

Intro

This document is meant to provide all parent coaches in the U7 and U8 rec program with the necessary information to ensure they know exactly what is expected. Both the program format and the goals for the program will be shared with you, to ensure continuity across the program. Please take a few minutes to go through the attached document, to ensure you are up to speed.

1) Program goals

We aim to introduce the players to the basics of soccer in a fun, friendly and challenging environment. From U5-U8 the focus is entirely on developing the dribbling technique of all players in the program. Dribbling is the foundation skill upon which all other skills depend. If someone is not capable of dribbling yet, switching their body weight quickly from 1 leg to the other, being able to pass or shoot the ball will be a struggle. Until players are competent, comfortable and confident dribbling the ball up and down the field, the focus should be on the dribbling. It is therefore very important that all young players are encouraged to dribble the ball. They should **NOT** be taught to “kick” or “boot” the ball up the field. **Kicking is not soccer!** We do not want our players to think that kicking the ball away is an important part of the game of soccer. These are also bad habits which will be very hard to break later in their soccer career. It starts with dribbling, which is a start of a solid foundation we hope to build on in the years to come.

U7-U8 Rec Soccer – Skill priorities

- 1) Dribble out of trouble
- 2) Soft first touch
- 3) No kicking allowed unless we are shooting on goal
- 4) Introduce passing only to those players who can dribble out of trouble.

In order for us to reach our goals it is important that everybody understands what the learning stages for dribbling are:

- 1) develop the mindset for dribbling (**this only happens when players are encouraged to dribble!!!**)
- 2) learn to dribble in a straight line
- 3) learn to change direction
- 4) become multi-directional

Coaches be aware that although some players will improve rapidly, most of the players will progress very slowly through these stages, especially since there is only one practice session per week and the season is very short. Only a handful will reach the fourth stage by the time they graduate to U-9, provided they started in our program at U5-U6.

But everyone will improve over time if we take our time to build a solid foundation.

2) Role of the coach and parent

The coach is a facilitator

A coach in the program is more a facilitator than an actual coach. As a coach you are helping us create an environment in which our players are encouraged to dribble. There is no need to coach the players on what to do or where to go. This will only hinder a player's development. Often coaches of beginner players have a tendency to constantly tell them where to stand and what to do. This conditions the players to become robots and discourages them from thinking for themselves. Coaching doesn't mean you need to control a player's actions. It is coaching not controlling.

We need to encourage the players to take up the field and dribble. Hopefully their dribbling skills will improve over time and eventually they will become more aware of their surroundings as well. If a player has the tendency to kick the ball away every time he or she is near the ball, please make sure to continue to emphasize the importance of controlling the ball. Encourage them to dribble the ball versus kicking it away.

Results do not matter

We do not keep track of the results. The program is not a quick-fix method designed to improve a team's chances to win games. Game results are misleading and irrelevant at this stage. The teams' win-loss record is cast at the draft process before a ball is kicked in earnest. Whichever coach is lucky enough to get the athletic 'studs' will win most of the games, regardless of which program is used. Scores really do not matter and results are not kept.

Include the other parents

Make the other parents aware of the program goals as well. In the excitement of the game, some parents might shout out "kick it" or "boot it", not knowing that this goes against what we are teaching these players. Words of encouragement are of course welcome, but we must make sure that the players are given the opportunity to develop their dribbling skills and also are able to think for themselves.

3) Program Format

All players in the U7 and U8 rec program are offered the opportunity to train on Saturday and play in a 4v4 game on Sunday.

Saturday Training

- The Saturday training is 60 minutes long.
- A professional trainer will run a practice, going through different exercises, for the first 40 minutes of practice.
- The parent coaches are encouraged to assist/help out any way they can during these 40 minutes. It helps all parent coaches get a better understanding of what is age appropriate for these young players.
- The last 20 minutes of practice are set aside for scrimmages. The parent coaches are asked to run these scrimmages in line with how the games are played on Sunday (rules are outlined later in this document).

It is very important that the parent coaches provide players with the opportunity to play during these last 20 minutes of practice. Given that these players spend very little time playing soccer, only 2 hours per week in the U7 and U8 rec program, we need to be very economical with the time. No need for a lot of coaching or providing instructions. You are a facilitator first and foremost. The players need to play the game. LET THEM PLAY!!!!

Sunday Game Format

Below the setup of the U7 and U8 games. Please make sure to play the games given this set up to ensure continuity across the program.

- 4v4 (**NO GOALKEEPERS!!!!**)
- New ball method when the ball goes over the sideline
- Dribble the ball in when it goes over the backline
- Players/coaches on 1 end – parents on the opposite sideline (ask the parents to sit 1-2 yards away from the sideline, to provide them with space to play)
- **NO THROW INS/KICK INS/OFFSIDES**



On your left a picture to show everyone how to organize players; coaches and parent ahead of the start of the game.

New ball method

All coaches will scatter around the field (ask parents or older siblings to assist if needed) holding a couple of spare balls. When the ball goes over **the sideline**, a coach will provide a player with a new ball, depending on who should be receiving the ball. You put a ball in by rolling it to a player nearby or even putting it down on the field for them. This will most certainly help increase the actual playing time. If we ask the players to bring the ball back in play themselves this could take some time which only shortens the actual playing time. When the ball goes over **the backline** a coach near where the ball went out of bounce can provide a player with the opportunity to dribble the ball back in play.

This method is not designed to set up quick breakaways to potentially score a goal. If a coach his or her focus is on the outcome, aka winning the games, then this simply means they are not fit to be a coach for young players. These regulations are put in place to increase the actual playing time. Increase the number of soccer actions in the limited time that we have. These guidelines are not set to manipulate the outcome of games.

Please note that this set up also allows us the opportunity to provide the less assertive players with the ball, to include them more often.

Why this set up?

This specific set up provides many opportunities to dribble and potentially score goals as well. It maximizes participation and minimizes the boredom among players. All players are involved and engaged, while playing the game. No need for complicated rules, but a lot of playing time for these players. As a coach you are a facilitator, making sure our youngsters can play the game.