



NAZARETH SOCCER CLUB

<http://www.nazarethsoccer.org/>

U4 - U9

BALL CONTROL AND CREATIVITY YEARS

"We should measure success in coaching by how long it takes the player to no longer need his coach." - Greg Ryan, University of Michigan, coach

Coaching and Training Manual

2012

SAFETY & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

As a coach, you are ultimately responsible for the safety of your athletes. Creating a safe playing environment for your players can significantly reduce the number and severity of injuries during your practices and games. The *National Center for Sports Safety* has outlined a few guidelines to help you create a safe playing environment.

- Develop an emergency action plan and make sure all of your assisting coaches are familiar with the emergency procedures.
- Always have an accessible, working phone at practice and at games to ensure that emergency personnel can be contacted quickly in case of an emergency.
- Make sure that your first aid kit is with you at all practices and games.
- Always have water or sports drinks available for your athletes, giving them numerous breaks to prevent dehydration.
- Examine your playing fields, courts and other surfaces before practice and games for potentially dangerous obstacles such as holes, wet spots and sharp objects.
- Regularly check the player's safety equipment before practice to make sure it is put on correctly.
- Make sure to store unused equipment away from the playing field so that no one trips over it while playing.
- Encourage your athletes to be aware of any unsafe playing conditions and report them to you.

Lightning - Use the 30-30 Rule!

1. If the time between lightning and thunder is 30 seconds or less, go to a safer location.
2. If the lightning can't be seen, just hearing thunder means you should go to a safer location.
3. WAIT at least 30 MINUTES after hearing the last thunder before leaving the safer location.



Open picnic pavilions, dugouts and rain shelters offer **absolutely no** protection from lightning! Get prompt medical treatment if someone is struck. CPR could save the victim's life if their heart has stopped or they have stopped breathing.

Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS		ACTION PLAN
These signs and symptoms may indicate that a concussion has occurred.		<p>If you suspect that a player has a concussion, you should take the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove athlete from play. 2. Ensure athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself. 3. Inform athlete's parents or guardians about the known or possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion. 4. Allow athlete to return to play only with permission from an appropriate health care professional.
SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE	
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or "pressure" in head	
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting	
Forgets sports plays	Balance problems or dizziness	
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent	Double or blurry vision	
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light	
Answers questions slowly	Sensitivity to noise	
Loses consciousness (even briefly)	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy	
Shows behavior or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems	
Can't recall events prior to hit or fall	Confusion	
Can't recall events after hit or fall	Does not "feel right"	
<p>IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS</p> <p>FILL IN THE NAME AND NUMBER OF YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL(S) BELOW:</p> <p>Hospital Name: _____</p> <p>Hospital Phone: _____</p> <p>Hospital Name: _____</p> <p>Hospital Phone: _____</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: white;">For immediate attention, CALL 911</p>		

If you think your athlete has sustained a concussion... take him/her out of play, and seek the advice of a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.

For more information and to order additional materials **free-of-charge**, visit:
www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports

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U4 THROUGH U9 PLAYER AND COACH DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY

The central focus in the NSC micro program is the player and their individual development.

Focus on individual player development, not team development/results. As micro coaches, we experience frequent player change/turnover, and the expectation of continuing with the same players and team for several years is unreasonable. Therefore, we develop individual players so that when it is time to form long-standing teams, they are fundamentally and technically sound with the basics of soccer (i.e., dribbling, receiving, ball control, shooting, etc.).

The curriculum is our guide to player development.

It is tremendously important for the Club and players that coaches adhere to the NSC Micro Development Curriculum. The purpose of the curriculum is to help 'standardize' training and focus on player development. As players develop throughout the years in the micro program, coaches have expectations as they progress. Standardizing training sessions will ensure that those expectations are met and all players develop accordingly. However, understand that all players of the same age are certainly not at the same developmental level. Therefore, it is equally important that we are *flexible* within these curriculum guidelines and challenge all players at a level that's appropriate with their ability.

The curriculum is our guide to long-term player success.

Because this is a progressive plan, every aspect of play that is taught at one age must be reinforced at the next age. Thus, topics taught at U6 must be trained again at U8, U10, and so on. Abilities acquired by players in a younger age group must be refined at the next age so that players can be successful when challenged by more skillful, more athletic, or more aware opponents and teammates. If an older player is lacking in some element introduced at a younger stage, this must be addressed before that player can advance to the next stage of the curriculum.

Let the kids play!

NSC has implemented the "small-sided" game philosophy (i.e., 4v4 with no goal keepers) because we want our players to:

- have more touches with the soccer ball;
- make more, less-complicated decisions during the game;
- have more individual teaching time with the coach during the game;
- have more involvement in the game allowing more opportunity to solve game-like problems;
- be more exposure to attacking and defending situations; and
- have more opportunities to score goals!

For these reasons, coaches must foster an environment that best allows these situations to occur. Therefore, coaches should not be on the field during game play, limit instruction during game play, and give equal playing time to each player. In addition, parents and spectators are required to watch from the opposite side of the field from that of the coaches and players. This helps to keep players organized when time to make substitutions, or for the coach to offer instruction to the player when not in play.

*"Once they cross that line, it's their game. It's not about us as coaches;
it's about them being able to make decisions."*

Jay Hoffman, US Youth Soccer Region I ODP Boys, former head coach

Andrew Hilarczyk

NSC Director of Player and Coach Development U4-U9



WHY SMALL-SIDED GAMES?

What does "Small-Sided Games" mean? These are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer players are sharing one ball.

All ages can play "Small Sided Games", but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger soccer players. US Youth Soccer recommendations for "number of players" at the various age groups are as follows:

U6: 3v3 no goalkeepers
U8: 4v4 no goalkeepers
U10: 6v6 with goalkeepers
U12: 8v8 with goalkeepers
U13+: 11v11 with goalkeepers

Here are some of the reasons why we believe, as soccer coaches, administrators and parents must guarantee that our young soccer players play small-sided games:

1. Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become **more skillful** with it! (Individual technical development)
2. Because we want our young soccer players to make **more, less-complicated decisions** during the game! (Tactical development)
3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically **efficient** in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)
4. Because we want our young soccer players to have more **individual teaching time** with the coach! Less players on the field and less players on the team will guarantee this! (Need to feel worthy and need to feel important)
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have **more, involved playing time** in the game! (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have **more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball!** (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
7. Because we want our young soccer players to have **more opportunities to score goals!** (Pure excitement)

These are the reasons why we adults must foster "Small-Sided Games" in our youth soccer programs. The "Small-Sided" environment is a **developmentally appropriate environment** for our young soccer players. It's a **FUN** environment that *focuses on the young soccer player.*

BASIC IDEAS TO CONSIDER WHEN COACHING YOUTH SOCCER

The most fundamental skill in soccer is individual mastery of the ball and the creativity that comes with it. This should be a priority in training and games, especially in the early years. As this skill is mastered, the rest of the game becomes easier - both to teach and to learn. Practices should be built around facilitating the development of the skills necessary to move and control the ball well. As these individual skills and the creativity to make them come alive in the game are developed to a level of competence, the finer points, first of passing skill and later of team organization can be taught.

Coaching soccer can be confusing at times because the game changes dramatically as the players improve in both skill and physical ability. When coaching young, developing players, as well as the adolescent players, U.S. Soccer feels it is helpful to keep the following ideas at the forefront of your mind:

- 1) Set up situations where the players can learn by playing the game. The game is the best teacher for young players.
- 2) Coaches can often be more helpful to a young player's development by organizing less, saying less and allowing the players to do more. Set up a game and let the kids play. Keep most of your comments for before and after practice and during water breaks. Comments should be kept short and simple. Be comfortable organizing a session that looks like pickup soccer.
- 3) Teaching and learning the game of soccer is a process: make your goals seasonal, as well as daily and weekly. Often, at the younger ages, the developmental efforts of one season are not noticeable in children until sometime in the next season.
- 4) Set age-appropriate goals i.e., know what the child is able to do at that age.
- 5) From a developmental standpoint, the young ages are the best ones for learning skills. Spend the time now encouraging this growth. By the age of 17 the capacity to pick up new motor skills begins to wane, while the ability to conceptualize team organization, tactics and strategy increases. As a coach, work with these strengths, not against them.
- 6) Do not expect games and practices to look like professional soccer. If you want to use high level soccer as a teaching tool, focus on the individual skill level of professional players, not their organization. Give your players opportunities to see what older, more skilled players, i.e., a high school, college player or an older brother or sister, can do with the ball. On occasion, invite some of these players to participate in your practice. Use them to model good soccer qualities. Let your players learn by experiencing the game alongside or against these better players. Older players can also be used as "neutral players." In this case, the neutral player helps whichever team has the ball i.e., he or she never defends. Maybe that neutral player has limited touches and/or can't score, but he or she gives the team with the ball a better chance of keeping the ball. By helping to maintain possession, the neutral player(s) helps the game maintain some rhythm, and gives the kids a clearer picture of the game's possibilities.
- 7) Recognize and understand how the skills learned at each age are connected to preparing the player to move into the next phase of his or her development. Know what the next level of play is, and the general tools that your players should carry with them as they move on. Help them to be prepared.
- 8) Allow your players to develop these requisite skills in an environment where the main goal is to have fun with the ball.

- 9) The value of matches is that they provide youngsters with an opportunity to showcase their newly acquired skill and creativity. It is always nice to win, however that should not be your focus at the younger age groups (through 14 years).
- 10) Have a clear idea of what it is you want to accomplish at practice. Create exercises/games that replicate and repeat the movements and situations that are found in soccer and that allow the player to grow comfortable and confident with the ball at his or her feet. Encourage players to move with the ball at his or her feet and deal with boundaries, opponents, teammates and goals. Keep in mind that soccer is a pretty simple game. If you are involved in soccer for long enough, you begin to realize that all the many little games that work are really just variations on the same basic concepts. As long as the parameters that you have established in your exercises/small-sided games are true to soccer (goals for scoring and defending), creates the problems that you want the kids to solve (protecting the ball while dribbling, etc.), and allows your players to be challenged and find some success, you're on the right track.
- 11) Don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best.
- 12) Remember that the game is the best teacher for the players. Coaches and parents should think of themselves more as facilitators, monitors, guides or even participants, to provide a rich environment for the kids to learn from and enjoy.

ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY AND BALL SKILLS BEFORE TACTICS!

At the younger ages (6 to about 10), soccer is not a team sport. On the contrary, it is a time for children to develop their individual relationship with the ball. The fact that younger children are placed into team environments is not their fault. Do not demand that the more confident players share the ball. Encourage them to be creative and go to goal. Do the same with the rest of your players. Work to bring all your players up to that level of confidence and comfort with the ball. Coaches should avoid the impulse to "coach" their players from "play to play" in order to help them win the match. Coaches should not be telling their young players to "pass rather than dribble," to "hold their positions" or to "never" do something (like pass or dribble in front of the goal).

With this in mind, try to encourage comfort with the ball and the confidence to use this skill creatively. Encourage the dribbler at the younger ages; your team of 8 to 10 year olds should be full of them. Dribbling, at the younger ages, is the child's attempt to gain control over the ball. Controlling the ball is the primary skill that every other skill in soccer depends upon. Although controlling the ball may seem to be a simple task, it actually takes an enormous amount of the child's energy. Do not expect him or her to look to pass or to pass with any level of competence or awareness, until he or she has first mastered this skill. Consider these two points. Children from about age 6 to 12 have an almost limitless capacity to learn body movement and coordination (i.e., motor skills). At the same time, their intellectual capacity to understand spatial concepts like positions and group play is limited. Work to their strengths.

Many kids who have been involved in organized soccer will often look to pass the ball or kick the ball down field as their first option. They have been taught to "share" the ball or they have learned that the best way to keep from making a "mistake" with the ball at their feet is to kick it away as fast as possible. For this reason, it helps if the coach continually encourages the players to make dribbling their first option. It may also help to make the players take at least two touches on the ball before they can look to pass. Remember that making mistakes at these early ages is a very important part of the player's learning and development. *Encourage risk-taking and applaud effort.*

ORGANIZATION OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT BY AGE AND STAGE

Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual and physical activity.

Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others. In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6 year old players the same way as 13 years old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups. The first two age groups are:

1) INITIAL STAGE – 5 TO 8 YEARS OLD

At this age children do not have the same capacity as adults to analyze the environment. They explore and have an egocentric conception of the world. Children are still gathering the experience necessary to interact with their surroundings and with others. Also, empathy and the capacity to consider the thoughts and feelings of others is very low. In order to help children build their own experience, many exercises will be individual (e.g. each player will have a ball). The tactical component of the game will be reduced to small-sided games with basic explanations about space distribution. Training sessions will be treated more as physical education than specifically as soccer training.

2) BASIC STAGE – 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD

At this stage, the structure (but not the content) of the training sessions will be similar to that of older players. The main component of the training session will be technical. It is sensible at this age to develop technique and basic tactical understanding. Children's capacity to solve problems increases significantly. Therefore players will begin working on basic and dynamic tactical scenarios. At this stage, players are pre-pubescent and have important physical limitations in terms of strength and endurance.

3) INTERMEDIATE STAGE – 13 AND 14 YEARS OLD

Players at this age develop a good understanding of the game. However, these players are limited by their physical size and the significant changes, which arise with puberty. Safety should be the number one priority for the coach. The coach must be cautious to avoid overtraining should focus more on tactical and technical elements of the game and less on the physical aspects. Tactical training plays an important role at this age.

4) ADVANCED STAGE – 15 TO 18 YEARS OLD

Players at this age have completed most of their physical and mental development. All components of training can be combined and organized with the purpose of developing the highest potential of the player. The strength of the muscles helps to develop technique at high speed and this speed helps the player to react faster to tactical situations. This stage is crucial for combining all the components of soccer in order to increase the players' soccer knowledge. These are some of the facts in terms of human development adapted to soccer. In this document these facts are used to develop the most appropriate training methodology for each age group.

U4/U5/U6 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Game Format: 4v4 (3v3 recommended)

GK Status: *No goalkeepers*

Field Size: 4v4 (40 yards x 25 yards) or 3v3 (30 yards x 20 yards)

Ball Size: 3

Restarts: *Kick-ins or Dribble-ins. No throw-ins.*

ABOUT THIS AGE

Five- and six-year olds are too young to be involved in any structured, organized soccer program. At most, they should be involved in fun activities that encourage the children to explore their physical abilities, while also including a ball with which to play. Make sure these are activity-based games that emphasize exploration and experimentation with the rolling, spinning, and bouncing qualities of the ball. The soccer ball should be considered a toy. *There should be no activities where players wait in lines to perform a pre-determined movement or required action.*

Five- and six- year olds, although still young, are beginning to gain more control over their bodies. At the same time, it is still new to them and they will require a lot of time and energy figuring out what their bodies can do, and how to use this developing coordination. Children at this age also love to use their imagination when they play. Keep this in mind when designing games. They enjoy playing on their terms, and as a by-product of their play, they will gain some limited comfort with the ball. Although they love to play, their ability to stay focused on any one thing is very limited. Keep your activities short and simple. Finally, even as they are steadily developing physical and mental abilities, they are still very young. Always treat children with care, patience and give plenty of encouragement. It can be helpful to include parents in the practice/play time so they can take ideas home with them to their backyards or parks. If children must be involved in these organized practice times, they should be having so much fun that when they go home, the soccer ball becomes one of their favorite toys.

WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING PRACTICE

The children should be having fun with the ball. There should be periods of active playing where everyone is involved, and there should be ample opportunities for short breaks for water and for catching their breath. If there is more than one adult/coach, the children should be divided into smaller groups, with at least one adult per group. At these young ages, children work hard and tire quickly. Allow them to have “active rests,” where they are not running but are trying to do something specific with the ball, often sitting or standing. Everyone should be occupied with something, even when resting. Keep the numbers from 1 v 1 to 3 v 3 and keep as many children actively involved with a ball as possible. Let them go to small goals with no goalkeepers. When possible, a size 3 soccer ball should be used.

WHAT SHOULD COACHES BE COMMUNICATING TO PLAYERS

At these ages, the coach/parent should be positive and encouraging of each child. Specific soccer-related information should be limited to basic ideas of how to best keep the ball from running out of bounds too often. There should not be any discussions about positions or any other team concepts. Coaches should display patience, good humor, and a willingness to see the world through a child’s eyes. Also, the ability to speak their language and accept that the children’s play will not look at all like soccer.

U4/U5/U6 TRAINING CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Week	Topic	Overall Objective
1	Dribbling Part I	Learn to dribble with both feet while keeping the ball close to the body.
2	Dribbling Part II	Learn to dribble and quickly stop the ball with both feet.
3	Running with the Ball	Learn to run with the ball under pressure while maintaining ball control using both feet.
4	Turning with the Ball	Learn to dribble and turn with the ball by cutting and/or dragging the ball back.
5	Dribbling to Beat a Player	Learn to shield the ball and dribble with speed to take on defenders.
6	Control/Receiving Part I	Learn to control and receive a bouncing ball.
7	Control/Receiving Part II	Learn to control and receive a bouncing ball then take on a defender.
8	Shooting	Learn to shoot with instep of foot.

U7/U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Game Format: 4v4 (3v3 recommended)

GK Status: *No goalkeepers*

Field Size: 4v4 (40 yards x 25 yards) or 3v3 (30 yards x 20 yards)

Ball Size: 3

Restarts: *Kick-ins or Dribble-ins. No throw-ins.*

ABOUT THIS AGE

These children are still young. By the end of this phase, (around eight- years-old) children are beginning to be able to apply past experience to the present situation. For example, at a simple level, they can remember what they were shown or what they tried with the ball from last practice. At the same time, this ability is not present on a consistent basis. They are still not able to imagine consequences (i.e., if you do this, what will happen?). Let them learn through experience.

Do not attempt to replicate organizational schemes that you have seen older teams doing. Seven and eight year olds are not capable of playing anything that resembles organized soccer. For example, team concepts such as combination play or positions should not be introduced at this age.

Do use older players as mentors and role models. Often the younger players will learn simply by watching how the older players move or by what they can do with the ball.

WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING PRACTICE

There should be a lot of playing with the ball in small numbers for relatively short periods of time. A key focus for this age is to encourage players not to fear the ball. Give each player plenty of opportunities to experience the ball at his or her own pace. For example, organizing games where there are multiple goals and balls for the players to work with. Also, games where they are changing direction and changing how fast they run, and dealing with balls on the ground and with bouncing balls. For most of the practice, each player should be actively involved with a ball. Games of 1 v 1 or games up to 3 v 3 with multiple balls involved (2:1 ratio of player to ball) and games to goals are also enjoyable and effective for this age.

No Lines. No laps. No Lectures. At this point, if you have not already done so, you may want to introduce some boundaries. However, don't allow the boundaries of the environment to hinder the training time by producing frequent stoppages of play because the ball goes 'out of bounds.' Try to keep the flow of the game going. Encourage informal play without pressure to "perform." Encourage the basic skills and give the players a lot of time with the ball. This will ultimately build their confidence. Make sure to always include games to goals.

WHAT SHOULD COACHES BE COMMUNICATING TO PLAYERS

Similar to the U-6 age group, the coach/parent should be positive and encouraging of each child. Specific soccer-related information should be limited to basic ideas of how to best keep the ball from running out of bounds too often, as well as some simple ideas for maneuvering in tight spaces and past opponents. Coaches should exclude discussions about positions or other team concepts. When addressing technique, consider that kids learn much by watching and copying. A good picture of proper technique can be a very powerful learning tool. Coaches should say things such as, "See if you can make it look like this." Limit time spent breaking down the mechanics. Instead, try to do most of your teaching of technique by offering a picture and then set up fun games where the objective of the game is for players to practice certain ways to control the ball. This approach allows the player a certain amount of freedom to develop their ball control and accept that there is more than one way of doing it. This is applicable at least through U-12.

U7/U8 TRAINING CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Week	Topic	Overall Objective
1	Dribbling Part I	Learn to dribble with both feet while keeping the ball close to the body.
2	Dribbling Part II	Learn to dribble and quickly stop the ball with both feet.
3	Running with the Ball	Learn to run with the ball under pressure while maintaining ball control using both feet.
4	Turning with the Ball	Learn to dribble and turn with the ball by cutting and/or dragging the ball back.
5	Dribbling to Beat a Player	Learn to shield the ball and dribble with speed to take on defenders.
6	Control/Receiving Part I	Learn to control and receive a bouncing ball.
7	Shooting	Learn to shoot with instep of foot.
8	Control/Receiving Part II	Learn to control and receive a bouncing ball then take on a defender.

U9 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Game Format: *5v5 with goalkeepers*

GK Status: *Goalkeeper rotation with all players experiencing*

Field Size: *60 yards x 40 yards*

Ball Size: *4*

Restarts: *Throw-ins.*

ABOUT THIS AGE

At this age, there are some children that are becoming more physically mature. Among your group, there are now some bigger and faster players whose eye-hand and eye-foot coordination is a little ahead of the majority of your players. Some of your players may also demonstrate a greater capacity to stay focused for longer periods of time. At the same time, they are still people of action rather than thought. Explanations must still be brief, concise and purposeful. What seemed to make sense to them last practice may have to be almost relearned at the next practice. Care should be taken with players, regardless of athletic ability, to address ball skill, especially in tight spaces. The faster, stronger players should not be encouraged to use their athleticism to solve all their problems. Building comfort with the ball at ages nine and ten will provide them with a variety of crucial tools they will need as they get older, and the level of ball skill and athleticism rises. Begin to introduce the players to the idea of thinking about their decisions and movement as being related to themselves and one or at most two of their teammates and one or two of their opponents.

WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING PRACTICE

As much as possible let players experience soccer through 3v3 to 5v5 games that last for no more than 10 or 15 minutes at a time. The small numbers allow the players to gain critical practice at 1 v 1 and 2 v 1 situations, while still allowing for the fun and feel of a soccer game. The time limit gives the players a predetermined amount of uninterrupted play, while also allowing an opportunity after 10 minutes for the players to refocus. At this age, players are typically ready for games or activities that help them learn when to play the ball sideways and backward. They also can begin to appreciate and enjoy playing the game skillfully.

WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING GAMES

Players at this age should be limited to a few organized matches per season, and they should require little or no travel. Remember, these are young children who have several more years to go before they will have all the tools needed to attempt soccer in the adult form. The best path to truly preparing them for the adult game is not have them practice at playing the adult game; rather it is by giving them repeated opportunities to experience soccer in a more manageable form for their age.

A team of 9 year olds who hold their positions and maintain a steady group of defenders who rarely, if ever venture into the attack, looks like a well disciplined and well organized team. However, U.S. Soccer does not recommend this as a proper approach to developing players at this age. It does not develop good soccer players. This approach hinders the player's ability to experience and enjoy the natural spontaneity of the game. It does not allow the players to have an equal opportunity to go and "find" the game based on what they see from the game or to handle the ball and develop instincts for the game. These are skills that they will need at the older ages and that are often lacking in the older players. This approach, while "successful" in the short term fails the players in the long run because the environment does not allow the players to develop the tools they will need to be truly "competitive" i.e., prepared to deal with the game, at the older ages

WHAT SHOULD COACHES BE COMMUNICATING TO PLAYERS

The coach should make comments that help players to stay involved and keep track of things without giving them all of the answers: “Join the game,” “Find the ball,” “Go get the ball,” “Don’t hide.” The coach for this age group does not focus on positions, yet encourages everyone to take part in attacking and defending. Try to manage the amount of information or feedback your players are receiving immediately after practices or matches. In today’s youth soccer landscape, kids at these ages are being overloaded with adult feedback and evaluation. Too much or inaccurate information can be counterproductive to your goals.

WINNING AND LOSING

Competition is a central element in a player’s development. At the youth level (ages 6-12), however, a competitive environment should not be a result-oriented environment. The differences must be clear. A competitive environment at the youth level encourages decisions from player and coach alike that focus on performance rather than outcome (favoring ball skill and inventiveness as the means to find success within the rules and spirit of the game). The result is just one indicator of performance and at this age, not the most important one.

Competition among kids playing games will always exist, whether adults are present or not. Making soccer “fun” at the younger ages does not mean that competition is removed. Competition can be positive and healthy. Scoring goals and winning the game are fundamental parts of soccer. Allow the children to enjoy this aspect without making it the focus. Set up other skill based objectives as the focal point. At the same time, recognize that children will find competition in anything you set up. Let them compete. In youth and junior level soccer, the emphasis and manner of the coach will often determine if the competitive environment is healthy or not.

At the youth level, matches are important as a means to player development (enjoyment, ball skill, insight, and fitness), not as the aim. These competitive situations are a series of tests for kids. In this respect, the usefulness of the game can occur in many different forms. Focus on the process and performance rather than the outcome, but be prepared for the possibility that your team may lose some games in the short term with this approach. Keep in mind that it is actually easier to win games at this age group with teams that are “organized” but lack skill. Placing the more physically mature players down the middle of the field and just asking players to ‘kick it down the middle’ or only allowing players to specialize at one position may lead to more victories. This approach, however, does not effectively teach the players the game and prepare them to continue on in the sport. Instead, a skillful approach to playing soccer should be emphasized, even though this may result in conceding goals or losing games in the short term. During the learning process, ball control and passing can lead to more costly mistakes. At the same time, the coach can manipulate the level and variety of the competition to ensure that players and teams are being given the opportunity to win and to lose games. Valuable lessons can be learned in both scenarios. In the end, it is still the responsibility of the coach and the parents, to manage how competition is addressed and managed among his or her players.

CONSIDER THIS:

At the latter stages of the youth level (U10 through U12), the goal is to provide training and game environments that promote the continued growth of ball skill, an increased game awareness, and an appreciation for taking calculated risks in the attack through the 3v3 to 9v9 game model, all in an environment that the players enjoy.

The small-sided game model is an effective method for developing ball skill and game awareness because it increases opportunities for players to have contact with the ball and to both attack and defend without the tactical regimentation that can occur in 11v11 soccer.

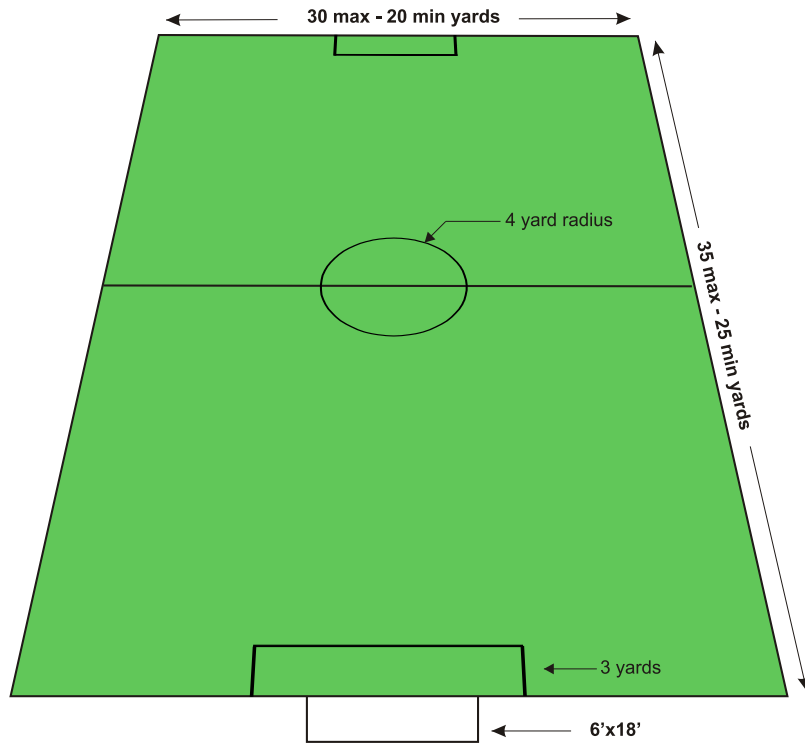
U9

TRAINING CURRICULUM OUTLINE

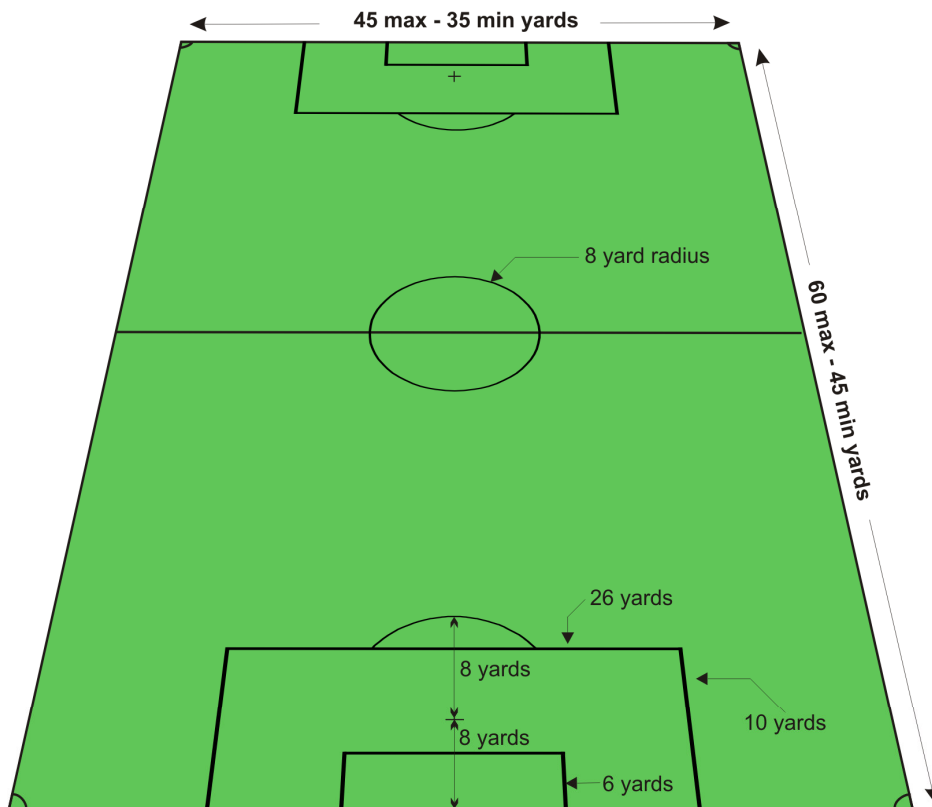
Week	Topic	Overall Objective
1	Dribbling Part I	Learn to dribble with both feet while keeping the ball close to the body.
2	Dribbling Part II	Learn to dribble and quickly stop the ball with both feet.
3	Running with the Ball	Learn to run with the ball under pressure while maintaining ball control using both feet.
4	Turning with the Ball	Learn to dribble and turn with the ball by cutting and/or dragging the ball back.
5	Control/Receiving/Passing	Learn to control and receive a ball then make a proper pass using both feet.
6	Shooting	Learn to shoot with instep of foot.
7	Control/Receiving/Shooting	Learn to control and receive a ball then shoot with instep of foot.
8	Control/Receiving/Spatial Play	Learn to control and receive a ball and create space.

APPENDIX A

Field Dimensions U4-U8



Field Dimensions U9



APPENDIX B

Micro Program Fields & Locations & Guidelines

Alcohol and smoking is not permitted at any facility at any time.

BUSHKILL RECREATION FIELDS:

1114 Bushkill Center Road, directly across the road from the Township Building and Police Headquarters.
Pets are not allowed at the field.

BUSHKILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

960 Bushkill Center Road, Nazareth, PA 18064

Players, siblings, and spectators should not go on or touch the train on the back field. Nobody may drive or park behind the school. Park only in lined spaces in the parking lot (not on the grass or along the curb). Smoking is not permitted on school property. Pets should not be on school property. The portable toilet is located behind the school. No one may enter the school to use the restroom even if the school is open.

SCHOENECK MORAVIAN CHURCH:

316 N Broad Street Ext, Nazareth, PA 18064

The entrance and exit to the field is in front of the church. *Please enter and exit this way only.* Drive slowly through the parking lot since the church may be in service and also hosts many events. No smoking or pets on church property. The portable toilet is located near the fields. You may not use the church's restrooms even if the building is open.

TUSKES COMMUNITY PARK:

3040 Bath Pike, Nazareth, PA 18064

Restrooms are located in the building by the parking lot on Bath Pike. Park only in lined spaces in the parking lot (not on the grass). If you drive through the Eagles Landing development to get to the upper parking lot, please remember that the speed limit through the development is 25 mph. The lane that connects the two parking lots is for maintenance vehicles only and is not for public access. No pets allowed.

HOLY CROSS:

696 Johnson Road, Nazareth, PA 18064

The entrance to the field is in front of the church and the exit is behind the church. *Please enter and exit this way only.* Drive slowly through the parking lot since the church has a daycare center and also hosts many events. No smoking or pets on church property. You may not use the church's restrooms even if the building is open.

LUCAS LANE FIELDS:

Lucas Lane, Nazareth, PA 18064

Pets are not allowed at the field.

LOWER ESSROC FIELD:

G w Stoudt Boulevard, Nazareth, PA 18064

Park only in the parking lot at the bottom of the field. Do not park or stop on Sage St. or Stoudt Blvd. The portable toilet is located under a tree on the upper field.

LOWER NAZARETH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

4422 Newburg Rd, Nazareth, PA 18064

Nobody may drive or park behind the school. Park only in lined spaces in the parking lot (not on the grass). Smoking is not permitted on school property. Pets should not be on school property. The portable toilet is located behind the school. No one may enter the school to use the restroom even if the school is open.

APPENDIX C

United States Soccer Federation
Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES: MAINTAINING A PERSPECTIVE

U.S. Soccer believes that first and foremost youth soccer is a sport that players should experience and enjoy as a game with a focus on individual experimentation and development. U.S. Soccer encourages creating soccer environments that will help promote the players' lifelong love of the sport. These environments should allow for the creativity, spontaneity and experimentation that the game of soccer naturally encourages. Too often, children are put into situations where development is secondary to winning, which leads to burnout and stifles individual skill development.

We believe that a player's development is enhanced when the short-term goals of a coach are pursued within the perspective of the player's long-term needs. The following is a two-part commentary on the importance of: (1) Having continuity and perspective in player development; and (2) Allowing children to experience soccer in ways appropriate for their age and level of soccer maturity. Part one addresses the theoretical stages of player development and how each successive step is built upon the foundations established in the previous stage. In the second part, the current Men's National Team coaching staff comment on the charge of their specific age group, and how it fits into the overall United States Men's National Team program of development and success.

The development of a player spans three general stages:

- (1) Youth level (ages 6-12)
- (2) Junior level (ages 13-17)
- (3) Senior level (ages 18 and older)

A player's chances of success at the Senior level are greatly enhanced by mastering the building blocks of soccer that are best addressed at the Youth and Junior levels.

At the Youth level, ball skills, enjoyment of and experimentation within the game are key for a player's development.

At the Junior level those keys can be seen in ball skills, enjoyment and insight into the game, with a gradual introduction to fitness, mental toughness and results. At this point, any success in winning matches should begin to be the product of a consistent and systematic approach to the game that focuses more on player development than on team-building. (The theory being that individually competent soccer players that are placed together on a team are more prepared to win than well-organized players who are unable to stand alone on their soccer abilities).

At the Senior level, players need to use all these qualities together, along with a commitment to excellence, in order to figure out how to **win**. If a player skips a step at the Youth or Junior levels, he will find success and enjoyment more difficult as he moves toward the senior level.

At the Youth and Junior levels, there are several points to address when discussing how to achieve these goals:

- (1) The game is the best teacher - let the kids learn from it by setting up opportunities for them to play.
- (2) Allow kids to learn in environments that are sensitive to age and abilities (emotional and athletic) and that offer a variety of experiences.
- (3) Age and ability competition is a central element in a player's development.

- (4) At the youth level, a competitive environment is not a result-oriented environment. The differences must be clear. A competitive environment at the youth level encourages decisions from player and coach alike that focus on performance rather than results. (Favoring ball skill and inventiveness as the means to find success within the rules and spirit of the game)
- (5) At the junior level, technical skill and attacking soccer continue to be important themes, but now there is a greater focus on developing players' insight into the game by emphasizing the role of the game itself as a forum for learning. (Still focusing on the performance, rather than the result)
- (6) At the youth and junior levels, matches are important as a means to player development (enjoyment, ball skill, insight, fitness), not as the aim. The usefulness of the game, in this respect, can occur in many different forms, from the 4 v 4 to the full-sided match model. Even at the Senior level, the game still offers opportunities for growth – only the weight of balance between factors such as enjoyment, ball skill, insight, fitness and results shift more toward the latter.

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF A YOUTH SOCCER PLAYER IN THE UNITED STATES

YOUTH LEVEL

At the early levels of youth soccer ...

Kids are just getting to know the game; they're exploring, checking things out, feeling their way into the game. They may wave to you in the middle of the game or spin around, with their arms out, at midfield because of some sudden, mysterious inspiration. They want to run, to chase, to kick, to be with their friends – and to follow the ball wherever it goes (and who can blame them!) During these years the kids should touch the ball as much as possible, learn physical balance, learn to guide the ball with both feet, and start kicking with some accuracy. When they play games, they should absolutely be left alone: the field should be their world, on the child's terms. These years should be about FREE PLAY with the world's favorite toy (the ball) and about falling in love with the game.

– Mass. Youth Soccer Association

At the later stages of the Youth level (ages 8 to 12) the goal is to provide training and game environments that promote the continued growth of ball skill, an increasing game awareness and an appreciation for taking calculated risks in the attack through the 3 v 3 to 8 v 8 game model. The small-sided game model is an effective method for developing ball skill and game awareness because it increases opportunities for players to have contact with the ball and to both attack and defend without the tactical regimentation that can occur in 11 v 11 soccer.

Games are a forum for players to test their ball skills and game awareness, and should be considered an additional means of development, rather than the objective. Results become important as they give the players a competitive focus in the match. Coaches are encouraged to promote soccer that:

- (1) Is free flowing,
- (2) Is coach-guided, not coach-directed,
- (3) Demands that all players on the field – regardless of their specified position – participate in defending and attacking.

JUNIOR LEVEL

As the players graduate to the junior level, they should be comfortable with the ball and have an insight into the game that will allow them to deal with the increasing pace of the game (both in athletic speed and speed of decisions). The goal at this point in a player's development is to begin expanding his understanding of the game as much as his technical and game maturity will allow. Again, this is accomplished through the small-sided game model for practice (up through 9 v 9 games) and the full-sided game for matches. The graduation to the full-sided game model should be a logical and subtle step. The ideas and principles that apply to the smaller game models continue to apply to the bigger game. The outcome of the game is still largely determined by ball skill and game insight.

SENIOR LEVEL

If a player has been exposed to a program that is able to address his or her needs and abilities over the long-term, this player should be prepared for this next stage of the game. At this point, winning is the purpose of the game. The emphasis is therefore to have players pull together all the components of their game in order to be as competitive as possible (both as an individual player and as part of a team) and get a positive result in individual matches. If their ball skills are insufficient, or they lack basic concepts of team play, they will struggle to have a positive impact on the game. Ill-prepared players will have difficulty continuing their soccer careers at the higher levels. At the Senior Level, the performance should determine the result. While there is still a measurable focus on development, the emphasis is now more on insight and team concepts, rather than individual development of ball skills.

The following is a commentary by the current age-group National Team coaches on:

- (1) The balance between developing soccer players and winning matches at their particular level within the National Teams programs, and
- (2) How the age-group fits into the larger National Teams schematic.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

United States Youth Soccer Association
<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/index.html>

United States Soccer Federation
<http://www.ussoccer.com/Coaches/Resources.aspx>

Got Soccer.com
<http://home.gotsoccer.com/>

Success in Soccer
<http://www.successinsoccer.com/>

Soccer Training Info
<http://www.soccer-training-info.com/>

Footy4Kids -100% Youth Soccer Coaching
<http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/#>

SoccerXpert
<http://www.soccerxpert.com/u6-u8-soccer-drills.aspx>