



U6 Soccer Coaching Fundamentals

Fall 2014

Introduction

- ▶ Most U6 coaches are parents/volunteers that may or may not have experience playing or coaching soccer. This presentation is specifically intended to provide a baseline understanding for coaches that will ensure the players and the coaches have a fun season.
- ▶ For many players, this will be their first formal soccer team. If they don't feel like it is fun, they likely will not continue playing soccer. It is important to understand what 'fun' is for our U6 players and how we can help them achieve it.
- ▶ It is important we coach our U6 players based on their mental and physical capabilities. We need to let 5-6 year olds be 5-6 years olds.



Topics

- ▶ Before the Season Starts
- ▶ Coaching U6 Players
- ▶ Running a Successful Practice/Game
- ▶ Coaching & Coaches Code of Conduct
- ▶ Useful Web Sites



Before the Season Starts

▶ *'Football is a simple game made complicated by people who should know better.'*

▶ *~ Bill Shankley,
Liverpool
Manager, 1968*

Getting Your Season Started

- ▶ Contact all players via email or phone to welcome them to the team, leaving your contact information and acceptable ways to contact you throughout the season. Make sure everyone is contacted, may need to email and then follow up with phone calls. Ask everyone to RSVP so you know they are aware of the schedule.
- ▶ Send out a team introduction email with a list of your expectations for the players, parents and spectators. Some of the items to mention in your email are:
 - ▶ Philosophy and Objectives
 - ▶ Uniforms
 - ▶ Schedule
 - ▶ Equipment (Cleats, Shin Pads, etc)
 - ▶ Expected Behavior and Code of Conduct – include link to BYSA Rules
(<http://bridgewateryouthsoccer.com/bysa/downloads/BYSA%20Rules%20Regs%200909.pdf>)
 - ▶ Medical Conditions
 - ▶ Where and when to meet for the first time



Getting Your Season Started

- ▶ Look for an assistant coach. Paying attention to everyone's needs during the practice and game is a multi-person job!
- ▶ Assistant coaches can handle the sideline players in a scrimmage while you focus on coaching.
- ▶ All coaches and assistant coaches need to fill out a CORI
- ▶ Attend the coaches meeting to go over coaches guidelines and hand out uniforms. A brief coaches clinic will follow the meeting.



Coaching U6 Players

*'If it's not fun, it's
not soccer'*

- Tony DiCicco



Characteristics of U6

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focused on themselves – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel.• unable to see the world from another's perspective – Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic.• everything is in the here and now – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.• heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore.• enjoying playing, not watching – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing.• limited attention span – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• look for adult approval – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”• unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic.• typically have 2 speeds -- extremely fast and stopped.• usually unaware of game scores – we should keep it that way.• often like to fall down just because it is fun – they are just children having fun.• often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right. |
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Technical Development of U6 Players

- ▶ Fun, dribbling, and motor development (running, skipping, galloping, turning, jumping) should be the central soccer themes in U6 practices.
- ▶ In order to become comfortable on the ball, U6 players need to touch the ball as often as possible.
- ▶ The skill priorities of U6 players are:
 - ▶ Dribble with all sides of both feet (big toe, little toe)
 - ▶ Dribble out of trouble
 - ▶ Dribble past someone
 - ▶ Soft first touch



Challenging Situations

▶ Aggression

- ▶ Needs to be addressed so safety of others is protected.
- ▶ Provide 1-3 'Strikes' before disciplining the player (sit out practice)
- ▶ Return to removed player after 1 minute and ask what they did to be removed. If not compliant, give more time for player to cool down.
- ▶ Communicate with parents and BYSA if chronic or serious problem.

▶ Hyperactivity

- ▶ Above normal U6 energy levels, but truly hyperactive. Be cautious in our evaluation of hyperactivity. If we are longwinded, all U6 players will fidget.
- ▶ Ask yourself if the hyperactivity is disrupting the team/players before addressing it.

▶ Withdrawn Behavior

- ▶ Some children just need a 'safe bridge' into group play which could be you, an assistant coach or a teammate asking to be their partner.
 - ▶ Parent attachment may require you using the parent for a short time with understanding that the parent will soon step away.
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- ▶ Do not force the child onto the field.

Running a Successful Practice/Game

The Bottom Line
Prepare – Prepare
– Prepare!

Remember the
players' mindset
and learning style



Practices / Scrimmages

- ▶ Your one hour scheduled time is divided up into a 30 minute 'practice' and a 30 minute 'scrimmage' against another team.
- ▶ During your practice time, MPS will be leading the players of both teams for the practice. You should still be a cheerleader during practice.
- ▶ You and the coach of the other team are responsible for scrimmage.
- ▶ **BE ENERGETIC AND ANIMATED!!!** The players will respond to your demeanor. If you are playing a monster or getting them to laugh, they will have more fun and feel like this is play time.



Scrimmages

- ▶ Introduce yourself to the other coach before the scrimmage starts.
- ▶ Agree on general rules about the scrimmage
 - ▶ No goalies
 - ▶ Number of players on the field
 - ▶ Substitutions (are they on the fly or during a stoppage)
 - ▶ Restarts (what to do when the ball goes out of bounds) – No Throw In's!!!
- ▶ Much of the scrimmage is 6+ players surrounding the ball. Teach players to dribble to space when possible.
- ▶ Do not teach passing. U6 should be focused on individual play (dribbling, shooting, defending). Team tactics are introduced at the U8 level.
- ▶ Cheer your players on. They can hear your instructions while they are playing. Do not shout instructions.
- ▶ If a player has scored a large number of goals, have them move to a more defensive position, giving other players the chance to score.



Playing Time and Positions

- ▶ Playing time must be equal – no exceptions
- ▶ Positions in U6 are simply ‘Offense’ and ‘Defense’, splitting your field players in half.
- ▶ Explain to players the main responsibility of Offense (to score goals) and Defense (to keep the ball out of your net), though all players are responsible for all aspects of the game.
- ▶ We recommend no goalies for U6 soccer, as the focus should be on learning to dribble, shoot and defend. If your team is much stronger than the other team, you may want to designate a stronger player ‘Guard the Castle’, playing around your goal to prevent goals (no hands).



Injuries

- ▶ Stop play and ask all players to take a knee.
- ▶ Determine if the injury is real or just needs a little attention.
- ▶ Medical kits are located at half field.
- ▶ If the injury requires attention, call the players parent over to assist and make decisions on how to treat.
- ▶ Follow up with parent after the game if needed.
- ▶ Report the injury to the BYSA if needed.



Parents and Spectators

- ▶ As parents and players are often new to the game and world of soccer, it is extremely important to communicate with parents.
 - ▶ Setting expectations before the season is vital to prevent confusion and stunt potential problems. Sending out an introductory email or handout at the first game with team expectations insures that your words are not being misconstrued. Also, if there is a problem down the line, you can reference that document. In this document, you should cover:
 - ▶ Team Goals – Have fun...
 - ▶ Style of Play – Try new things and be creative
 - ▶ Attendance – Let me know if you can't make it
 - ▶ Discipline – Policy for handling bad behavior
 - ▶ Communication – Phone numbers, email, text or in person meeting if needed
 - ▶ Sideline Behavior – Be mindful of your comments on the sideline about your own child and other parents children.
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Coaches Code of Conduct

The Bottom Line

You, your assistant coach, your players and the parents on your team all represent Bridgewater Youth Soccer – act accordingly

MA Youth Soccer Code of Conduct

- ▶ Before, during and after the game, be an example of dignity, patience and positive spirit.
- ▶ Before a game, introduce yourself to the opposing coach and to the referee.
- ▶ During the game, you are responsible for the sportsmanship of your players. If one of your players is disrespectful, irresponsible or overly aggressive, take the player out of the game at least long enough for him/her to calm down.
- ▶ During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of the parents of your players.
- ▶ It is imperative to explain acceptable player and parent behavior in a preseason meeting.
- ▶ Encourage them to applaud and cheer for good plays by either team. Discourage them and you may need to be forceful and direct from yelling at players and the referee.

MA Youth Soccer Code of Conduct

- ▶ During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of spectators rooting for your team.
- ▶ During the game, do not address the referee at all. If you have a small issue, discuss it with the referee calmly and patiently after the game.
- ▶ If you have a major complaint, or if you think the referee was unfair, biased, unfit or incompetent, report your opinion to your League. Your reactions will be taken seriously if they are presented objectively and formally.
- ▶ After the game, thank the referee and ask your players to do the same.



Final Thought

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



Useful Web Sites

The Bottom Line

The following sites offer a host of drills and skill sessions to make practice planning and execution simple and easy.

Useful Web Sites

- ▶ www.mayouthsoccer.org/coach's_corner.aspx
- ▶ www.weplay.com/youth-soccer/drills
- ▶ www.soccerxpert.com
- ▶ www.footy4kids.co.uk
- ▶ www.sportsessionplanner.com (go to “Sessions”)
- ▶ www.soccer-training-guide.com/soccer-drills.html
- ▶ www.freeyouthsoccerdrills.com
- ▶ www.soccer-for-parents.com/free-soccer-drills.html
- ▶ www.soccerhelp.com/soccer_drills.shtml
- ▶ football.isport.com/football-guides/
- ▶ www.responsiblesports.com/resource_center.aspx
- ▶ www.coaching-youth-soccer-for-success.com/free-soccer-drills.html
- ▶ www.bettersoccercoaching.com
- ▶ www.youthtoprosoccer.com
- ▶ www.soccerdrills.net (limited free material)
- ▶ www.soccerpracticebooks.com (pay site)



Sources

- ▶ Massachusetts Youth Soccer Coach Curriculum
 - ▶ G-D level course materials
- ▶ Salmon Creek Soccer Web Site
- ▶ Mass. Premier Soccer Handbooks
- ▶ Twitter
 - ▶ Tony Taylor @Tad690
 - ▶ Coaching Family @coachingfamily
 - ▶ Lee Merricks @cosmosoccerCA
 - ▶ Rob Parker @goaliecoach00

