

COACHING THE UNDER 10 PLAYER

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1. CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 10 PLAYERS:

- Gross and small motor skills becoming more refined and reliable. " Boys and girls begin to develop separately.
- Ability to stay on task is lengthened. They have the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Greater diversity in playing ability and physical maturity.
- Skills are emerging. Becoming more predictable and recognizable.
- Some children begin moving from concrete thinking to abstract thinking.
- Able to pace themselves, to plan ahead.
- Increased self-responsibility. They remember to bring their own equipment.
- Starting to recognize basic tactical concepts, but not exactly sure why certain decisions are better.
- Repetition of technique is very important, but it must be dynamic, not static.
- Continued positive reinforcement needed.
- Explanations must be brief, concise, and mention "why".
- Becoming more "serious". Openly, intensively competitive, without intention of fouling.
- Still mostly intrinsically motivated. " Peer pressure starting to be a factor.
- Adult outside of the family may take on added significance.
- Prefer identification with a team. Like to have good uniforms, equipment, balls.
- More inclined towards wanting to play instead of being told to play. Will initiate play more.

2. INVOLVING THE PARENTS

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-10 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing the entire calling. (Phone chains)
- Choosing a team administrator, someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shinguards cleats or sneakers.
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-10 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

3. THINGS YOU CAN EXPECT

Some coaches say that the 9 and 10 year-old players are beginning to "turn the corner" and starting to look like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and unpredictable for the most part. These players are starting to find out how much fun it is to play the game skillfully, but they will still stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They start to understand offsides, but still forget themselves when the goal is in front of them.
- They will really beat up on each other during practice... especially boy's teams.
- During a game, the parents will scream out "HAND BALL" or "COME ON REF, CALL IT BOTH WAYS" at least fifteen times.
- They might cry after the game if they loose, but will forget it if you ask them if you want to go out for burgers and fries.
- You might actually catch them practicing on their own without you telling them to do so.
- Their parents are telling them to do one thing during the game, you are telling them another thing, but what they end up doing might be what their friend is telling them to do.
- You will see a pass that is deliberate. You might even see a "back pass".
- You will see your first \$100 pair of cleats during practice. They will call the other team bad names... really bad names.

4. COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Some of the players that are playing as U - 10's are seasoned veterans of the youth soccer scene. Some of them may have already been involved in traveling to play in tournaments. As a result, some of them might be very nervous about the whole process. It is our job to keep things in perspective for these young, developing players. True, some of them are becoming quite skillful and are seeing how fun it is to play the game when they can really control the ball. However, many of them are still learning the ropes. Even the more experienced players need to have the game be fun!!! Emphasis is still placed on having players learn how to control the ball with his/her body, but now, they need to find themselves in more game-like situations. Training is more dynamic and starting to have players make simple, basic decisions such as "Which way is there more space?" or "Whom should I pass to?".

Following are some more items that a coach of U-10 players should consider:

- Use small sided games as the main teaching vehicle. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but also the full 11-a-side game is still too complicated for them to understand.
- How we group players during training takes on even added significance because of the wide margins of ability levels. We need to mix players up often.
- Stretching is becoming more important, along with a good warm-up. Since the game is faster, make sure that they also have good shinguards. Safety and preventive measures take on added significance.
- Training twice a week is plenty. Sessions need not go longer than one hour, fifteen minutes.
- They should all come with their own size #4 ball. In fact, they still need to be encouraged to play with it by themselves.
- Put them into competitive environments as much as possible. This will not only keep them focused, but it will allow the game itself to teach them. It also will keep things fun for them, and allow you to deal with issues such as 'winning' and 'loosing' which is now a very big concern for them.
- Now it is possible to teach them positional play with the expectation that they will get it some of the time. However, it is absolutely necessary that you do not allow players to specialize in any one position. They need to learn basic principles of the game, first. Having them play all of the positions is best for their individual development. Remember that our first responsibility is to develop players and let them have fun.
- Whenever possible, allow them to solve their own puzzles. Don't immediately give them solutions on how they can play better.

5. SKILLS TO TEACH AT THIS AGE

The basic foot skills, secondary foot skills, receiving and passing skills and dribbling should be reviewed and mastered at this age and is outlined in detail in the U-8 section.

Advanced skill development should be introduced at this age and includes:

ADVANCED FOOT SKILLS:

Advanced Foot Skills: These foot skills should only be taught after the player has mastered the basic & secondary foot skills. It takes patience and practice for a player to master these skills.

a) V-Move:

- Starting with the ball just in front of the left foot.
- Drag the ball back with the sole of the right foot.
- Tap the ball with the outside of the right foot away from the body.
- Switch feet.
- Hints: the path the ball moves should make a V.

b) Push-n-Pull:

- Starting with the ball in front of the right foot.
- Tap the ball and roll it back with the right foot.
- Tap the ball again and roll it forward with the laces of the right foot.
- Switch feet.

c) Back Pull:

- Start with your back against the field.
- Place the ball in front of either the left or right foot.
- On "GO" top the ball backwards while switching left to right foot, from one end of the field to the other.

Technique: should look like they are toe-tapping the ball while pulling it backwards.

d) Bell Push-n-Pull:

- Do five bell dribbles then do a push-n-pull.
- Alternate feet. Encourage the players to turn 90° on the pull back.

e) Bell Rollback:

- Do five bell dribbles then do a roll back turning the ball 90° during the roll back.

f) Other Combinations:

- Combine foot skills, as above, to make the player concentrate on the foot skills and ball control.

Techniques: Th players will inevitably start with their heads down looking at the ball. After practicing a skill for a couple of practices challenge them to do the skill with their heads up and their eyes off the ball.

DRIBBLING SKILLS

Dribbling Skills: Dribbling is a pre-requisite to being able to do the **1v1 moves** in a natural free-flowing movement. At the younger ages, coaches much concentrate on the basic dribbling skills. Many players can already dribble with the inside of their foot. This is the basic dribbling technique performed by players since it is easiest to control the ball with the inside of the foot. However, in order to develop a well-rounded player it is very important to teach the players to dribble with all the parts of their foot. This will enable a player to perform many of the **1v1 moves** in a smooth free-flowing movement.

There are two types of dribbling, speed and control.

Speed dribbling is done mainly with the laces of the foot or the outside ball of the foot. When speed dribbling, it is important not to push the ball too far in front of the player when in traffic. Their first instinct is to kick the ball and run to it. A player should be able to step, touch, step, touch with the ball going no further than a yard or two in front of the player depending upon their ability and physical being. The more space the farther the ball can be pushed out in front of the player. When introducing this, start slow with no pressure allowing the kids to step, touch, step, touch at their own pace. Increase the speed and pressure as the players succeed.

***Technique:** Toe should be pointed down and slightly inwards. The player should not attempt to kick the ball forward, but should push the ball forward as the foot comes through (light touches) in its natural stride. The upper body should be slightly bent over the ball. Player should learn to keep their heads up.*

Control dribbling is done mainly in traffic or in a 1v1 situation. All parts of the foot should be utilized when dribbling the ball. Encourage the use of boot feet and the different parts of the foot by players especially at an early age. The key is touch. Quick changes of direction and keeping the ball under control and close to the body is very important to be a successful dribbler.

***Technique:** The player should not attempt to kick the ball forward, but should push the ball. The upper body should be slightly bent over the ball. Player should learn to keep their heads up. Raise toe when changing directions.*

1 V 1 MOVES

1 v 1 moves are the basic moves to beat an opponent. A coach cannot teach these moves unless the basic and secondary foot skills have been mastered. These should be introduced to the players at the U8 age groups and above. Players will develop at their own pace, and will master only a few of these moves. In introducing these moves start with just making the move around a cone or a player whom is instructed not to steal the ball but just walk towards the oncoming ball dribbler. Slowly work up to a full pressure situation.

a) Inside 180°

- Dribble the ball in one direction.
- On command turn 180° with the inside of the sole of the foot and explode in the opposite way of the dribble.

Technique:

- *Make sure the player explodes out of the turn.*
- *Turning the soccer ball should be done with the outside of the ball of the foot.*

b) Outside 180°

- Dribble the ball in one direction.
- On command turn 180° with the outside of the foot and explode the opposite way of the dribble.

Technique:

- *Make sure the player explodes out of the turn.*
- *Turning the soccer ball should be done with the outside of the foot nearest the little toe.*

c) In-Out Feint:

- Dribble with the ball towards the side of a cone.
- When the player gets to the side of the cone, they stop the ball with the outside of the right foot and swivel their hip as if they were going to do an outside 180°.
- Using the inside of the right foot they then explode with the ball, in the original direction of their dribble.

Technique: *Bend and swivel at the hips, to fake out the opponent.*

d) Scotch:

- Dribble the ball forward.
- Act as if to strike the ball, but instead of striking, step over the ball.
- Tap the ball forward with the opposite foot and explode out of the move.

Technique:

- *Really act as if to strike the ball hard, when stepping over.*
- *First just practice the fake strike, then work up to entire move.*

e) Scissors:

- Dribble the ball forward.
- Step over the ball with the right foot and act as if to explode right with the outside of the foot.
- Instead explode to the left using the outside of the left foot.
- Switch feet,

Technique:

- *Start with the ball just still in front of the player. Start with just the step-over. Then add the outside of the exploding foot.*
- *When stepping over the ball make sure the foot stepping over steps in front or over the ball.*

f) Double Scissors: Same as above but step over the ball twice prior to exploding away.

g) Step-Over:

- Dribble the ball forward.
- Step over the ball with the right foot so that the ball is on the outside of the right foot.
- Turn and take the ball away with the inside of the other foot.

Technique:

- *Start with a still ball and practice the movement.*
- *Make sure the hips swivel during the step-over to fake out the opponents.*

h) Rivolino: Same as Step-over but explode with the ball using the outside of the step-over foot.

i) Mathews:

- Nudge the ball with the inside of one foot. Make sure to swivel hips to fake opponent.
- Explode with the ball in the opposite direction with the outside of the same foot.

Technique: *Make sure to swivel the hips to fake out the opponents. Start by using stationary ball and practice exploding move.*

j) Cruyff:

- Fake kick with the inside of right foot.
- Using the sole of the right foot pull the ball behind the left foot, changing directions.

Technique: *The foot should not leave the surface of the ball until you explode out of the direction change.*

k) Maridonna:

- Dribble the ball forward.
- Step on the ball, while spinning around, lightly with the right foot to momentarily stop the ball.
- While facing the opposite direction use the left foot to roll the ball back to face the direction of the original dribble.

Technique: *The tap must be light and the body must spin at the same time. As the right foot is being placed back on the ground as a pivot foot the left must be in the process of the rollback. The entire move should be very fluid.*

SHOOTING

Shooting is nothing more than passing at the goal. At the younger ages U12 and under, it is more important that they shoot accurate than hard. At these ages player's cruciate ligaments have not fully developed around the knee, as a young player kicks the ball hard the knee has a tendency to over extend stretching these ligaments since they are not fully developed. Continual over extension of these ligaments could cause damage (some permanent) to the cruciate ligaments. Many of the injuries young players get are from over training at a young age. Their muscle, ligaments, and joints are still developing and over training may lead to permanent injury. When training concentrate more on accuracy then on power.

Shooting Technique: Teach the players to shoot the ball on the goal the same way they would pass to a teammate except the pace on the ball should be harder (but not too hard – see above). Players should use the inside of the foot (push pass) for most accuracy. For harder shots then they should use the instep pass (toes pointed down and strike the ball with the laces). Players should be taught to pick a spot on goal (preferably in the corners of the goal) and "pass" the ball into these areas. Striking the ball with the big toe should be discouraged.

COACHING DEFENSE

Basic Defense: The basic defensive skills involve a lot of patience. Kids initial reaction is to "attack" the ball. Add that to a parent screaming "attack the ball!" and the whole principle of defense has been destroyed. The basic defense involves; a. stance, b. distance, c. patience, d. attacking, and e. judgment. In a one vs. one situation where the ball handler is facing the defender the last thing a defender wants to do is attack the ball, he must be patient. He must take the proper stance allowing the ball handler only one path outside. When he can win the ball he attacks, but when the ball handler has control he just wants to contain him.

- a. Stance – feet should be staggered forward and not out. Knees bent, 75% of weight on balls of feet. Arms should be out for balance.
- b. Distance – the distance the defender should be away from the ball carrier is going to be dependent on the speed of the defender and his/hers first step. Generally 2-3 yards.
- c. Patience – defense is about patience, the player's general instinct is to attack a player facing him/her with the ball. This will result in a good ball handler going right around them. Containment when not able to attack the ball.
- d. Attacking – defense attacks whenever they think they can win a 50/50 ball or better. Attacking the ball and not the player is the key to winning balls. Player must lean over and through balls to win them 1v1. Defenders must be aggressive to the ball. Games such as steal the bacon and other 1v1 dribbling activities promote good attacking skills.

- e. Judgment – defenders must learn to judge whether or not they can win a ball. Games such as Steal the Bacon not only promote good attacking skills but promote good judgment skills as well. Start the game with a pass in from the coach cheating to one side, the other must judge whether or not he can win the ball.

Summary: Patience and stance are the two hardest things about basic defending. You **must** not only tell the player to be patient and not attack the ball when the player is facing you, but the parents as well. You will continually hear from the parents “attack the ball”. Parents and players need to understand that proper defense is patience and containment not going in and attacking the ball. Players must repeatedly practice these defensive techniques to learn their own style and judgment of attack.

6. TYPICAL TRAINING SESSION

Here are some items that should be included in a U-10 training session:

Warm-Up: A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that involve the ball. Since there can be one theme to the session, hopefully, the warm-up will lead into the theme of the day. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time after the players have broken a sweat, again, hopefully done with the ball. Again, the warm-up should get the players ready to play. It should be lively, fun, and engaging as well as instructional. There is nothing like a good, fast paced activity to grab the player's attention and make them glad that they came to practice.

Individual Or Small Group Activities: Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not necessarily a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals or cooperate in small groups in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a keep-away game. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "looser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

Play The Game: Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 4 v.4 up to 8 v.8. Be creative. Play with 4 goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

Warm-Down & Homework: Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then

thigh, then foot, and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? Can they do that with their heads? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.

7. PRACTICE GAME IDEAS

Many of the games in under 6 and under 8 can be applied to this age group by adding some additional complexity and restrictions i.e. only use the left foot, making the grids smaller, two touches only.

a) 'TEAM KNOCK OUT'

Here is a game to use in the 'Small Group Activity' phase of the practice. It is an engaging game that is fun to play and challenges players in almost all aspects of the game.

THE GAME:

- Divide the squad up into two teams.
- To start, each player on the team that is inside the field will need a ball. Those on the outside of the field do not need a ball.
- When ready, players on the outside run into the grid, attempt to steal any ball they can and put it through any one of the goals that are marked by the cones.
- Players with the ball attempt to keep the ball away from the defenders by dribbling or passing to a teammate that has lost their ball.
- If an attacking player loses a ball, they immediately try to 'steal' it back.
- The game stops when all of the balls have been kicked through the goals. Then the two teams switch roles.
- Keep track of how long it takes each team to steal all of the balls.
- If a ball is kicked out of bounds it goes over to the other team for a throw-in.

This game is good for teaching dribbling skills as players find themselves in situations where they have to dribble to keep possession as well as dribble to beat an opponent. Also, they find themselves in situations where they may have to pass to a teammate as well as find themselves playing defense as well. Because there are so many balls, and so many goals, it is just a crazy enough game to be appreciated and enjoyed by a typical nine- year-old.

b) "END ZONE GAME"

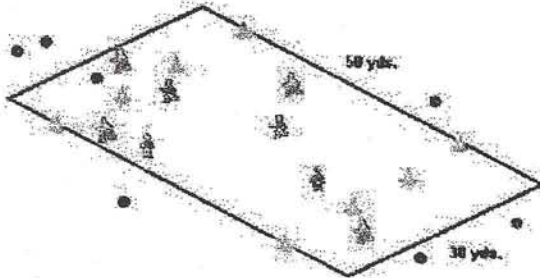
Here is a 4v4 game that is free flowing and gives players a lot of problems to solve. It is a good game to use towards the end of the session as it is very close to the 'real' thing.

One particularly good thing about this game is that since teams end up attacking in two, different directions, it forces players to play in different positions. They are at the back of

the team when their team attacks one end-zone, while they will find themselves at the top of the team when they attack in the other direction. This is great for their development.

THE GAME:

- Set up the field as shown with a seven yard 'End-Zone' at each end.



- Score a goal by getting the ball from one 'End-Zone' to the other by passing or dribbling.
- Once a goal is scored, immediately attack going in the other direction. Do not give the ball to the other team. The 'End-Zones' are free, only the attacking team can enter these areas.

This game also encourages players to "SPREAD OUT" and work together, which, players are starting to be able to do at this age. At first, players will be tempted to just kick the ball up the field instead of passing. With patience, and demonstration of what is possible, this game could have a dramatic impact on their ability to play attractive, skillful soccer.

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