

Champions Soccer Training U12 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 U12 age group, players are becoming more coordinated and better able to acquire skills, as well as better able to understand the game. The main focus for this age group is to improve foot skills, passing and trapping, and 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.

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!

What to expect...

The games will begin to get much more intense and along with that parents will begin to get more intense. Encourage your team's parents to be supportive and encouraging and to allow you to do the coaching!

Players are at a crucial time in development and although it may seem that certain players are pulling away from the pack, this is a huge age for growth. Some players that may be at the bottom of the team this year could be at the top of the team the next year. Therefore, make sure to give all of your players good playing time so that they have the greatest opportunity for growth and fun!

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 Fun Games to practice skills
- 5) Choose 1 or 2 of the following 3 options
 - Shooting game
 - Possession Exercise
 - 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
 - Stepmover Turn: Step around the front of the ball and cross your legs, swing around with the other foot using the inside of the foot to touch the ball in the opposite direction.
 - 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

Tactics

Spacing and Positioning

- Players must provide 5 points of positioning at all times.
 - Width on the left side of the field
 - Width on the right side of the field
 - Height (A player that pushes high on the defense)
 - Depth (A player that drops back behind everyone)
 - Central Connector (A player that connects the game at the center of the field)
- Throughout possession exercises and games players tend to gravitate towards the ball, leaving their designated position. Forwards will drop back towards the midfield, defenders will push up too high, outside players will gravitate towards the center, central players will gravitate towards the outside.
 - The most important aspect to soccer as a “team sport” is that each player has a role to fill. Moving out of position leaves a part of the field open and vulnerable on defense or the team lacking in attack on offense.
 - Even if a player is only 5 or 10 yards out of position, the team is not maximizing the space on attack. Spreading out makes it difficult for the defense by creating too much space to cover. Condensing makes it easier for the defense to mark the attackers.

Decision Making

- The most difficult skill and the most important skill in the game of soccer is decision making. A smart player, is the most dangerous player on the field. Players must learn...
 - When to dribble or pass the ball.
 - Assessing the positioning of the opposing team on defense and offense
 - Helping to organize his or her own team on defense and offense
 - Knowing how to position oneself effectively on defense and offense.

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.
- Shuttle Line Passing
 - Set up teams of 4-6 players and put half of team in a line on one cone facing the other half of the team in a line on a cone 10 yards away. The player passes the ball to the opposite line and then runs to the

back of that line.

- First team to 30 passes wins
- Do various rounds like all right foot, all left foot, trap with right pass with left, trap with left pass with right
- 1v1 Defending and Attacking
 - Split into 2 teams. Once team starts in a line next to the goal. The other team starts in a line at a cone 25 yards out. Have the first team in line at the goal pass a ball out to the first person in the opposite line and then run out to defend. Once the defender wins the ball or the attacker shoots the ball the round is over and the next pair goes.
 - Play 2 rounds where each team gets an opportunity to play offense and defense. Each team has 3 minutes on offense to score as many goals as possible. The team with the most goals at the end of 2 rounds wins!

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.
- Power/Finesse
 - Two teams are set up in two lines, one on each corner of the "D" at the top of the box. Teams take turns sending a shooter forward. The coach stands with all of the ball on the post and passes 2 balls out to each shooter. One long ball for a long shot and then one short ball for a close shot. If the shooter misses both shots the shooter is out. If the shooter makes one shot the shooter stays in the game and if the shooter scores both shots then the shooter can challenge another player from the other team. The challenged player will then receive 2 shots and must make both in order to stay in the game.

- The game continues until one of the teams is out of players and then the team with remaining players wins!
- 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.
- Steal the Bacon
 - Give everyone on each team a number and then line the teams up on the opposite sidelines of the field. Toss the ball up in the middle and call out a number(s)!

Possession Exercises

1. Set up a box 10x10 steps. One player from each team on each side of the box and one player from each team in the middle. When the player in the middle passes the ball to a player on the outside that player takes the position on the side of the box while the player who received the ball dribbles into the box. The players on the outside work together with the player in the middle to keep the ball away from the other team.
 - Once the team improves with this exercise, add another player to the center to make the game 2v2 in the middle or 3v3 in the middle, etc. For each player that is added into the game the box increases by 5 yards. For 2v2 in the middle the box is 15x15 steps. For 3v3 the box is 20x20 steps, etc.
2. 3 team possession. Divide the group into 3 teams and play with 2 teams working together on offense and 1 team on defense. If the ball is passed out of bounds or the defensive team wins the ball then the team that lost

possession becomes the new team on defense. Keep score by seeing which team can get to 40 passes first.

- Size of the box is 20x20 for teams of 3, 25x25 for teams of 4, 35x35 for teams of 5, 40x40 for teams of 6-7 players.
 - Focus on condensing the game on defense and working together to win the ball back and expanding the game and spreading out on offense. With the defending team changing throughout the game there are many opportunities for the players to practice condensing and expanding the game.

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 11v11 with 10 players on the field you can play with:

- 4-4-2: 4 defenders, 4 midfielders, and 2 forwards
 - 1 of the center defenders drops back behind the other 3 as the “sweeper” to sweep behind the other 3 defenders on anything that gets through
- 4-5-1: 4 defenders, 5 midfielders and 1 forwards
 - A more defensive formation
- 4-3-3: 4 defenders, 3 center midfielders, and 3 forwards
 - 3-4-3: 3 defenders, 4 midfielders, 3 forwards

- A more offensive formation

2 Helpful Tips

- 1) Put a fast or physical person at sweeper
- 2) Put your smarter play-makers in the center midfield

Good luck with your team and HAVE FUN!