyable one for all the kids on the squad, one in which each child will have an equal amount of playing time, and that will, according to the sport, enable them to play different positions.

That, of course, is the fundamental purpose of youth sports: to allow the children to learn and enjoy a sport without the anxiety of having to keep score or care about winning or losing."

Other excerpts from the same book:

"In the early years of youth sports there is absolutely no reason to keep score of the games. This would include youth sports from ages six through nine. After age nine the kids themselves are beginning to fully comprehend the meaning of competition, and score becomes a more meaningful part of the game to them. But in the early years score is kept more for the parents' egos than for the kids."

"Over 95 percent of the kids replied that they would rather simply have fun than worry about winning, and over 90 percent said they would prefer to be on a losing team if they were able actually to play in the games rather than be bench warmers on a winning team"

"According to a recent study as many as 80 percent of all children who play youth sports drop out of competitive sports by the time they reach the ripe old age of twelve.

Why do these trends exist? Because somewhere along the line early in their sporting careers, too many of these kids had the misfortune to have fallen into the hands of coaches who decide that they weren't good enough to play or who simply didn't want them to play.

Even worse, too many coaches just flat out decide that they want to show kids that sports can be a positive experience - but that it can only be positive if they play on a winning team. Hence, the coach plays the more advanced players most of the time while the less talented kids play limited amounts. From the coach's point of view the lesser kids share in their teammates' on-the-field successes."

"In other words, the eight-year-old who may just be a bit small in size or who hasn't had much practice in a particular sport is shut out of the enjoyment of the sport; he has in essence become a 'has-been' before being given a chance to develop his skills."

This is what Tony Waiters, an internationally renowned coach, has to say about youth soccer in his article titled 'The Crusher' (The World of Soccer Newsletter, January 1995):

"In spite of the encouragement of 1994, the game needs to step up to a new level if North America is to be recognized as a world soccer power. The difference between the U.S. and top nations like Brazil, Italy and Holland is small but , at that level, a little is a whole lot!

To be a true world force, North America's all-round individual skills and tactical awareness of every player must have a greater opportunity to develop fully.

That won't happen with 8 and 9 year olds in competitive, must-win, 11-a-side soccer. Many states still stage 11-vs-11 championships for players under 10. What chance do we have? What's ahead for such pressure-cooked kids? What's the point of winning at 9 or 10 years of age and being a soccer loser at 17 and 18 or burned out (more likely turned off) at the age of 15 or 16.

In 11-a-side competition, children are forced to play "position" by coaches seeking team success through individual strengths while hiding or minimizing deficiencies. As a consequence, we start at an too early age to limit the all-round development as players. For what? A few trophies on the wall? The ego of the coach? The second childhood of some parents?

True, if you don't get into the "system" early, you risk missing the chance later. Every soccer fan, in many parts of the world now, knows of Cobi Jones. He is a rare exception to the rule. A late entry into the "system" at 16 years of age. How many other "Cobi Jones" are there out there that have never been identified?

The Crusher, that must-be-joined-if-you-want-to-progress system, is bearing down on the development opportunities. It's taking away a kid's childhood, fun and chance to develop the all-round skills. If my pen was a magic wand, with one sweep I would eliminate all 11-a-side play until children were at least 11, ideally 12 or 13. If we don't address the situation, my guess is we'll be waiting too long for that "world power" status".

The Right of Child Athletes

When children enter a sport program, they automatically assume responsibilities. But they also have rights. Adults need to respect these rights if young athletes are to have a safe and rewarding sport experience. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education's Youth Sports Task Force has developed a "Bill of Rights for Young Athletes". The rights identified by these medical experts, sport scientists, and national youth sport administrators are presented in the accompanying box.

Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

1. Right to participate in sports.
2. Right to participate at a level commensurate with each child's maturity and ability.
3. Right to have qualified adult leadership.
4. Right to play as a child and not as an adult.
5. Right to share in the leadership and decision-making of sport participation.
6. Right to participate in safe and healthy environment.
7. Right to proper preparation for participation in sports.
8. Right to an equal opportunity to strive for success.
9. Right to be treated with dignity.
10. Right to have fun in sports.

3. **ROLE OF THE COACH**

The lack of a soccer education should not deter anyone from taking on the mantle of a soccer coach. As long as one uses the general education life has had to offer, as long as one possesses a natural affinity for young children and can relate to them, one can be a successful youth soccer coach. All it takes is following the general human nature concepts of dealing with young people and making an effort to understand the players' needs. Most of the principles of youth coaching are derived from child rearing experiences. Anyone who has experienced parenting or who has had younger siblings will be familiar with the techniques of guiding children through life's early lessons.

The youth coach is expected to don many different hats during the course of the season. He is a parent figure, a friend, a fan, a role model, a driver, a psychologist, a teacher, a parent, an expert, a manager, a guide, a facilitator.... the list is endless. Below are some of the key roles of the coach:

a. The Coach as a facilitator

Coaches of U-8/U-10 players are probably more aptly described as facilitators than traditional coaches. The reason for 'facilitator' is because most parent/coaches have not been exposed to a soccer environment. However, as long as you focus on the following objectives, your players will proudly call you their coach.

Objectives:

- Set up the condition and environment for learning.
- Players must have fun.
- Players need to receive positive feedback from the coach.
- Coach must be enthusiastic about what he is doing.
- It should all be done in the "Spirit" of Play.
- Activities need to be geared towards the players achieving success, with success measured by FUN.

b. The Coach as a positive role model

Demonstrates respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators, and opposing coaches. To have a responsibility to the game itself.

c. The Coach as one who understands who he is coaching

- Children are not defined by chronological age only.
- Each child matures and develops at his own pace.
- Treat each child as an individual.
- Not all children participate for the same reasons.

Studies indicate that young athletes most often say they participate in organized sports for the following reasons:

- To have fun
- To improve their skills and learn new skills
- To be with their friends or make new friends
- For thrills and excitement
- To succeed or win
- To become physically fit

However, don't lose sight of the fact that, at the U-8/U-10 level, many children participate simply because their parents pushed them to join an organized sport. In such instances, the youth coach is put in a unenviable position of having to deal with children who have no intrinsic motivation to participate.

Characteristics of U-8 children

- Short attention span
- Inclined more toward group activities
- Constantly in motion
- Psychologically easily bruised (dislike personal failure in front of peers)
- Beginning to develop physical coordination (improved sense of balancing skills)
- Like to run, jump, climb and roll
- Acquisition of sports heroes (imitation)
- Still lack sense of pace - full speed all the time until fatigue sets in, at which point they stop to catch their breath and restart at high speed.

Characteristics of U-10 children

- Lengthened attention span
- Still in motion but not so busy
- Psychologically becoming more firm
- Boys and girls beginning to develop separately
- Overall and small motor skills becoming more refined
- Prefer team type balls and equipment
- Pace factor becoming developed (do think ahead)

d. The Coach as a teacher

Well organized.

Shows interest in the progress of all the players.

The elements of the teaching cycle:

- (i) Introduction of the training theme. This stage should take less than a minute. Sometimes it's not even necessary.
- (ii) Demonstration - clear picture of what is to take place - speak of parts as you show the whole
- (iii) Quickly organize and explain activity and conditions (rules) but do not coach mistakes before they happen.
- (iv) Practice - allow players time to play, do not over-coach
- (v) Corrections - key coaching points. Specific feedback for both correct and incorrect performance: collective correction then later individual feedback.
- (vi) Evaluation - is there a successful transfer from training to the game.

e. The Coach as one who knows the components of soccer

NOTE: Components are listed in order of emphasis at this level

(I) Technique

Most important at this age group because it is the introduction of the player to the ball.

Activities must be FUN and game-like and learning takes place through self discovery.

(ii) Psychology

The development of a positive attitude about all aspects of the game.

Motivation - not to win but to participate.

(iii) Tactics (Definition: Player Decisions)

At this level the emphasis is not placed upon teaching tactics due to the limited technical ability of the players and also to their psychological development. Decision making is observed - not stopped to analyze, describe, or dissect, all of which can lead to bored young players.

(iv) Fitness

Appropriately organized technique enhancing activities and small sided games will provide players at this level the necessary physical requirements to meet the needs of their game.

FORGET ABOUT TACTICS & FITNESS AT THIS AGE LEVEL

It is very tempting for coaches to emphasize tactics and fitness in a training program. This stems from the constant exposure to professional sports methods via the media. Coaching tactics and conducting fitness drills with young players will prove a waste of time for the following reasons:

- Players who are struggling to control, dribble and pass the ball are not capable of carrying out tactical instructions.
- Tactics are, in any case, overrated at all the levels of the game. Soccer is a succession of 1 vs 1 duels. The team whose players win most of these individual duels will dominate the game. Therefore, improving the individual skill of the players will bring the most success at any level.
- Children do not need a separate fitness program. They reach their own maximum fitness level simply by playing and will not experience any significant gain in fitness beyond their natural level. If an eight year old player is slow, there is not much you will be able to do about it.
- If the player takes away with him thought of sit-ups, push-ups, wind sprints and the like, he will be less likely to return for the same punishment.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

1. SAFETY AND ETHICAL ASPECTS

Be aware of your responsibility in regard to legal and safety issues. Check as to whether the state has any law(s) regarding volunteer coaches.

Responsibilities of the coach in relation to the health and safety of the players:

- (i) Know the laws of the game and understand them.

Point of emphasis: Spirit of the Laws.

Examples - must wear shin guards, must wear shoes, inflation of the ball, no jewelry, field surface, and duration of (training) game appropriate to mental and physical development of players.

To further ensure player safety, make sure equipment and playing surface are in accordance with the Laws of the Game.

Examples - exposed shin guards or no shin guards, sharp edges on goal post, improper shoes, exposed metal on shoes, inspection of field for glass, holes, or any unsafe situation.

Make sure all portable nets are firmly secured at all times even when not in use by your team. There have been a number of fatalities as a result of portable nets toppling over.

- (ii) Proper teaching and instructing of players regarding reasonably safe techniques and methods of play.

- (iii) Implement appropriate training programs to make sure your players are fit for practice and competition.

Examples - Warm-ups and proper stretching prior to training and games.

- (iv) Supervise and control your players so as to avoid injury situations, taking into consideration factors such as age, experience, judgment, and physical condition of players, as well as the competitive situation.

Examples - supervise players on and off the field, teach them to warm-up, place players in comparable ability, size and development situations, climate conditions, high winds, extreme cold, heat and humidity, thunder and lightning, hail etc.

- (v) Ample supply of water - frequent water breaks.

Always need to ERR on the side of safety and caution.

Insurance needs (adequate coverage)

Evaluate and plan in term of "Risk Management" for your program and players.

Ethics - defined as the principles recognized as standards of behavior by a specific group (very often of a moral nature).

Let us strive to maintain integrity within the sport.

2. CARE AND PREVENTION

- Always ERR on the side of caution
- It is suggested that the coach or someone from the team be responsible for assisting with injuries, which may include attending a certified Red Cross First Aid course.
- Each team should have and know how to use a First Aid kit that includes but is not limited to: Team Safety and Information Card; plastic bags and ties for ice, ice in a cooler, tape, band aids, scissors, antiseptic, sterile pads, towelettes, gauze pads, ACE wrap, antibiotic First Aid creme.
- Prevention should be our first concern. Each coach should have a Team Safety and Information Card which contains the following but not limited to:

Name of the player, home telephone, emergency contact if parent is not available plus phone number, for players under the age of 18, an emergency medical treatment release signed by the parents, any allergies to any medicines or treatments, stings or bites, if they are currently taking any medication and when, emergency numbers of police, hospital, ambulance, and fire, plus the local phone to be use to call for location and or how to get it.

- If a player is injured, inform the parents. If the parents are not at the game, follow up with a phone call explaining what took place.
- It is recommended that if the player has to go to the doctor the coach should request a written permission slip for the player to return to activity.

- Coaches need to know: (see pages 39 - 41 in the booklet "Youth Soccer Parent/Coach Primer").

- Rest
- Ice
- Compression
- Elevation
- Strains
- Sprains
- Blisters
- Broken bones and recognition of them
- Cramp
- Heat exhaustion and heat stroke
- Concussion and head injuries

- Rule of thumb when handling an injured player:
 - A. Avoid panic
 - B. Check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration, and shock
 - C. Dependent upon nature of injury avoid moving the patient
 - D. Inspire confidence and reassure patient
 - E. Use common sense
 - F. Seek professional help
 - G. Check for history of injury (how it happened)
- Use certified athletic trainers when available.
- Always ERR on the side of caution

3. TEAM ORGANIZATION

- a. The team itself: we recommend every player gets a chance to play every position. Let the players who are going to be GK play awhile in training to experience the position before putting them into the game.
- b. Player deployment: based upon the number of players in a specific age group. The configurations only serve as a loose guideline and are not meant to restrict the players from moving into all the areas of the field.
- c. Parent/Coach Meeting - Tell the parents:

Your philosophy.

What you hope to accomplish this season.
 Player responsibilities
 Training schedule, Weather policies, Game schedule
 First aid, health, safety
 Field maintenance and equipment
 Uniforms and personal equipment
 Finances, fund-raisers, Awards, Tournaments
 Special events
 Open discussion
 What is expected of the parents:

- Getting the players to practice and games (car pooling).
- Be supportive of their children and the team.
- Do not yell at any player (yours or theirs), at any coaches, at any referees, and at any parents of the other team.
- De-emphasize winning or losing
- That we want to develop a good attitude about the game so the child can develop a long-term soccer relationship.
- That we will emphasize skill acquisition rather than high pressure kicking and running just to get a result.
- Assistance to help the child develop good training habits at home.
- Assistance in communication when practice and games are changed (phone chain).
- Assistance in getting medical help.
- Provide refreshments, equipment set up and tear down.

d. Equipment Needs

Players: A ball Shin guards Shoes Loose fitting clothing Water bottles	Teams: Cones, extra balls, air pump Colored shirts, bibs, or vests Adequate playing surface Soccer nets First aid kit Ice (preferred over cold packs)
---	---

e. Keep attendance. Players and parents will then know how serious you are about the practices.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR COACHING YOUTH

Recommended Duration and Number of Training Sessions per Week:

U-8: 1 or 2, 1 hour sessions per week, and 1 game.
 U-10: 2, 1 - 1.5 hour sessions per week, and 1 game.

In addition to these formal practice sessions, the players should be encouraged to play on their own.

Recommended Ball Size and Type of Activities:

U-8: Size 3, Many of short duration

U-10: Size 4, Fewer with longer duration.

The nature of the training session should emphasize fun, and be upbeat, positive and appropriately challenging for each age group. Brief explanations and demonstrations that quickly get the players participating is vital. Remember, every player must bring a ball.

5. ORGANIZATION OF A TRAINING SESSION

Consideration of the aims and objectives of coaching is the first step in deciding the content of any training session.

The game of soccer possesses attributes which make it enjoyable and satisfying to its players. Given that the aims of each session should be that of enjoyment, these attributes must be present in the actual sessions themselves.

Therefore, a training session should include several vital elements:

1. Enjoyment
2. Objectives
3. Activity
4. Realism
5. Progression

Progression enables the coach to build a training session step by step and address the particular needs of his or her team.

The Progression of a Practice Session:

- a. Warm-up - Enthusiastically set the tone for fun. The warm-up prepares the mind and body for upcoming activities. Ball gymnastics greatly enhance motor skills (i.e. coordination, balance, agility, and flexibility). Young players need very little stretching, but it is a good habit for them to begin at an early age.
- b. Individual Activities - Fun-filled activities emphasizing technique development. Remember, this is the discovery age. Lots of ball contacts.
- c. Small Group Activities - Small-sided games that are an extension

Laws of the Game: Modified U-10

The following modifications of the Laws of the Games are recommended for U-10 Soccer Players:

THE FIELD:

> **Dimensions** The field of play shall be rectangular, it's length being not more than 80 yards nor less than 70 yards and it's width not more than 50 yards nor less than 40 yards. The length in all cases shall exceed the width.

> **Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than 5 inches wide, A halfway line shall be marked across the field, A center circle with an 8 yard radius, Four corner arcs with a 2 feet radius, Goal area - 6 yards from each goalpost and 6 yards into the field, joined by a line drawn parallel to the goal line, Penalty area - 14 yards from each goalpost and 14 yards into the field, joined by a line drawn parallel to the goal line.

GOALS: Maximum - 7 feet high by 7 yards wide, minimum size of hockey goals.

THE BALL: Size 4.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

> Maximum number of players on the field at any one time - 8 - one of whom shall be a goalkeeper.

> Maximum number of players on a roster should not exceed 14.

> **Substitutions:** Injuries, throw in, goal kick, goal, half-time.

> **Playing time:** Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time.

> Teams and games may be co-ed.

PLAYERS EQUIPMENT: Conform to FIFA with the following exceptions:

> **Footwear:** Tennis shoes or soft-cleated shoes.

> **Shin-guards** - Mandatory.

REFEREE:

> Registered referees, Associate referees, Parent/Coach or Assistant.

> All rule infractions shall be briefly explained to the offending player.

Laws of the Game: Modified U-10

ASSISTANT REFEREES: Use club assistant referees.

DURATION OF THE GAME:

- > The game shall be divided into 2 equal 25 minute halves.
- > There shall be a 5 minute break at halftime.

START OF PLAY: Conform to FIFA except that players must be 8 yards from the center mark.

BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY: Conform to FIFA.

METHOD OF SCORING: Conform to FIFA.

OFF-SIDE: Conform to FIFA.

FOULS AND MISCONDUCT: Conform to FIFA.

FREE KICKS: Conform to FIFA with the following exception - opponents must be 8 yards away from the ball.

THROW IN: Conform to FIFA.

GOAL KICK: Conform to FIFA.

CORNER KICK: Conform to FIFA with the following exception - opponents must be 8 yards away from the ball.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Opposing parent/coaches and players should shake hands after each game.

Do not record league standings.

Do not record final score.

Participation awards for ALL.

Parent /Coaches, non-playing players, parents and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.

No alcoholic beverages will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.

Soccer Injuries: Prevention & Care

PREVENTION

The first line of defense in the treatment of athletic injuries is to prevent them. This is accomplished by a well-planned program; competition among equal ability groups, proper warm-up and adherence to the Laws of the Game. Other factors that can lead to the prevention of injuries:

- > Proper use of equipment (shin guards, no jewelry, uniforms designed for climate).
- > Upkeep and monitoring of playing surfaces.
- > Proper fitting shoes, proper type of shoe for surface.
- > Ample water supply and breaks to give players rest.
- > Avoid scheduling training during the hottest periods of the day and when there is intense humidity.
- > Full rehabilitation of an injury prior to return to play, determined by physician.
- > Recommendation of a physical exam by qualified personnel prior to participation.

The coach or assistant should be responsible for assisting with injuries, which should include attending a certified first aid course and knowledge of state and local ordinances.

It is recommended that the coach should follow-up with a phone call about a player's injury to the parents whether or not the parents were in attendance at the game or practice.

Each coach should have and know how to use a First Aid Kit that includes, but is not limited to: Team Safety and Information Card, plastic bags and ties for ice, ice, tape, band-aids, antiseptic, sterile pads, towelettes, gauze pads, elastic wrap, antibiotic cream and rubber gloves (CARE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO AVOID CONTACT WITH BLOOD AND BODY FLUIDS AND TO USE PROPER DISPOSAL OF ITEMS SOAKED WITH SUCH FLUIDS).

CARE

The care of the injured athlete will begin the moment an injury occurs. Immediate care will reduce the severity of the injury and the possibility of long term disability. The coach, upon seeing an injured player on the field should:

- > Make sure that the airway is clear.
- > Determine if the player is conscious.

Soccer Injuries: Prevention & Care

- > Ask how the injury occurred (player, teammates, officials).
- > Ask the player where it hurts.
- > If the player is unable to continue, he should be checked to determine the extent of the injury.

After determining that the injury IS NOT life threatening, the nature of the injury can be further determined.

- > Note the position of the injured part.
- > Look for swelling and deformity.
- > Compare with the opposite side.
- > Ask the players and/or teammates what happened.

Treatment for minor injuries such as sprains, strains and contusions is referred to as R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation). The R.I.C.E. treatment is the only first aid treatment that is safe treatment for a sports injury without professional advice. The treatment helps in three different ways. R.I.C.E. treatments, limited to 20 minutes, can do no harm to any type of injury. Almost anything else (including heat applications) can cause harm in some instances.

- > Applying ice chills the injured area causing the blood vessels to contract, closing circulation to the injured area.
- > Applying pressure with an elastic bandage inhibits the accumulation of blood and fluids in the area, thereby minimizing pain and swelling.
- > Elevating the injured area decreases fluid accumulation to the injured area, puts the area to rest and helps to reduce painful muscle spasms.

FOLLOW-UP care should be considered if gross swelling or deformity is present, the player is unable to bear weight on the injured part or severe pain or discomfort is present.

Some familiar terms that you should know:

- > **SPRAIN** Ligaments are bands of tissue that attach bone to bone and stabilize joints. A sprain is an injury to one or more ligaments.
- > **STRAIN** A tearing injury to a muscle or a tendon (tendons attach muscle to bone) Athlete may hear the muscle tearing, muscle fatigue and spasm before occurrence severe weakness

Soccer Injuries: Prevention & Care

or loss of muscle function, sharp pain upon occurrence spasmodic contraction, extreme tenderness to touch and/or indentation to the body part.

> **CONTUSION** A crushing injury to a muscle or tendon caused by an outside force, which causes hemorrhaging to surrounding tissue.

> **ABRASION** A loss of surface area of the skin caused by sliding. Care - The area should be cleaned with an antiseptic to prevent infection. An antibiotic ointment should be applied to keep the wound moist and destroy bacteria present.

HEAT INJURIES YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF:

> **HEAT CRAMPS** An involuntary contraction of muscle or a muscle group that is repetitive and rapid in nature. Care - Rest, drink water and stretching.

> **HEAT EXHAUSTION** Surface temperature approximately normal, skin pale and clammy, profuse perspiration tired and weak, headache - perhaps cramps, nausea, dizziness, possible vomiting and possible fainting (the player will probably regain consciousness as the head is lowered). Immediate Care - Move to a cool area, air-conditioning best, have the player lie down with feet elevated, remove restrictive apparel as appropriate, cool with wet cloths or by fanning, if alert - water may be given (1/2 glass per 15 minutes), if player vomits - take to hospital immediately and always refer to physician for further diagnosis, treatment and prior to return to activity.

> **HEAT STROKE** Body temperature is high, skin is hot, red and dry, sweating mechanism is blocked, pulse is rapid and strong, player may lose consciousness. Immediate Care - Seek immediate medical care (Call 911), while waiting, treat as above for heat exhaustion keeping in mind that if you reduce the body temperature too rapidly it can cause internal bleeding.

General principles when handling an injured player:

> Avoid Panic. > Use common sense. > Seek professional help.

> Check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration and shock.

> Dependent upon the nature of the injury, avoid moving the player.

> Inspire confidence and reassure the player. > Determine how the injury occurred.

> Use certified athletic trainers when available. > Always ERR on the side of caution.

> It is recommended that if a player has had medical attention, he/she must have written permission from the doctor to return to activity.

Team Administration & Risk Management

GAME ORGANIZATION

- > Pregame.
- > Halftime.
- > Postgame.

COACHING ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

- > Are the activities fun?
- > Are the activities organized?
- > Are the players involved in the activities?
- > Is creativity and decision making being used?
- > Are the spaces used appropriate?
- > Is the coach's feedback appropriate?
- > Are there implications for the game?

RISK MANAGEMENT: Accepting a coaching position means accepting responsibilities:

- > To provide proper instruction for the activity.
- > To provide proper equipment for the activity.
- > To make reasonable selection of players.
- > To provide proper supervision of training and games.
- > To take proper precautions to guard against post-injury aggravation.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

- > Never leave a player alone after training or games.
- > Be certain that players depart with their parents or designated individual.
- > Avoid being left alone with players who are not your children.

Team Administration & Risk Management

DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING

- > Player Development.
- > Fun and Purpose.

PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH COACHING

- > Developmentally Appropriate.
- > Clear, Concise and Correct information: Brevity - Clarity - Relevance
- > Simple to Complex: There should be a flow that is appropriate to the age of the players and the topic of the practice - in some instances this will proceed from a warm-up to individual activities to small group activities to large group activities (The Game) - While the progression may vary, every practice should start with a warm-up and end with "The Game".
- > Safe and Appropriate training area.
- > Decision making.
- > Implications for the Game.

PRE-SEASON PARENT-COACH MEETING

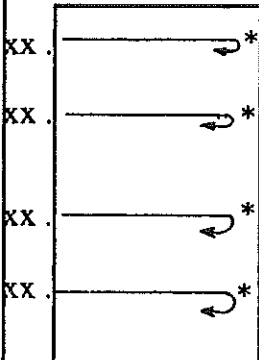
- > Discuss coaching philosophy and goals.
- > Discuss what is expected of parents (transportation, communication, sportsmanship) and players.
- > Obtain information; i.e., medical information, parent's skill inventory.
- > Consider Coach-Player meeting on both an individual and group basis as appropriate.

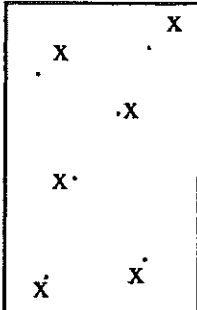
EQUIPMENT NEEDS

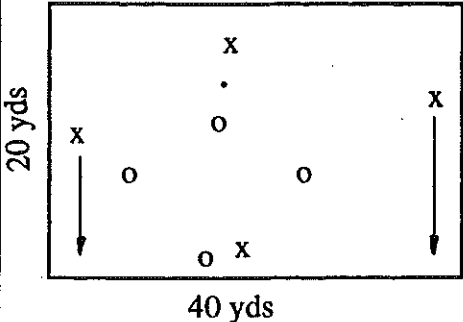
- > Players should be encouraged to take responsibility and care of their equipment from the beginning to include: ball, shin guards, proper shoes, clothing appropriate for training and climate, and water bottle.
- > Coaches should be responsible for: cones, bibs or vests, extra balls, air pump, first aid kit, ice, water, nets, portable goals (if used).

TECHNICAL TOPIC

DRIBBLING-RECREATIONAL LEVEL

FUNDAMENTAL	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>COACHING POINTS</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In pairs -One dribbles, one rests -Dribble to cone and back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Inside of right foot only -Outside of right foot only -Laces of right foot only -Alternate inside/outside -Left foot, same sequence -Alternate feet, step touch
LINE DRIBBLE		

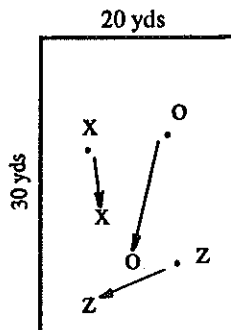
MATCH RELATED	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>COACHING POINTS</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -One ball per player -Dribble in the area -On coaches signal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stop *Change direction *Switch balls *Dribble to a line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use all parts of both feet -Close control -Head up -Change direction -Change speed
FREE DRIBBLE		<p><u>PROGRESSION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pirates: players without a ball try to gain possession. -Topcat: try to kick other players balls out of the area.

MATCH CONDITION	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>COACHING POINTS</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Line soccer 4v.4 -Dribble over opponents end line to score. -Each team has a line to defend and a line to attack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Attitude to risk -Close control -Change direction, feints -Change of speed -Vision
LINE SOCCER		

TECHNICAL TOPIC

PASSING-RECREATIONAL LEVEL

FUNDAMENTAL



ORGANIZATION

- In pairs
- Pass and move in area

PROGRESSION

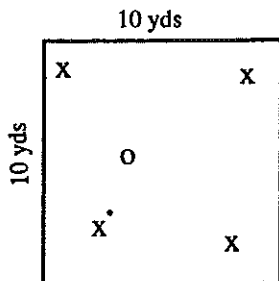
- Six pairs pass and move in 20-30 yd area.

COACHING POINTS

- Push pass: inside of foot
- Instep pass: laces
- Flick pass: outside of foot
- Weak foot: all above

PASS AND MOVE

MATCH RELATED



ORGANIZATION

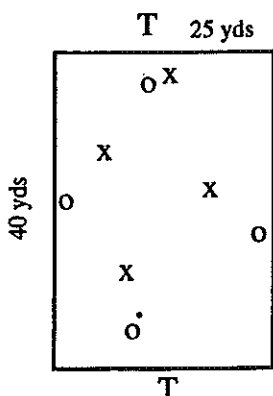
- 4v.1
- 3v.1
- 2.v1

COACHING POINTS

- Accuracy
- Pace
- Timing
- Disguise
- Support position

KEEP AWAY

MATCH CONDITION



ORGANIZATION

- 4V.4 + 2 target players

COACHING POINTS

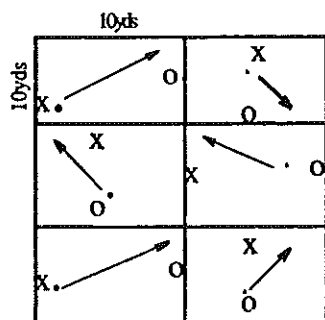
- All above
- Spread out side to side end to end
- Diamond shape

TARGET SOCCER

TECHNICAL TOPIC

RECEIVING-RECREATIONAL LEVEL

FUNDAMENTAL



ORGANIZATION

- In pairs, one ball
- Pass ball to space partner moves to receive.

PROGRESSION

- Thigh control
- Chest control
- Head control
- Underarm serve
- Overarm serve, bouncing ball

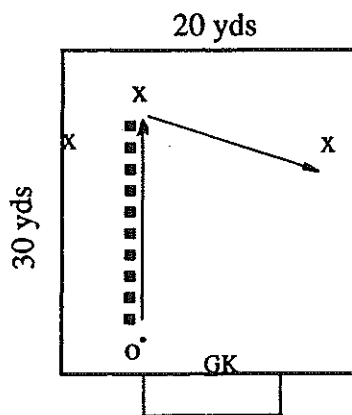
COACHING POINTS

- Move behind in line with ball
- Decide on controlling surface
- Eyes on the ball
- Relax surface
- Control ball out of the feet
- Look up

- Run/move thru the ball

UNDER CONTROL

MATCH RELATED



3v.1 TO LINE

ORGANIZATION

- Defender passes ball to attackers and moves to defend.
- Attackers control ball and pass to try and cross line.
- Repeat

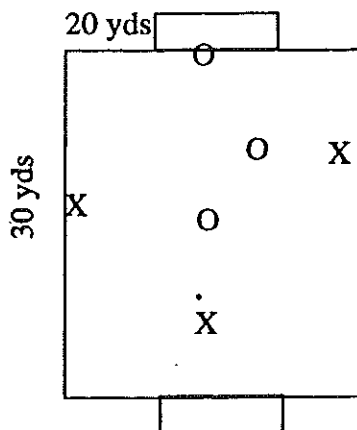
PROGRESSION

- Serve in air
- 2 defenders

COACHING POINTS

- Move in line and towards the ball
- Control out of feet
- Control away from pressure
- Vision
- Wide players open body to face field.
- Attack at speed

MATCH CONDITION



Sweeper Keeper

ORGANIZATION

- 3 V. 2
- Floating Goalkeeper
- Team in possession GK plays out
- Defending team 1 player in goal

COACHING POINTS

- Control away from the defender
- Hold the ball
- Move to receive

TECHNICAL TOPIC

SHOOTING-RECREATIONAL LEVEL

FUNDAMENTAL	ORGANIZATION	COACHING POINTS
	<p>-In pairs shoot stationary ball</p> <p>PROGRESSION</p> <p>-Shoot a rolling ball (i.e. 2 touch)</p> <p>-Dribble and shoot</p> <p>-Shoot at cone placed in middle</p>	<p>-Angled approach</p> <p>-Non-kicking foot alongside behind ball pointing at target.</p> <p>-Contact with instep (laces)</p> <p>-Strike thru center of ball</p> <p>-Follow thru</p> <p>-Head steady, eyes on ball</p>
LOW DRIVE		

MATCH RELATED	ORGANIZATION	COACHING POINTS
	<p>-Groups of three (2 shoot, 1 GK)</p> <p>-Shoot rolling ball (away striker)</p> <p>-Shoot rolling ball (towards striker)</p> <p>PROGRESSION</p> <p>-One and in. 1v.1 person who scores becomes GK, keep score 1st to six wins.</p>	<p>-All the above</p> <p>-Vision check GK's position</p> <p>-Shot selection</p> <p>-Accuracy before power</p> <p>-Shoot low</p>
BEAT THE GK		

MATCH CONDITION	ORGANIZATION	COACHING POINTS
	<p>-3v.3 to 6v.6 in penalty area.</p> <p>-Coach serves balls.</p> <p>-Both teams try to score.</p> <p>PROGRESSION</p> <p>-Two goals</p>	<p>-Attitude to shoot</p> <p>-Shoot early</p> <p>-Shoot before pass</p> <p>-Shoot 1st time</p> <p>-Control turn and shoot</p>
QUICK SHOTS		

TECHNICAL TOPIC

HEADING-RECREATIONAL LEVEL

FUNDAMENTAL



ORGANIZATION

- One ball per player
- Standing, throw head catch
- Walking
- Jogging
- Running, throw, bounce, head catch

PROGRESSION

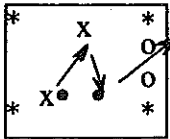
- Pairs: self serve head to partner.
partner serves, head back.
- Threes: X1 throws,X2 heads
X3 catch

COACHING POINTS

- Contact, forehead
- Eyes open, mouth closed
- Tense neck
- Head thru ball
- Arch back, swing upper body thru ball
- One foot forward,step toward target on contact.

SELF, PAIRS, THREES

MATCH RELATED



ORGANIZATION

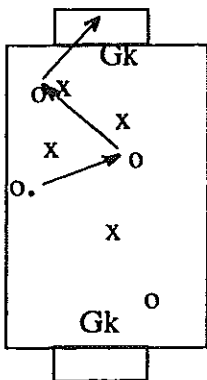
- Groups of four
- Two pairs
- One pair= GK1 & GK 2,defend goal.
- Second pair= Attacks, throw head head goal.
- Alternate attacks

COACHING POINTS

- Step forward ,meet the ball.
- Get over the ball
- Head down

HEAD TO GOAL

MATCH CONDITION



ORGANIZATION

- 4v.4 to 6v.6
- Use full size goals
- Follow sequence throw, head, catch.
- Head to score
- Intercept by heading,ball hits ground.

COACHING POINTS

- All the above

THROW, HEAD, CATCH

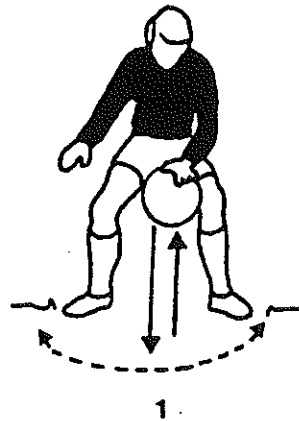
Goalkeeping 1

Shot-Stopping: Basic Techniques

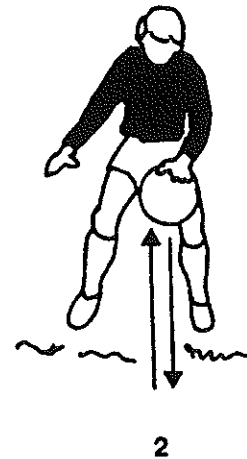
Warm-Up

Ball-handling exercises:

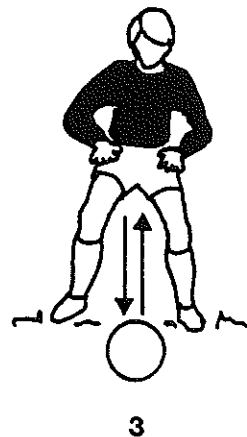
1. Bounce ball in semi-circle.



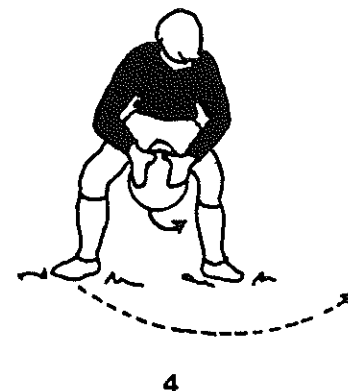
2. Bounce-jumps with ball.



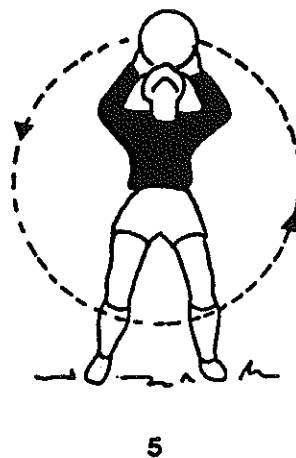
3. Hard bounce - soft catch.



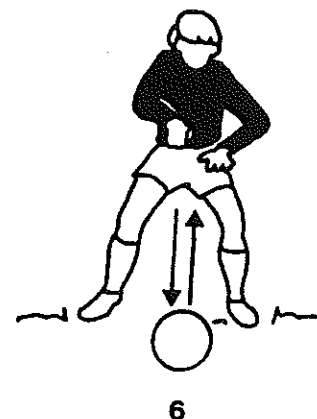
4. Two-handed bounce through legs; turn and catch.



5. Body circles with ball (eyes on ball).



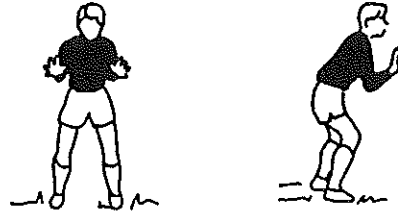
6. Punch ball to ground and catch with both hands.



Technique Practice

Ready" Position

- Feet shoulder-width apart; weight forward; hands at waist-height with palms facing ball.



Ground Shots

- Straight-leg technique: knees and feet together; hands behind ball.



- Kneeling technique: feet and legs across path of ball, with knee of kneeling-leg beside heel of lead-leg. Scoop ball and bring to chest.



Waist-High Shots

- Hands behind ball; elbows in. Bend forward to absorb force of ball.



Shoulder-High Shots

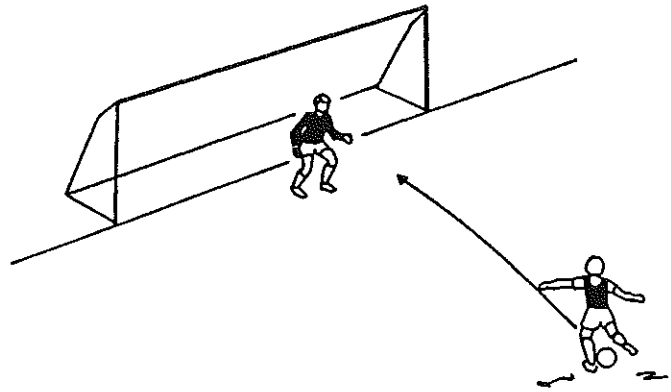
- Fingers are spread behind ball (thumbs in W-shape). Bend arms to absorb force of shot; lower ball to body.



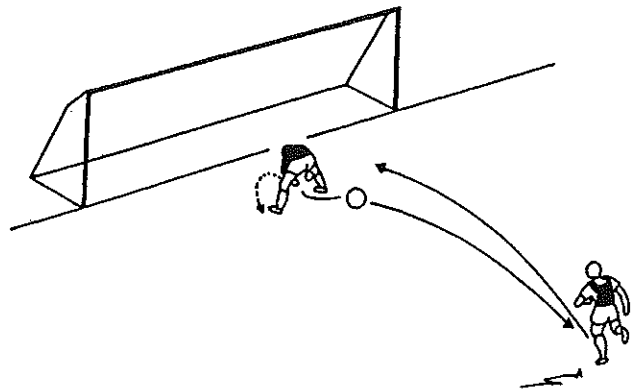
For all shots, emphasize keeping head steady, keeping eyes on ball, stopping shot and then securing ball to body.

Skill Practice

- Goalkeeper adopts “ready” position and uses appropriate technique-on-demand to save shots from server.

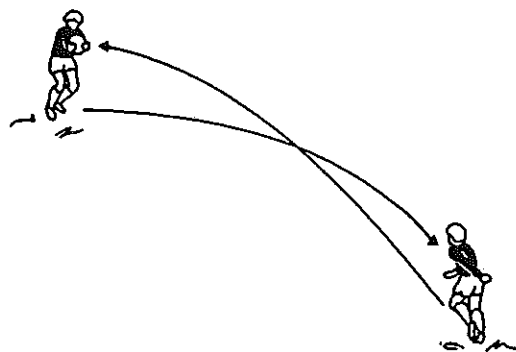


- Goalkeeper, ball in hands, turns back on server and throws ball through legs to server about 10 metres away; goalkeeper then turns quickly to assume “ready” position to receive shot from server.

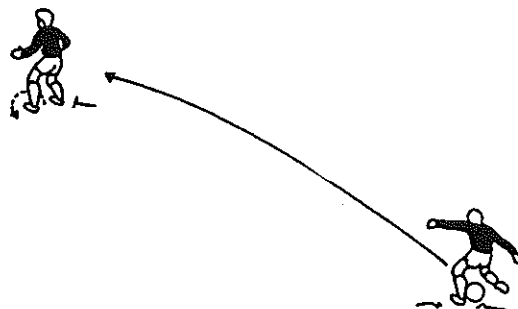


Related Game

- Two goalkeepers stand 10 metres apart and kick ball to each other. Each ball that is “cleanly” caught merits one point. Play to 10 points.



- Variation: Receiving goalkeeper keeps back turned until goalkeeper in possession shouts “Turn” as he kicks ball.



SMALL-SIDED SOCCER PROGRAM

Rationale

To further enhance the Recreational Program, supports USYSA's teaching philosophy with respect to small sided soccer in U6, U8 and U10. This philosophy allows the game to be the teacher by maximizing each player's touches on the ball and encourages all the players to develop their skills in all positions. Further, the philosophy discourages intense competition until the older age groups.

1. WHY SMALL-SIDED GAMES

The child is not a small adult: Children under the age of 12 are physically, mentally and technically not equipped to cope with 11-a-side soccer on a full field. In a small sided game, the player's energy is reserved for ball manipulation rather than for chasing after it for 30 to 50 yards.

Enhanced player development: Small sided soccer allows more touches of the ball for each participant, more decision making, more active involvement, all of which speeds up player development. Each touch of the ball represents a 'Learning Moment' for the player both technically and tactically. Playing 4v4 at Under-8 allows for many such learning moments.

Enhanced tactical development: Beginner players of any age will grasp the tactics of the game more easily via small sided games. The 11-a-side game causes information overload for inexperienced players. When the size of field is so big that it necessitates a succession of passes to bring the ball from one end to the other, most U-8 players will experience little success due to their limited technical abilities. It then becomes tempting to coach the player to hoof the ball high and long in order to achieve success in attack. The important art of ball possession cannot be learned if players are instructed to kick the ball as far as possible and chase it. This will result in the development of players who are tactically and technically limited.

The 4v4 game in a small field eliminates the need for long kicking and puts a premium on ball control and clever play. The player's size and power are not as important as their skill and cunning.

One extremely vital tactical situation is the transition stage. Transition is defined as the very short phase when the ball changes possession, when one team has just lost the ball, while the other team has just won the ball. The speed with which the players of both teams react to the change in possession is considered as the biggest determinant of the game's outcome. For example, the team who has just lost the ball can win the ball back immediately if its players collectively and quickly mark tight

can win the ball back immediately if its players collectively and quickly mark tight and challenge the ball. On the other hand, the team who has just won possession can take advantage with a quick, incisive and direct counter attack and score. In a small-sided game such as the 4v4 game, all the players on the field are forced to react to the transition by virtue of their proximity to the ball. For this reason, the 4v4 game will cultivate tactically sharp players who can think and react quickly.

Eliminate positional stifling: The 11-a-side game leads to positional categorization and stereotype patterns which, when implemented at too early an age, stifle individual development. In fact, once the size of the game reaches 5-a-side or 6-a-side, it becomes necessary to organize the team into formation and assign specific roles to players. Some coaches are of the opinion that they can utilize the 3v3 and 4v4 games in practices but can still play 7v7 or 11v11 in games and thus accord the players the best of both worlds. An inherent problem with this approach is that when a player is assigned a position in a game, the limiting nature of his position prevents him from experimenting and trying out the tricks he learned in practice and **TEAM DEVELOPMENT TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT**. Another flaw with this approach is that coaches will have larger squads to manage and players will have less touches on the ball both in practices and in games.

Coaches should delay the point in the player's development when it is tactically and organizationally necessary to place them into positions. Soccer experts worldwide believe that the Under-10 level is the earliest recommended point for 'organized' soccer. In the rest of the world, there is no such thing as Under-6 or even Under-8 soccer. In Europe, the youngest age group for organized youth soccer is Under-10. In South America and Africa the youngest age group for organized soccer is usually Under-14 or Under-15. In most parts of the world, the children's first experience with soccer usually occurs in an unsupervised, unorganized setting in the form of small-sided games in the back yard or in the streets without adult coaches.

This kind of environment, where kids are free to play the game away from stifling adult supervision, where they have the freedom to experience the pure joy of playing, discovering, experimenting and learning new tricks, is where their love of the game is nurtured. This is the environment which has produced all the wonderfully gifted players you have marveled at during the World Cup. Here in North America, we have a similar breeding ground for NBA stars in the inner city hoop courts.

In Holland, the U-10 players start by playing 4v4, after which they progress to 7v7 at U-12 and 11v11 at U-14. Holland is renowned worldwide for producing top talent. Other European countries play 7v7 at U-10 across half a regular soccer field, using smaller goals. In both Europe and South America, the 11-a-side version is only used starting at the U-14 age group!

Enhanced soccer-specific fitness: Soccer is a game of change. Players are constantly changing their movement and activity patterns. Allow me to indulge and state the obvious: The closer the player is to the ball, the more frequent and intense movement pattern changes he/she experiences. Conversely, the players who are furthest from the ball do not change movement often and, in fact, many times are actually standing still. It's for this reason that professional teams train all week long using small-sided games. The small-sided games create more activity patterns, more ball contacts and are more physically demanding than the 11-a-side game. The professionals do not play 11v11 in training because it is an inefficient method of practicing and they want their training to exceed the requirements of the game.

Kids love playing small-sided games: The game is less boring because of the constant involvement. The weaker or less assertive players cannot hide and, sooner or later, get swept up by the action and excitement.

So what is the (small sided) game plan

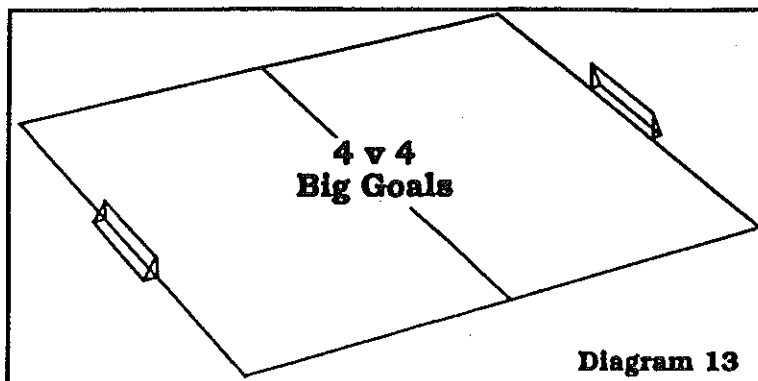
We need to gradually increase the number of players on the field using the following recommended progression:

Under-6	3 vs 3
Under-8	4 vs 4
Under-10	8 vs 8
Under-12	11 vs 11

In addition, the training sessions should emphasize small sided scrimmages at every age level.

Youth Player Development The Dutch Way

The four main field sizes and game organizations used to create different demands for the youth player.

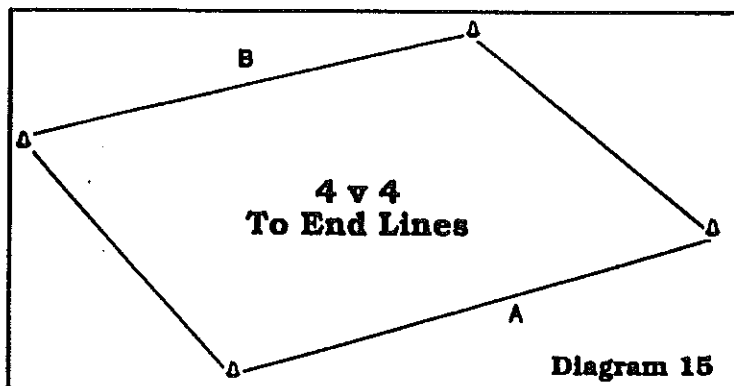
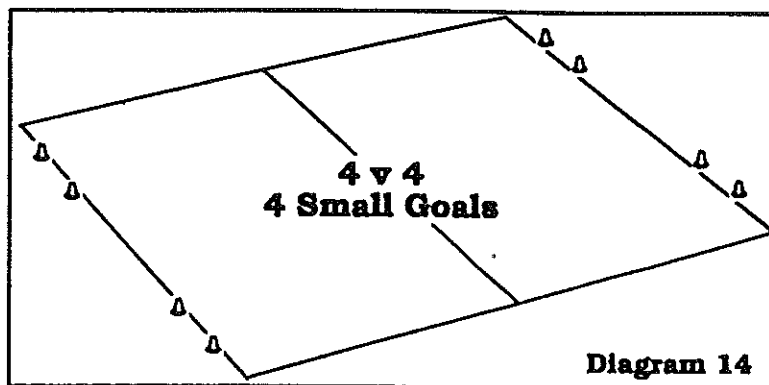


Field One

Diagram 13 is 20 yds long x 30 yds wide, big goals. This obviously is the shooting game (but emphasis can be placed on good defending).

Field Two

Diagram 14 is 30 yds long x 35 yds wide. The four goals encourage switch play, crosses and headers and the value of playing with the "head up" (counter-balance by balancing defensive positions).

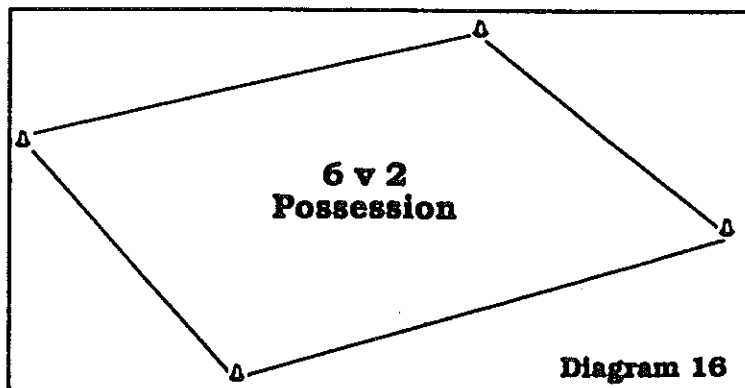


Field Three

Diagram 15 is 20 yds long x 25 yds wide. Dribbling and wall passing (counter-balanced by pressuring and tracking players). Goals are scored by crossing end lines A or B with the ball under control.

Field Four

Diagram 16 is 25 yds long x 18 yds wide. 6 v 2 or 5 v 3 possession play (counter-balanced by defensive challenging).



PRACTICAL SECTION

FUN GAMES FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

The following 21 games are fun activities which will help your players improve various aspects of their game. The first few games focus on technical aspects such as dribbling and shielding. The rest of the games help to improve team play.

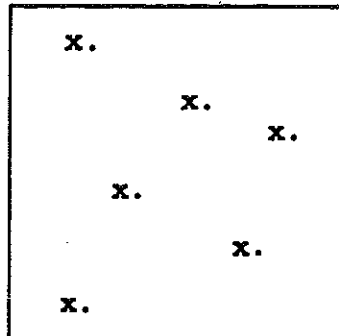
By their very nature these games ARE the TEACHERS. The games create problems for the players to solve on their own and require little or no formal coaching. The coach simply explains the activity and supervises the team with very little or no stoppages until it is time to move on to the next activity.

Refer to the 'Assistant Coach Series' and 'Youth Soccer Parent/Coach Primer' booklet for additional compilations of fun activities. Note the progression of a practice session from the warm-up to individual activities, to small group activities, to large group activities.

GAME 1: HOUSE DRIBBLE

CAN BE USED AS WARM-UP

10-15 YDS. SQ.



OBJECTIVE: To allow players to become comfortable at dribbling and manipulating the ball without the presence of opponents.

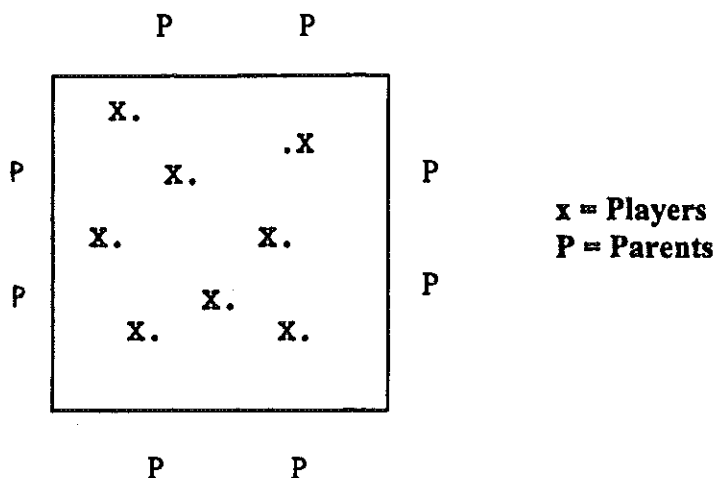
ORGANIZATION: 6 to 10 players with one ball each, dribble inside a grid. Players respond to coach's commands as shown below.

<u>Coach's Command</u>	<u>Player's required response</u>
Right foot (or left)	Players dribble with right foot only
Stop (or "Red Light")	Players stop the ball by placing one foot on top of the ball
Turn	Players change the direction of the dribble
Right Elbow (or other body part such as nose, forehead, knee, cheek, etc.)	Players stop the ball by placing the body part on the ball
Clear the house	Players dribble fast out of the grid
Sit	Players sit on the ball
Jump	Players stop the ball and run around it jump over the ball, two legged, side to side
Change	Players leave their ball and get another ball
Three (or any other number)	Players dribble into groups of three

VARIATION: Instead of shouting a body part, the coach can touch an area on his body and the players need to stop the ball using the same area.

GAME 2: COLOR DRIBBLE

CAN BE USED AS WARM-UP



OBJECTIVE: To get players to develop their vision by looking around while dribbling.

ORGANIZATION: 4 to 10 players with one ball each, dribble inside a grid 15-25 yds. Square. Parents wear colored bibs or vests and position themselves randomly around the grid. Coach calls out a color at which point all the players need to dribble fast to parents wearing the specified colored vest.

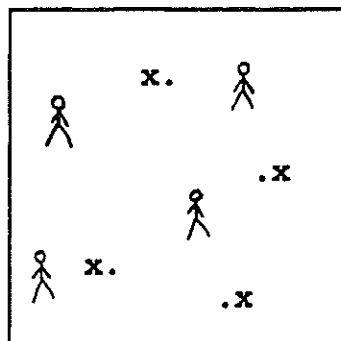
After every turn, have parents move around grid to a new position.

VARIATION: Color Change

Players in grid split into 2 or 3 small teams, each team wearing the same color bibs. Players dribble in area. When coach shouts "change", each player changes the ball with a teammate of the same color. If coach shouts "color change", each player changes ball with a member of one of the other team(s).

GAME 3: NUTMEG

CAN BE USED AS A WARM-UP



x - Dribbler

⋈ - Player (or Parents)
stand with legs open

OBJECTIVE: Improve dribbling and changing direction with heads up.

ORGANIZATION: Half the players with one ball each. The other half stand in grid with legs open. Players with the ball dribble in this grid and 'NUTMEG' as many players as possible in 30-60 seconds (push the ball between standing player's legs). Cannot nutmeg the same player in succession.

Rotate roles

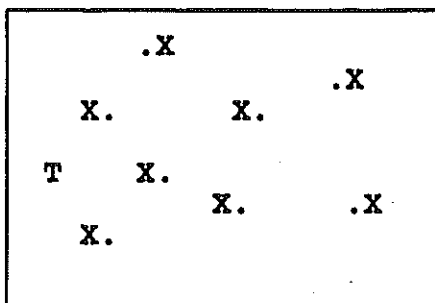
VARIATION: Add a defender who tries to take the ball away from any of the dribblers. Dribbler who loses the ball becomes the new defender.

Note: If parents are available, use them to stand in grid with legs open. Parents can also have a turn at dribbling in order to see for themselves that soccer is not as easy as it looks.

GAME 4: FREEZE TAG

CAN BE USED AS A WARM-UP

20-40 YDS. SQ.



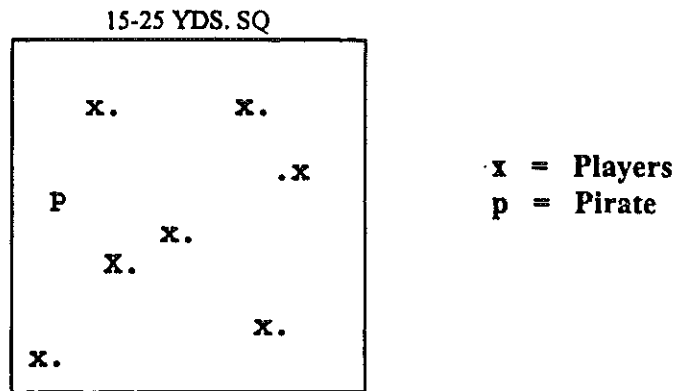
x - Player with ball
T - Player tagging

OBJECTIVE: Improve dribbling and changing direction.

ORGANIZATION: 6 to 10 players dribble their balls in the grid. One player without a ball tries to 'freeze' players by touching them. Each player who is frozen must stand with his/her legs open and wait until his teammates 'unfreeze' him by dribbling their ball between his legs. Tagging player tries to freeze the whole team within 60 seconds.

Increase difficulty by adding a second tagging player.

GAME 5: PIRATE



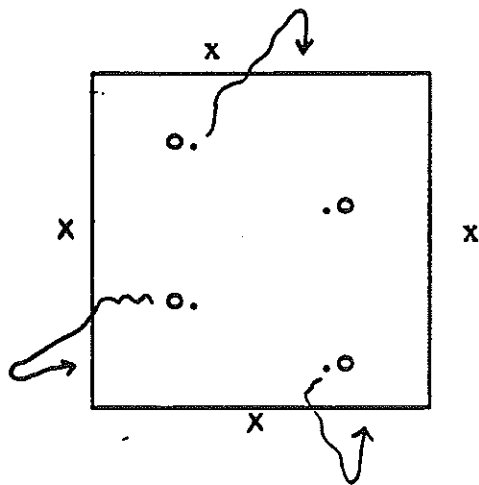
OBJECTIVE: To develop dribbling ability and change of direction to evade challenges.

ORGANIZATION: 4 to 8 players dribble ball in a grid.
One player is without a ball and is the pirate.
The pirate tries to win one ball from any of the other players.
The player who loses his/her ball becomes the new pirate.

VARIATION: The pirate kicks the balls out of the grid.
Each player who loses his/her ball becomes an additional pirate.
Play stops when there are no more balls in the grid.

VARIATION: Players try to kick everyone else's balls out of the grid while keeping their own ball protected.

GAME 6: JAIL BREAK

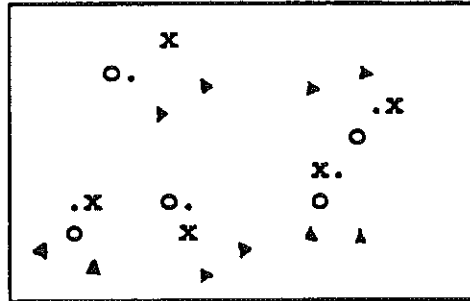


OBJECTIVE: Improve dribbling past opponents, changing direction and accelerating with the ball.

ORGANIZATION: 4 to 6 players inside a grid 15-25 yds. sq. 4 to 6 players stand along perimeter of grid. Players inside the grid have one ball each. The players inside the grid (prisoners) try to break out of jail by dribbling past the prison guards (x's) out of the grid. Prisoners return inside the grid and attempt to break out again through another side. The prisoner who can break out of and back into prison the most times in 60 seconds is the winner. The guards (x's) are not allowed in the grid and are not allowed to chase the prisoners outside the grid. Guards can only move laterally along the grid lines.

Rotate roles.

GAME 7: MULTI GOAL



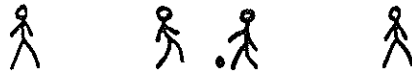
OBJECTIVE: Improve dribbling past defenders, changing direction and acceleration away from defender.

ORGANIZATION: Two teams of 4-6 players.
Each player is matched up against a player from the other team.
One ball per pair (attacker versus defender).
Each attacker tries to score by dribbling through as many goals as possible in 60 seconds.
If defender wins the ball or ball goes out of bounds, defender becomes the attacker and play is continuous.

NOTE: This is a very physically demanding game. Play one minute and rest 2 minutes.

VARIATION: The 2 teams play with just one ball. Attacking team tries to score by dribbling through any of the goals.

GAME 8: LIVE GOALS

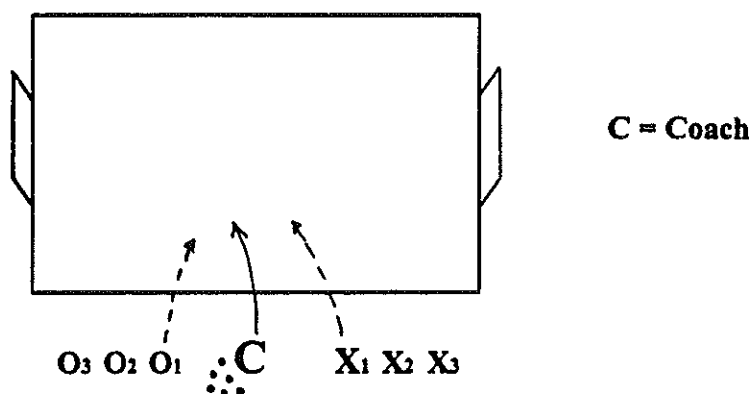


OBJECTIVES: Improve dribbling one against one.

ORGANIZATION: Players in group of 4.
2 play 1v1 while the other 2 are stationary about 20 yards apart with legs open (acting as the goals).
The 2 players playing 1v1 try to score by putting the ball through the legs of the stationary player.

Rotate roles every 30-60 seconds.

GAME 9: NUMBERS GAME

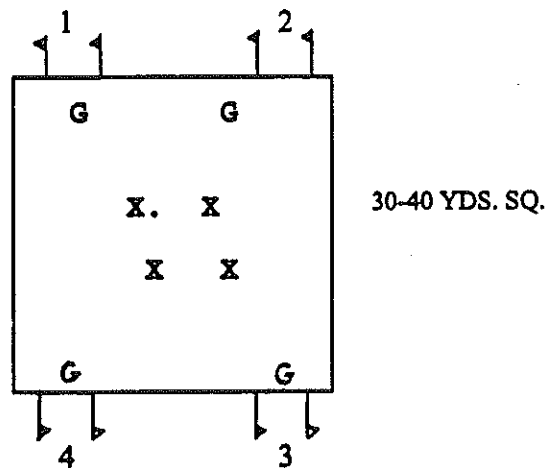


OBJECTIVE: To develop awareness, reaction.
To improve dribbling and shooting.

ORGANIZATION: Coach stands outside field at the mid point with all the balls.
Players line up in two teams along sidelines.
Players in each team are given a number.
Coach serves a ball into field and calls out a number.
The player from each team with that number runs inside the field to make it 1v1 and each player tries to score a goal.
When ball goes out of bound or is scored, players return to their position outside the field, coach serves another ball and shouts another number.

VARIATION: Coach shouts 2 numbers to make it 2v2.

GAME 10: OPEN THE GATE



OBJECTIVE: To improve passing and develop vision and reaction.

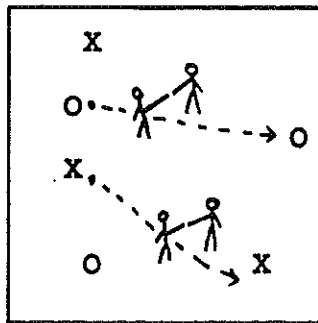
ORGANIZATION: 3 or 4 players pass one ball among themselves in a grid. 4 other players stand in front of 4 gates. The coach can open and close gates by pointing at a specific gate. For example, in the diagram above, gate 2 is open while all other gates are closed. If the coach points at gate 1, the player standing in front of gate 1 must move out of the gate and stand beside it. If the coach points at gate 2, that player must move inside gate and close it. Whenever a gate is open, the passing team tries to put the ball through the open gate. The players can bring the ball closer to the gate before kicking it through but only by passing it to each other since dribbling is not allowed.

Rotate roles.

The coach should keep a number of balls at his feet and serve a new ball every time the team kicks one out of the grid. This will maintain a good activity level.

VARIATION: The coach can open more than one gate if he wished, or close all the gates and let the players just pass the ball around. A defender can be added to make it 4v1.

GAME 11: MOVING GOALS



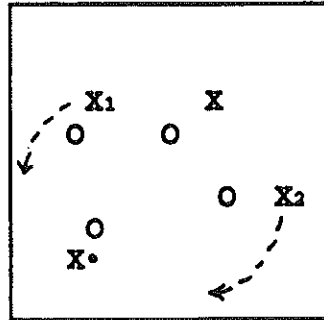
30-40 YDS. SQ.

OBJECTIVE: To develop passing and team cooperation.

ORGANIZATION: 2 teams of 3 players each.
2 pairs of players form a goal by holding outstretched hands or holding a stick.
The 2 goals move around grid.
The objective is for each team to score points by passing the ball through the moving goals to a teammate on the other side of the goal.

VARIATION: 4 players keep the ball away from 1 or 2 defenders in the grid while trying to score points by passing through moving goals.
To keep defenders from standing in front of moving goals, award a point for 4 consecutive passes also.

GAME 12: POSSESSION



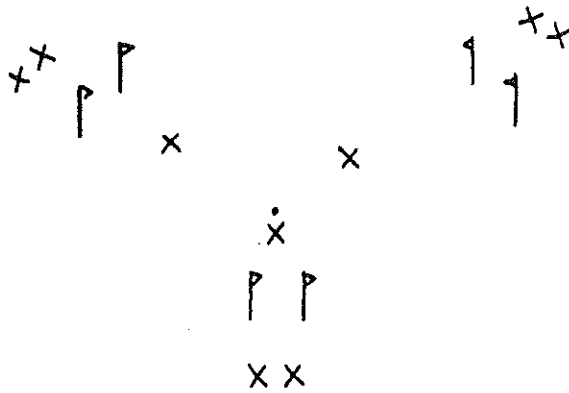
30-40 YDS. SQ.

OBJECTIVE: To teach players to support the player with the ball by moving away from defenders.

ORGANIZATION: 2 teams of 3 to 5 players.
Teams attempt to keep possession of the ball inside a grid.
Players pass the ball with their hands but ball can only be rolled on the ground.

NOTE: In the game the players will learn quickly to open up play and get away from defender's 'shadows' in order to be open for a pass. (see in diagram how X₁ and X₂ move to make themselves available for a pass).
After a while, play the possession game with feet and see if they still move to support the ball properly.

GAME 13: THREE GOAL GAME

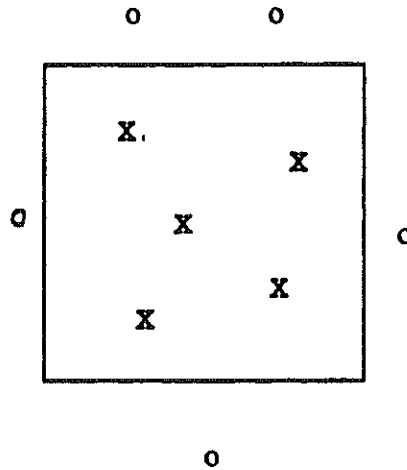


OBJECTIVE: To improve dribbling past players, improvisation, creativity and fitness.

ORGANIZATION: Three teams of 2 to 4 players each.
Each team defends one goal and attacks the other two goals.
Play is continuous with no boundaries but goals can only be scored from inside the area.
One player from each team is playing (1v1v1) while the other players sit about 5 yards behind their goal.
Whenever a player gets tired (or on the coaches' signal) players switches with a teammate.

VARIATION: Play with 2 players from each team on the field. (2v2v2).

GAME 14: COWBOYS AND INDIANS



OBJECTIVE: Improve dribbling, shielding, vision, passing and teamwork.

ORGANIZATION: 2 teams of 3 to 5 players each.

One team inside the grid, each player with a ball.

Other team around the grid.

On coaches' command the outside team enters grid and attempts to kick all the balls out of the grid.

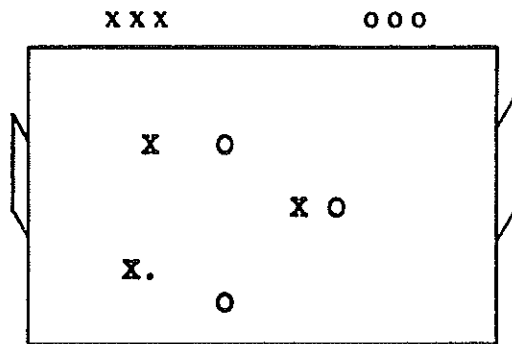
The players of the inside team each protects his own ball. Once a player loses his/her ball, he stays in grid and helps his teammates keep their balls.

Play stops when all the balls are kicked out.

Switch roles.

Winning team is one who clears all the balls in the quickest time.

GAME 15: ALL CHANGE

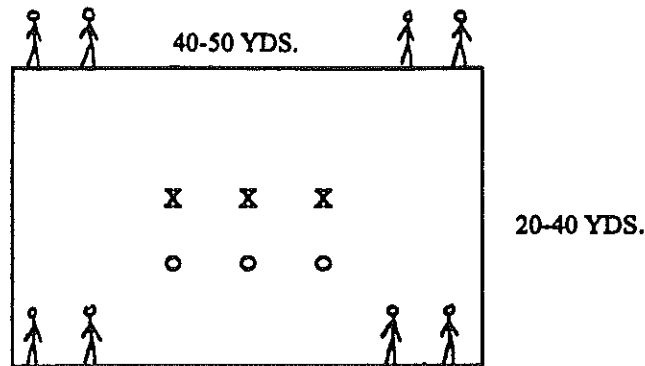


OBJECTIVE: To improve all aspects of team play, alertness and reaction in a fun game.

ORGANIZATION: Two teams of 4 to 6 players each. Half the players from each team are playing in the grid. The other half are sitting on the side line. Whenever the coach shouts 'change', all the players inside switch with their teammates outside on the fly without any stoppage in play. The coach should make frequent calls for change to keep everyone on their toes.

VARIATION: The players outside must wait in a specific pose or position, i.e. lie on their backs, lie on their bellies, on hands and knees facing away from field, etc...

GAME 16: FOUR GOAL GAME



OBJECTIVE: To develop dribbling, passing, and vision.
To develop awareness of when to switch play to the other side.

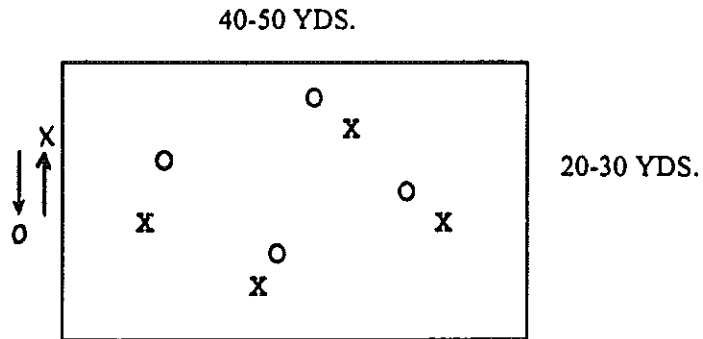
ORGANIZATION: Players play a game of 3v3 to 5v5 with four goals made up of pairs of parents.
Each team can score through the two goals at the other end.

VARIATION: Coach can signal to one of the goals to kneel or rock side to side.
Coach then tells players they can only score through "kneeling goal" or through "rocking goal".

VARIATION: Coach can add one parent to each team to act as a goalie.
Coach can tell players they can only score on open goal (parent/goalie will "close" one of the two goals by standing in front of it).

Note: When parents are not available, use cones to mark the four goals.

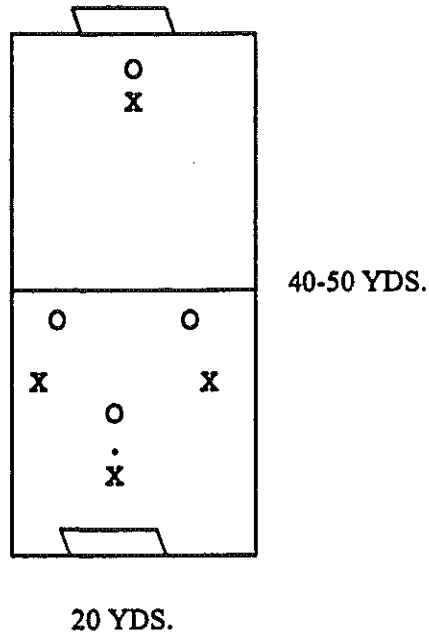
GAME 17: END LINE DRIBBLE



OBJECTIVE: To develop dribbling, vision and creativity.

ORGANIZATION: Two teams play in a grid that is wide and short. Teams score a goal by stopping the ball on the end line. Each team attacks the opposite end line and protects its own end line.

GAME 18: LONG AND NARROW

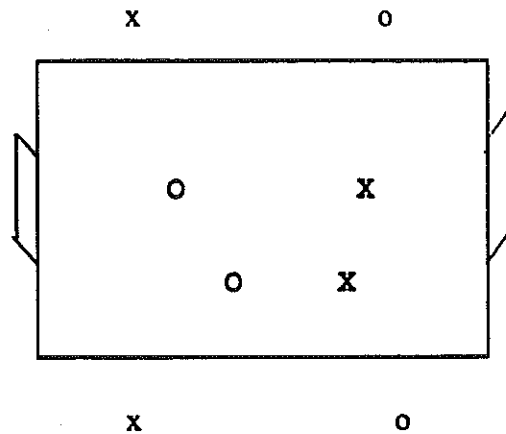


OBJECTIVE: To develop depth in attack using long through balls and quick support.

ORGANIZATION: 2 teams play in a field that is very long and narrow. The field is split into 2 halves.
One player from each team must remain in the attacking half at all times.

VARIATION: Team can only cross the half line by passing the ball to their player in the attacking half. In other words, the ball cannot be dribbled into the other half.

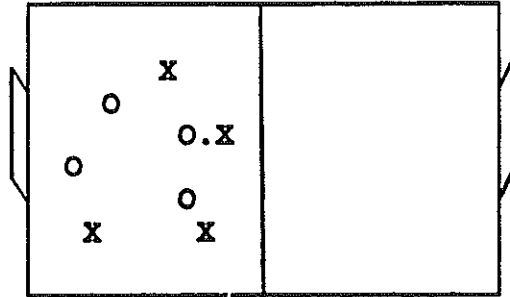
GAME 19: THE WALL GAME



OBJECTIVE: To develop width in attack.

ORGANIZATION: 2 teams play 4v4 to 6v6 (goalies optional).
Each team has 2 players on the side lines acting as support. The outside players cannot enter the field.
The players inside the field can use the outside players as a 'wall' by passing to them and receiving return passes.
The outside players cannot dribble the ball nor can they score.
Outside players cannot interfere with the other team's 'wall' players.

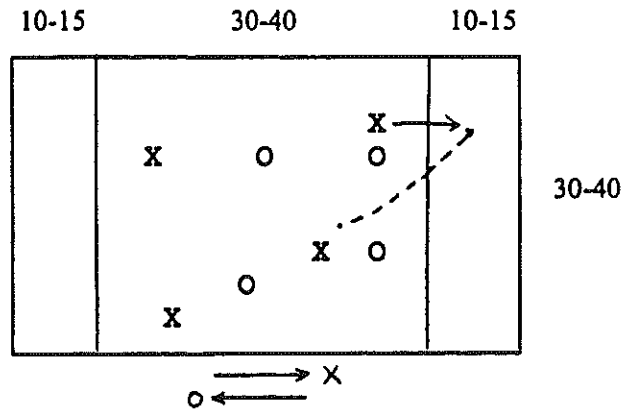
GAME 20: CLEAR THE HALF



OBJECTIVE: To develop team compactness and support, and improve fitness.

ORGANIZATION: 2 teams play a regular game.
Goals only count if the whole team (minus the keeper) has crossed into the opponent's half before the goal is scored.
Also, the goal counts double if any of the defending team's players remained in the other half.

GAME 21: END ZONE GAME



OBJECTIVE: To develop passing and support, forward and diagonal passing, forward and diagonal runs.

ORGANIZATION: Teams of 4 to 6 players play in a field that has 2 end zones. A goal is scored by passing the ball into the opposite end zone. The ball cannot be dribbled into the end zone. Players are not allowed to wait in the end zone for a pass. In other words, a teammate can only enter the zone at the same time as the pass is made into that zone. For a goal to count, the player receiving the pass in the end zone must control the ball before it goes out of the zone. Defending players are not allowed in the end zones.

LESSON PLAN

Name

Date

Theme

Age Group

Equipment

First Activity (warm-up)

Second Activity

Coaching Points

Third Activity

Fourth Activity

Fifth Activity (the game)

APPENDIX I

ARTICLES ON YOUTH SOCCER

SMALL SIDED GAMES

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

COACHING

PARENTS

Small-Sided Games: Less is More

TEN: More touches of the ball increases skill development.

REASONS: More open space, fewer numbers, less bunching. Enhanced tactical awareness. The game is less complicated and easier to understand.

WHY: More "fun" and personal enjoyment; due to small fields and simplified rules.

YOUR: More playing time. Encourages maximum individual participation.

CHILD: More individual involvement improves fitness.

WILL: More responsibility, every child greater opportunities to score, builds confidence.

ENJOY: More freedom of expression; there are no positions, children will find their own position. A child can be a forward one minute, a defender the next. Children will migrate to areas of the field where they feel comfortable. We'll find out, slowly, what their best position is.

SMALL: More children will play. Five four-a-side fields can fit inside a full sized field. This allows for 40 youngsters to play at the same time instead of 22.

SIDED: More child-centered not coach controlled.

GAMES: More experience in all phases of the game. Everyone has to do everything. The emphasis is on PLAYER DEVELOPMENT.

WHY 3V3 & 4V4 SOCCER?

It has long been acknowledged by youth coaches and experts that young players need to start at a smaller, modified version of the game. But the questions always were: How small do we start? How do we progress to the 11-a-side game?

Soccer coaches in North America looked to Europe and South America for answers to these questions to discover how the traditional soccer nations produce all their talented players.

In the rest of the world, there is no such thing as Under-6 or even Under-8 soccer. In Europe, the youngest age group for organized youth soccer is Under-10. In South America and Africa the youngest age group for organized soccer is usually Under-14 or Under-15. In most parts of the world, the children's first experience with soccer usually occurs in an unsupervised, unorganized setting in the form of small-sided games in the back yard or in the streets without adult coaches.

This kind of environment, where kids are free to play the game away from stifling adult supervision, where they have the freedom to experience the pure joy of playing, discovering, experimenting and learning new tricks, is where their love of the game is nurtured. This is the environment which has produced all the wonderfully gifted players you have marveled at during the World Cup. Here in North America, we have a similar breeding ground for NBA stars in the inner city hoop courts.

In Holland, the U-10 players start by playing 4v4, after which they progress to 7v7 at U-12 and 11v11 at U-14. Holland is renowned worldwide for producing top talent. Other European countries play 7v7 at U-10 across half a regular soccer field, using smaller goals.

As mentioned before, U-6 and U-8 soccer is a phenomenon unique to North America. Our culture encourages placing ever-younger children into organized sports. If we are not careful, we could lose track of the purpose behind youth sports and force ever-younger children into highly competitive situations based on our own adult ambitions. We need to replicate the "street soccer" environment of the rest of the world and allow our kids to experience the joy of discovery.

So what are the benefits of 3v3 soccer?

- Each player gets more touches on the ball than with 6v6 or 11v11
- Enhanced player development with faster improvement due to more touches on the ball
- Players love it
- Players are always involved
- Players experience all the attacking and defending elements of the game
- The game itself becomes the coach
- No need for experienced coaches
- Easier for beginner coaches to grasp the principles of soccer
- Need less fields
- It is appropriate for the players' mental, physical, and technical abilities
- It's how all the great stars learned to play

The following questions are usually asked by parents and coaches who are new to the concept of 3v3:

We have always played 6v6. Why Change to 3v3?

We have always used to do many things which we now stop doing because we know better. We used to feed our athletes meat as a pre-game meal. We now know better. We used to think that weight training is not appropriate for soccer players. We now know better. We used to spend most of the practice time doing running and calisthenics instead of game-related ball work. We now know better. The science of

coaching evolves just like any other field of knowledge. It is now widely acknowledged by youth coaches and experts that 3v3 soccer is more appropriate for 5 year olds than the 6v6 version.

I want my child to belong to a proper team, with uniforms, and league games.

Playing 3v3 does not necessarily mean straying away from the "team" concept. It just means your child will play in a smaller team. A 3v3 game can be just as 'official' as an 11v11 game. Of course there is a lot of flexibility accorded to leagues in the way they structure their 3v3 program. Some leagues organize into teams of 5 or 6 players. Other leagues maintain larger squads of 8 to 10 players which are split into smaller teams on game day playing simultaneously side by side against a similarly split squad. When all is said and done, a five year old child does not care what format your league adopts as long as he/she is allowed to chase and kick that size 3 ball.

How will the players make the transition to the 11v11 game?

The United States Youth Soccer Association has recommended the following progression:

3v3	at	U-6
4v4	at	U-8
8v8	at	U-10
11v11	at	U-12

The USYSA has published the official rules for each of the above programs. These rules are available through the state office (918) 627-2663.

Try it! You'll like it!!

The majority of the leagues in Oklahoma have already switched to 3v3 soccer. In all my travels, I have never ran across a league that regretted switching to 3v3. Every coach, parent and player who experienced 3v3 soccer becomes a convert. The 3v3 game will not eradicate all the problems of youth soccer. It will not eliminate excessive parental pressure, playing to win versus playing for fun, non-assertive players getting lost on the field, or advanced players dominating games. These problems will always exist because they are an extension of human nature and our individual differences. However, 3v3 and other small-sided games help by reducing these problems into more manageable portions.

ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Should we concentrate on passing or dribbling at U-6?

The game at the U-6 level is characterized by awkward, rudimentary attempts at dribbling mixed with enthusiastic kicking of the ball in the general direction of the opponent's goal.

Do not confuse kicking with passing. Passing implies an intention by a player to direct the ball accurately towards a teammate, it implies decision-making. Kicking means using the feet to propel the ball in any old direction. You will not see too much, if any, passing in a U-6 game. Passing is simply beyond the ability of U-6 players. In terms of level of difficulty, kicking is the easiest to learn, dribbling is next and passing is the hardest to master for young players.

You might argue that passing should be easier than dribbling and besides, since passing is the essence of team play, it should be taught first. But what is dribbling? Dribbling is essentially passing the ball to oneself. If a player cannot pass the ball accurately to himself/herself, how is he/she expected to pass the ball to teammates? Remember not to confuse kicking with passing.

3v3 is not real soccer. I want my child to play regular soccer.

In the words of Tony Waiters, we need to see the game through the children's eyes. Five year olds do not have the technical, physical or mental maturity to play the adult version of the game. The beauty and essence of soccer does not depend on the field dimensions or the number of participants. Soccer is about the challenge of controlling and manipulating a ball under pressure, beating an opponent, passing to teammates and scoring a goal. These elements are present in 3v3 soccer just as they are in the 11v11 game.

As a rule of thumb, if a player cannot pass accurately from one side of the field to the other, or, worse still, cannot even reach the other side, then the field is too wide. If a player spends all his/her energy chasing the ball and have little energy left to play with the ball, then the field is too big. After all, we are not trying to develop marathon runners but skillful ball players. The size of the field is determined by the technical and physical range of the players. As they grow, players can graduate to progressively bigger fields with more participants.

I want my players to learn how to play positions.

Before a player can learn to play specific positions he/she needs to acquire the basic technical skills of dribbling, passing, controlling and shooting. Trying to teach positions to very young players is akin to teaching trigonometry to a grade 1 class. Let's be realistic. It's a great accomplishment just to get your 4 or 5 year old to chase the ball and kick-dribble it towards the opponents' goal. The 3v3 game allows the players many opportunities to do just that.

Five year olds should be allowed and even encouraged to swarm around the ball. The 'swarm' will disappear by itself when players learn to control and pass accurately under pressure. You cannot eliminate the swarm before its time. The 3v3 game does not eliminate the swarm. It just reduces it to a more manageable size.

Where are we going to find more coaches to accommodate all the teams.

Leagues which have adopted 3v3 soccer have found that it is easier to enlist parents into the coaching ranks since managing smaller squads is less intimidating to a beginner coach. The absence of any tactical or positional aspects in 3v3 soccer makes the task of coaching less daunting to a rookie coach. In fact, the larger base of parent-coaches at the U-6 level creates a reservoir of coaches for the future.

We do not have enough field space

The 3v3 game actually alleviates the field space problem. A 3v3 field can be as small as 15 by 20 yards. Most fields currently used for U-6 play can be split into 3 or 4 fields for 3v3. Many areas previously deemed too small to accommodate a soccer field can now be utilized. Practice sessions at the U-6 level should revolve mainly around dribbling activities interspersed with the occasional passing activity.

And during games,

ENCOURAGE your players to dribble,
REMINDE them to sometimes try to pass,
DON NOT GET UPSET at them if they don't pass (they simply cannot), and
EXPECT to see a whole lot of kicking.

How do we handle a player who refuses to participate?

There is no magic formula or one definitive method to get a player to join in an activity. Many four and five year olds are socially, mentally and physically not mature enough for a complex team sport such as soccer, and yet, are thrust into organized soccer by their well meaning parents. Some players who are shy or timid might be overwhelmed by the new, unfamiliar environment of a soccer team practice. They will

need time and your patience to adjust and enjoy the new experience. The onus is on you, the coach, to try and “break the ice” between yourself and the reluctant player.

Think back to what you, as a parent, had to do to coax your own child when he/she resisted such things as feeding, bathing, going to bed, etc. You made funny faces and acted like a clown. You gained their trust with soothing, nonthreatening reassurances, and when that didn't work, you promised them ice cream.....

The same approach might be needed here. But remember, if your practices are boring, complicated and intimidating, you will have problems convincing some players to participate. However, if your practices are fun and goofy, the players will want to participate. Even the most shy five year old's resistance will eventually break if she sees her teammates merrily engaged in a fun activity full of laughter and playfulness.

To summarize,

BE PATIENT with reluctant players

REASSURE your player and give him/her **PERSONAL** attention

ALLOW players to sit out and join at their own time and pace

MAKE SURE your practices are **FUN**

TALK to the player's parents about the situation and **ENLIST** their help. They know their child better than you do and you are not a child psychologist.

PRAISE the player for joining the activity

How do we handle a timid player who doesn't go after the ball?

Once again, you need to allow for differences in maturity among your players. Not every child is naturally aggressive and assertive. In the practical section of this course we suggest having each parent work with his/her child in a one-on-one interaction under the supervision of the coach. This is especially useful at the beginning of the season when players are being exposed to the game for the first time and are still getting to know the coach.

One-versus-one games where the coach is careful to match players of equal ability should help players overcome their hesitation to challenge for the ball. Every time a player goes after the ball he/she needs to receive praise for the attempt regardless of the eventual outcome.

How do we handle a player who dominates the game?

Many teams have one or two players who are physically or technically more advanced than the others. These players usually score most of the goals. As a coach, you don't want to curb the player's progress or 'punish' him/her for being talented by giving him/her less playing time or shouting at him/her to score less goals and pass to teammates. However, you can cultivate leadership qualities in your best player by asking him/her to help the weaker players. Players enjoy scoring goals and receiving the accompanying adulation. Try to make your best player understand that if he/she can pass the ball to teammates, they could score too and enjoy the game as much.

Your practice sessions should be challenging enough for your best players. For example, use activities which incorporate a combination of techniques such as dribbling and passing or dribbling and shooting, or using the weaker foot.

During games, you could coordinate your player shifts with the opponent's coach to ensure that each team's best players are on the field at the same time.

Small-sided soccer and player positions

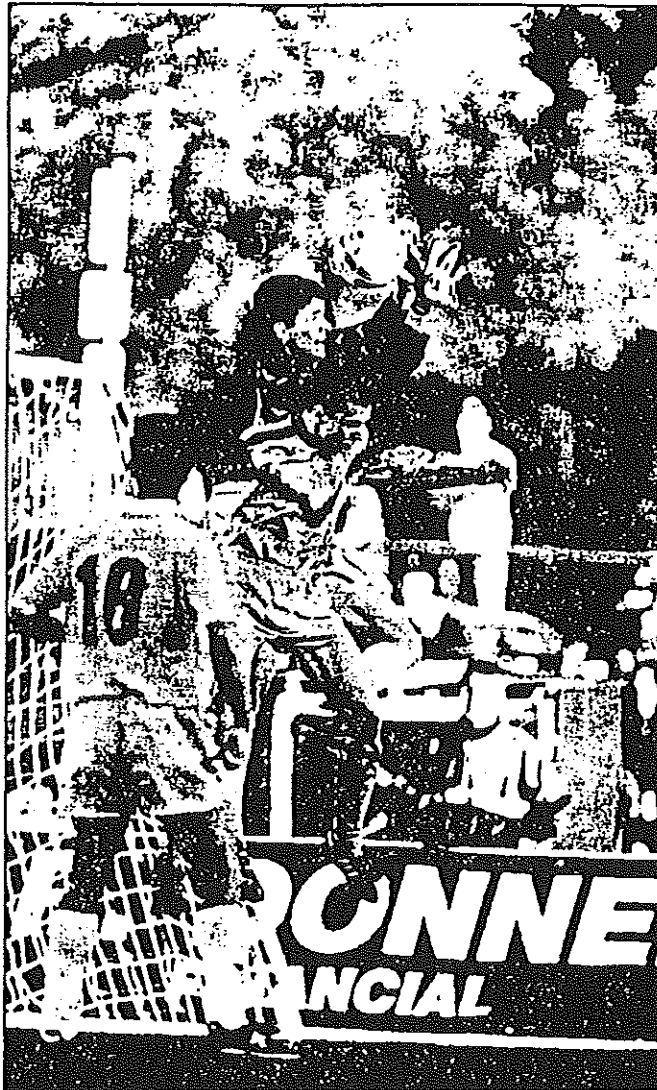
The January *Youth Soccer Letter* lead story on former Canadian national team and NASL coach Tony Waiters' current work on youth player development, particularly his emphasis on small-sided soccer, elicited a number of letters — most of them positive, many recounting the writers' own experiences with 3-v.-3 or 6-a-side.

One man wanted to know more. David Jones, a leader of the Long Valley (N.J.) Soccer Club, noted that every book he's read, and every coaching course he's attended, emphasizes the importance of exposing young players to all positions on the field, including goalkeeper. However, he said, no one ever goes into much detail about what they mean by this.

"Does it mean playing a kid in several different positions during the course of each game for the entire season?" he wondered. "Does it mean playing a kid in one primary position in games, but putting him into different positions during practice?"

He described Long Valley's recreational approach, typical of many programs throughout the country. "We have an 'equal opportunity' philosophy," he wrote. "Kids get essentially equal playing time. The gutsier coaches move their kids around a lot, so everyone gets a chance to play center forward, everyone plays some defense, and everyone who wants a chance gets to play some keeper. With the right coach and the right chemistry, this can be a lot of fun, generate a lot of enthusiasm from all the players, and over the course of a season, result in significant improvements in the players."

However, Jones continued, "some of



Exposing players to more than one position on the field will make them more versatile as well as make the game more fun for them. (Photo by Phil Stephens)

our coaches feel that kids do better and learn faster if they are settled into one position in which they are comfortable and/or where they'll serve the team the best, and then essentially stay there. Playing time is still equalized, but switching to another position is something done under unusual circumstances, not the norm. This can also promote a lot of skill development, en-

thusiasm and victories."

He also described what he called "a middle of the road" approach: a climate in which youngsters with a certain mental attitude are moved around, while others who feel comfortable in one spot stay there.

"Kids on all these teams, exposed to all these approaches, seem to be equally happy as long as they get a good percentage of playing time, improve their skills, and win enough to feel good about themselves."

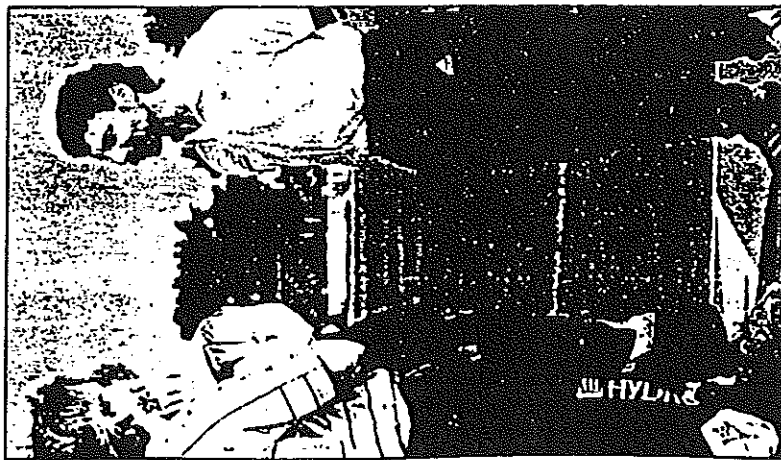
Jones added that each approach has something to recommend it. "Settling them into one position produces players who learn a position faster and produces rapid results in terms of winning, which through the eyes of a bunch of 10-year-olds generates its own excitement. Moving them around generates a lot of enthusiasm since everyone knows they'll all get a chance to 'shine' at center forward or wherever; it also develops perhaps more 'well-rounded' soccer players through the experience that comes with playing a variety of positions and — if not immediately — eventually generates a good percentage of victories." The middle-of-the-road approach produces comfortable players too, which also contributes to fun and (often) winning.

Is there a "best" approach that combines the twin elements of youth soccer: player enjoyment and skill development? *Soccer America's Youth Soccer Letter* revisited Tony Waiters to find out.

He turned the question back to small-sided soccer. "If you start players out with small-sided soccer, you've got them playing games that are so transitional, and with so few numbers, that every-

Continued

Small-Sided Soccer (Cont. from page 1)



According to U.S. women's national team coach Tony DiCicco, a goalkeeping specialist, young players who want to be goalkeepers should have experience playing other positions as well. (Photo by J. Brett Whitesell)

have to be able to adjust to the game as it's being played. In order to do that, they have to see what's going on on the field, wherever they are. If they've got people behind them, they've got to be able to take risks. If there's no one behind them, they can't take risks. That transcends positions."

Dewazien dislikes even the terminology of positions. "Calling someone a 'fullback' connotes someone big and strong who runs over people, like in American football," he said. "If you're a 'halfback,' you've got to be quick. I don't want to tag people; that's for 'The Scarlet Letter.' The decisions you make should depend on what's going on around you."

The best way to develop good soccer players, he said, is the tried-and-true method: playing pick-up games, or "street soccer." "The only way to be good at that type of game is to look around and figure out where you are and what you have to do," Dewazien said. "That's the way real soccer players develop, not by being placed in positions at an early age."

Even one of the country's top goal-keeper trainers, Tony DiCicco, who also happens to be the U.S. women's national team head coach, decries specialization at too early an age — including keepers. "I'm seeing kids 10 and 11 specializing in goalkeeping, and I think

that's incorrect," he said. "A kid who likes goalkeeping should be a goal-keeper, but not the whole game, every game."

DiCicco advocates plenty of short-sided games in practice. "That's good for foot skills, and it gives keepers a chance to see what things are like in front of a goal. They learn how to be a soccer player first, not just a keeper, and that's important today, especially in view of recent rule changes."

The U.S. women's coach said one way to train players to play all over the field is by playing games without big goals, emphasizing possession. "Everyone should learn to possess the ball; that's not position-specific," he said. "When we practice, we don't just have attackers and defenders; we play possession soccer. And, of course, switching sides of the field helps develop two-footed players."

He cited the example of a national team player who was given a chance to play regularly at a position she was unfamiliar with. The player turned it down, saying she couldn't do it. "Other women are willing to give any position a shot," he said. "They recognize that versatility is a way to get on the soccer field. And the way to become versatile is by playing different positions whenever you get a chance — whether it's in practice or in games."

Let the Children PLAY!



Gary Williamson

Up in the loft of my parents house, there is a "small" box full of medals and trophies I won playing sports as a kiddie, gathering dust.

I picked up the first one playing table tennis when I was nine years old, it meant the world to me. For the next eight years adding to it became just about all that was important to me in

sports.

Trouble is, it wasn't until I finished playing the game that I realized everything else I should have valued more than picking up a replica trophy with a wee gold man stuck on top.

The friends, the fun and enjoyment, the discipline and respect for opponents. So when USYSA announced the new development of small sided games for U6 (3V3), U8 (4V4) and U10 (8V8) that will take away all the pressure of competition from children under 12, whisper it, but you have to give them all the credit in the world.

There are plenty of laudable objectives in the scheme, but the most important one is trying to rid the children's game of the "win at all cost" ethic.

And the best thing about it is, it's not just aimed at the children. It also targets the root of the problem - the parents and the coaches on the sidelines.

Now before anyone starts taking the hump and telling me they're the program of a groovy new era in tolerance and encouragement. Yes, I am generalizing.

But, there are still enough people out there making the sport a misery for the children as if they should be allowed to do that, right?

I have seen children walking away from tournaments in tears after losing finals because they thought they had let their parents down.

Some children do not want their fathers to watch them play. A few mothers can't even face watching their child because they get too uptight. It's giving them heart failure.

How many times have you seen children howl-

ing their eyes out after a barracking from their coach or folks.

You accept these things at that age because you're taught that winning is the "bc-all-end-all".

But, in hindsight, getting that stressed out over a sport at 11 or 12 years old or even younger is a scandal.

No one hates losing more than myself. Ask anyone who's ever played any sport with me.

But, you can spend your whole life being competitive - AFTER you've taken some time to learn what you're doing first.

Soccer at that age should be about acquiring skills, learning the fundamentals of the game and teamwork.

Changing from 11's to small-sided games HAS helped, but a lot of the attitudes that caused the problems in the first place have been carried over.

Well, it's time we lose them - and the USYSA's new initiative is the way to go. Children will play soccer until they fall over if there's two of them or two hundred. They'll play until dark and love every minute.

It's adults that put unbearable pressure on them to win at all cost. They're the one's who need to be educated.

Competition is great, but we want children in soccer first before we start driving them out of it.

So a word to the wise to all the supposed "grown-ups" standing at the side of the soccer fields shouting themselves hoarse. Get with the program. **Let the children play.**

by Gary Williamson

State Director of Coaching and Player Development

Too Much Pressure On Our Young Soccer Players

I often wonder how much fun our young soccer players are having not only at practice but on the soccer field on match days. My main concern is really with our young players of 15 and under. After 15, I feel we are dealing with the more serious soccer players who have been involved in the game long enough to know whether or not this game is for them. But whether we agree or disagree, organized competitive soccer is here for players as young as five and six years of age, so we coaches have to deal with it as best we can.

However, my point is not whether or not these youngsters should be playing such matches but how they are coached and the type of pressure both parents and coaches are putting on these young kids. As I said, it's here so let's deal with it as best we can.

Recently I seem to find myself more entertained by the screaming, hysterical parent on the sideline rather than the game itself! That's a shame, but true. We've all seen it, I know-- parents jumping up and down shouting out instructions to their kid. "Kick the Ball", "Chase the ball"; all stuff we coaches cringe at when it is screamed at the kids. I've even seen parents run along the sideline with their kid while he's trying his best to get the ball under control and the parent is again screaming, "Go, go". Can you imagine the panic these poor kids get into once the ball comes their way? If it was me I don't think I'd ever want the ball!

This type of action can be witnessed most weekends at most soccer games. Parents scream abuse at the referee if he makes a decision not in their favor. Not only is this leading to a shortage in referees (who wants to get abused constantly for an hour?), but also, the players see parents arguing over the decisions, so feel it is the right thing to do.

As coaches we need to try to educate our parents more about the game as well as let them know that this type of behavior just will not do. Game days should be an enjoyable experience for all involved. Parents should be reminded to encourage all players in a calm manner, not in the life or death way they shout at the kids now. We

are dealing with youngsters who are learning about the game. They need to be allowed to learn the complications of the game for themselves rather than have ten different sets of instructions screamed at them, which are usually different than those of the coaches. These youngsters are going to be so burned out and so pressured into pleasing Mom and Dad that it will become a total nightmare to them everytime practice and game days come around. And who can blame them? I know youngsters who don't even want to play the game! But his or her brother or sister plays, so they are expected to, or Johnny down the road plays so you should too.

Parents need to be taught how to be a spectator in this sport or we will have no youngsters playing the game. Just look at the faces on some of these youngsters playing the game. You tell me if they are having an enjoyable experience?

Unfortunately, at times I find myself as amazed at some of our coaches behavior at practice and game days. Some youngsters are terrorized into making moves on the field and to do certain things in practice. Some are being over coached too early on and not left alone to develop their own natural abilities. You see some coaches who are not happy unless they can hear their own voice echoing around the soccer fields, the blood vessels about to burst in their neck. Maybe that's the way it is in other sports. You see the basketball coach running up and down the side throwing his arms up in the air in disgust, or the baseball coach squaring up to the referee while having a nose fight.

Well, I'm sorry, but that's not the way soccer is. We do not need to emulate this type of person and go out on a Saturday or Sunday and pretend we are one of these people. We need to remember we are dealing with youngsters who want to learn the game. If we don't introduce these youngsters to this great game the right way, they will be turned off and play either another sport or become another victim of the world of computer games.

Brett Mosen
USSF National A License Coach



Children and sports: Why adults should keep their distance

by John K. Rosemond
from Hemispheres

The following article provides additional perspective on the role of organized sport for youngster, the changes of the role sports plays in society and how the role of adults in youth sport has changed. The observations and comments made by the author are interesting and thought provoking. — Dave Simeone, North Texas Soccer Director of Coaching

Remember when "children's sports" were organized and run by children and played on informal fields and vacant lots? Our family counselor fondly recalls that time and says those good old days are worth bringing back.

Times have certainly changed where children and sports are concerned. When I was a youngster growing up in the suburbs of Chicago, sports were a very important part of my life. Along with most of the other boys in my neighborhood, I played touch football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and baseball through the glory days of spring and summer. We organized these games ourselves, played in empty lots and fields at the local school and nearby parks, provided our own transportation, and dressed as we chose.

Needless to say, adults were not in attendance. We were the coaches, the referees, the umpires, and for the most part, our own audience. We picked the captains, who then picked the teams. We determined who would play what position and modified the rules to suit the number of players. We yelled at one another to hustle, raised and criticized one another's play, and resolved the inevitable conflicts that arose in the course of the game. Despite all this, there were rarely hard feelings. It was all part of the game, and since the game was effectively ours, we could do with it as we pleased. In the process, we learned how to cooperate as well as how to compete without making enemies. We learned how to subordinate our own needs and desires to the best interests of the group, how to be good winners as well as good losers, and most important, how to begin running our own lives.

Little League baseball was the only organized sport available outside of school sports, which didn't start until the seventh grade. Through our early teenage years, my buddies and I watched as the organized sports programs grew and began taking over the hallowed ground of our playing fields. The turning point came the day we were politely but firmly told to vacate a field we were playing on because a Little League team needed it for practice.

Some 35 years have since passed, and I'm aware that children rarely play pickup games anymore. Somewhere along the line, someone got the brilliant idea that sports would be a more meaningful experience for children if the games were managed by adults. So, that's the way it is. Adults organize the leagues, assign children to teams, determine the play schedule, decide team names and uniforms, determine who will play what position, and run the practices. Adults are the coaches, the referees, the umpires, and the audience. They determine what the rules will be, keep score, and resolve any disputes that arise in the course of play. At the end of each season, the adults decide which children will receive which award. In short, adults have completely taken charge of what was once the play of children. As a result, children no longer play baseball, football, or whatever — they perform for adults who are all too eager to have their egos stroked. Instead teaching one another how to play, learning to resolve disputes, acquir-

ing leadership and decision-making skills, and soon, today's young athletes just do what they're told.

And so, I voice my objections. I say this is unhealthy, unwarranted, and unnecessary. Hearing this, a fellow in a recent audience spoke up, charging me with "taking children's sports too seriously." Identifying himself as an amateur coach, he said the point was not winning or losing, but teaching social skills and giving children opportunities for physical exercise.

"With all due respect for your commitment

to children," I responded, "if the primary objective was not to win and in doing, make a certain number of adults feel good, then three things would be different: First, there would be no such thing as a forfeit. If a team showed up short of players, the other team would simply share a few to balance the sides, and the game would go on. Second, every child would play an equal amount of time, regardless of ability. Third, very few adults would show up. They'd simply drop their kids off at the field and go do adult things until it was time to pick them up. Children's sports programs have gotten completely out of hand. It's the adults involved who take them too seriously, not me. The solution is really quite simple: Give these games back to the kids."

"How do you propose we do that?" he asked.

"I see no problem with communities setting aside fields for children to play on," I said. "Nor with adults organizing a general sign-up for each sport to be played. But instead of assigning children to fixed teams, I propose assigning them, at random, to certain fields on certain days. Then let them choose two captains to pick the teams. Let them assign positions, determine the batting order, or whatever, resolve their own disputes, even modify the rules if they like. In short, let them run their own show."

"And the adults?" he asked.

"No more than two adults should be at each game to supervise. It would not be their job to make decisions for the children, but to see to it that they play safely, that no one wanders off, and the like. As for the parents, they should drop their kids off and leave. Go be adults. Stop centering their lives around their children. Stop putting their kids in performance situations, and just let them play with one another."

I didn't kid myself. My antagonist wasn't about to be persuaded that his good intentions didn't count. He would talk to the many college coaches I've talked to who have told me that children's sports programs — contrary to myth — have failed to produce a better crop of college athletes. In fact, the consensus seems to be that starting kids at earlier and earlier ages in organized sports has had exactly the opposite effect. By the time today's children get to college — even high school in many cases — a fair number of potential "winners" have already burned out, the "late bloomers" are convinced they don't have the talent to make it, and the "stars" have often become insufferable prima donnas.

An added problem, high school and college coaches point out, is that the adults who coach children's sports are usually amateurs. In their real jobs, they're dentists or mechanics or bank

Continued

Children Continued

managers. They have good intentions but they don't really know how to coach. As a result, sports injuries are on the rise. When pickup games were the rule, every kid got around to playing every position. Today, however, a child may be pegged as, say, a good pitcher by age eight or nine. As a result, the child does virtually nothing but pitch. By age 14, that child may already be developing elbow and shoulder problems typical of major league pitchers.

Then there's the "parent problem" — parents who push, parents who have a hard time accepting that some children simply aren't athletically inclined, parents who can't separate themselves from their children's successes and failures, parents who expect too much too soon. These parents get so involved with their children that they forget what being an adult is all about.

I know how easy it is to do that. My son and firstborn, Eric didn't show any interest in sports until he was 11, at which point he decided he wanted to play soccer. We dutifully took him to practices, sticking around to cheer him on and talk about his performance afterward. Shortly after the first competitive game had begun, one of the dads started running up and down the sidelines, blasting forth with a constant stream of instructions to his child, who appeared increasingly confused, even embarrassed. In no time at all, other parents joined in, and pretty soon there was a horde of moms and dads racing up and down the sidelines together, yelling at their children. All at once, I realized that the first dad on the sidelines had been your truly: I stopped dead, walked as nonchalantly as possible to where my wife was sitting in the bleachers, and putting my head in my hands, asked, "What was I doing out there?"

"I have no idea," she answered. "I'm just glad you stopped."

That was the last soccer game of Eric's we ever attended. From then on, we just let him off and picked him up an hour or so later. If we arrived before the game had ended, we stayed in the car until it was over. Eric loved it! Without us there, he could deal with the game, the other kids, and his coach on his own terms without worrying about what we thought concerning anything he did or didn't do.

He went through a season and a half of soccer and announced to us one day that he didn't want to play anymore. He didn't like team soccer. He had more fun playing with the other kids in the neighborhood in the field behind our house. In short, he wanted to quit, mid-season. So, we let him quit.

Whenever I tell this story, some people are shocked. "Weren't you worried that he'd think it was all right to quit something at any time just because he didn't like it?" they ask.

To tell the truth, that thought never crossed my mind. Childhood is for exploring various options and discovering those that "fit." If something doesn't fit, I'm all for letting the child move on. In fact, my experience is that children who are not allowed to withdraw from an optional activity they've found they don't like are less likely, in the future, to join something else. After all, they now have reason to believe that if they don't like the second activity, they won't be allowed to withdraw from that either. Eventually, a child will discover his or her "niche" and stay with it. Some find it sooner, some later, but this is one bridge that must be crossed when the child comes to it.

I recently came across an article about non-competitive sports for children — games in which there are no winners or losers, only players cooperating with one another to achieve a goal. Fine and dandy, I thought, but what, pray tell, is wrong with competition? After all, competition is part of life. In fact it may be the very essence of life. It is certainly something everyone needs to learn to deal with, and the earlier, the better.

I think proponents of noncompetitive games for children are missing the point. They say competitive games ultimately harm the self-esteem of certain children. I say the self-esteem issue works itself out in the long run, and the less adults interfere in this natural process, the better. The pickup games of my youth were highly competitive. Some kids played better than others, but everyone who wanted to play, played. Eventually, every child found a sport of one sort or another that he or she could excel at. Looking back, I can see that the often intense competitiveness within my peer group helped me learn an invaluable lesson — that in the final analysis, the true winners of the world are those standouts who are able to motivate others to be standouts as well.

John K. Rosemond is a family psychologist, director of the Center for Affirmative Parenting in Gastonia, North Carolina.

PLAYING SOCCER

By Pat Hoopes

The Save the Children organization has a motto:

"Playing is at the heart of childhood"

As organizers of youth soccer, we should consider that children and their needs are the heart of our mission. The fact that play is a basic learning method, natural to child development, can be useful to soccer parents, coaches and administrators. Our teaching methods, match environment and personal conduct should be based around this simple principle; "Create an atmosphere of play."

WHAT CAN WE DO TO KEEP THE PLAY IN SOCCER?

PARENTS

Parents should understand that children learn soccer as they play soccer. Instructions before or after the game are seldom useful in the learning process and are often the cause of frustration and negative feelings about sports. Would you analyze a child's play after a game of Slap-Jacks or Hearts? Is the winner or loser in a game of "Chutes and Ladders" important? Commonly, we will give our children a detailed analysis (and usually a negative one) of a soccer match or practice just completed. Soccer is play for children; it should be accepted as play by adults.

However, a parent has almost total control over the progress a child makes in soccer. The parents pick the coach and the team, which sets the agenda for the learning process. If you do not see the principles of gaming and play exhibited by the coaching staff, talk to them. If your child is not having fun and learning soccer, look for options with other coaches and teams.

Parents should understand that kids want your involvement in their play. They want fathers and mothers to play soccer games with them at home. Soccer skills are not required. Simple games that your child invents will strengthen soccer skills and family relationships. Parents looking stupid is OK with children; it should not deter adults. Fun versus requirements should always be the rule for soccer homework. Suggest soccer activities, but let the child choose. Avoid compounding family competitive relationships such as sibling rivalries. Let children win. Make playing soccer fun at home and children will be attracted to you and the sport of soccer.

COACHES

Coaches must recognize the play aspects of teaching children.

- Smaller groups for younger children improve playing and therefore teaching.
- *Playing* teaches soccer, not verbalization. Minor directives during games or practices actually distract from the play.
- Showing skills is always better than explaining them.
- Experimentation and failure are part of play. Positive reinforcement will allow a child to try difficult techniques over and over until mastery comes. Negative reinforcement will usually make the child want to stop trying.
- Measure success of a team in the attitude and excitement of players toward matches and practices.
- Use easy-to-understand objectives such as knocking down cones, juggling, scoring goals lower than 3 feet high, being first to the ball, etc., that allow for a lot of success.
- Let children experiment to find ways to meet your objectives and praise all success.
- Remember that when the play is over, the player does not want to rehash. Instructions and praise must be immediate; they have little meaning after play is over.

Coaching is, in large part, establishing situations for learning to occur. In practice, find simple individual and small-group games/drills that allow players to see and then experiment with different techniques and tactics. Focus players on the type of game you would like to see demonstrated versus the score you want in matches. Create games during practice sessions that challenge both the skill and imagination of your players. Use toys in games such as volleyball nets for juggling games, extra large or small balls for touch control, trash cans for heading drills. Vary the games often and monitor usefulness by player's experimentation and success within the game. Increase the skill level of the game as progress is made, but allow opportunity for success. Add fantasy into games and practices; call groups by famous team names, suggest World Cup final drills, personally act child-like and involve yourself in the games (without making them unfairly compete against an adult). Understand that playing is a more effective teacher than you are. Let play be your model for teaching.

ADMINISTRATORS

Establish a league/club atmosphere wherein soccer events are fun as well as educational. Events that lose this principle lose their teaching value. Arguments are a sign that attitudes no longer reflect the needs of children, and early steps should be taken to correct distractions. Quarrelsomeness or abusive parents

should be asked to leave because they spoil the "play" for everyone. Coaches should be taught and required to demonstrate their positive gaming techniques. Establish small-sided games for younger players. Success can be measured, in part, by closing your eyes at a soccer match; if the sound of children playing predominates, then your program has a good "playing soccer" attitude. Long-term success should be measured in the skill level achieved by long-term members rather than the team trophies acquired.

Game Should Be Fun, Not Serious For Kids

There's a saying,

"As the twig is bent, so shall the tree grow." Or something like that. What does this have to do with soccer? If we consider the game as a towering, mature tree, with its highest branches being the professional leagues and national teams, then its twig or sapling stage has to be youth soccer.

That twig, according to a number of famous soccer people both within and outside our country, is not just being bent—it's being twisted into a misshapen form that's already affecting the upper level game in a negative way. Some fundamental changes in how youngsters are brought along need to take place soon, say these critics, or the game may face a less than bright future as far as the caliber of players is concerned.

Who thinks so? Try people like Gordon Banks, certainly one of England's, if not the world's, all-time great goalkeepers. Or Roy Rees, former US U-17 national coach for nine years. Add ex-England Captain Gary Lineker, and Danish international and current Barcelona forward Michael Laudrup.

They all have something in common. They love the game. They're not doom-sayers or media cheapshot types who, especially in the US, look at soccer as a permanent punching bag. And they all feel that something must be done at the youth stage to make the game at its highest level more interesting and more a contest of skills.

A conversation with Banks a few months back, when he was touring the country as part of the Soccer Blast promotion, brought up the topic. Here's how it went.

Soccer Magazine: How old were you when you first started playing with a team, not just kicking a ball around in the street?



▲ Coaches and players agree that children should play on small fields until they are teenagers.

Gordon Banks: I started playing with a school team at age 14. That was with Tinsley County School in Sheffield.

SM: And when did you first start playing with a club youth team, outside of school?

GB: That was with Chesterfield, a Third Division team. I think I was about 14 or 15 when I started with them.

SM: So you didn't begin playing with an actual team until around 14 or 15?

GB: That's right.

SM: I don't know how familiar you are with youth soccer here, but youngsters begin playing team games as early as age six or seven. What are your feelings about this?

GB: It may be a bad thing. If it's done in terms of pleasure and fun, then that's alright. They should be in small-sided games and not on a large field.

SM: Not an imitation of the grown-up game?

GB: That's right. And it shouldn't be competitive. It should be fun. If coaches stress the fun of it, and teach skills along the way, then it's okay. But if coaches make it very competitive and start jumping down the kids' throat all the time—you don't want that sort of thing with young kids. They don't need that kind of pressure.

Now listen to Lineker. His criticism of England's poor international showing went right to the youth game there. But much of it applies to the US, too.

"Our game is too fast and too physical," he said in a recent *World Soccer* story. "Which comes from the school-boy stuff really. Until someone at the top changes the way that the game is played at the school level, our game will always be less technically sound than the rest of the world."

"Kids of eight and nine play on big pitches [fields] with big goals, and the only way that little kids can get [the ball] down to the other end of the field is to kick the ball as hard as they can. Kids used to play in the street or backyard and they learned dribbling and passing. They should ban playing on big pitches until children get to age 13 or 14."

Danish international Michael Laudrup spoke in the same vein. He saw it as a world problem. "But the saddest thing is that kids like to have idols and they assume that the players on the national team are the best," Laudrup said. "Then they see that nine or 10 of them base their game on strength while players who base their game on skill are viewed with suspicion. The message for kids is clear. If they dream of playing on the national team, they have to aim for strength. I maintain that people who coach kids have a very special duty, to tell them technique and enjoyment are the most important things."

Roy Rees, the former U-17 national coach, agreed. He felt that excessive emphasis on competition and winning,

playing on large fields, relying on strength and size and overcoaching are all impeding the development of American youngsters.

"I largely agree with all these statements," he said. "But you must realize that competition is a prevailing norm in American life. Nothing is fun. Everything is serious. You must have immediate results. Win now or it's a total disaster."

Coaches who emphasize winning for the very young, he claims, lean toward selecting bigger and stronger players. "If I want a winning team of 12 or 13-year-olds," Rees said, "I'd just pick the biggest and strongest players and I'll win every time. But this hurts the smaller players."

And it sends a message that size and strength count more than skill and brains.

He wouldn't have youngsters go to full size fields until age 12 to 14. "Play small-sided games. Look at how the really great players develop, particularly in Africa and South America," he said, pointing out those areas as having the most creative players today. "Their game is spontaneous, full of freedom and liveliness. They learned to play in small pickup groups and learned skills that way. Coaches here should create a similar environment: Bring back fun into the game. Create problems for the players and then let them solve them. For example, have them play small-sided games in which you can only score with the left foot. But don't tell them how to do it. The game here is totally coach dominated. All our sports are. Players are constantly told what to do. Soccer is a game of creativity, imagination and decision-making by players. Giving them rigid patterns of play is bad for them."

That's the message for youth coaches from the game's elite. Small-sided games on small fields. Have fun and don't get uptight about winning. Let players be original, even if they make mistakes. Don't be swayed by size and strength in player selection. Don't overcoach. Reward the dribbler who tries to go one-on-one or the ones who try a give-and-go, not the big, booming kicker.

And maybe all these soccer twigs will grow into a big, healthy forest.

Ed Borg is a veteran observer of the soccer scene.

Blood and guts with Luton's Cub Scouts

Win at all costs. That's what our eight-year-olds learn every Saturday. Simon Kanter shouts from the touchline

What the hell's going on? It's ten o'clock on a Saturday morning, it's pissing down with rain and I'm standing with a dozen or so mouthy, middle-aged men in a sort of shared hell, watching our lads founder in the mud. 'Come on, Les,' someone shouts, 'keep running, work, work, wurrrrk!' And there's little Les puffing and panting and struggling to his feet, and going down again and up again - and down again.

Les, you see, is just eight years old, and this water torture is a Cub Scout 11-a-side, half an hour each way on a full-sized pitch with full-sized goals. Poor, inoffensive, little Les from the 11th Scout Troop of Luton is a picture of Victorian deprivation, soaking wet, knobby little knees, oversized kit and a malnourished look on his bony little face. He's staring at us with doe eyes as his dad remonstrates with him: 'Come on, you little...' and then he gets bundled over by some big porker of a lad with wobbly great thighs. This brings a cheer from the other side of the pitch and a roar of 'Come on Damien, sort 'em out.'

Big, fat Damien is master of all he sees. A monstrous, overblown five-footer of a lad; he ploughs through the opposition like a mad rhino, sweeping aside mistimed challenges with a well-placed elbow to the mush or a carthorse flail of the legs. This huge monster-boy is the star of the opposition team, not because he's any good, but because he's big and strong and he (and every other player on the pitch) knows it.

So what the hell is going on? All these lads straining every sinew as Damien boots the ball 20 yards and charges after it, leaving a pack of tiny chasers floundering in his wake. 'Come on, keep up with him' our lot are shouting, 'for Christ's sake keep going.' But it's too late, and fatty is bearing down on poor little Steve, our goalkeeper. Bless Steve, he's a game little bugger, chasing out of his goal and wrestling Damien's legs with his oversized gloves. Down they both go in a heap, and it's all eyes on the ref. Akela, for

it is he, saunters up to the penalty spot, parps loudly on his whistle and - everyone holds their breath - gives a penalty. Resigned nods among our gang of dads. 'Had to be. No choice. Blatant.'

Up strides Damien, grinning school bully extraordinaire. He places the ball like a pro, wipes the dirt from his hands on the back of his shorts, paces backwards, two steps, three and then trots in and...thwack. The ball spins along the sodden turf about four yards. Little Steve is off his line like a whip-pet and the ball spins off his boot and bobbles in front of the goal. For a second everyone is motionless, then suddenly there's a melee of flailing arms and legs. Chaos. Then, parp, parp; the ref's given a free-kick to us. This is truly a cause for unbridled celebration. The tension evaporates. 'What a prize wanker' exhorts one dad. And on the other side of the pitch clenched fists and noisy remonstrations.

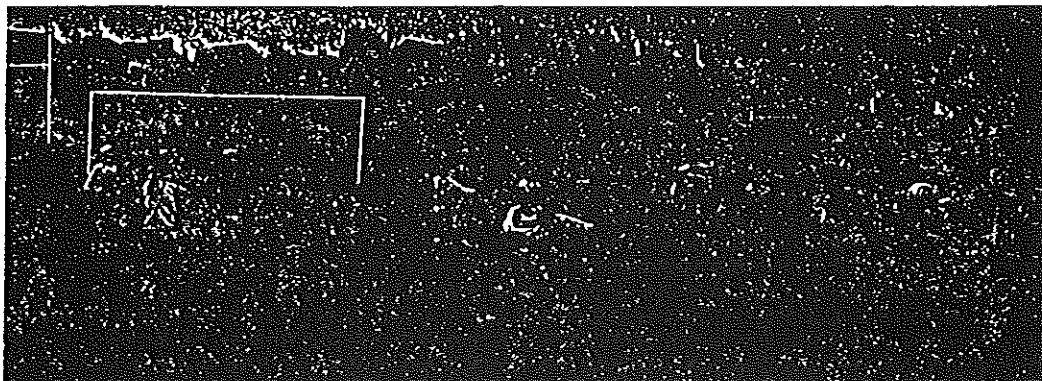
For this is the stripped-down essence of English football: character-building blood and guts. These boys may be hurting but oh how we love them for it.

A few months ago, I was holidaying in the South of France. We had a kick around, me and the lads, Jake (aged eight) and Freddy (six). I would belt the ball up in the air and they would gamely chase after it. A couple of Italian boys asked if they could join in. Gian-Luca (also eight) and his brother Simone (ten) started doing tricky, foreign things, flipping the ball up in the air and balancing it on their knee or foot.

They started playing keep ball, knocking little passes to each other and sliding it under the legs of my boys as they chased and harried. 'Daddy, it's not fair,' cried Jake. 'They're not playing properly'. His face was a picture of confused exasperation. But he was right, of course.

Football's not a circus act and young lads aren't performing seals. Football, and I mean *real* football, is about eight-year-olds charging up and down a full-sized pitch, working and fighting for possession. It's about seeing who's got the most bottle. It's about being competitive and winning at all costs. The result is everything. Right?

Is this any way to produce the footballers of the next decade? Twenty two eight-year-olds running around a pitch so soggy the Chinese could have been perfecting their water torture techniques on it



Youth players speak openly concerning problems with coaching

Joe Provey, editor of Soccer Jr. magazine, recently addressed coaches at the USYSA/Adidas workshop in Chicago, discussing youth players' complaints and concerns about the game and coaching.

Provey gave a presentation entitled *Eight Complaints Kids Have About Youth Soccer*. His material was based on more than 1,000 letters to the magazine sent during the last three years. The letters included responses to *Baloneyfest* and *Worst Moments* contests which encouraged kids to speak openly about gripes and grievances.

The problems cited fall into seven general areas.

1. Problems With Coaches: The majority of problems were with coaches, the two most common being coaches take things too seriously and don't know enough about the game. Comments in the former category ranged from "My coach acts like it's a crime to smile or compliment a player" to "Our coach doesn't encourage us like a real coach should. He mumbles swear words under his breath and sometimes even yells and throws fits. It is very embarrassing." Kids also indicated frustration with inexperienced coaches. Many asked for advice on how to improve practices, practice on their own, or get into better programs such as those which lead to ODP.

Other coaching problems cited were unfairness (the coach who favors players); confusing instructions (one coach saying one thing and another something else); and hypocrisy.

"I think it's baloney when your coach tells you winning isn't everything and then gets mad if you lose a game," said one correspondent.

2. Playing Unwanted Positions: Many kids had complaints about the positions they were asked to play. They either wished they could play at other positions (many cited being stuck in goal and never getting onto the field) or complained of being ignored.

"The coach said not to ask where to play. What should I do?" Asked one writer.

Another said, "It's baloney when your coach is more interested in scoring and winning than in your feelings and where you want to play!"

3. No Respect For The Defense: Many kids complained defenders get no respect.

"I don't like the way we win an important game and only the offense gets the credit," said one writer.

Another said, "I love playing defense, but people judge how good you are by how many goals you score, not how many you save."

4. Lack Of Expertise: The number of letters requesting

instruction indicates a lack of expertise among coaches. Kids ask for instruction in skills and tactics; how to train and prevent or take care of injuries; how to interpret laws; even how to make practice less boring.

"Our coach is a teammate's father, and just about all he does at practice is make us run about four miles. This makes us very tired, and we can't have a very good practice. What should we do?" Wrote a reader.

5. Not Enough Playing Time: With justification, kids deplored not playing or not playing enough, especially if coaches do lip service to equal time and then fail to follow through.

"It's baloney when your coach says that each player will play 15 minutes, and then he doesn't play you!"

6. The Coach's Kid: Problems with coaches' kids were either: complaints about coaches who gave their own kids preferential treatment ...

"Baloney is when your coach thinks his daughter is the best player on the team."

Or complaints from coaches' kids themselves,

"Baloney is when you're the coach's daughter, and he's so worried about favoring you, he ends up benching you and the players you are better than play."

7. Problems With Parents: Sadly, many writers cited problems with their own or others' parents. Problems include lack of knowledge.

"Baloney is when your parents tell you how to play when they don't even know how to play," said one reader.

Or parents and coaches "tell you that you made a lot of mistakes and messed up a lot when you really played your hardest and best!" Said another.

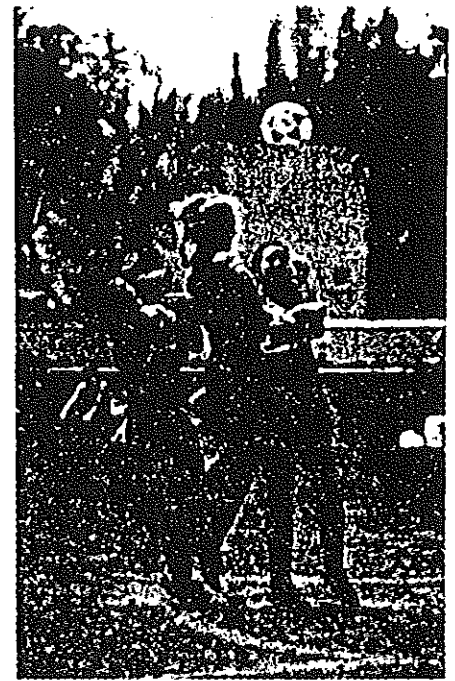
Other problems cited are parents who take the game **TOO SERIOUSLY!**

A 13-year-old girl wrote, "My mom and dad are taking over as the team loud mouths! My mom says that when they yell and I get mad that it will only get me better, but she's wrong."

Another wrote, "Baloney is when every parent on the sideline thinks they are a coach and 15 people are yelling at you!"

Parents who force their kids to play are a peeve. "Parents shouldn't force their kids into a sport. It only hurts the team they end up on," wrote a girl, age 11.

Despite the many letters of complaint, young soccer players who write to Soccer Jr. — even when they're complaining — say how much they love soccer. They've got problems, but they're optimistic that solutions are forthcoming. Editor Provey notes only a small minority mention the idea of quitting playing.



E. Starkoff

Relax, Get Comfortable

American Players Still Need To Develop Better Ball Skills

By Tim Nash

Watching the United States play in the World Cup, one aspect of America's growth as a soccer nation stood out more than any other — the players are still not as good with the ball as their European and South American counterparts.

The U.S. players always had more bad touches than their opponents, the Americans did not take defenders on 1v1 as much as other teams, and the opposing man-markers did not give as much room or respect to the U.S. players.

While America has made great strides in its soccer development, it's obvious there is still some work to do at the levels below the national team.

"We have to be able to play quicker. In order to do that, we have to have better technique," said Bob Gansler, director of coaching for U.S. Soccer. "We need decision-making, and we need the experience of having played many times.

"We need to be able to play faster. That doesn't mean run faster, it means play faster. And the first step is becoming comfortable with the ball."

Being comfortable with the ball is perhaps the most important aspect of the game for Americans, young and old. Watching other countries play, it is very noticeable how rarely the players look down at the ball. Because of the level of comfort they have with the ball, they are able to play with their heads up more.

Coaches can talk about formations, tactics and philosophy all they want, but the bottom line is this — if your players can't make the ball work for them, it doesn't matter what system you play.

"We still have a need to sharpen up our technique, because without good technique, tactics become a moot point," said Gansler. "A lot of times, kids actually collide with the ball because they are so tense. They have to be more comfortable, and the more touches they get on the ball, the more comfortable they will become."

The first step is to get players' heads up when they are receiving the ball as well as after they receive it. Many players have to watch the ball onto their foot and then lift their heads to look around. If a player is able to eliminate the step of watching the ball — and do it instinctively — he or she will be able to play faster.

It is simply a matter of confidence. And through repetition comes confidence.

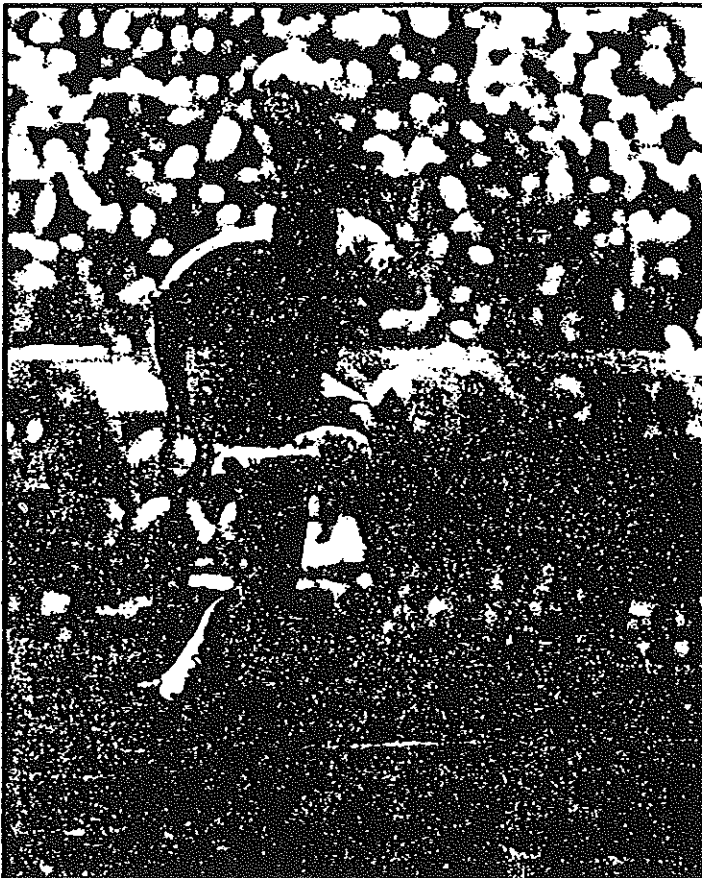
"It's all about vision, decisions and having the skill to implement them," said Gansler. "There's no secret here, practice makes perfect — or nearly perfect. Getting comfortable with the ball is a matter of repetitive touches."

The best way to put players in a situation where they are better able to begin a close relationship with the ball is through small-sided games. Playing 4v4, 5v5, 6v6 or 5v3,

5v4, etc., allows players more touches than full-field games, and they get more out of a training session.

Said Rind Dokter, Dutch youth coaching instructor, "We think that children up to 11 years old should not play full field, because from the age of five to 11, it is important that

former Dutch National Team coach and current U.S. Soccer coaching consultant Rinus Michels. "The players have to be able to have the vision to dissect the game and to adapt to the unpredictability. That is what the coaches have to develop and apply it to youth development."



The best example of a player who is comfortable with the ball on his foot is Brazil's Romario, but American players at all levels need more practical experience with the ball in order to play faster and with more control. Photo by Brad Whitford

they learn the game and learn the skills.

"Therefore, you have to create small-sided games because they have the ball more, their overall picture of the game improves and their vision becomes better. That cannot happen in 11 on 11. It is out of the question."

Perhaps the most important thing coaches have to remember is that when game day rolls around, coaches are not allowed on the field. The players will have to fend for themselves, and they had better be prepared.

"As coaches, we have to remember that it is a players' sport, not a coaches' sport," said

.....
"Getting comfortable with the ball is a matter of repetitive touches."
Bob Gansler

Added Dokter, "The kids should think more about what they have to do, and the coaches should be more aware of making them do that. The problems they face are not the problems of the coach, they are the problems of the kid."

But coaches should guard against simply putting players in small-sided games and letting them play. There should be a purpose to what the players do and there should always be something they are trying to accomplish.

"This is not the end-all, but the players get used to having the ball more and they are able to get more touches," said Gansler. "The

small-sided games should have everything that a full-field game has. The shape of the offense and defense must be there, and you have to have results. You have to let their shoot and score.

"What is soccer all about? It's about scoring goals. So the players have to ask themselves, 'How am I going to go to goal? Can I go directly to goal or who do I give it to, and how do I give it to them in order to go forward to go to goal?' Small-sided games help them with these decisions."

The coach's job is to put an emphasis on certain aspects of the full-field game in the small-sided games. For example, if a coach wants his players to work on man-advantage offensive situations, then they should play 5v4. If they want to work on keeping offensive an defensive shape, then they should play 4v4.

"The coach can adapt these games so that whatever you need to work on can be accomplished," said Gansler. "You cannot play 4v2 for the whole practice session and expect that it is going to optimally prepare your team for the next game. Some of it will, but you have to know where it fits in."

The coach can influence what the player do in these games by picking the size of the teams and the size of the area used. And on common goal in playing small-sided games is to help players cope better with situation that arise during games.

"Playing small-sided games helps the players learn to relax, their pulse goes down and they are better able to handle pressure situations," said Gansler.

There are other popular ways to get players comfortable with the ball, and the most popular is the Coerver dribbling drills. However, some coaches rely too much on these drills and not enough on practical game-related training.

"Here and in some other countries, some people have come up with some aids to practice — juggling, Coerver moves, things that you can do on your own," said Gansler. "They have been overused. Some feel that just the Coerver or juggling drills are not enough. You have to take those skills and use them in practical situations.

"Mr. Michels calls these things home work."

Still, some coaches have been reluctant to do much else beside the Coerver drills. There is a time and place for everything, and the Coerver method certainly has its place in a day's workout.

"For example," said Gansler. "I was observing with Mr. Michels a coach using the Coerver method in his training. Mr. Michels said, 'Good for a warmup.' The coach kept doing it, and he said, 'Good for a warmup!' He was still doing it, and Mr. Michels said 'Good for a warmup, maybe a cool down and maybe homework, but not for a whole practice session.'"

"Dribbling is not an end, it is a means to an end. The end is the shot, the pass, the cross. Coaches should put players in a situation in practice that emphasizes this."

DEVELOPMENTAL

Economical Training: Are 100% of the Players Participating?

By Don Yerks, M.Ed., Physical Educator, USSF "A" Licensed Coach, New Jersey State Coaching School Staff

I can't tell you how many times I have driven by a soccer field and viewed a coach conducting a soccer practice. This practice was designed in such a way that only one or two players were moving, while all the other players were standing around watching.

A 1992 study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that 40% of children between the ages of 5 and 8 already display at least one of the risk factors for heart disease: obesity, hypertension or high blood cholesterol. That's alarming, considering that cardiovascular disease, which includes heart disease, is America's number one killer!

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends that children exercise three to five days per week for 20 to 60 minutes each session, at 60% to 90% of their maximum heart rate.

As coaches of youth soccer, are we doing a disservice to our players by placing them in lines or circles? Answer: definitely, YES! As a Certified Physical Educator and New Jersey State Coaching School Staff Member, I am so disappointed at the sight of two or three players moving/playing and the rest watching. Not only are they going to develop their technique at a slower pace (fewer ball touches), they will also be very bored during a line or circle exercise (drill).

In addition, players will not be reaping the full benefits of being vigorously active for at least 20 to 30 minutes each day, as the ACSM recommends, if they are waiting their turn in a line or circle. We cannot allow our children to grow up displaying risk factors for heart disease! One reason parents enroll their sons or daughters into a soccer program is for the potential cardiovascular benefits. We must not disappoint those parents.

Some basic characteristics of children under the age of 10 are: They have relatively short attention spans, are constantly in motion, are very ego-centered, and want to have a good time at what they are doing. We need to consider these characteristics when designing our training sessions.

In order to become fit, one has to move! While moving, one should sustain that movement within a "Target Heart Rate Zone" (THRZ). This THRZ is easily calculated by subtracting your age from the number 220. For example, $220 - 10 = 210$. So a 10-year-old's maximum THRZ (100%) would be 210 beats per minute.

Most fitness experts recommend training within 60% to 90% of your THRZ. This can be measured by the following formula: $220 - 10 = 210$ multiplied by .60 (60%) which equals 126 beats per minute (BPM); and $220 - 10 = 210$ multiplied by .90 (90%) which equals 189 BPM. This example tells us that a 10-year-old should

be training/playing at a minimum of 126 BPM and a maximum of 189 BPM in order to gain and develop cardiovascular fitness.

Can we accomplish this while standing in lines and circles? Answer: definitely, NO! You can measure the BPM by finding the carotid arteries which supply blood to the head on the side of the neck. Once you have found the carotid pulse on the side of the neck, with your middle and index fingers placed gently over the artery, start counting the pulse for six seconds. After you have counted the carotid pulse for six seconds, take that number and add a zero to it.

Example: Count the carotid pulse for six seconds, and say that the number counted is 16. Now add a zero, and that gives you an approximate heart rate of 160 BPM.

In order to gain any cardiovascular benefits, we need to sustain this heart rate for at least 20 minutes during the practice. This data would indicate to the coach that the player was working at 76% of his/her THRZ (210 multiplied by .76 = 159.6, rounded up is 160 BPM). It must be noted that going over a THRZ maximum is extremely dangerous and should be avoided at all costs! This is why a coach should ascertain this data to avoid heart problems with overweight and unfit players.

As you can see, you don't need high-tech machines to collect this information. The coach of a youth team should now be training all his/her players within their THRZ for at least 20 minutes per practice in order to truly benefit his/her players on and off the field. This 20-minute or longer session must always be preceded by a warm-up, and followed by a cool or warm-down period lasting approximately five to 10 minutes.

In the State Coaching School curriculum, we discuss and define the term "Economical Training." "Economical Training" is incorporating two or more of the four basic components of the game of soccer into one exercise or activity. These four basic components are: Technique, Tactics, Fitness and the Psychological Dimension.

An example would be organizing a dribbling activity in a restricted area or grid. During this activity, the entire team is dribbling in the restricted area, making sure there is a safe space to dribble.

There are many things that the players have to think about during this exercise, such as: "How fast do I dribble?" (Fitness and Fatigue Considerations); "Where do I dribble?" (Tactics/Decision Making and Spatial Awareness); and "How do I dribble so that I don't lose control of the ball and bump into a teammate?" (Technical). As you can see in this example, the exercise is very economical in the sense that three out of the four components of soccer are being practiced.

We as coaches of youth soccer players should take the concept of "Economical

Training" one step further. Since we only meet with our teams once or twice a week, doesn't it make sense to have all 100% of our players moving 100% of the time?

With this statement in mind then to be truly "economical," we should change our "Economical Training" definition to: Incorporating or training two or more of the four components, while 100% of the players are actively involved 100% of the time. This would translate into coaching soccer players without the formation of lines and circles. Lines and circles are not conducive to numerous ball touches and total involvement (mentally and physically); however, they are conducive to boredom, discipline problems, and a lot of wasted time.

A practical example of the "new" definition of "Economical Training" would be instead of having two lines of players jogging and passing up to and through a line of cones, a coach would pair up his or her players in a restricted area or grid 10x15 yards (the shape of a rectangle). These two players or partners are working in their own space, getting many opportunities to pass, and NOT waiting in line for their turn. If your team consists of 16 players, then you would need eight grids.

Another example would be instead of having two lines of players and asking them to dribble in and out or zig-zag through a line of cones, you could place two players in a 10x15-yard grid, and ask them to play "Follow the Leader," each player dribbling their own ball. Again, you would need eight grids to accommodate a group of 16 players.

These examples of passing with your partner and "Follow the Leader" are FUN, which fulfills the psychological dimension, technical (passing and dribbling), and have

a fitness element which would depend on the duration of the activity interval. In addition, 100% of the players are practicing/playing 100% of the time.

So using our "new" definition of "Economical Training" as a guide, we are addressing the psychological, technical and fitness components, as well as having 100% of the players participating 100% of the time.

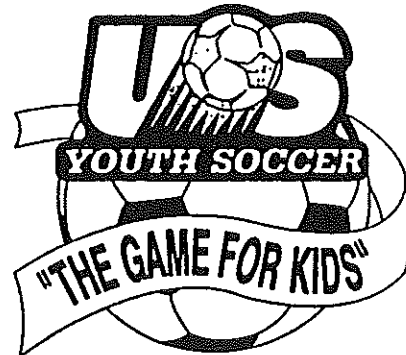
If we as coaches can design training sessions that are truly "economical," then our players' chances of developing heart disease will be much less. In addition, endurance levels during a match will be elevated, and your players will have a better attitude and love toward the game of soccer.

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Don has been involved with the New Jersey State Soccer Coaching Schools for the past eight years. In 1986 he was honored as the Region I Girls Coach of the Year. He is currently in his eighth year of teaching health and physical education in the Manalapan-Englishtown School District in New Jersey.

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Should there be a regional tournament for U-12s?

By Bobby Howe
WSYSA Coaching Director

The Region IV Council has pondered this question during the last two years. Should WSYSA send representative teams to such an event? Indeed, should WSYSA hold a state tournament for players 11 years of age?

My answer to all the above is a resounding "NO!!"

We must create the environment for players to learn the game at their own pace without the pressure of impossible decision-making or the stress created by parental (adult) influence. We must allow kids to be kids and allow the game to provide their enjoyment.

Over the last few years we have seen a gradual move toward small-sided games for our youngest players. Many people have recognized modified and micro-soccer as the most successful vehicles for the development of players under 11 years of age.

Fewer players on the field:

- Reduces the size of the "swarm"
- Creates more touches
- Does not allow players to "hide" or be excluded from the activity
- Presents realistic but simple soccer challenges.
- Requires players to make simple but realistic soccer decisions

If all of the above is presented in an environment which downplays the importance of winning, the result creates great enjoyment for the players.

Realistic experience + Fun = Improvement in play.

For all players the game itself is a great teacher and for our youngest players (6, 7 and 8 years of age) it should be the only teacher. However, as players become older, good coaching can accelerate the learning process. At what age should we start to give the game a hand?

The time between 9 and 11 years of age

has been recognized by educators as the most productive in terms of the ability and desire of children to learn. It is no less applicable to soccer. Children at this age are coordinated and eager. They have a great relationship with parents, teachers and coaches. It is important, therefore, that the influences in their lives are providing the best possible information.

Physiologically and psychologically, the ages of 9 through 11 are ideal for player development:

At that age children have grown out of infant instability but are not yet encumbered by the awkwardness of their early teens. This is ideal for challenging skills practice.

This age group also observes the important crossover from "selfishness" to the ability to socialize. In soccer terms, through this age period, children learn to understand the importance of cooperation in team play.

The age of 11 is generally accepted by most soccer educators as the age to begin 11-a-side play. Players must be given time to experience and develop within the "adult game" before exposure to the pressures of tournament play.

It is time to abandon the idea of tournament play for 11 year olds.

It is time to abolish all-star teams for 11 year olds.

It is time for adults to realize that a team building to win games does not equate to development.

It is time for coaches of 11 year olds to fully understand technical coaching points and simple principles of play.

It is time to allow 11 year olds to develop their skills.

It is time to reduce burnout and disenchantment with the sport created by too much pressure too early.

It is time to allow 11 year olds to play! ■

Soccer vs. football



Soccer coaches get the same treatment from players after a win as football coaches do. (Photo by Phil Stephens)

ers defend and defenders attack. Coaches must avoid making youngsters specialists; they should make them "soccer players."

● A soccer game is not a revolving door; a football game is. Football coaches substitute constantly, sending individual players — even entire teams — on and off the field. Such substituting guarantees players will never feel comfortable with the ball, in sync with their teammates, or in the flow of a match. Pro soccer coaches are allowed limited substitutions; that's unworkable in youth soccer, but coaches should still try to send players in for long periods (at least a quarter at a time, preferably a half).

● Football-style aggression is ineffective in soccer. Soccer coaches who encourage players to run hard all the time, tackle every chance they get, and play the entire match at top speed prevent them from playing intelligent, skillful soccer — while cheating them (and spectators) out of enjoying the game. Unlike football, soccer is not all one direction and one speed. Passing back can be smart; so can slowing down the pace. Aggression is a valuable

According to Eric Ahrendt, coach of the Fremont (Calif.) Bandits, a U-10A boys select team, many youth coaches run their soccer teams as if they were football squads. That's natural — many coaches are more familiar with American football than soccer — but it's also not wise. Ahrendt explains why:

● Soccer is a player's game; football is a coach's game. Football is a series of set pieces, where the coach arranges players in precise formations and gives them specific instructions on what to do once the play starts. Soccer is a continuously flowing game; players are free to decide what to do with the ball when they have it, and where to go when they don't. Coaches who constantly shout instructions succeed only in frustrating themselves and their players, while making it harder for players to focus on the game, and make good decisions.

● Soccer players are generalists; football players are specialists. A football player is either offensive or defensive; beyond that, he specializes in the skills of one single position, like right tackle or quarterback. Soccer players, however, must master the same core set of skills no matter where they play — even goalkeepers, nowadays — and also have an understanding of the responsibilities of each position, because they may be required to play anywhere. Attack-

able trait in a soccer player — but it is not the same as football aggression.

● Vince Lombardi would be a poor youth soccer coach. He was a demanding taskmaster, coaching hardened pros playing a violent game. His approach got results at that level, and remains much admired today. But youngsters need praise more than criticism; they need to learn by being encouraged to

take chances and make mistakes, and they need to have fun at practice and during games.

Shooting drill should be shot

There are 15 minutes left before kickoff, and 14 players, three balls, one line of players, one goalkeeper and one shooter are assembled near the penalty area.

In order to keep this shooting drill going, the coach hops in as the target player. The players endure the tedium so they can touch the ball twice — once on the pass to the coach and once to pummel the ball well over the crossbar, across the street and out of sight.

Now the players engage in the most active part of the drill — pursuing the elusive ball for 5-10 minutes, only to find it lodged firmly in the neighbor's tea rose bush.

This scenario is all too common in pregame warm-ups. It's not the coaches' fault — inexperienced coaches have seen this drill being done a million times by "other" coaches. It's like a computer virus, multiplying and perpetuating itself at will.

A much more effective pregame warm-up would begin approximately 30 minutes before kickoff. After players put on all their equipment, they wander on to the field and casually knock the ball around in small, unorganized groups. As the final players reach the field, the

captains lead a short, light jog around the field.

After the jog, the players engage in some light stretching followed by small group activities requiring a higher level of active movement, such as 5-on-3. During this phase, it is important for the players to continue stretching according to their individual needs. As each body is different, each needs to be stretched differently.

It's at this point that many coaches get into trouble with the long shooting lines. Instead, after 5-10 minutes of 5-on-3, players should begin to separate by positions and address position-specific topics. Goalkeepers need to put on their jerseys and gloves and begin basic throwing, catching and diving drills. Attacking players need to address receiving balls of various heights, turning and finishing. Midfielders, based on the team's style of play, might work on turning and ball possession. Defenders work on heading balls out of the area, 1-on-1 defending and knocking longer balls to targets.

Once the goalies are warmed up and ready to play, they step into the goal area and begin receiving relatively easy shots from attacking players only. As their confidence builds, the goalies instruct the attackers to increase the difficulty of the shots. Attackers need to work together — feeding balls to each other, turning and hitting shots on the move. These should not be stationary balls; it's important that these are match-related shots.

As this activity progresses, midfielders and others may step in and take a few shots. As with the attackers, shooting situations for midfielders and defenders should be match-related. Defenders need to strike balls that are traveling out from the goal area, replicating situations where the team has pushed up to strike on goal and the defender pounces on a ball that hasn't been properly cleared.

Finally, it's important that the players are not rushed by the kickoff whistle. The final few minutes should be spent in a relaxed environment in which players are able to complete last-minute equipment alterations; grab a drink of water or spend a quiet minute to gather their thoughts.

As coaches, let's band together to drive the pregame line shooting drill to extinction! ■



Rising star ... midfielder Andy Turner.



Big test for Spurs youngsters

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR'S youth team are England's representatives in this year's American Airlines Dallas Cup XV Tournament which is being held from March 26 to April 3.

Spurs have previously turned down youth tournaments in the US, but the strength of opposition, with clubs such as Milan, River Plate and Celtic taking part, persuaded them to participate in this year's Under-19 World Youth Club Championship Group.

Keith Waldon, Tottenham's youth coach, explained: "As a world famous club, we get dozens of invitations every year to take part in international youth tournaments, but limit them strictly to two or three in Europe.

"But with teams of this stature taking part, we felt that it would be a great opportunity for our boys to test themselves against some of the very best young talent in the world.

"Our record over the past 10 years has been, in my opinion, the best by far in England, not only in terms of winning youth trophies but also in producing players for the first team, which is our main objective.

"Barring the odd exception, we have beaten the best youth teams at home, so it is useful to play against the different styles of foreign opponents. Most English sides still

Born in the USA

CELTIC AND TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR ARE FLYING THE FLAG FOR BRITAIN AND WORLD SOCCER IN THE 1994 DALLAS CUP . . . A BREEDING GROUND FOR TOMORROW'S STARS.

Likely Dallas squad: Andy Quay (goalkeeper), Ijah Anderson, Danny Foot, Leon Townley, Glynn Hurst, Garry Brady, Steve Carr, Jamie Clapham, Billy Hudson, Neil Le Bihan, Junior Haynes, Gareth Knott, Robert Simpson, Steve Slade.

YOUTH TEAM HONOURS

FA Youth Cup: 1970, 1974, 1990.
SE Counties Senior League: 1970, 1971, 1973, 1979, 1981, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993.
SE Counties Senior League Cup: 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1993.
Southern Junior Floodlit Cup: 1965, 1970, 1990, 1992.
International youth tournaments: 1959 Rotterdam, 1960 Berenrath, 1965 The Hague, 1966 Bremen, 1971 Rotterdam, 1972 Rotterdam, 1974 Rotterdam, 1975 Geneva, 1976 Brussels, 1987 Dusseldorf, 1991 Bellinzona.



tend to play the direct style at a furious pace, whereas we try to play proper passing football."

Waldon knows that one of his tasks is to fly the flag for English football.

"Wherever we go, people are surprised that we don't play what they consider the traditional English way — all effort and smashing long balls forward.

"They are surprised to see an English side get the ball down, pass it around and beat them at their own game like we do.

"Our style has helped us win almost every European tournament we have entered, but we haven't yet encountered Milan, for example, who must be one of the strongest clubs in the world. This will be the ultimate test for us."

Tottenham's task will not be helped by the fact that most of their players will be a year younger than their opponents.

"The age limit in the US is Under-19, but we will probably send our Under-18s, which is the age limit for domestic competition," says Waldon.

Waldon stresses that winning is not as important as taking part.

"Results at youth level do not matter in the slightest," he says. "I would like to see no

leagues in youth football, only friendlies and cup competitions.

"It is purely a matter of giving more experience to young players so that they are better prepared for first-team football. Obviously it is nice to win the competitions we enter, but only if we do it playing the right way."

Although Spurs are considered one of the big spenders of British football, their youth system has produced great players such as Glenn Hoddle, Graeme Souness and Steve Perryman, and more recently Nick Barnby is one of several outstanding youngsters at the club.

Seven of last year's youth team have already played in the first team. Winger Andy Turner was the youngest player to appear in the Premier League at 17, although his record was beaten this year by full-back Steve Carr, a fellow Republic of Ireland Under-21 who made his league debut against Ipswich last October, just days after signing as a professional.

Other players to watch include striker Robert Simpson, whose prolific form this season earned a call-up in England's youth side when he scored on his debut against France, and Scottish schoolboy cap Garry Brady.

Parents: Make Your Child a Winner!



Gary Williamson
State Coach for Oklahoma

I often hear the comment, usually after a loss, "Oh well, it's just a game!" I wonder?

Playing on a soccer team can be an important experience in your child's life. Participation can help your child physically and personally. However, placing your child on a soccer team does not guarantee a beneficial experience.

As a parent, you can help your child have a positive experience in playing soccer.

The type of support you give your child can make soccer fun and rewarding or the cause of anxiety and stress. You can motivate your child and help to develop a healthy, positive self-image. Here are some suggestions:

- Children play soccer to have fun, to learn and improve their skills, to enjoy exciting times, to be with friends, and to stay in shape. In order to maintain or improve your child's motivation in soccer, find out why he/she likes to participate and support their reasons for playing.

- Success in soccer is more than just winning. However, young children equate winning with success and losing with failure. If children win a game, they feel good or worthy. If they lose, they feel incompetent or unworthy. This attitude toward winning can be discouraging to children, unless they are always winning. One of your most important roles, therefore, is to help your child keep winning in proper perspective. Try to redefine success in terms of the actual performance or how well your child and the team played. Focusing on the performance rather than the outcome helps keep the game in perspective.

Your child may also need guidance in how to deal with success. In winning, two things may go wrong. Long run suc-

cess may come so easily that the competitive game loses its challenge. Your child may become complacent and/or arrogant. Conversely the pressure to win may result in a lack of motivation if your child dreads playing in fear of failure. Your child may not be able to perform well and may want to quit. Give encouragement and positive support if this is the case. It is important that you assist your child in understanding their contribution to the team's win or loss.

- Winning is fun. Your child needs to know that striving to win is important. Being successful in soccer also means making improvements and striving to do one's best. You can help develop this winning attitude in your child by encouraging maximum effort during practices and games, rewarding their improvements in mastering skills, and supporting your child to try their best. The will to win is important but, the will to prepare to win is of greater value.

- Losing is inevitable if your child plays soccer. Your child must learn to accept themselves after a loss this is an important part of participation in the game. Instead of finding excuses it is important for your child to understand the reasons why the team lost. Such reasons may include superior competition, too many mistakes, poor preparation to compete at this level or maybe the players have a losing attitude. Whatever the reason, your child needs to regroup. Focus on preparing physically and mentally for training and the next game so he/she can do better next time. This is a valuable lesson.

- Realistic goals will help your child. Compare current performances with past performances to determine whether they are successful. Your child must experience success by performing at a level that demands his/her best effort. When your child's skill level improves he/she realizes that effort equals success and will feel a sense of accomplishment.

- Encourage skill improvements, good plays, and good behavior. Remember to praise effort — not just performance — this will motivate your child to try hard. The best way to encourage is by praising or with a physical response: a pat on the back, thumbs up, or smile. Try to avoid giving money or other material rewards, which may turn play into work and have a negative effect.

- Mistakes are part of learning the game of soccer. Your child will make plenty of them. When your child makes a mistake, they know. They do not need

reminding by you. That's when they need your encouragement: "Great try!" "Good run!" "You'll get it next time!" "Super game!". You cannot play the game for your child. Let him/her make decisions and learn through trial and error. Be patient and assist. If your child displays continual frustration, you can help by giving ideas, or practicing with your child on his/her skills to correct mistakes.

- Avoid criticizing and punishing your child for mistakes. If you do he/she will fear failure. In turn this may lead to stress and worry about not performing well and to dread the possible disapproval of parents, coaches, and teammates. Never be negative to someone else's child. It hurts the child and parents. It also creates unwanted tension. Negative criticism hinders rather than improves performance for the individual and the team.

- Fulfill your responsibility. As the number and variety of soccer teams flourish, it becomes increasingly necessary for you to investigate the suitability of the different programs for your child. You have the right and responsibility to ask questions before allowing your child to participate on a soccer team. Seek to find a compatible match between the philosophy of the program and the reason why your child wants to participate in soccer.

Words of Caution

- Identifying with your child is perfectly natural. You want him/her to be successful. Be careful not to live out your own dreams through your child. Seeing a child's performance in sports as a reflection of one's own self-worth and success can cause parents to set unrealistically high goals for their child. This can place pressure to perform beyond his/her capability, a major cause of stress in soccer for children.

- Be a good role model. Be mindful of your behavior at games. You expect your son or daughter to show good sportsmanship and self-control. As a parent, you need to exhibit appropriate behavior yourself, no matter how frustrating it may be to see a poor call or bad play.

- Let the coach COACH. During games and practices, leave the coaching to the coach. It confuses players when they receive instructions from more than one source. Your child has the ball, his/her mind is racing, here comes a defender or two, a split second decision is necessary. Then suddenly from the sidelines: "Shoot!", "Pass!", "Cross!", "Dribble!", "Hustle!". Confused, your child hesitates and is stripped of the ball. Then we hear from the sidelines: "Why didn't you shoot (pass, etc)!". Children go out on the field to do their best, and they expect their parents to do the same.

Many of the adult leaders are unpaid volunteers. As a parent, you should

be realistic in your expectations. However, the adult leaders that your child is associated with should possess some basic characteristics which are favorable to the development of young people. Adults you would like to see your children imitate.

- Failure - Avoid punishing your child when he/she or the team loses. If you do, losses are viewed as personal failures, a blow to his/her self-worth. Teach your child how to cope with failure. Help your child to understand that no one does everything well. Show your child that failure presents a challenge and provides an opportunity to learn. Allow your child "space" to do things alone. This may require more patience on your part, but it will pay off in the long run. Respect your child's feelings and thoughts.

- Realistic Expectations. You must be sensitive to your growing child as they develop physically, mentally and socially. You must realize that your child is not a miniature adult, and he/she has a right to play in an environment that is developmentally appropriate to his/her age and ability.

It's Just A Game!

There is no guarantee that soccer can instill self-discipline or build character. There are plenty of good lessons mixed with soccer instruction and participation. Experiencing "the game" is of greater value than cheap trophies. Success comes from self-discipline, perseverance, paying the price, and playing within the rules. Adversity builds resilience. Teamwork brings rewards. Unique individual talents and achievements are also highly valued. As a parent I hope you are teaching your child more than just the ability to run faster or kick the ball harder or winning the game at all costs.

Playing the game of soccer is fun, but there are times when we must ask, at what cost? Do you want to win so badly that your family turns out to be the losers? If recreational soccer adds to the stress it should relieve because you focus on the score, the game has become more important than the children who play it.

For example, when the youth coach and assistant defeated their arch rivals at the local league game, it cost them one red card and five yellows. Moreover, one player was "taken-out" (injured for the season), and three or four players will miss the next game through injury. All this in addition to the referee's report of unsporting behavior and verbal abuse by players and adults who constantly berated the opposition and officials during the game.

After the game one of the parents congratulated the coach on his victory, and the coach replied, "Another such victory, and we are ruined."

Football means finesse, fitness and fun for the Baggio wannabes

Malcolm Macdonald discovers how the Italians nurture their gifted young players

Glorgio Marchetti, vice-secretary of the *Lega Nazionale Professionisti* (the equivalent of the Premier League), is proud of the way Italian youngsters are nurtured. 'One must take great care,' says Marchetti. 'There must not be any level of risk for our young. We set very clear regulations, so our young can not only enjoy playing our national sport, and second religion, but they also have the opportunity to go as far as their ability and desire allows them in complete safety. Plus, we ensure they learn all the basics of the game to enhance their abilities.'

There is little organised football in Italian schools, mainly because a qualified coach must always be present and the cost is prohibitive. But all clubs have at least one coach qualified by the *Coverciano*, a small football university in Florence. It teaches all the basics that have put Italian football at the pinnacle of Europe. This, for me, is the great strength of the game here. As all the coaches learn the same principles, players develop a similar understanding throughout the country.

A friend of mine, Santino, has four growing sons, the oldest of which is Paolo, aged 10. He's full of how well Paolo is doing at his local club, playing on a smaller pitch. Santino told me that Paolo 'benefits so much from the youth structure, as do all the boys at his club. They all enjoy it so much. That's important, but the great thing for my wife and I, is that should one of our sons have the talent and desire to get to the top, the way is clear, and safe from injury. We have no fears for them, and know they will always get the best benefits from their football.'

That's a remarkable testimony to Italian youth football. Never, in England, have I heard the like. I recently stopped my car to watch 14 kids playing on a small pitch, with a coach on the sidelines offering regular advice. They were aged 10 and 11. Their first touch was so good, they were always ready to pass the ball with their second. Their passing was accurate, well weighted, yet they were playing on a mud-heap.

These kids didn't go chasing the ball like a rugby scrum, they stretched the reduced dimensions to the ultimate and played a simple passing game, not trying the impossible. In half an hour of watching them only twice was a player penalised for taking a third touch. Only three times did the ball go over head height, and one of those was a cross that brought a goal.

I turned to a fellow on-looker and asked him if these lads were connected to any professional club. He smiled, and told me no, they were just a local team.

Their touch and passing abilities were such they rarely lost the ball. Italians are renowned for their defending, and certainly, the best form of defence is to retain possession. These kids did just that, knowing the opposition can't score without the ball.

These skills and inbuilt understanding are no accident. The organisation of Italian youth football ensures boys play and develop within the standards they can realistically attain. It begins with the *Fulcinni*, which translates as 'chicks'. They are 8 to 10 year olds, who play on reduced dimensions (seven players to a team, goals measuring 4 metres by 2 metres and 20 minutes per half). I have always felt an eight year old attempting to defend a full-size goal is ridiculous, and non-productive for him or the opposing forwards.

The next level is for the 10 to 12-year-olds *Esordiente* (beginners) and maintains the reductions of the chicks, but increases the duration of each half to 25 minutes. Both these categories play in

local championships. The 12 to 14-year-old youngsters play on bigger pitches with full-size goals. They play, depending on their standard, in regional or local championships.

The *Allievi* (Cadets) are 14-16 year olds who can play locally, regionally and nationally. It is from this point all professional clubs are welcomed and encouraged by the authorities to run as many teams as they want. All Serie A and Serie B clubs must field a team. That's 38 to start, then the best qualifying 26



from Serie C1 and C2 are admitted. The 64 are then split geographically into four groups, leading to play-offs, semis and a final that produces national champions. The professional clubs also have a 16 plus championship League, a Spring Championship and a knockout competition for 19-20 year olds.

State law dictates no youngster can play at senior level until he has passed his 16th birthday. Then, he must produce medical documentation stating that he is fit to perform at this higher level. Furthermore, no club can sign a player from outside its region until that lad has completed his education, ending on his 15th birthday. All professional clubs must school youngsters in the mornings, with coaching and training only in the afternoons.

Professional clubs are encouraged to run, and sponsor, feeder youth clubs. AC Milan and Inter have two. One of Inter's, Bariviera Faddini, produced Marco Di Vecchio, who recently displaced the expensive Dutchman, Bergkamp. A player leaves his feeder club at 16. Di Vecchio, with all the fruits gained from this youth structure, recently found himself the only fit Inter forward.

There is no reserve team football in Italy. 'It would be a nonsense championship', says Glorgio. 'Serie A and B club players must be contracted, and the wages are the highest in Europe, even the world. There can be no loan, or non-contract players and injuries are more frequent nowadays. Clubs have to run bigger squads, but play more and more games.'

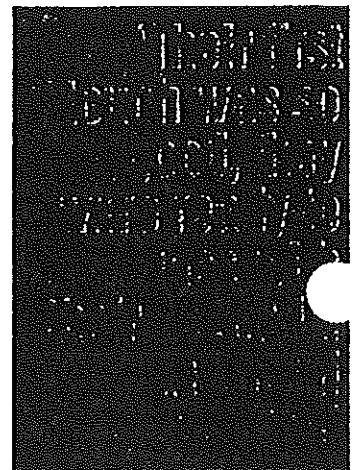
'AC Milan for example, are in two domestic competitions, they also have to play in the European Champions' Cup, the European Super Cup, and the World Club Cup.

'The majority of their players are needed for internationals regularly. But their squad can still put out two teams better than any one from most of Europe.'

Paolo Maldini (right) has followed Franco Baresi (below) from the youth team to the first team. Baresi, who captained AC Milan and Italy, learned his trade



with one of AC Milan's feeder youth clubs. Dennis Bergkamp's (top right) position as Inter's main striker has been usurped by an Inter youth product, Marco Di Vecchio



Parents Sometimes Say The Darnedest Things

It doesn't matter whether you're in California, Connecticut or any soccer field in between. The scenery may change, but the sounds remain the same: Simplistic, asinine sideline comments spew from coaches and spectators, most of whom have never played the game (or even felt a soccer ball bounce crazily off their shin).

The phrases are so ubiquitous, we no longer even hear them. They're so ridiculous, we tend to pay them no mind. But they're there; they fill the air, raining down like the worst storm ever played in. And because young players—and many referees—are so impressionable, the words have to affect them.

Here are some of the most common shouts, screams, pleas and interjections—along with a few pointed responses we wish we had the guts to shout back.

- "To somebody!" (What a surprise! We thought he wanted to blast the ball into the concession stand.)

- "Go to the ball!" (If everyone took that advice, we would have exactly the kind of chaos the coach has been working all year long to avoid.)

- "C'mon, guys! A little intensity!" (Sure—intensity is something that can be transferred at will from cigarette-smoking, doughnut-eating fans to teenagers forced to play a game at 8 in the morning.)

- "Talk to each other!" (They would—if they could hear over the din of shrieking parents.)

- "Pick up the pace!" (This is usually hollered during a brief lull following a manic start, the only result of which was an amazingly tired group of athletes.)

- "Win the ball!" (Yep, that'll do it. Before that command, he thought the whole idea was to arrive there late and

let the other player get it.)

- "Stick in hard!"

- "Too many steps!" (Never mind that, the goalkeeper took all of five steps, not four, and put the ball back into play quicker than you can say "Bora"—which is the whole purpose of the much-misinterpreted goalkeeper rule. This spectator is going to show everyone that he knows soccer—and subtly be damned.)

- "The keeper's scared!" (You hear this before a penalty kick. You will never, however, hear it anywhere near a goalie's mother—that is, hear it and see the speaker live to tell the tale.)

- "That's using your head!" (You will hear this following virtually every head ball. It is perhaps the least funny, most overused joke in the entire sports kingdom.)

- "Hey ref, there are two teams out there!" (Well, I'll be dipped. I thought there was only one team playing. How silly of me.)

- "Kick it out of there!" (Never mind that the coach has been trying to teach his team to work the ball forward with patience and poise, or that blindly booting the ball might result in greater disaster than is already occurring. Just go ahead and bang.)

- "Come on, ref, let 'em play!" (This is always followed, several seconds later, by "Come on, ref, call something! Somebody's gonna get hurt out there!")

- "Come on guys, pass the ball!" (This is always followed, several seconds later, by "Come on guys, shoot the ball!")

- "Pick up men!" (No advice, of course, on who to pick up, or where, or what to do if the coach wants coverage by area. In the famous words of Nike, "Just do it.")

- "Don't let 'em shoot!" (This assumes that teams go into games with the express aim of letting their opponents shoot.)

- "You gotta want it!" (This assumes that teams go into games with the express aim of not wanting it—whatever "it" is.)

- "Hey, ref—what about that?" (Yeah? What about it?)

- "That ball was out!" (This is invariably blurted when the ball is rolling along a sideline. Never mind that the whole ball must be over the whole line, since when do rules matter to most fans anyway?)

- "Unlucky!" (This is my personal favorite. It's said all the time; it means nothing—but I suppose things could be worse. It's probably only a matter of time before spectators start screaming, "Unskillful!")

Dan Woog has heard many other things in his years on the soccer field, most of which are unprintable.

Parents are not advised to do too much yelling at soccer games, lest they embarrass themselves.



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CODE OF ETHICS FOR COACHES

This code of ethics has been developed to clarify and distinguish approved and accepted professional, ethical, and moral behavior from that which is detrimental to the development of the sport of soccer.

RESPONSIBILITY TO PLAYERS

1. The coach must never place the value of winning over the safety and welfare of players. Winning should be the result of preparation and discipline with emphasis placed on the highest ideals and character traits.
2. Coaches shall instruct players to play within the written laws of the game and within the spirit of the game at all times.
3. Coaches shall not seek unfair advantage by teaching deliberate unsportsmanlike behavior to players.
4. Coaches should not tolerate inappropriate behavior from players regardless of the situation.
5. Demands on players' time should never be so extensive as to interfere with academic goals and progress. Motivation for excellence should include academics as well as athletics.
6. Coaches must never encourage players to violate NTSSA recruitment, eligibility, or guest player rules and policies.
7. Under no circumstances should coaches authorize or encourage the use of medicinal or performance enhancing drugs. Players should be directed to seek proper medical attention for injuries and to follow the physician's instructions regarding treatment and recovery. At no time should a player be put at risk by returning from injury prematurely or by being forced to play while injured.

RESPONSIBILITY TO NTSSA AND MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

1. Adherence to all NTSSA and Member Association rules and policies, especially those regarding eligibility, team formation, recruiting, and guest players is mandatory and should never be violated. It is the responsibility of every coach to know and understand these rules.

2. Player development and the growth of the player through participation is essential to the growth of the sport. Additionally, the coach must behave in such a manner that the principles, integrity, and dignity of the sport are maintained.
3. Any problems that cannot be resolved between coaches should be referred to the appropriate NTSSA Commissioner, Member Association, or League Commissioner immediately.

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE LAWS OF THE GAME

1. Coaches should be thoroughly acquainted with and demonstrate a working knowledge of the laws of the game of soccer. Coaches are also responsible to ensure that their players understand the intent as well as the application of the laws.
2. Coaches must adhere to the letter and spirit of the laws of the game. Those coaches who circumvent the rules to gain advantage have no place in soccer.
3. Coaches are responsible for their players' actions on the field and must not permit them to perform with the intent of causing injury to opposing players.
4. If coaches permit, encourage, or condone performance which is not in the letter or spirit of the laws, they are derelict in their responsibility to players, Member Associations, NTSSA and the sport worldwide. The coach must strive constantly to teach good sporting behavior.

RESPONSIBILITY TO OFFICIALS

1. Officials must have the support of coaches, players, and spectators. Criticism of officials undermines their purpose in the game. Coaches must always refrain from criticizing officials in the presence of players.
2. Coaches should strive to develop a line of

communication with officials, giving each an opportunity to better understand the problems relating to their specific area. This shall not be taken as encouragement to debate referee decisions during the match.

3. On game day, officials should be treated with respect before, during, and after the game. Officials should be addressed as "Referee" or "Mr./Ms. Referee" and not by name. Professional respect should be mutual and there should be no demeaning dialogue or gesture between official, coach, or player. Coaches must not incite players or spectators or attempt to disrupt the flow of play.
4. Comments regarding an official should be made in writing to the appropriate organization assigning the official.

RESPONSIBILITY REGARDING SCOUTING AND RECRUITING

1. It is unethical to scout any team, by any means whatsoever, except in regularly scheduled games.
2. The use of video tape or motion picture equipment to scout an opponent's regularly scheduled games for the purpose of recruiting is unethical.
3. All NTSSA rules pertaining to recruiting shall be strictly observed by the coach, manager, or any team representative.
4. It is unethical to recruit player(s) actively playing for another team.
5. It is unethical for a player to be recruited or enticed from the Olympic Development Program (ODP) setting, either by his ODP coach or any other coach, manager, parent or team representative.
6. When discussing the advantages of his/her organization, the coach has an ethical obligation to

be forthright and refrain from making derogatory remarks regarding other coaches, teams, and organizations.

7. It is unethical for any coach to make a statement to a prospective athlete which cannot be fulfilled; illegal to promise any kind of compensation or inducement for play; and immoral to deliver same.
8. Allegations of illegal or unethical recruiting are very serious and should be based on concrete facts rather than hear-say and innuendo. While documentation of recruiting violations is essential, the use of video tape and other electronic equipment is discouraged.

RESPONSIBILITY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. Coaches have a responsibility to promote the game of soccer to the public. Comments and critiques of governing bodies, teams, coaches, players, parents, or the media should be positive and constructive, never prejudicial or inflammatory.
2. When asked to give a recommendation concerning team, camp, coach or organization, it is in the best interest of all concerned if no less than three referrals are given in order to provide a professional unbiased source of information.
3. Coaches have the responsibility to assist their players in conducting themselves properly when in public while representing their team, Member Association, and NTSSA.
4. Publicly predicting a win is folly and serves no useful place in a coach's public image.
5. Comments stressing injuries, team, personnel conflicts, or disciplinary problems as an excuse for a loss or unsuccessful endeavor are detrimental and should be avoided.
6. It is unethical for a coach to solicit alumni.

parents, booster club, or managers to pressure organizations, Member Associations, or NTSSA to alter established rules. The coach must not attempt to influence these organizations in political or financial dealings outside the framework of their own rules and bylaws.

7. The media should be allowed access to the players for comment. Players should be instructed in how to conduct themselves during an interview.

GAME DAY AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A coach's behavior must be such as to bring credit to himself, his organization, and the sport of soccer. This is never more evident than on the day of the contest.
2. Rival coaches should meet prior to the game and exchange friendly or professional greetings. While the concept of rivalry is wholly embraced, it cannot take precedence over exemplary professional conduct.
3. During play, coaches have a responsibility to be as inconspicuous as possible. Coaches shall exhibit a respectful attitude towards players. The coach must confine him/herself to the coaching area. The attitude of the coach towards officials, spectators, opposing players and coaches should be controlled and undemonstrative.
4. It shall be unethical for a coach to have any verbal altercation with an opposing coach or bench during the game. Hostile physical contact with a player is considered highly unethical.
5. The coaches foremost post game responsibility is his/her team.
6. Coaches should use their influence on unfriendly spectators who demonstrate intimidating behavior towards officials and opposing teams.

