

Champions Soccer Training U8 Coaching Guide

Introduction

Welcome to coaching youth soccer and THANK YOU for volunteering your time to coach this season! This guide will provide you with age group information and practice material in an effort to provide guidance and ideas for a successful 2016 season! If you have any questions, have a particular concern for your team, or need new drill ideas please do not hesitate to contact Head Trainer, Ali Andrzejewski at CoachAli.ChampionsSoccer@gmail.com. You may also contact your team's assigned trainer!

Main Focus

At the U8 age group, players are becoming more coordinated and better able to acquire skills, as well as better able to understand the game. Although the kids are more capable to do drills, it is important to have a good blend of skills and fun so that the players leave every practice with a positive, fun experience. The main focus for this age group is to improve foot skills, passing and trapping, and introduce shooting. The key to engaging the kids in skills exercises is to make every exercise a competition. This will also help teach the players about competition and help them mentally prepare for the game.

From clinic to U8, coaching focus should shift from encouragement to encouragement and expectation. Let players know that you expect them to work hard, be resilient, be positive, help their teammates, cooperate, etc.

What to Expect...

Many parents are concerned that their children are “not aggressive enough”. However, this is typical for this age group. While some children have the natural aggression, others need to build confidence and understand competition in order to foster aggressiveness on the field. This is why playing competitive drills at practice can be so beneficial!

Competition does not always mean “against teammates” it could be against yourself. In an environment with a big mix of skill levels it is important to have drills where the kids can compete only against themselves to help prevent the anxiety of playing against a more advanced players. In cases where there opposing teams, the key is to make sure the teams are balanced!

Order of Practice:

- 1) Begin practice with a warm up jog and stretch, teaching the kids the important soccer muscles: Calves (Put the ball of the foot on a soccer ball

with someone doing the same thing from the other side to balance out), Hamstrings (Touch Toes), Quadriceps (Hold foot to buttox), Hip Flexor (Lunge and lean back), and Groin (Butter Fly Stretch)

- 2) 1 Dribbling Skills drill
- 3) 1 Volleying OR Passing and Trapping (with the Inside of the foot)
- 4) 1 or 2 Fun Games to practice skills
- 5) Shooting Game (optional- not for every practice)
- 6) Scrimmage

Skills

- Lunge Fake: Lunge wide to the right side of the ball and then use the outside of the left foot to go the other way (or vice versa)
 - Stepmover Fake: Step around the ball from the inside to the outside of the ball with the right foot ending wide to the right side of the ball and then use the outside of the left foot to go the other way (or vice versa)
 - Pull-Back Turn: Step on the top of the ball with the bottom of the foot and pull the ball straight back
 - Passing and trapping with the inside of the foot
 - Volleys with the inside of the foot
- Toss the ball to the foot and volley it back to the hands of the server with the inside of the foot keeping the **ANKLE LOCKED** and **TOE POINTED UP**
- Volleys with the laces
 - Toss the ball to the foot and volley it back to the hands of the server with the inside of the foot keeping the **ANKLE LOCKED** and **TOE POINTED DOWN**
- Shooting
 - At close distances shoot with the inside of the foot just like a pass
 - Toe up, ankle locked just like inside volleys.
 - From farther distances shoot with the laces
 - Toe down, ankle locked just like laces volleys.
 - Kick the ball and land on to the shooting foot like a “Hop” onto the shooting foot
 - Make sure players are still facing the target **AFTER** the shot

Skills Drills

- Circle Dribbling

- Have players dribble inside the circle as you call different cues like, “Pull-Back Turn!” “Right Foot only!” “Left foot only!” “Lunge fake!”
- Zig-Zag Dribbling
 - Set up the cones in a zig zag and have the players dribble around the cones in a zig zag only using one foot. Have them practice a few times with only their right foot and then a few times with only their left foot. Demonstrate the drill in the beginning to ensure the players understand.
 - Players can dribble through the zig zag and then straight back for a relay race.
 - The emphasis with this is to dribble with both the INSIDE and the OUTSIDE of the foot. The outside of the foot is a very difficult skill for children to acquire and this is the perfect age to BEGIN to introduce it.
- Suicide Relay Races
 - Set up 3 lines 10 yards apart using lines on the field and cones.
 - Set up Players in groups of 2-4 players and do relay races practicing the pull-back turn, inside cut, outside cut, and stepover turn.
- Circle Passing/Volleys
 - Half of the players outside the circle with a ball, half the players inside the circle without a ball. Players inside the circle run to different players on the outside receiving a pass, settling the ball, passing the ball back and then running to a new player.
 - Make this a competition by seeing who can get the most passes in 1 minute
 - Work on different types of passing each round
 - All right foot, All left foot, 2-touches (trap and pass), 1 touch (pass right away on first touch)
 - To do volleys have players on the outside pick the ball up in hand and toss it to the players as they tun up to them. Players volley the ball back to the servers hands.
 - Work on volleys with the inside and laces
- Partner Passing
 - Have players partner up and practice all right foot passes and all left foot passes from various distances.
 - For example, set players up 7 yards apart and see who can get to twenty 2-touch passes with the right foot first. Mix it up with rounds of all left and at different distances.

Games:

Knock Out

- Set up a circle and have everyone inside with a ball. The goal is to dribble around the circle and protect your ball while also trying to kick other's balls out. If your ball is kicked out of the circle, then you are out and must come sit down next to the coach. Last player left wins!

Sharks and Minnows

- Set up a circle and have everyone inside with a ball. Now select 2 children to be your "sharks" who will not have balls. When you say go, the children are now only trying to protect their balls from the sharks while the sharks go around trying to kick everyone's balls out. Make sure that everyone who wants a turn gets to be a shark.

Musical Soccer Balls

- Using the music on your phone or a small device, have the children dribble around with their ball until they hear the music stop. Once the music stops they must sit on their balls. The last one to sit down is out and must go sit next to the coach. Continue each round until there is only one player left. The one player left in the end is the winner!

World Cup

- Split the kids up into two teams. Everyone shoots on the same goal. Throw out 3 or 4 balls at a time and anyone from either team can score! The first team to get to 5 or 10 goals wins!
 - Shooting Game
 - Have all players sit on a line 15 yards from the goal. Players stand up, dribble and shoot based on what you say. For example, "If you have black shoes on, score!" "If you love the Baltimore Ravens, score!"
 - Shooter/Goalie
 - Set 2 teams up in lines 15 yards from the goal. A player from one team dribbles in and shoots and then becomes the goalkeeper for the next player (from the other team) dribbling down to score. Teams take turns sending players down to score. After a player shoots and then plays goalkeeper for the next shooter, they get a ball and get back in line.
 - First team to 10 goals wins! Count score out loud.

Scrimmage

- Basic Scrimmage

- Split the players into 2 teams and scrimmage for 15 minutes at the end of practice. Two 6-7 minute halves with a water break in the middle.
- Numbers Scrimmage
 - Have each team line up next to their goal with the assistant coaches at each goal. You stand on the center of the sideline and as you pass the ball into the middle you call out any number between 1 and 4. Whatever number you call out is the number of players that must come onto the field. Once the ball is scored or goes out of bounds the round is over and players return to their sides to get back in line.
- Small Scrimmages
 - Split players into 4 teams and have 2 smaller games played on 2 fields side-by-side.
- Fun Scrimmages
 - Set up a team on each side of the field. Toss a ball out into the middle of the field and call out different fun things like “Everyone with brown hair.” These players run on to the field and play until the ball goes out of bounds or in the goal then they return back to their side.

Formations for Games:

In 7v7 with 6 players on the field you can play with:

- 3 defenders (Left, Right, Center), 1 midfielder and 2 forwards (allow defenders to attack of the sides, but must get back on defense- center defender always stays back like the “anchor”)
- 2 defenders, 2 midfielders and 2 forwards (everyone stays true to their positions and areas of the field)
- 2 defenders, 3 midfielders (Left, Right, Center), 1 Forward

You must choose the formation depending on what your team’s strengths are. If you have a lot of aggressive attackers play a more offensive formation. If you do not have aggressive attackers or are more defensive-minded, then play with only 1 forward and keep your strengths in the defense and midfield.

Good luck with your team and HAVE FUN!