



Coach,

Welcome to South Lakes Soccer Club. We are very pleased that you have accepted the challenge of coaching the “beautiful game”. Perhaps you have played or coached before, maybe not. Regardless of your experience in the game I hope that you will find this document helpful.

First, I would like to offer you a sincere “thank you” for taking the time to further your coaching knowledge and review this coaching document. I know your players are appreciative of your efforts.

If you have any questions at any time please contact me. I will be happy to answer any questions or help in any way possible.

This document in no means has the answer to all of the many questions and concerns that will arise with coaching youth soccer. The internet can be a great tool in answering questions and locating quality activities. If you have additional questions or would like a professional coach’s opinion please email me at doc@southlakessoccer.org. Thank you for everything you do for the kids and promoting the best game on the planet!

Good Luck!

Brandon Lawless
Director of Coaching
South Lakes Soccer Club
doc@southlakessoccer.org

“Coaching’ the Player”

Helpful Practice Hints

- U6 players should practice for 45/60 minutes once per week.
 - Avoid lines, laps, and lectures.
- Be flexible with your activities. If it isn’t working or the players are not having fun, CHANGE IT and move to a new activity.
- Be prepared before practice. ‘Not preparing is preparing to fail’. For U6 players have at least 5 activities per practice.
 - One topic per practice.
- ALL players should be involved in ALL activities at ALL times. No “elimination” games.
- Allow the players to ‘learn through playing the game’; don’t over coach.
 - Avoid using a whistle.
 - Look like a soccer coach.
- Avoid corporal punishment. Use time outs as punishment.

Focus for U6

Technical Skills

U6 – ‘Me and the ball’

- Kicking
- Dribbling

Game Awareness & Strategy

U6

- Going in the correct direction when attacking and defending

Essential Knowledge

U6

- Basic Soccer Rules of Play
 - ‘Love of the Game’
 - Sportsmanship
 - Fair play

Activities

Activities are soccer related games that engage the players' imagination while allowing them to make decisions and perform soccer skills and techniques.

Small-Sided Games

Small-sided games are the best learning environment for 'teaching and learning' soccer. Small-sided soccer games allow the player to have a 'free backyard' type of learning environment at practice. The rule to these games can be modified or simplified to highlight a specific practice topic. Varying the number of the players on the field (1 v 1, 2 v2...) or adjusting the field size can help improve the learning environment.

Activities Check list

1. Is the activity FUN?
2. Is the activity organized?
3. Are the children ALL involved in the activity?
4. Is creativity and decision making being used?
5. Is the space appropriate and safe?
6. Is the coach's feedback important?
7. Are there implications for the games? Is it Soccer?

Developmentally Appropriate (Age Appropriate)

All activities for U6 players need to be developmentally appropriate. Developmentally appropriate activities or games challenge and reward all players at their own personal developmental level. Developmentally appropriate activities or games don't exclude players and allow for continuous participation.

Line-ups and Positions

Soccer is a free flowing game, where the player's are the decision makers. Positions are an important component to the game and should be introduced at the U6 level. However, U6 players WILL NOT NOR SHOULD THEY BE EXPECTED TO stay in their positions. They must be allowed to interact freely within the game. Soccer doesn't have 'pre-planned plays' during the run of play. If your U6 players are out of position, it is okay and it is developmentally appropriate. Positions are only given as a starting point for the players.

Managing the 'TEAM'

Pre-season Parent Meeting

- Players may be included, if coach desires.
 - Hold before each season.
 - Discuss coaching philosophy.
- Discuss what is expected of parents and players (transportation, communication, sportsmanship, etc.)
 - Obtain additional player information.
- Uniforms, Practice Schedule, Location, etc.

Team Administrator

- Volunteer 'Team Parent'
- Handles schedules (snacks, drinks, transportation, etc.)
 - Handles cancellations and reschedules.
- Handles registration of team with club or association.

Assistant Coach

- Limit # to reduce distraction and confusion.
- Selection should be made with prior knowledge of their coaching philosophy and agenda.
- Be sure to establish roles and responsibilities prior to beginning practice or games.

Equipment

- Players should be encouraged to take responsibility and care of their own equipment beginning at the U6 level. This should include a ball, shin guards, proper shoes, clothing appropriate for all weather conditions, and water bottle.
- Coaches should be responsible for cones, bibs, extra balls, air pump, ice, extra water, etc.
- ALL teams/coaches should have a 1st Aid Kit and be familiar with its contents.
- ALL medical forms should be carried at ALL times to ALL events.

Risk Management

Remember that accepting a coaching position means accepting responsibilities.

Game Organization

Pre-game

- Players arrive ready to Play 15 minutes early.
 - Warm-up Activity
 - Line-up and a drink of water
 - Team Cheer.

During the Game

- ALL Players should play at least 50% of the game.
- Players should be exposed frequently to all positions.
- Limit Coaching. Allow the players make their own decisions. Give suggestions post action only.
- Positive encouragement and praise for good performance.
 - Observe the game.
 - Say nothing negative to the referee.

Halftime

- Compliment the players as they leave the field.
 - Allow the players to relax.
 - Water and Snacks for the players and coach.
- Positive encouraging words to ALL players. Example: 'You girls are playing great, with super dribbling and passing. Keep up the good work!'
- Positive motivating words to ALL the players. Example: 'Let's go have FUN. YEAH!'
 - Line-up
 - Team cheer.

Post game

- Take a deep breath.
- Positive words of encouragement for all the players.
- Team cheer for other team. (2,4,6,8, who do we appreciate..)
 - Shake other teams and referees hand.
- Team celebration – Tunnel, snacks, and good-bye.
 - Don't review the game with the players.

FIELD SESSIONS

U6 Fields Sessions

U6 – Last minute practice reminders

- Remember to select activities/games that fit your practice topic
- The minimum number of high intensity activities/games for a U6 practice should be 3. However, it is recommended to be prepared with at least 5 activities/games. U6 players' attention span can be tricky.
- Use the low intensity activities/games to help monitor the player's heart rate and energy levels.

U6 Model Session – 45/60 minutes

Warm-up Activity – (10 minutes) – High Intensity

2nd Activity – (5 minutes) – Low Intensity

Water Break – (2 minutes)

3rd Activity – (10 minutes) – High Intensity

4th Activity – (5 minutes) – Low Intensity

Water Break – (2 minutes)

Final Activity (Scrimmage)– (10 minutes) – High Intensity

Cool Down – (5 minutes) – Very Low Intensity

Dribbling Activities:

‘I can do this can you...?’

- Coach performs a task or coordination exercise with or without the ball (stopping the ball with a variety of body parts, dribbling the ball, tossing and catching the ball, etc.) with the ball and asks the players if they can repeat the task. Later, have players come up with their own ideas for other players to imitate.

‘Anatomy Dribble’

- Players dribble to keep control of ball without touching others. While they dribble, coach calls out a part of the body and players have to stop their balls with

that part of the body. You can call “right knee”, “left below”, “belly”, “chin”, etc.

‘Toss and Retrieve’

- Coach tosses ball and asks players how they can bring it back to him? Using hands? Feet? Head? Elbows? Give kids time to come up with ideas of their own.
 - Variations:
 - o Same as above but coach specifies, e.g. one elbow and one cheek; two backs.
 - o Coach changes position.

‘Maze Dribble’

- Coach lays out cones all over the field.
- All players with a ball try and dribble in and out of the cones as quickly as possible.
 - Variations
 - o Players can touch cone with their hands
 - o Players can touch cone with their ball.

‘Red Light! Green Light!’

- All players start in a line at the end of the grid, while coach is in the middle. When coach says “Green Light”, players dribble forward. When coach says “Red Light”, players stop ball with a foot on the ball. On “Yellow Light”, players move forward slowly. “Reverse” sends players backward. After a few rounds, use hand signals instead of verbal commands.
- Coach can face away from dribblers and when (s)he calls “Red light”, players must stop ball before coach can turn around and “catch them dribbling. Whoever gets caught, goes back to starting line (or five steps back). The first player to cross the finish line becomes the new “traffic signal”.

‘Everybody Tags!’

- Each player dribbles within area while trying to tag anyone and maintaining control of ball. Each time you tag someone, you get a point. Replay game to beat previous score.
 - Variations:
 - o Restrict tagging to certain part of body like back, right shoulder, hips, etc.

‘Minefield’

- Players are given special names “uppsies” or “downsies”. Uppies run around and turn cones up. Downsies run around and turn cones up side down. After 30 seconds see how many cones are down.

- Variations:

- o At first, play without balls. Then have players dribble while turning cones.

Kicking Activities:

‘Hit the Target’

- Players dribble around and try to hit coaches (or parents) with ball. How many hits can you make in 30 seconds?
 - Variations:
 - o Safe Zone for coach or parents

“Lots of Goals”

- Pairs of players try to score as many goals as possible within a limited time by kicking the ball through goals that are set up randomly throughout the field. Score one point for each kick through goal. Always repeat game to improve on previous score.
 - Variations:
 - o Players can’t run through goals
 - o Close certain goals by standing (coaches/parents) in them
 - o Add two defenders, (never just one to avoid embarrassment!).

“Pac Man”

- Two players with ball, all others run freely in area. Players with ball dribble and attempt to hit the other players below the knee by kicking the ball at them. Once a player is hit, he gets his ball and turns into a Pac Man. Game continues until all players have been hit and have their ball.
 - Variations:
 - o All players dribbling, Pac men/women in a colored penny, trying to hit other players’ ball. If player get their ball hit, they put on the colored penny and join the Pac men/women.

Small-sided games:

“Get Out Of Here!”

- Two teams stand on sideline of small field next to coach, who rolls ball into play. Players play 1v1 or 2v2, determined by coach before ball is rolled into play. When ball leaves field, players “Get out of here” and return to teams. Coach continues play with a new group. (Coach is boss of the balls – players don’t chase ball until coach passes it). Player don’t collect balls until all the balls have been played
 - Variations:
 - o Large or small goals
 - o Parent goalies

'TRUTHS' ABOUT CHILDREN AND SPORTS

Most frequently listed reasons for participating in youth soccer:

1. To have fun.
2. To stay in shape.
3. For the excitement of competition.
4. To improve my skills.
5. To do something that I'm good at.
6. To go to a higher level of Competition.
7. To play as part of a team.
8. For team spirit.
9. To meet new friends.
10. To learn about the game.

Most frequently listed reasons for dropping out of soccer:

1. I was no longer interested.
2. It was no longer fun.
3. I was tired of playing and practicing (boring).
4. I wanted to participate in other non-school activities.
5. This sport conflicts with other sports I wanted to play.
6. My coach was as poor teacher.
7. This sport required too much time.
8. Coach only played his/her favorites.
9. I did not like the coach.
10. There was too much pressure and emphasis on winning.

Reasons Children would return or continue to play soccer:

1. Practices were more fun.
2. Coaches understood players better.
2. Practices or games did not conflict with social life.
3. I could play more.
4. The coach understood the sport better.
5. The coach was a better teacher.
6. Games and practices were scheduled at different times.
7. The coach didn't yell as much.
8. There was less emphasis on winning.
9. There were more leagues so other players were closer to my ability.

10. The sport did not take so much time.

Dealing with Injuries

Soccer Injuries - Prevention

- A well planned developmentally appropriate program for the players.
 - Proper use of equipment (shin guards, no jewelry, appropriate clothes).
 - Upkeep and monitoring of the playing surface.
 - Proper fitting shoes, proper type of shoe for surface.
 - Ample water supply and breaks.
 - Avoid scheduling training during the hottest periods of the day and when there is intense humidity.
 - Full rehabilitation of an injury prior return to play, determined by a physician.

Soccer Injuries - Care

Treatment for minor injuries such as sprains, strains, and contusions is referred to as RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation). The RICE principle is the only first aid treatment that is safe treatment for a sports injury without professional advice. The treatment helps in 3 different ways.

RICE treatments, limited to 20 minutes, can do no harm to any type of injury. Almost anything else (including heat applications can cause harm in some instances).

General Principles when handling an injured player:

- Avoid panic.
 - Treat the injury. Don't assess blame.
 - Use common sense.
 - Seek professional help.
 - Check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration, and shock.
- Dependent upon the nature of the injury, avoid moving the player.
 - Inspire confidence and reassure the player.
 - Determine how the injury occurred.
 - Use certified athletic trainers when available.
 - Always ERR of the side of caution.
- It is recommended that if a player has had medical attention, they must have written permission from the doctor to return to activity.

1. Final Thoughts

- Positions/Playing Time-Flexible and at least 50%
- Atmosphere-Fun, No Stress
- Screaming/Chess on Grass-Avoid at all costs
- Referee Interaction-Friendly
- Managing the Sideline-You can do it!
- Managing the Score line-Especially when “up”.
- Emphasis on winning-Eliminate it
- Age Appropriate instructions that don’t change the integrity of the Game.
- Your team is a reflection of you. Your demeanor and behavior affects your players.
- Players are grouped by age and not ability.
- What is the next level for players? What steps can be taken?- Head Start/Academy/Competitive Soccer
- You represent SOCCER to your players!

Thank you for volunteering your time
at SLSC!

