

U6 Coaching Rationale

By, Dr. Tom Fleck-US Youth Soccer

It is important to understand at the outset that soccer players coming to the sport prior to the age of six have not necessarily done so by their own choice. As such, their coaches must give them something to get excited about and/or have fun doing. Further, at this age, learning to play soccer is often quite secondary to most other things in their lives.

With the above as our assumptions, let's look at some things we can do to accommodate the U6 player:

- Do not train one-minute more than one hour-physical fatigue and attention span considerations.
- Have as many different kind of activities ready as you can get into an hour-these need not necessarily be soccer activities.
- Every player must bring his or her own ball to training. Kindergarten players' use a #3.
- Training once or twice a week is just fine more than this plus a game leads to early burnout on their part and YOURS.
- Though they may all be very similar in birth dates, the similarity stops there-differences may vary as much as thirty-six months in regard to physical and/or mental maturity.
- Running laps is a cross-country training method-no place for it in soccer, at any age.
- Team play and passing is very alien to this age-they know if they pass the ball they don't get it back.
- In an hour training session you should have at least four to six 90-second "drink breaks".
- Each training session should be built around having them touch the ball as many times as possible-be sure to have them use all parts of the body.

Some Characteristics of U6 Players

By, Dr. Tom Fleck-US Youth Soccer

- Short attention span
- Most individually oriented (me, my, mine)
- Constantly in motion
- Psychologically easily bruised
- Little or no concern for team activities
- Do believe in Santa Claus, but will not discuss with peers
- Physical & psychological development of boys and girls quite similar
- Physical coordination suspect
- Eye hand and/or eye foot coordination most primitive at best
- Love to run, jump, roll
- Like to roll on the ground-that's in good dress-up clothes, not in their uniforms
- Enjoy climbing
- Prefer large soft balls and nerf balls
- Catching skills not developed
- Can balance on good foot
- NO SENSE OF PACE-GO FLAT OUT, they will chase something until they drop

Typical Training Session

As previously mentioned, a typical training session for U6 players should not exceed an hour. Also a reminder that many short drink breaks rather than the "half-time" notion is far more beneficial to the players physically and keeps your training session moving along. Here are some other items that should be included in a training session.

Start with a brief warm-up of some kind. A body movement activity with intermittent static stretching is appropriate. When possible, have them stretch with the ball. A good ballet instructor can give you insights as to the benefits of stretching before active, physical participation.

Follow the warm-up with a 1v1 kind of competition. Not a 1v1 soccer match, but rather a golf game or a game in which each player knocks the ball between the cones or hits a target. After the ball is struck each player must jog to get his/her ball. This keeps them in motion.

Move into "Soccermastics" or ball gymnastics. This means to have each player do all kinds of things with their ball. Throw it up in the air and catch it with their hands, roll it between their feet and around their body, carry it with no hands on the back of their neck, sit on the ground and keep the ball up with their feet and then their hands, dribble the ball on the ground with just the knees, etc., etc., etc. As many ball touches with as many parts of the body as possible.

Now get some side games going where every player is involved, i.e. if you have 8 players then the game should be 4v4, 2v2 (be sure to switch every 5 minutes or so).

Be sure to spend time having everybody shoot on goal, a regular goal if possible or cones where you have no goal. Every player must get chances to shoot on goal.

Finish on time. This is essential if the players are really into it, cut at that point and you will get an enthusiastic return.