

# Coaching Age Specific

## U-6: Coaching U-6 Players

### Player Characteristics:

- Short attention span.
- Can attend to only one problem at a time.
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated.
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for. We need to be patient and laugh with them as they get “lost” on the field.
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Give “hints”, don’t criticize.
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals, etc.) should be given for winning.
- Prefer “parallel play”: will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates. Thus, a 3 against 3 game is, in reality, a 1 against 5 game because they all want the ball at the same time.
- Very individually oriented (me, mine, my).
- Constantly in motion, but with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop. They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly.
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar.
- Physical coordination limited. Eye-hand and eye-foot coordination in not developed. Need to explore qualities of a rolling ball.
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc.
- Prefer large, soft balls.
- Catching or throwing skills not developed.
- Can balance on their “good” foot.

### Involving the Parents:

It is important that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-6 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling (phone chains).
- Choosing a team administrator – someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.

- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (cleats are not mandatory.)
- Most importantly your philosophy about coaching U-6 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

**Things you can expect:**

As coaches of these younger players there are things that we know that we can expect during training and games. If we know what to expect, we will be more effective in dealing with the hundreds of situations that come up. This will help us relax, and in turn allow us to enjoy the unpredictable nature of working with these children even more. Here are some of the things that we can expect.

- Most players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- No matter how loud we shout, or how much we "practice" it, they can not or will not pass the ball.
- Somebody will come off the field in need of a toilet. Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet.
- The only player to hold position is the goalkeeper (if you play with one). Don't even consider teaching positional play.
- Twenty seconds after the start of the game, every player will be within 5 yards of the ball.
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that.
- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the player's attention. By all means, stop whatever you are doing and go watch for a couple of minutes.
- During a season, you will end up tying at least 40-50 shoe laces.
- They will do something that is absolutely hysterical. Make sure that you laugh.

## **U-8: Coaching U-8 Players**

### **Characteristics:**

- Attention span is a bit longer than U-6 players but still not at a “competitive” stage.
- Inclined towards small group activities.
- Always in motion: scratching, blinking, jerking, rocking...
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give “hints”
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence (most are able to ride a two-wheeler).
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same “gear” as them.
- Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. Make sure that they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. “If they try hard, they performed well” regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be encouraged constantly, and asked “Now, can you do this?”
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play and remembering what goal they are going for but, in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget. They still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.

### **Involving the Parents:**

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-8 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling (phone chains).
- Choosing a team administrator – someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (cleats are not mandatory).

- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-8 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations are for them during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

**Things you can expect:**

Six, seven, and eight year old players are a bit more compliant than their U-6 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to play a "game". They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by the fact that they occasionally and I mean occasionally, will pass the ball to a teammate, on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase "I can't do that!" but will quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think they can. Some other things that you can expect to happen during a season with this age group are:

- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but now they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in your bag as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or the coach tells them that it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys
- They will still want to wear pennies, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is whose best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up, please let them go (they must face their teachers five days a week).
- They will wear their uniforms to bed.

## **U-10: Coaching U-10 Players**

### **Characteristics:**

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

### **Involving the Parent:**

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

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling (phone chains).
- Choosing a team administrator – someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.

- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (cleats are not mandatory).
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-10 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.
- What your expectations are for them during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

**Things you can expect:**

- Some coaches say that the 9 and 10 year old players are beginning to “turn the corner” and starting to look like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and unpredictable for the most part. These players are starting to find out how much fun it is to play the game skillfully, but they will stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during a game. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:
  - They start to understand off-sides, but still forget themselves when the goal is in front of them.
  - They will really beat up on each other during practice, especially boy's teams.
  - During a game, the parents will scream out “HAND BALL” or “COME ON REF, CALL IT BOTH WAYS” at least fifteen times.
  - They might cry after the game if they lose, but will forget it if you ask them if you want to go out for burgers and fries.
  - You might actually catch them practicing on their own without you telling them to do so.
  - Their parents are telling them to do one thing during the game, you are telling them another thing, but what they end up doing might be what their friend is telling them to do.
  - You will see a pass that is deliberate. You might even see a “back pass”.
  - You will see your first \$100 pair of cleats during practice.
  - They will call the other team bad names, really bad names.

## **U-12: Coaching U-12 Players**

### **Characteristics:**

- They begin to develop the abilities to sustain complex, coordinated skill sequences.
- Some of the players have reached puberty. Girls in general arrive earlier than boys.
- Most players are able to think abstractly and are thus able to understand some team concepts that are foundational to the game.
- They are beginning to be able to address hypothetical situations, and to solve problems systematically.
- They are spending more time with friends and less time with their parents. They are susceptible to conformity to peer pressure.
- They are developing a conscience, morality and scale of values.
- Players tend to be highly self-critical. Instruction needs to be enabling. Show them what can be done instead of telling them what not to do.
- Although they are more serious with their play, they are still mainly involved because it is fun.
- They are openly competitive. A few may foul on purpose.
- They are looking towards their role models and heroes in order to know how to act.
- They have a more complex and developed sense of humor.

### **Involving the Parents:**

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- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-8 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.

- What your expectations are for them during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

**Things you can expect:**

Some coaches say that the 10 and 12 year old players have “turned the corner” and are looking like real soccer players. However, games are still frantically paced and a bit unpredictable for the most part. These players know how much fun it is to play the game skillfully. As a result, we begin to see some of the players drop out who recognize the importance of skill and become discouraged with their lack of it. Some other things that we can expect when working with this aged player are:

- They will yell at their teammates when they make a mistake.
- They will openly question the referee’s decisions.
- Players will encourage each other.
- They will pass the ball even when they know that they will not get it back.
- Team cooperation is emerging. They will run to a spot, away from the play, even when they know that they might not get the ball.
- They will point out inconsistencies between what you say and what you do. They are “moral watchdogs”.
- The difference in skill levels between the players is pronounced.
- Some players might be as big as you are, some might be half your size.
- Not only will some of the players come to training with expensive cleats, but some will also come with matching uniforms, sweat suits, and bag.
- Parents, during games, can be brutal. Some will yell at the referee at almost every call.
- They will get together with their friends and be able to set up and play their own game.