



U8 & U9 Coaches Information

Judging a Good Coach

Here are a few things we'd like for you to consider:

- A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports.
- A kids' coach is someone who goes to work early, misses meals, gives away weekends and plays havoc with family schedules so he or she can help out a group of youngsters.
- A good coach is someone who stays half an hour or more after practice to make sure every one of the players has a safe ride home.
- A good coach is someone who rarely hears a mom or dad say 'Hey thanks', but receives a lot of advice on game day.
- A good coach is someone who makes sure that everyone gets to play.
- A good coach is someone who teaches young people that winning is not everything, but still lies in bed at night staring at the ceiling wondering whether he or she might have done anything differently to have turned a loss into a win.
- A good coach is someone who can help a child learn to take mistakes in stride.
- A good coach is someone who sometimes helps a child to develop ability and confidence that sometimes did not exist before.
- A good coach is someone a youngster will remember a long time after the last game has ended and the season is over.

PLANNING FOR THE SEASON

Planning

The way to have successful practices is to plan. Your practice planning should begin *before* you first get together with the team and should continue throughout the season as you plan for each practice.

Pre-season planning

As the players get older, practices can be increased in frequency and length. U8 teams may practice twice a week for about an hour each time; older teams may extend twice-a-week practices to 90 min.

The two main objectives for any soccer practice are (1) to have fun, and (2) to learn to become better soccer players. In order to achieve the second objective, it is important that you develop teaching goals for the season before you start. You will ordinarily have only four to six practices before the first game. Since you will not have time to teach everything, choose the topics you want to focus on and build your practices around these topics.

Parent Orientation Meeting

All coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion in your living room, could be combined with a team picnic, or the first practice.

Whatever the format, the time you invest will pay benefits for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, the following information could be put into a letter to parents/players, but a face to face meeting is preferable.

Purposes of a parent orientation meeting include the following:

- Enables parents to understand the objectives and goals of the program
- Enables parents to become acquainted with you, the coach
- Informs parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport
- Informs parents of your expectations of them and of their child
- Enables you to address any concerns of the parents
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players
- Allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, *etc.*)

Things to consider when organizing a parent orientation meeting:

- Hold it early in the season; preferably before the first team practice.
- Having the players present is optional.
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
 - team roster (with names of parents and players, telephone numbers)
 - schedule of practices and games
 - club rules

- team goals/rules
 - summary or outline of the meeting
- Be prepared and be organized to conduct the meeting efficiently.

Important points to cover in your meeting:

- Coach introduction
 - introduce yourself and assistant coaches (**or ask for volunteers at this time**)
 - give some background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience)
- Coaching philosophy
 - discuss what you consider to be the value of this sport
 - discuss your methods for teaching skills (describe a typical practice)
 - state the importance you assign to having fun and developing skills
 - state the importance you assign to winning and losing
 - discuss any team rules and guidelines, disciplinary procedures
 - discuss your philosophy regarding player rotation, substitution, playing time
- Specifics of the program
 - Practice schedule (how many per week? how long?)
 - Game schedule (how many? when do they begin?)
 - Minimum playing time
 - equipment required/recommended
 - inherent risks (soccer is a contact sport, albeit a relatively safe one)
 - medical insurance (Oregon Youth Soccer insurance provides secondary coverage)
- Team management
 - ask for volunteers as assistant coaches
 - ask for volunteers as team parents (snack schedule, help with nets/flags)
 - set up telephone tree and/or car pooling system

Discuss COACH'S responsibilities, for example:

- demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship
- treat each player fairly
- have organized practices and teach soccer fundamentals appropriate to the age group
- provide a safe environment (e.g. arrive at practice on time and remain after practice until every child is picked up by an **authorized** adult, ensure that the players' equipment conforms to the club guidelines)
- contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem
- help each player set individual and team goals that are realistic

- give parents a schedule of practices and games in a timely fashion
- allow each player to play half of every game at a minimum
- respect the referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself in a controlled manner on the field

Discuss PLAYER'S responsibilities, for example:

- attend practices/games regularly, and to arrive on time
- bring proper equipment to each practice and game
- inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a practice/game
- make each practice a challenge to improve
- work toward good sportsmanship and teamwork
- respect the referees
- be supportive of all teammates all of the time

Discuss PARENTS' responsibilities, for example:

- transport your child to and from practices/games on time
- be supportive of all the players (criticism does not improve performance)
- help your child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- focus on mastering skills and having fun, not on winning
- Avoid material rewards for your child (the reward is the fun of playing!)
- attend games and cheer the team
- refrain from criticizing opponents; be positive with all the players
- respect the referees (they will make mistakes, but they are doing their best; if you feel you are better qualified, see your club's Referee Coordinator - he or she could easily find work for you!)
- refrain from coaching your child during games (try to understand and respect the difference between the roles of the coach and the parent)

Answer any questions from the parents.

Suggestions for Dealing with Parents

Coaching is exciting and rewarding, but occasionally you may experience difficulty with parents. Whatever the concern, a parent is generally just looking out for their child, often at your expense. There are some things you can do to open up communication and make dealing with parents a positive aspect.

1. Have a parent meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to the upcoming season.
2. Express appreciation for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
3. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement. (If you

have a preference for a certain time to voice these concerns, such as after practice, make this clear at the Parent Orientation Meeting.)

4. Know what your objectives are and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. No coach can please everyone!
5. Know the club and game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
6. Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, and then thank them for it.
7. Resist unfair pressure. It is your responsibility as coach to make the final decision. This doesn't mean that you can't still listen to parents.
8. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.
9. Ask the parents not to criticize their children during practice or a game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
10. Don't blame the players for their parents' actions.
11. Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
12. Most importantly, be fair! If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect and that of their parents as well. Remember that you will be dealing with all types of children, and with parents having different backgrounds and ideals. The challenge for you as a coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER SIGN-UP SHEET

Position	Name	Phone
ASSISTANT COACH		
ASSISTANT COACH		
TEAM PARENT (GAME SNACK COORDINATOR)		
PHONE TREE COORDINATOR		
PHOTO COORDINATOR		
FUND-RAISER COORDINATOR		
PARENT REFEREE / TIMEKEEPER		
END-OF-SEASON PARTY COORDINATORS		

Player Equipment

BALL

Encourage each player to have his or her own ball and to use it often, not just during team practice. Players will not derive maximum benefit from practice unless they each have their own ball for warm-ups and individual drills.

Soccer balls come in a variety of sizes, each designated by a number:

- size #3 - smallest standard size, for the youngest players (U-6 to U-8 or K-2nd grades)
- size #4 - intermediate size, appropriate for U-9 through U-12 (3rd to 6th grades)
- size #5 - largest standard size, for U-13 to adult (7th grade and up)

SHIN GUARDS

An absolute requirement for games should also be worn for all practices. The pull-on “legging” type with foam padding protecting the front of the leg from ankle to shin is an excellent shin guard. Shin guards with plastic inserts offer additional protection, especially for the older player. Consider wash ability when selecting a shin guard. The shin Guards should be completely covered by the socks.

SOCCER SHOES

Recommended, but not absolutely required by most clubs. Baseball or football type shoes with square or rectangular cleats are not legal for soccer. Soccer cleats for most recreational play must be rubber or molded plastic (no metal cleats), and no less than 3/8 inch in diameter. Check your club’s regulations, then check your players’ shoes for illegal cleats, protruding nails, or sharp edges, and rectify any problems before a referee discovers a violation and one of your players is forced to sit out a game. Soccer cleats do not have a single toe cleat. Soccer shoes have two toe cleats, set back from the toe of the shoe.

WATER BOTTLE (with identifying marks on it) Fresh water should be available to your players at each practice and game. It is easier for the coach if each player provides his or her own water bottle.

SHIRTS, SOCKS, SHORTS

One or more of these items may be provided for each player by your local club. Be sure that you are aware of your club’s policies with respect to uniforms and inform your players and parents of any requirements.

Key Teaching Points for Coaching Soccer

Coaching from the Touchline

It is important to realize that although we as coaches are permitted to instruct from the sideline, this is not a license to take over the game from the players.

Coaching is best done during practice time, not during the game.

Support your players with positive comments from the sideline. Encourage them. Better luck next time, or “well done” mean a lot to a player. Every child out there wants to show you their best. Help bring the best out of them.

A Few Things to AVOID:

1. Don't continually shout instructions - they often reach the players too late (the action has moved to a new situation), and may be distracting.
2. Don't send one of your assistants to instruct from the opposite touchline to "cover the field". It is doubly distracting to the players (often the instructions coming from opposite sides of the field differ!). Coaching should be done from the bench side of the field. Many clubs and leagues restrict coaching in this manner.
3. Don't send a parent or assistant to coach from behind the goal line; coaches and spectators do not belong there! The coach can be "carded" for permitting such a violation of the rules.

A Few GOOD IDEAS:

1. Your sideline coaching should be limited. Prepare your players to think for themselves as much as possible. Observe. Take notes of situations and skills that your team has problems with and work on them during practice.
2. Watch how the opposition plays and point out to your substitutes anything that can be to your team's advantage (e.g. all their goal kicks go to a certain area, their defense plays far back or far forward, etc.).
3. Remind the players going in whom they are substituting for and what their duties are at that position. The less time spent shouting and the more time observing. The better understanding you gain of your team, the more information you will have to help them during your next practices. **Remember that as coaches we are in a supporting role. It is the kids' show!**

Soccer Etiquette

Another aspect of sideline coaching is finding the best place to do it. Just as good fences make good neighbors, when teams establish themselves on opposite ends of the field it reduces the potential for friction between the teams. **RYSC requires** that both teams occupy the same side of the field, with spectators on the opposite side.

Each coach should setup, and stay between the half line and the outer edge of the penalty box. The coach, assistant coaches and substitutes need to abide by this ruling. Pacing up and down the touchline, which is not a great idea under the best of circumstances, is extremely irritating if it means running in front of the opposing coach and screaming over his coaching. The best solution is just to quit pacing and watch your team. A little consideration for others will increase everyone's enjoyment of the game.

After the game, give the other team a proper cheer (discourage cheers such as "Two, four, six, eight, who did we *eliminate!*" they are both arrogant and unsportsmanlike), then line up your squad and lead them onto the field to congratulate the opposing players and coach. Teach your players to win humbly and to lose graciously.

Finally, remember that, as coach, you are responsible for the behavior of your spectators (parents and others) as well as your own and that of your team. Spectators must be educated about the proper place to stand to watch the game. All spectators should remain between the two 18 yard lines (marking the penalty area) and 2 yards behind the touchline. This provides a clear line of sight for the linesperson (even if you don't use linespersons at your level of play, it is a good idea to get the spectators into the habit of watching from well off the touchline!). No one should ever be closer to the goal than 18 yards, and never directly behind the goal area.

Substituting

The coach's main duty besides watching out for the welfare of his or her players is to keep track of playing time and to substitute players in and out so every player plays a comparable amount of time. **Know the situations when it is permissible to substitute.**

Each player must play a certain portion of the game (e.g. at least half). Only injury or, under exceptional circumstances, disciplinary action should prevent a registered, present, and properly equipped player from having his or her fair playing time.

EQUAL PLAYING TIME for all who regularly attend practice is a reasonable goal for every coach. "Everyone plays and everyone sits out" is a good rule. Don't use substitution as immediate punishment for mistakes made.

To avoid misunderstandings with parents we recommend that you:

1. Explain to your parents (e.g. at the Parent Meeting) the restrictions that are placed on you in terms of when you can legally substitute players during a game.
2. Prepare a fair substitution schedule before each game, follow it as best you can, and keep it on file for the season. We strongly recommend that coaches prepare their line-ups before game time and substitute between periods or, for the older players, mid-way in each half and at half-time. Remember to keep an eye on your watch!

TIP: to keep the subs interested in the game

- a. Ask them to observe the position where they will play next.
 - b. Have them keep statistics (e.g. number of passes made/missed, shots on goal).
3. **ROTATE** your players, particularly in the earlier grades. Don't limit the forward positions to a few; everyone should have a chance to play defender, midfield, and forward. Every player should be encouraged to try goalkeeping, but any player with a valid apprehension should not be forced to play this position. If you have difficulty getting volunteers, try to spread the task among a few players who can be rewarded by playing forward for the rest of their playing time. Giving each player some goalkeeping experience during practice scrimmages will increase their confidence to try it during a game.

Practice Sessions - Introduction

Focus your attention on the listed points for each technique as you observe your players. It is important for your players to learn to practice techniques properly, but remember that this may take some time - more for some techniques than others, and more for some players than others. Again, be patient and be encouraging!

I. Warm-up 10 min.

Each practice session should be started with a warm-up. Use the "beehive" grid for this purpose. Dribbling games make the best warm-up. Use your imagination to improvise from the skill games described below. Keep it "ball" oriented and fun.

II. Stretching 5 min.

Follow the warm-up with a stretching session. Generally, players under the age of 10 do not need to stretch. Have the players stretch their calves, thighs, hamstrings, Achilles tendons, and arms. Hold each stretch for the count of ten and do not let the players bounce while they are stretching.

This is a good time to tell the players what they will be doing in their practice today.

III. Skill Games 15 min. each

Utilize one or two skill games during each practice. Try and build each of your practices around a particular skill (e.g. dribbling or passing). First demonstrate the skill to the players before starting and then correct group and individual players' mistakes during the skill games. Try not to be over corrective - remember; let the game be the teacher!

IV. Scrimmages 15 - 30 min.

Complete your practice with a small sided game (*i.e.* 3 v 3, 4 v 4). Try to make the skill you practiced earlier a "condition" of the game. For example, in a practice that emphasized passing, the players of a small sided scrimmage must complete 2 or more passes before they can shoot on the goal. Make the scrimmage as much like a competitive game as possible, utilizing the rules of soccer modified for the appropriate age.

Techniques

It is important for the players to learn and practice the proper techniques

Practice all foot skills with both right and left feet.

Inside of the foot pass

- Ankle locked
- Foot slightly up at the toe
- Thigh turned outward
- Look up to establish eye contact
- Connect with the middle of the ball just before the instep
- Follow through (contributes to direction and pace of the pass)

Outside of the foot pass

- Ankle locked
- Foot pointing slightly downward at the toe
- Leg swings across the ball
- Ball should spin when kicked

Receiving a pass

- Move toward the ball (don't wait for it to come to you)
- Inside or outside of the foot used most often
- Foot surface first touching the ball should be withdrawn slightly on contact to take the momentum out of the ball ("cushioning")
- Ball should not be stopped completely, but under close control
- Redirect ball in front or to the side in anticipation of moving in that direction to pass or dribble

Dribbling

- Small controlled steps ... ball should be kept approximately 2-3 feet in front of you
- Strike the ball with either the inside or outside of the foot (softly and not with the toe)
- Look up frequently to establish eye contact
- Change speed and direction

Ball juggling

- Continuous bouncing of ball off head, shoulders, thigh, foot, *etc.* without the ball touching the ground ... This will develop ball control.

Shielding

- Legs bent
- Shoulders down
- Arms out at the sides. Used as a means of keeping an opponent away from the ball, or to stall for time waiting for a teammate to get open for a pass.

Heading

- Lean back at the waist
- Lunge into the ball
- Strike the ball with the middle of the forehead

Shooting

- Head down
- Let the ball come under the body (allows shot to stay low)
- Ankle locked with foot pointing downward at the toe
- Strike the ball with the laces of the shoe
- Accuracy before power (avoid shooting directly at the goalkeeper)

Throw-ins

- Ball **MUST** go directly over the head
- Both hands must remain on the ball (R and L thumbs meet behind the ball; thumbs and fingers of both hands form a W)
- Both feet must be on the ground (not necessarily flat; it is permissible to drag the toe of the trailing foot)
- As soon as ball is released, player should get back onto the field (often to receive a return pass)

“Trapping” (Settling or Controlling)

- Controlling the ball using any legal part of the body (NO HANDS unless you are the goalie)
- The controlling surface must “give” on contact to cushion the ball
- Ball should stay close to the player (not bounce away)
- If using a chest trap, bend the body backward slightly so the ball rolls down onto the ground at the feet
- Important when controlling the ball from the air to the ground, that it settle at your feet.

Tactics

Remember, tactics are not important for the U8 player and should not be stressed. As the players mature, and the concept of team play begins to develop, the tactical elements can be introduced. Listed below are some basic guidelines for the coach, which fall into the realm of tactics.

General

- Play positions (the various roles can be understood *even as players rotate positions*).
- Get open and call for the ball.
- Look and listen for passing opportunities.
- Pass and move to space and/or to support.
- Work to build and maintain triangles - the basic structure for passing and support.
- Always support the player with the ball (forward and rear support within passing distance).

Team Offense

- Maintain possession of the ball.
- Keep the offense wide in order to spread (and weaken) the opponents' defense and to create space for scoring opportunities.
- Penetrate as deeply as possible with every pass, without unduly risking loss of possession.
- Finish attacks with shots on goal.

Team Defense

- Support and communication are critical.
- Pressure opponents to decrease their "comfort zone".
- Delay opponents' attack when your team first loses possession of the ball to permit defense to regroup.
- Mark "goal-side" to defend against shots on goal.
- Mark "ball-side" to defend against easy passes.
- Maintain defensive balance on the field; guard against reversing the ball (crossing passes).
- Mark tighter as you get closer to your goal.
- Concentrate defense in front of the goal as the ball approaches your goal (limiting space available for goal shots) and direct ball away from goal.

Kick off

- Short pass and dribble.
- Short pass and pass back (triangle).
Note that the "long boot" is not encouraged!

Throw-in

- Throw to an open teammate if possible (first look for the farthest unmarked player).
- Throw toward the other team's goal.
- Throw down the touchline.
- Throw to your goalkeeper (this is not considered an illegal pass back).
- Take throw-ins quickly (before the defense can set up) but always under control.
- Throw the ball so that it can be controlled in the air.
- Thrower should re-enter the field quickly to be open for a return pass.

Goal kick

- Big kick up the side of the field.
- Avoid kicking the ball across the front of your goal.
- Consider having a defender take goal kicks while the goalkeeper maintains position to guard goal.

Free kick

- Close to goal, direct - shoot!
- Close to goal, indirect - short pass and shoot.
- Far from goal - big kick toward the front of the opponents' goal.

Corner kick

- Big kick into the opponents' goal area.
- Short pass and dribble or cross.

Drills (Skill Games) - General Guidelines

Some popular skill games are included here for your immediate use (see after Scrimmage Guidelines). You don't need 100 drills. Pick a few drills (say, 4 or 5) for each practice session and work at them.

Step 1 - Explain the drill (why it is done, how it is done).

Step 2 - Demonstrate the drill (slowly, step-by-step).

Step 3 - Execute the drill.

Step 4 - Figure out what went wrong (it's often the instructions); fix it, and start over!

Remember: showing is better than talking. Some drills will not work well at first. Maybe they need a small adjustment (e.g. too many players, or players standing too close or too far apart). Repetition of drills builds skills. It can also be boring. So use variations of drills, and don't repeat the same drill too often. If your players are not enjoying and not learning from a particular drill, find another that focuses on the same skills.

Start a drill simply and progress to the harder stuff. For example, begin with a simple passing triangle; then introduce a chaser. Play with the kids! Sometimes you should join in the drill as a participant rather than as a coach. Not only will the kids enjoy it, but you will gain a better appreciation of the skills you are asking them to master.

IDEA: Call a parent from the sidelines to be goalkeeper for a shooting drill!

Experiment! Don't be afraid to try new ideas. Split the team into small groups for you and your assistants to teach a drill; then rotate. This keeps more players busy and allows more individual attention. When organizing the kids into small groups, consider their abilities. For example, in some dribbling or passing drills it might be best to have pairs with similar abilities. Conversely, in competition (e.g. 2v2) you might pair stronger and weaker players for balance. Start a drill slowly. WALK through it first, then do it at half speed, and finally at full speed.

SCRIMMAGES - GENERAL GUIDELINES

General:

- Not the best for improving skills (many players, only one ball). But the kids love scrimmage and its great fun for them. So allow plenty of time for scrimmage during every practice, but *don't* make it the *only* activity.
- Excellent for learning positions and game simulation.
- Good way to teach the rules (you are the referee!), but try not to stop play too often.

Small-sided scrimmage:

- Fewer players, thus each player gets more touches on the ball.
- Small field and small goal requires more control and passing.
- Small goal encourages accuracy.
- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED IN PRACTICE FOR ALL AGES!
- If you have a large team and sufficient space, run two games simultaneously.

Scrimmage with conditions:

- Maximum 5 touches: to encourage passing.
- Minimum 2 touches: to encourage control (no one-touch "passes").
- Minimum 5 touches: to encourage dribbling.
- Must pass 3 times before allowed to shoot: rewards passing and good spacing.

Uneven scrimmage:

- 5 v 2 or 4 v 2 with no goals: forces passing. (The larger team counts passes.)

Offense vs. Defense:

- Good to practice action at the mouth of the goal.
- Good to work on set plays (goal kicks, corner kicks, free kicks).
- Have 2 or 3 extra players on offense to keep the action around the goal.
- Give defenders two small goals near the touchline at midfield.

Freeze!

- Blow the whistle and call "freeze".
- All players must stop where they are.
- Coach makes observation, e.g. players open on right flank.
- Excellent teaching tool (if not used too often).

Open scrimmage:

- Full game simulation.
- All players, one game.
- Enforce rules more strictly to encourage fair play; it also gives players free kick practices.
- Play another team occasionally, if possible; practice subs and positions.

LAWS OF THE GAME

FIFA LAWS OF THE GAME

The rules of soccer (called the Laws of the Game) are quite simple, because soccer is a simple game. The Laws were written by people who understand the game, for people who understand the game. Behind the Laws is a very straightforward philosophy of “fair play”, often called the spirit of the game. It is assumed that the game itself is more important than any particular match, player, coach, referee, or fan. Participants who don’t “play fair” are subject to disciplinary action.

Within this spirit of fair play, there are 17 laws. Some of them may be modified for younger, older and female players.

Law 1 – the Field of Play

Specifies the field, markings and goal sizes (all lines are part of the area they define); therefore, the ball is in play until the entire ball crosses the entire line. See the Small Sided & Game Guideline for field sizes appropriate for differing age levels.

Corner flags may not be moved (e.g., to take a corner kick).

Law 2 – the Ball

Specifies the shape, size, weight, and pressure of the ball.

Law 3 – The number of Players

Specifies the maximum and minimum number of players to have a legal game. Sets the number of substitutions at 3 or 5, with no re-entry allowed. This rule is almost universally modified to allow unlimited substitutions with unlimited re-entry. Regardless of what substitution rules are used, the process is the same:

- Substitutions take place a mid field
- The sub must be ready to enter before the ball goes out of play
- The sub must ask (and get) permission from the referee
- The exiting player must completely exit the field before the sub can enter

Additionally, if changing goalkeepers (either with a substitute or by changing places with one of the field players), first get permission from the referee. Goalkeeper substitutions must occur at a stoppage in play.

Law 4 – Players’ Equipment

All players must wear a shirt, shoes, and shinguards with socks completely covering the shinguards. Players may not wear anything dangerous, including cleats with sharp edges. Oregon Youth Soccer has extended this rule to ban all jewelry, hard casts and items which **may** injure the player or others on the field. Hair fasteners must be soft. Goalkeepers may not wear baseball-style caps with a stiff brim. Medical Alert Bracelets must be taped. The use of protective head gear is a referee decision at game time.

Law 5 – The Referee

Authorizes the referee to control the match by:

- Calling fouls
- Cautions and send off any participant

- Stop play when necessary (e.g. for an injured player)
- Keep time and record of the game

The referee is also instructed to not stop the game for slight injuries, and to not call fouls of trifling or dubious nature. The referee is also allowed to apply advantage to any call. This means that if the referee determines that stopping play would take away an advantage from the offended team, he can choose to not stop play.

Law 6 – The Assistant Referee

Authorizes two Assistant Referees to assist in controlling the match. They may call fouls to the attention of the referee, and signal off sides for the referee.

Law 7 – the Duration of the Game

Specifies that each period of play is of equal length.

Law 8 – The Start of Play

Specifies that the referee shall conduct a coin flip with a representative from each team. The team winning the toss chooses which end of the field to attack; the other team chooses to kick off. At halftime, the teams switch ends, and the opposite team kicks off.

Each half of the match is started with a kick-off from the center spot. The ball must travel forward. All players must be in their own half. A goal can be scored directly from a kick-off.

If the referee must restart the match for any reason not specifically mentioned in the Laws, a "dropped ball" is used. The ball is in play once it touches the ground.

Law 9 – Ball in or out of Play

The ball is "out of play" when the whole ball passes over the whole of a boundary (goal or touch) line or when the referee signals to stop play.

The ball is "in play" at all other times, including: when part of the ball passes over a boundary line, when the ball rebounds from the goal post, a corner flag, the referee, or assistant referee, and stays on the field; and most emphatically, when the players assume an infraction is going to be penalized, but the referee has not yet blown the whistle.

Law 10 – Method of Scoring

A goal is awarded when the whole ball passes completely over the goal line, between the goal posts, under the crossbar, and no infringement has occurred. The keeper catching the ball and carrying it across the goal line while falling is counted as a goal. No other method of scoring is authorized.

Law 11 – Offside (Note: not called at U8 level)

Offside is a very simple law, but is almost universally misunderstood. The intent of this law is to penalize the player who tries to camp near the opponent's goal, to try to capitalize on easy scoring chances. The law is NOT intended to make up for poor defense.

A player is in an offside position if he or she is ahead of the ball, and ahead of the second-to-last opponent, and in the attacking half of the field. It is not an infraction to be in an offside position.

If a player in an offside position, at the moment the ball is played by a teammate, and becomes involved in active play, then the referee shall punish that player for being offside.

It should be obvious that offside must be re-judged every time the ball is played. A player may be in an offside position and never interfere with play (so there is no offside, even if a goal results), or a player may momentarily return to an onside position just as the ball is played (so there is no offside), or the ball may go to another area of the field where the attacker was not in an offside position (so there is no offside). Also, a player passing to himself is never offside. A player coming back to an onside position to receive the ball is still offside, provided he was in an offside position when the ball was last played by a teammate.

Law 12-Fouls and Misconduct

Law 12 is rightfully considered the heart of the Laws. It defines both the letter of the Law and the spirit of the game. Law 12 is also exhaustive: If it is not listed here, it is not an infringement. For example, it is legal for players to play the ball with their head (or chest or knee etc.), because Law 12 only forbids playing the ball with the hand or arm.

Law 12 describes two different kinds of infringements: fouls (punishable by some sort of free kick (see Law 13), and misconduct (punishable by some color of card).

Fouls are further subdivided into penal and technical fouls. Penal fouls are punishable by a direct free kick or penalty kick, and technical fouls are punishable by an indirect free kick. Penal Fouls are fouls of a physical nature; there are 10 of them (listed below).

If, in the opinion of the referee, a player commits any of the following offenses in a careless, reckless, or excessively forceful manner;

- Kicking (or attempting to kick) an opponent
- Tripping (or attempting to trip) an opponent
- Striking (or attempting to strike) an opponent
- Unfairly charging an opponent
- Jumping at an opponent
- Pushing an opponent
- Unfairly tackles an opponent
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Deliberately handles the ball

A direct free kick is awarded to the fouled team at the spot of the infringement (unless the foul is committed by a player in his own defensive penalty area, in which case a penalty kick is awarded).

A few notes on Penal Fouls:

Jumping at refers to a cleats-up, foot-first jump at an opponent, regardless of the position of the ball. If there is contact, there is a foul.

A fair charge is shoulder-to-shoulder, non-violent, both players have at least one foot on the ground, and the ball must be within playing distance (two strides). If any of these conditions is not met, it is an unfair charge.

An unfair tackle is an otherwise legal play to gain possession of the ball, but the tackler makes contact with the player before making contact with the ball.

Handling the ball is possibly the most misunderstood (and most frequently miscalled) foul. The law requires that it be deliberate, not incidental. A ball moving swiftly toward a 8-year olds face may cause that player to involuntarily protect her nose with her arm. This should not be considered deliberate, even if the ball goes straight down to her feet, and she dribbles away with it. If the player is 14, it should be called. The referee makes the decision in either case.

There are a number of technical fouls. These infractions do not involve physical contact.

- A second touch by the same player at a restricted restart
- Offside
- Dangerous play
- Impeding an opponent
- Interfering with the goalkeeper putting the ball into play
- Goalkeeper infractions:
 - Taking excessive time to release the ball after gathering it with the hands.
 - Handles the ball twice without releasing it into play.
 - Handles the ball after a teammate kicks it to him/her.
 - Handles the ball direct from a teammate's throw-in.
 - Wastes time.

Technical fouls are punishable by an indirect free kick.

A few notes on technical fouls:

The foul is called dangerous play, as opposed to "high kicking". A high kick is only dangerous if another player is within playing distance. If a player is trying to head a waist-high ball that an opponent is kicking, who is playing dangerously? The foul should be called on the "heading" player. Trying to play the ball while laying on the ground when an opponent is trying to play it is another common form of dangerous play.

Impeding an opponent is interpreted as playing the man, not the ball (think of a screen in Basketball). Attempting to prevent an opponent from playing the ball without putting yourself in a position to play the ball (regardless of whether you actually touch the ball) is considered impeding.

There are 7 "cautionable" (Yellow card) offenses, and 7 "send off" (Red card) offenses. **At this age group there shouldn't even be anything close to this kind of behavior so it won't be discussed at this time.**

Law 13 - Free Kicks

There are two kinds of free kicks, direct and indirect. A goal can only result from a direct free kick (that is, is not touched by another player) and if it is scored against the opponents. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves (unless it is a goal kick taken from inside a team's own defensive penalty area, in which case it must exit the penalty area). The kicker may not touch the ball again until another player has touched it.

The location of the free kick is determined by the location of the offense. If the offense was in the kicking team's defensive goal area, the free kick can be taken from anywhere inside the goal area. For an indirect free inside a team's attacking goal area, the free kick is located on the 6-yard line closest to where the offense occurred. For a direct free kick inside a team's attacking penalty area, the kick is taken from the penalty mark (see law 14). In all other cases, the free kick is taken from the spot of the offense.

All opposing players must retire 10 yards from the spot of the free kick, unless they are on their own goal line and between the goal posts; if the indirect free kick is inside a team's defensive penalty area. When the kick is from the penalty mark, the opponents must retire 10 yards and be outside the penalty area.

The referee will signal an indirect free kick by holding one arm up until the ball is touched by another player.

Law 14 – Penalty Kick

A direct free kick awarded to a team inside their attacking penalty area is taken from the penalty mark. All players except the goalkeeper and the person taking the kick must be outside the penalty area, outside the penalty arc, and behind the ball (so no offside position).

The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line until the ball is played (he may move laterally, but not forward). The ball is in play as soon as it is kicked and moves forward. The kicker may not play the ball again until another player has touched it.

Law 15 – Throw-in

When the ball goes out of play over either touchline, a throw-in shall be taken

- By an opponent of the player who last touched the ball From the spot where the ball went out of play
- Thrown from behind and over the head
- Using both hands
- With at least part of each foot touching the ground on or behind the touchline

The thrower may not play the ball a second time until touched by another player. A goal can not be scored directly from a throw-in.

Law 16 – Goal Kick

When the ball goes out of play over the goal line, not between the posts and under the bar, last touched by an attacker, the defending team is awarded a goal kick. The goal kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area, and is in play when it leaves the penalty area (whole ball over whole line). Opponents must be outside the penalty area. The kicker may not play the ball a second time until it is touched by another player.

Law 17 – Corner Kick

When the ball goes out of play over the goal line, not between the posts and under the bar, last touched by a defender, the attacking team is awarded a corner kick. The corner kick may be taken from any point inside the nearest corner arc, and is in play when it is kicked and moves. The corner flag may not be moved. Opponents must be 10 yards away from the ball. The kicker may not play the ball a second time until touched by another player.

A goal can be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opponents.

Referees and the Laws

Dealing with Difficult referee situations

Being human, referees are not all alike. What was a foul or caution last week isn't even worth a pause in play this week. If a referee seems to be applying the rules in strange and wonderful ways for your game, the correct approach is to make note of this call your league's referee coordinator. Trying to change the referee's call during the match is not only counter-productive; it is against the rules (see Law 12, the section on Dissent).

If you believe the referee is engaging in misconduct (e.g., swearing, favoring one team, physical or verbal abuse), plan to report this in writing. GET WITNESSES and call the club President right away. Your report will be taken seriously. The referee community is very interested in keeping our reputation accountable to the highest standards.

The Role of the Referee

As you probably realize, some referees are better than others. There are very few great ones. The one thing that is (or should be) true of all referees is that they don't care who wins. This means they see the game differently than the players and coaches. For example, during a match, two players are challenging for the ball. After the challenge, one is dribbling away, and believes he made a great play.

The other is sitting on the ground, and believes he was fouled. Everyone else who saw that play agrees with one or the other of those players, based on what team they are supporting. The sole exception is the referee(s). The referee's point of view is centered on identifying any infringement of the Laws in that challenge, and determining whether or not it was significant enough to affect play, and then whether to stop play or apply advantage. The single most important phrase in the Laws is "**if, in the opinion of the referee,...**". Yes, this gives the referee a huge amount of authority over the match; it is intended to. Arguing with, or lobbying the referee is forbidden. They call what they see, as they interpret the advantage rule.

A Novice Spectator's Guide to Soccer Rules

The rules for officiating soccer are rooted in the philosophy and spirit of the game. Soccer is played by gentlemen (and gentlewomen). The referee is ALWAYS right. Dissent is not allowed or tolerated. Unfair or unsportsmanlike advantage is neither sought nor taken.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS: The ball is in play unless the entire ball passes beyond all of the touchline (sideline) or goal line (end line). If the ball is out, over the touchline, the team opposite the last touch throws it in. If the ball is over the goal line and not in the goal, it is kicked off the ground by the team opposite the last touch. A corner kick if last touched by a defender, or from the goal area if last touched by an attacker. A corner kick can go directly into the goal for a score. If the goalie, in possession of the ball, falls or rolls into the goal carrying all of the ball over all of the goal line, a score results.

BLEEDING: If a player is bleeding they must leave the field, and may not reenter the field until the referee has checked to make sure the bleeding has completely stopped and there is no blood on the uniform or shoes.

COIN TOSS: The team that wins the coin toss decides which goal they want to attack in the first half. This team may not elect to kick off. They exchange ends and kick-off at half time.

CORNER KICK: A corner kick is awarded when a defending player last touches the ball before it passes over their own goal line, but not into the goal. The ball is placed at the nearest corner flag, anywhere in the corner arc.

DROP BALL: If play is stopped for any reason with the ball in play, such as for an injury, the game is restarted by a drop-ball. The ball is dropped between two players, and must strike the ground before either player may touch it. All other players are away from the drop.

EQUIPMENT: Soccer style shoes or non-cleated turf shoes may be worn. Shoes with a single toe cleat, square or rectangular cleats are not permitted. No hard casts are permitted. No

jewelry is permitted, including watches, bracelets, necklaces, hair clips and earrings. If players intend to get their ears pierced, we suggest that they do so a month before games begin, or after the season. Even taped earrings still pose an injury potential to the player if struck by the ball or another player.

FREE KICKS: Infractions result in free kicks awarded to the offended team. They are either direct or indirect kicks. On a direct free kick the kicker can put the ball directly into the goal for a score. On an indirect free kick another player on either team must touch the ball before it can score. The referee will indicate an indirect free kick by holding one arm directly overhead. A penalty kick is awarded for a direct free kick infraction committed by the defense in its own penalty area. This call is determined by the position of the defending player; the ball need not have advanced into the penalty area. In many clubs, for play below the fifth grade level, there are no penalty kicks and all free kicks are indirect.

GOAL KICK: A goal kick is awarded to a team when the ball is kicked over the goal-line (excluding that portion between the goal posts!) by the attacking team. All the players on the team not in possession of the ball must be outside of the penalty area. The team awarded the ball may have as many players in the penalty area as desired and any of these players is allowed to take the goal kick. If the ball is not kicked beyond the penalty-area, the kick is retaken. No one can touch the ball after it is kicked until it passes out of the penalty area, this includes the goalkeeper. If a player of either team touches the ball before it passes out of the penalty area, the kick is retaken. The kicker may not play the ball a second time until it has been played by another player.

GOALIE PASS BACK RULE: The goalkeeper may touch the ball with their hands anytime they are within their penalty area, except when the ball is deliberately kicked back to them by a teammate. The goalie must play such a deliberate kick from a teammate with their feet just like any other field player.

The goalie may play the ball with their hands, if it is passed back by a teammate's head, chest or knee. If the goalie does play a ball kicked back with their hands, the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick with the ball placed at the spot where the goalie improperly handled the ball. Because it is an indirect free kick, the ball must touch another player before it goes into the goal.

HANDBALL: A handball is an intentional act to play the ball with the hand or the arm. The ball striking the hand is not a handball. A handball may not be called by the referee if no advantage is gained, or calling the foul would stop an obvious scoring attempt by the offended team.

INFRACTIONS: The conduct infractions are listed elsewhere. "Handling" the ball means intentionally playing the ball with the hand or arm. Accidental contact is not an infraction. No player, except the goalie, is allowed to put themselves or others in danger of injury; thus the rule against dangerous play. Most calls for dangerous play are the result of a high kick or a low head. High kick is defined in relation to the other player's head, not the kicker's waist. You can't kick the ball while you are on the ground in traffic because you place your head in danger. If, in the judgment of the referee, the team offended by an infraction has a clear advantage which could lead to a scoring opportunity, the advantage rule may be invoked with the clear call of "Advantage - play on!" and a forward sweep of the hands.

KICK-OFF: The kick-off must travel toward the opponent's goal. There is no longer a minimum distance, but the ball must move forward, and may not be played again by the kicking player until the ball has been touched by another player of either team. If the ball is kicked backward,

it never went into play and the kick is retaken. If the kicker touches the ball a second time without another player touching it, then the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick.

OFFSIDES: To be whistled for off-sides, a player must first be in an off-side position. A player is in an off-side position if they are nearer to the opponents' goal-line than the ball, **unless**:

- The player is in his own half of the field of play.
- The player is not nearer to the opponents' goal-line than at least two opponents (one of whom may be the goalkeeper);
- The player is level with the second to last opponent, or with the last two opponents.
- The ball was last touched by a defender.
- A player is only penalized for being in an off-side position, if, at the moment the ball is played by a teammate, he is, in the opinion of the referee:
 - Interfering with play or with an opponent, or
 - Seeking to gain an advantage by being in that position.

Thus, a player is not declared off-side by the referee merely because of being in an off-side position, or if receiving the ball direct from a goal kick, a corner kick or a throw-in. Off-side is frequently not called for younger teams (U9); however, the referee may warn a coach or young player about "strategic off-sides", the practice of intentionally placing a player near the opponents' goal throughout play (*i.e.* cherry-picking).

PENALTY KICK: The Penalty Kick is taken for an infraction by the defending team, within the Penalty Area that would result in a direct free kick. The ball is placed on the penalty Mark, and all players except the kicker and the goalkeeper must be outside of the penalty area or the penalty arc. When a penalty kick is being taken, the goal keeper may now move from side to side on the goal line, but not forward. The kicker must move the ball forward, and may not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. If the ball is kicked backwards, the kick is retaken. If the kicked plays the ball a second time with another player touching the ball, an indirect free kick is awarded the opposing team. **(There will be no penalty kicks at this level)**

SUBSTITUTIONS: In recreational play, each player must play an equal amount of each game, to the best ability of the coach, unless the player is injured, or for disciplinary reasons. Coaches are permitted to substitute only in certain situations, including: half time (plus quarters for younger players), after a goal is scored, on a goal kick, on any own throw-in, at any dead ball situation, or for an injured player.

TACKLING: Tackling is done via two methods. With the shoulder, and with the feet. A shoulder tackle is pushing a player away from the ball using the shoulder. This does not allow the player to pushoff with the arm or dive into a player with the shoulder. It is a straight up shoulder to shoulder tackle. Tackling with the feet is taking the ball away from an opponent by kicking it away. Slide tackling is not allowed in recreational soccer. Tackling a player from behind, or striking the player first, and not the ball, is a foul.

THROW-IN: A team loses possession of the ball whenever one of its members is the last one to touch the ball before it goes completely over the touchline (sideline). The ball is brought back in play by awarding a throw-in to the other team. When conducting a throw-in, the player must have at least part of each foot on the ground at the moment when the ball is thrown. The player must also bring the ball back completely behind the head using both hands and bring the arms directly over the head during the throw. The throwing player may not step

fully over the line, and onto the field until has left their hands. The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play, but the thrower may not play the ball again until it has been touched by another player. If, during an attempted throw-in, the ball does not cross the touchline, it has not been put into play and the throwing team is allowed to repeat the throw-in. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in. A foul throw results when the ball is not thrown in as described above, and the ball being awarded to the opposing team for a throw-in. For the younger players, however, the referees in many clubs will give the thrower a second chance after an errant throw.

Coaching 4v4

U8 & U9

Soccer Techniques

Seven year olds should have fun to develop an appreciation for the game of soccer. At this age group, there still is no goal keeper, but there is a goal box in front of the goal. The goal box is a no-man zone, where neither offense nor defensive players are allowed. The purpose of this is to encourage shooting from a distance, and to discourage the defense from camping in front of their goal.

Listed below are some techniques which you can reasonably expect to introduce to kids by the time they are 8 years old. The major emphasis for the youngest players should be on getting comfortable with controlling the ball and learning to pass. The 4v4 play provides a diamond concept which allows for passing back as well as ahead and to the sides. "Coaching" should still be kept to a minimum; teach through enjoyable games and exercises. Allow the game to be the teacher. Tactics are not important at this age, but defining passing and defending should be emphasized. Be patient!

You should be aware of skills the players will need at the next age group, so you can help the exceptional player advance.

The Game

Play Formation

Placing players in a diamond formation is available at this age. The diamond shape gives good strength in the middle, and allows one player to move forward or back as needed. Another formation is a box, with 2 players forward and 2 behind. This offers multiple triangles as well, but reduces the "pass back" options.

Game Preparation

1. At each game, the HOME TEAM coach is in charge. The home team will be so designated on the schedule, and will rotate each week.
2. First HOME TEAM coach of the day is responsible for setting up the field for play.
3. The club will assign referees to these games, and the coaches will be on the touchline with their substitute players and assistant coaches.
4. A **Coin Toss** determines who starts play. The visiting team calls the toss. The winning team gets to choose the goal they want to attack first, and the other team gets the kick off.

5. Play starts with a kick off from the center of the field. The player kicking off must move the ball forward, and may not touch the ball again until the ball has been touched by another player. All opposing players must be on their own half of the field. Defending players must be outside of the center circle.

Length of Game

1. Games will consist of 2 equal 20 minute halves with a 5-10 minute half time break.
2. The clock is not stopped during the game.
3. The referee will blow a whistle to indicate the start of play, the end of first half, and the end of the game.

Substituting

Substitutions should be made about every 10 minutes, or at the half time. Substitutions during play are made when the ball is naturally put out of play. Ball out of play is; *i.e.* throw-in, goal kick, after a goal is scored, or for an injury. Each coach should determine a system of substituting (platoon style - 4 at a time, individually - one at a time, *etc.*).

Switching at Half Time

After the half time break, the players switch ends of the field.

Goals

All free kicks are indirect kicks, meaning that two players must touch the ball before a goal is scored off a free kick. Goals cannot be scored directly from a free kick, goal kick, corner kick, or throw-in. A second player, from either team, must touch the ball before the goal can be scored. Coaches are asked not to keep score. A goal is scored when the entire ball passes over the entire goal line between the uprights and below the cross bar.

Taking Down the Field

The coach of the HOME TEAM of the last game of the day will take down the nets and any other field equipment.

Goalkeepers

1. Goalkeepers will be used in 4v4 soccer. They must be identified with a shirt that is different in color from both the home team and visiting team colors.
2. Goalkeepers may use their hands to play the ball anywhere within their Penalty area (14 yard box), which is marked in front of the goal. If the goalie steps outside this area, they become a field player and may not use hands.
3. Goalkeepers are governed by the General Rules of Soccer, as followed by Oregon Youth Soccer. After the goalie has possession of the ball, they may release the ball, either by kicking or throwing. If the goalie picks up the ball, he/she must then release it and the ball may not be picked up again until it has been touched by another player.
4. The goal keeper may pick up the ball, only if last touched by an opposing team players. Pass backs to the keeper by a teammate may be picked up if the pass is made using the head, chest, thigh, knee, or body part other than the feet. Infraction results in an indirect free kick for the opposing team, from the point of the infraction, or the nearest point outside of the goal box. The ball may not be picked up again until it has been touched by another player.

Ball Control Training

Dribbling

Coaching points:

Keep on toes all the time, touch ball after every step (keep ball close), look up after every touch (vision), find space, contact (inside, laces, outside) will depend on the direction player wants to go. Concentrate on balance, changing speed, acceleration after change of direction, keep body between ball and opponent.

Dribbling & turning

A. Techniques

- Dribbling with inside of foot (R and L)
- Dribbling with outside of foot (R and L)
- Show simple footwork
- Disguise dribble
- Running with the ball for speed
- Turning with inside of foot (right and left)
- Protect the ball

B. Principles

- Close control in close space
- Keep head up to see the ball and the developing play

Shooting

A. Techniques

- Lace kick with both feet (R & L)
- Allow the ball to come under the body (allows for a lower shot)
- One-touch shooting

B. Principle

- Accuracy before power

Passing and support

A. Techniques

- Strike the ball in the middle
- Lace kick for power (R and L foot)
- Push pass (inside of foot) for short passing on the ground (R and L foot)
- Wall passes using both feet
- Use outside of both feet

B. Principles

- **Discourage kicking with the toes**

Controlling (“trapping”)

A. Techniques

- Limp foot to absorb the energy from the ball. Ball will stop at their feet.
- Juggling
- Inside of foot (R & L)
- Outside of foot (R & L)

B. Principles

- Use relaxed stance, knees slightly bent

- Cushion control is the key
- Keep ball close

Defending

A. Techniques

- Staying goal side of the ball, and opponent
- Challenging
- Tackling
- Clearing

B. Principle

- Decrease space and time (for the opponent)

Positions and Systems of play

A. Techniques

- Attackers (forwards, wings)
- Defenders (fullbacks)

B. Principles - All positions have both offensive and defensive responsibilities.

Shielding

Use of body position. Play 1 v 1 in an open area. Player A has the ball at his feet and has to keep possession for a specified time, say 15 seconds. Player B tries to take the ball away from A by getting a toe to the ball. The idea is for player A to keep his body between player B and the ball, keeping the boxer's stance with both feet in line with the ball and player B's feet, with his knees slightly bent for flexibility and a low center of gravity. After each player has taken a turn at shielding, increase the time he must shield the ball to score a point. Try these variations:

1. Get player B to play the ball to player A to start the game (realistic restart)
2. Restrict the area used
3. Limit the player on the ball to his weaker foot
4. Have player on ball look up after every touch on ball
5. Get the player on the ball to feel for the marker with his arm - this will allow the player with the ball to anticipate his markers movement, while still keeping an eye on the ball

Skill Games

I. Dribbling

Beehive - Provide a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid (or approximately 1 sq. yd. per player). Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside the grid randomly using correct techniques and practicing avoiding other players. Players should practice inside and outside foot dribbling, stopping, changing direction, and maintaining control while in the beehive.

King of the ring - Provide a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid where each player has a ball. One player or the coach is "it" without a ball. Players start to dribble in the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it". Players can reenter the grid after retrieving their ball and completing some type of small skill penalty activity, like juggling the ball twice on their feet or knees or dribbling around a nearby tree before returning to the grid.

Red Light - Green Light - Just like the traditional game except the players dribble their balls forward and must learn to control and stop their balls on the "red light" command. Line all the players up and have the coach be the traffic cop. Send out of control players back to the starting line.

Attack and Protect - Provide a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid. Each player has a ball. Players dribble around in the grid trying to kick another player's ball out of the grid while at the same time protecting their own ball. Provide the players with a skill "condition" that they must complete before they may reenter the grid.

Spiderman - Provide a 20 yd. x 30 yd. grid. Each player should have a ball. The coach starts as the first spider. The players dribble around the grid while trying to avoid the tag of the spider. When a player is tagged by the coach, they join hands and go after new prey. Each successive tagged player makes the web of the spider grow bigger, but, alas, less organized. Young players will request this game constantly.

II. Passing

Keep Away Circle - Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle of cones. One player or the coach stands inside the circle and tries to intercept passes made between the players. Passes completed between partners count as goals. Change the player inside the circle after a pass is intercepted or after a short time interval.

Cone Game - Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle. Set up 6 or 8 cones in the middle of the circle as targets. Partners try and knock over the cones in the middle with accurate passes.

Triangle Pass - Set up a three player triangle. Each group has one ball. Players pass to each other around the triangle shape. Make sure they reverse the direction of their passes from time to time. After a certain level of proficiency is reached, add a defender to the center of the triangle who will try to intercept the ball.

Four Corner Pass - Set up a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid with cones at each of the four corners. Four players work with one ball, one player on each side of the grid. A fifth player defends inside the grid. Players may only run between the cones on their side of the grid as they attempt to pass the ball across the grid. Change the middle player often to keep the play crisp and fast.

Star Wars - This competitive game is very exciting for younger players! Set up a 10 yd. x 20 yd. grid. Have all the players line up at one end prepared to run to the other end. The coach or a player stands just outside the grid at midway with several balls at the ready. On command the players attempt to run to the endline while evading balls kicked at them by the coach. All shots should be kept below waist level. Players hit by the balls become new additional shooters until only one runner is left.

III. Shooting Drills

Marbles - Players are organized into pairs, each with a ball. Standing with his back to the field of play, the first player throws his ball over his head. The second player then kicks his ball from the starting point and tries to hit the ball that was thrown. Play alternates by kicks until one ball is hit. The players then reserve and start again. Coaches should emphasize instep kicks for length and side of the foot kicks for accuracy. Make it a condition that every other game is left foot only!

Four Goal Game - Set up four cone goals about two yards wide in each corner of a 20 yd. x 30 yd. grid, Divide players into two equal teams. Players may score at any of the four goals. This game encourages teamwork and results in lots of shooting.

Shoot Between Cones - Set up a cone row with cones spaced 3 to 5 yards apart. Pair up players and position one player on each side of the cone row facing the cones and each other. Players should start close to the row of cones at first, striking the ball between the cones. The partner receives the ball and strikes it back between the cones. Move players farther away from the cones as their technique and accuracy improve.

Go For Goal - Players form two lines on either side of the coach who is standing about 18 to 20 yards from a goal of any size. The coach serves the ball toward the goal while one player from each line races to win the ball and shoot. As skills progress, add a goalkeeper. The coach should encourage correct shooting technique and a good first touch on the ball.

Dribble Cones and Shoot - Set up two cone lines for a dribble weave about 30 yards long with a 2 yard goal at the end. Divide players into two lines or teams. Players must dribble through the cones and score at the goal at the end before the next player in line starts.

IV. Other Games

The Numbers Game - Young players will play this game for hours! Set up a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid with goals at each end. Divide players into two teams and place each team on one of the end lines. Number the players 1 - 6 (or use colors for very young players). The coach stands at the halfline and serves a ball into the grid while calling a number. Players who are called sprint off their end line to win the ball, play 1 v 1, and try to score. Players standing on the end line may keep the ball in play but may not protect the goal. The coach could try 2 or 3 numbers. Ball should be served on the ground.

4V4 Pass and Strike - Set up a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid with two opposing goals. Divide players into two teams. Players must pass the ball to each team member or make 4 complete passes before they can shoot on goal. If the ball is taken by the opponent the team must start over in its pass count.

Crab Soccer - Set up a 15 yd. x 20 yd. grid with goals at each end. Divide the players into two teams. Players must walk on their hands and feet simultaneously while trying to pass the ball to teammates and scoring. This

game really encourages teamwork because of the difficulty in movement by the players.

GOALKEEPER TRAINING FOR THE U8/U9 PLAYER

Introduction

Many players will take turns playing in goal, because at this age the players begin to learn about the position, as they continue to learn about the game. The requirements and training of this position are specific and must be dealt with in a patient and understanding manner. It is helpful for every young goalkeeper to get basic instruction from an older keeper who has gone through proper training. Exposing a player to diving and defending breakaways (1 v 1) without proper preparation usually ends in injury and discouragement, and should be avoided. All keepers enjoy playing out on the field, and should participate in all areas of practice to improve their vision, technical foot skills and overall development.

Proper instruction for goalkeepers in this age group can improve them tremendously. They will move out of the way of a hard shot, and should therefore concentrate on receiving all types of balls and on distribution. It is at this age group the more dedicated goalkeepers may also be exposed to proper diving techniques. The goalkeeper should always be a part of the team training should emphasize the goalkeeper.

Position

The Ready Position:

Start by teaching players the “ready position”, the stance that all goalkeepers should adopt anytime they prepare to stop a shot, whether during practice or in a game. The ready position involves being balanced on the balls (or front) of the feet, bending comfortably at the knees while keeping as tall as possible, and having the hands in front of the body. To add to this the player should be shifting weight from foot to foot at speed in order to increase his reaction time and jumping ability.

Hand Positioning:

It is imperative that young goalkeepers are taught the correct hand positioning for both low and high balls. In both cases, the hands should form a supple web that surrounds the back side (closest to the goal) of the ball. (Remember to always play with an appropriate sized ball for the age group that you are coaching). Coaches should also remember that at this age, players often have difficulty judging the height and speed of a moving ball. For low balls the hand position resembles an ‘**M**’, with fingers pointed down and palms facing forward. The little fingers of both hands are almost touching. For high balls the hand position resembles a ‘**W**’, with fingertips pointed up and palms facing forward. The thumbs of both hands are almost touching.

Coaching Points:

It is stressed that whenever possible, the young goalkeeper should try to get two hands behind the ball (no show diving!) as quickly as possible. This means that we have to encourage the young goalkeeper to attack the ball, and move forward to meet the flight of the ball, and move with a sidestep to get the body in front of the ball. When meeting the ball, the goalkeeper should use their body to form two barriers, a cushion and a wall. Try to get the goalkeepers to cushion the ball towards their bodies with their hands, as they scoop the ball towards their chest. The goalkeeper can absorb the force of the shot by relaxing slightly at the moment of contact. We do not want to form a brick wall that the ball will just bounce off back towards the attacking player! The wall will be created behind the cushion by the goalkeeper’s legs or body.

A goalkeeper should always be on the balls of his/her feet to be ready to react to different and developing situations.

Practice:

At practice emphasize that the hands are supposed to *cushion* the ball into the chest area. A good practice exercise for this is to work in pairs with one throwing the ball, the other catching, pretending that the ball is a water-filled balloon! Alternate the service, make the catching player move their feet. This can be advanced into one hand catches, using the correct hand positioning getting the players to not let the ball make a sound as they catch it. Coaches should try this too; it is more difficult than it seems!

Summary

To summarize, no matter what type of shot, the goalkeeper should do the following:

- Side-step quickly behind the line of the ball
- Attack the ball whenever possible
- Create two barriers between the ball and the goal, or have as much of body behind ball as possible
- Absorb the ball's force by cushioning
- Bring the ball to the safety of the chest
- Concentrate until the ball is in the hands
- All goalkeepers need a good warm-up of all the above and some basic diving (explained below)

Ball Distribution

Once the ball is successfully collected and controlled, the goalkeeper must make a quick decision on the method of distribution, whether to roll, throw, pass or punt the ball back into play. **Remember that the keeper is trying to distribute the ball to a teammate in space and in such a way that it is fairly easy to bring down under control.** Most players at this age will be most accurate if they roll, pass or throw the ball. Again, goalkeepers should be encouraged to distribute the ball to the sides of the goal and to try to switch the play to the opposite side from where the pressure (ball) has just come.

Roll

Rolling the ball to a teammate who is fairly close and does not have an opposing player near him involves a motion very similar to bowling. The goalkeeper's feet are usually moving in that direction and the strongest arm provides the rolling force, while the other hand simply helps guide the ball in the appropriate direction.

Throw

There an abundance of different throwing techniques a goalkeeper can use. It is best to expose the young players to all of them and then they will decide which ones they favor. Most frequently seen are the underarm throw, the sidearm slingshot, the baseball pitch and the over arm throw.

The over-arm throws are slightly more difficult for a teammate to control, so it is vital that the keeper allows for this in looking, to see where the nearest member of the opposition is. This action is similar to a tennis serve, holding the ball in one hand (the strongest serving arm), but the feet are positioned firmly on the ground one foot in front of the other.

Pass

Quite regularly in the game these days, one will see a long ball played over the defense that rolls straight to the keeper and the opposition forwards give up the chase. If a keeper has been regularly involved in field play practice (all have at the younger age groups) then he will have

time to control the ball and pass to a teammate in space. This may even be done outside of the penalty area. It is recognized that it is often difficult for a younger player to look up and take a 'snapshot' of where players are before concentrating on the ball, however, a simple call of 'time' by a defender will allow him to relax sufficiently in order to control the ball, look up and pass. If the goalkeeper is attempting to control the ball with his feet, he should try to do this when the ball is not heading directly to his goal! The coach can help the players practice this.

Punt

There are times when the players in front of the goalkeeper will all have a member of the opposition fairly close by. The coach can teach his players to move into space, but sometimes a goalkeeper will have to punt the ball. To most easily get a young keeper to do this, get him to hold the ball in both hands, then walk forward after a few steps drop the ball and attempt to kick just after the ball bounces. This technique will set up the desired motion. The keeper must keep the toes of the kicking foot pointed down and remember to follow through the ball as far as possible. This skill requires a lot of practice before it can be done successfully on a regular basis. The coach should emphasize accuracy before power to start with.

Communication & Support

Undoubtedly the goalkeeper has the best view of the field of play, particularly in his own half. The keeper therefore must be encouraged to communicate with his defenders and midfield players. We have already seen how a defender can make a call of 'time' to his keeper, and in this way the relationship is dynamic and players should be communicating with each other constantly. This communication should always be **positive**. Constructive analysis must only come from the coach.

As with all game situations, a player who wants to control the ball should call for it, and this is no different for young goalkeepers. They should be encouraged to call 'keeper's ball' for any ball that they feel they can control (both in practice and matches). This is a real safety issue as a player that does not call for a ball he is going towards risks getting run into by another player. Having every player in practice call for every ball that they want to control, as well as every ball they want to receive from a teammate, gets them learning good habits from an early age. The goalkeeper should learn this too, and also to give instructions for the defense to go wide, come in, or to a specific player to hold position or drop back to cover. This develops trust and will eventually be used to take advantage of the opposing team's weaknesses and break down an attack.