

U8 Soccer

Thank you for volunteering to coach the U8 soccer division. Coaching is the biggest responsibility for the program and we are sure you will find it nothing short of rewarding. It is a very challenging position to volunteer for, and we give you the utmost respect for doing so.

From the U6 division up through the U16 division we believe in a philosophy that promotes “the athlete first and winning second”. While this division will not be as competitive as the older ones, please always keep this philosophy in mind. We expect that you will come prepared to teach the children not just the game of soccer, but how to be a good teammate, good sportsmanship, and respect. These things can be learned as long as you come prepared to practices and games and play every child equally in time and in different positions. The goal is not to go out and crush the opposition but to help the children grow in their development of skills and knowledge of the game while in a pressure situation. You will find that you will have children that have played for a year or so and others that have never played. It is okay. This division is all about having fun and learning for you and the players.

In this packet you will find some very helpful resources. Amongst other things, we outline what you should expect to see from your children by the seasons end. We offer some of our favorite and most effective drills for you to use to get them there.

Please remember our philosophy in anything you do and most of all to have fun. If you ever have any questions or need help feel free to call us or email us.

Russ Matthews
Dan Ayotte

Expectations for U8 Soccer

The expectations for this division are pretty simple. In anything you do have fun. Practices should be full of fun activities that engage all of the kids at the same time. Less waiting to do something means more fun. The games should be full of praise from the coaches. As coaches are allowed to be on the field and help direct their team, it creates a perfect scenario for this to happen. You will notice that your team makes the same mistakes together, like clumping together or lifting their heads up when trapping the ball or kicking the ball. It is easy to get frustrated with this. You must ask yourself why these things are happening and plan your practices with activities to help remedy it. Every team has weaknesses, even if this is just for fun. Help your kids get better.

Shooting – The child should be able to shoot the ball in the air sometimes as well as the ground into open areas in the net (area where the goalie is not) preferably the corners. They should have enough strength in their legs to do this from within 4 yards out. They will probably be willing to do this with their dominant leg only. They should also be able to attempt to shoot the ball on the move and while the ball is rolling on the ground as well as stationary.

- **Passing** - The child should be able to pass the ball on the ground through a 2 foot wide gate from within 4 yards out.
- **Trapping** - The child should be able to trap the ball with their feet.
- **Heading** – The child will probably not try to head the ball. Any try should be heavily applauded.
- **Tackling** – The player will need to be told when to tackle and when to jockey.
- **Field Presence** – The child should know the difference between offense and defense and what side of the field they are playing on.

Practices and drills

One thing we have learned from our experience in coaching with any age group is that practices that include making players wait to touch the ball are less productive than those that consistently engage all of the players. When

children are made to wait in lines they get bored easily and get distracted. You will notice that you are constantly reeling the children in to perform an easy task. With this being said, This group will have 45 minutes of practice followed by a 45 minute game.

- we recommend that you design your practices so that there are very few activities that involve the children waiting to touch the ball.
- Teach the basic idea first. Make it more difficult after to challenge the players.

STATIONARY BALL TOUCHES

Place a ball in front of each child. On your signal each player touches the sole of their foot on top of the ball, alternating feet as fast as possible. Have them keep count and challenge them to do better the second time through. This drill promotes coordination and foot quickness.

STATIONARY BALL JUMPING

With balls at their feet have the children jump over the ball side to side and forward and backward. Have them keep count and beat their first try the second time. This develops foot speed and endurance.

OVER And Under

Two children stand back to back, legs apart with one ball per pair. One person in pair hands the ball through legs to the other player, who takes it and hands it backward over his/her head. Have them keep count. Challenge to do better the second time.

Variation of this is side to side.

These drills encourage players to work together and stretch.

BODY PART DRIBBLING

Players dribble the ball in a confined space and on your command stop the ball with the body part that you call out (elbow, head, etc...) Be creative. This improves dribbling skills, reaction time, listening skills.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

A classic spin on the classic game. Everyone follows the leader and imitates him/her. Rotate through the line. Then do it while they dribble the ball. This develops coordination and balance with a ball.

KNEE TAG

Everyone with a ball tries to tag other players knees while keeping control of their ball. A point is awarded for every knee tagged. Teaches players to get low and have a low center gravity.

KNOCKOUT

Everyone has a ball and dribbles in a confined area. On your signal, players try to knockout other player balls out of the confined area while keeping control of their own ball. On your signal players just dribble until you tell them to “Knockout” again. This promotes dribbling, shielding, attacking. Once a player's ball is knocked out have them do 10 toe touches on the ball and come back in.

FIND THE COACH

Have an assistant coach or parent help you out. All players with a ball facing one way. Have the assistant go far out and then tell the kids to throw the ball up high in the air, trap the ball and then find the coach. They will dribble the ball over to the assistant and give him a high five and return to the line they are started on. Time them. See if they can beat their time. Promotes dribbling in a crowded area, field awareness, speed and agility.