

AYSO Region 27

Notes to 8U coaches

Welcome to 8U coaching in AYSO Region 27 Saratoga Soccer and thank you so much for volunteering. Coaches are the heart of our program and without you, our kids don't play.

For many of you, this is your first coaching assignment and you have questions and concerns about what will be expected. We usually cover these points in our pre-season Team Assignment Night (TAN) meeting. However, since many of you either missed that event or did not step up to coach until after the event, this note should help answer many of your questions.

- Safe Haven and CDC Training:
 - AYSO Policies and Procedures requires that all coaches be certified for the age division for which they are coaching. This training protects both you, as a volunteer, and your players. All coaches must have AYSO Safe Haven and CDC Concussion training. These are provided for free at AYSO University (AYSOU). To get to AYSOU, login into your account on our Website and click on the AYSOU tab. That takes you to AYSOU where you click on the "Login" button at the top right. Your login credentials for AYSOU are the same as for our Website so you should simply get logged in automatically. Once logged in, choose the item labeled "My Courses". This will hold all the courses that you have already taken plus access to the "free" courses. Click on "AYSO Safe Haven" and "CDC: Concussion Course" to complete those courses. They should take about an hour (or less) each.
 - Related to player safety are your player forms. These are the registration forms that were electronically signed by the parents when their player was registered. These forms allow you and other health care providers to treat the child for possible injury in the absence of the parent. This provides legal protection for you, the volunteer, and rapid response for the child in the unlikely event of a serious injury. These forms are sent to you electronically and MUST be printed out and carried with you at all times. We suggest printing multiple copies to keep one with your coach gear and, perhaps, another copy in your car so that you KNOW they are always available if needed.
- 8U Coach Training:
 - You can take 8U Coach training online as well from AYSOU. These classes are not "free" in that they include materials that cost AYSO money, so we need to reimburse AYSO for them. To do that, you click on the eCommerce item on AYSOU and choose "Products". From there, select the "8U Coaching Training Course". When you get to the checkout phase where you pay, one of the entries is a "Gift Voucher". We have secured vouchers for you so that the region covers the cost. Please use the voucher code: "SNW5EAAXPG4UXMLF". If this fails for any reason, contact our Regional Coach Administrator at: coach@ayso27.org to get an alternate voucher code.
 - In addition to the online training, the region provides coach mentoring via UK International. UKI is an AYSO sanctioned partner that is trained in the AYSO curriculum and AYSO philosophies. They are there to help you become a better coach. They can offer guidance on training games, suggest session plan improvements and observe your training sessions to help you learn if what you are doing is working and what could be better. We try to arrange training sessions for 8U in blocks so that teams are together. That way you can meet the other 8U coaches and learn from each other. It also means that we can supply an 8U UK mentor for every one of your sessions to offer you guidance.
- 8U Game Play:
 - Once you take the online training, you should have an understanding of the simplifications we make for 8U. The AYSO accredited coaching curriculum is a sound

program which is built around the best ways to teach the game to kids of all ages as they develop. Please stay within the curriculum as it is well thought out to match the emotional and physical skills for the players of this age group. We have simplified the game at this age level in the following ways:

- The focus is on basic mechanical skills, not game tactics, so do not concern yourself about positioning or formations. You may choose to align the players in some fashion to help, but do not get frustrated when they do not really grasp the concept of a formation. AYSO does not even teach that until the 12U level.
 - We target 4v4 play. This is called “short-sided” play. AYSO has used short-sided play for decades as part of its curriculum. This has now been adopted by USSF and recommended for all soccer instruction. However, in some cases, such as when we do not have enough coaches for all of the players who want to play, we will defer to 5v5 play. This allows more players per team while maintaining a standard of $\frac{3}{4}$ play (for most of the players) for each player in a game.
 - There are no goalkeepers in 8U. We want to encourage the players to kick at the goal and succeed at scoring. This reinforces frequent shots at goal and improves kicking skills. Also, at this age group, goalkeepers are not physically ready to handle goalkeeping skills and the emotional aspect of letting in a goal.
 - There is no offside.
 - There are no penalty kicks.
 - There are no direct free kicks, only indirect free kicks. This means that the ball must be played by another player before it can legally go into the goal. If it does, without being touched by another player, the restart is a goal kick.
 - There is no penalty area. When the ball goes over the goal line the restart is a goal kick. Place the ball anywhere within the goal area and kick it to restart play.
 - There are corner kicks. When the ball goes over the goal line (and not in the goal) last touched by the defending team, then we place the ball at the corner of the touchline and goal line. The attacking team kicks it into play from there.
 - There are no throw-ins. When the ball goes “into touch”, that is, the entire ball goes out of play across the touchline (often incorrectly called the sideline), the team opposite of the one that played it “out of bounds” restarts by kicking the ball back into play from outside the touchline. 8U rules allow the player to choose to dribble it back into play instead of passing it in, but in our Region we discourage that because we do not want to teach “double touch” as a restart. We just have to unteach it later. However, if a player does dribble it back into play, don’t stop play, let them go. Touches are important, and you can work on that later in your training sessions. You can allow throw-ins if you like although we will not be worried about taking them correctly. We will instruct Game Monitors to not worry about poor throw-ins. The idea is to restart play quickly. If you do allow throw-ins and you see them being done poorly, either discontinue using them or work to teach them to be done properly in your training sessions.
- Game Day:
 - Our 8U divisions will all play only other teams within AYSO Region 27. Your game schedule will be found on your Blue Sombrero Team page.
 - All 8U games are played on Fields 1 and 2 at Congress Springs Park. Note that each field is divided into 2 8U fields. This is to support our new 8U game format.
 - Here is the format for ALL 8U games this Fall:
 - Since we play 4v4 an ideal team size in 8U is 5 players so that each player plays $\frac{3}{4}$ of every game. However, this small number of players is difficult to manage if a player or 2 cannot make a game or training sessions. It is also impossible to properly balance the teams.
 - Therefore, all 8U Teams are “Double-sized”. There 10 or more players per team and 2 coaches per team. This allows for a coach being unavailable occasionally for a training session and still allows for useful training sessions should a couple players be missing.
 - The 8U Game schedule shows your 8U team playing your opponent at either Field 1 or Field 2. These fields are divided into 2 8U fields.

- At the game, you divide your team up into 2 4v4 squads. They will play a similarly divided squad from your opponent. This means that even if a few players are missing you can usually still play 4v4.
 - One coach takes the “A” squad and the other coach watches over the “B” squad. In the event that a coach is unavailable he/she can keep an eye on one game and a parent can watch over the other and the coach can go back and forth to observe where needed.
 - The Team’s 8U Monitors can watch over each squad game to make sure the players are safe and basic rules are followed. This leaves the coaches free to observe and coach.
 - Assuming that you have subs, you can sub them into either squad as needed.
 - At half time you can shuffle players across the squads to help balance things out. Sometimes you may have a strong player who is dominating one of the games. If so, you may switch him/her to the other squad for the second half. Or, if you are being dominated, you may want to adjust your players to improve your play against a stronger opponent.
 - The focus here is simply on giving the players some playing time. They will learn by playing. They will not respond that much to attempts to apply tactics so please do not get upset if they “fail to pass” or “don’t hold position”. Instead, observe their movements, their dribbling, their passing (when they do try to pass) and encourage and reinforce the good when you see it. And when you observe weaknesses such as limited use of the foot during dribbling, make a note to work on that in your training sessions.
 - Remember, we don’t track scores because it is not the goal at this age level.
- Games or training are subject to field closures due to rain or other unexpected events. Always check the field status from our Website: “Info->Field Status”. Field status is updated when the status changes. That means that if it says “Closed” it is closed until we re-open it. We do not update the status constantly, only when it changes. We check the fields on game days in the early morning, so the status should be reset by 7:00 AM if it is going to change. If a field is closed during the day, it remains closed for the entire day. It will not reopen.
- If a game is canceled because of a field closure, the game is not replayed. The schedule remains the same and the game is simply missed.
- Also, please use the Field Status page to determine if fields are open for trainings (practices). Again, if the field says “Closed” it remains closed until the status changes.
- Officials:
 - There are certified regional referees (or higher) who may sign up to referee your 8U games. However, since the game is simplified, referees do not often sign up for 8U games. If one does, that’s great and he/she will arrive in a referee uniform and manage the entire game.
 - Most games will not have a referee and often the coaches simply grab a whistle and help manage the game. While this works fine, in our region we are trying a new idea to allow the coaches to focus as coaches. We are experimenting with a new volunteer role called the “Monitor”.
 - Every 8U team will name one of its parents as a volunteer “Monitor”. It should NOT be the coach as the coach is already committed to the development of his/her players. The volunteer will be provided some simple training to become familiar with 8U play (as outlined above) to help manage the game and relieve the coaches from this task. The training will be provided by the Region and will last only about 2 hours. It will be scheduled once we get the names of all of the Monitors from the Coaches or Team Parents.
 - If the team has a parent volunteer who is already a certified referee, that is fine and counts as the “Monitor” with the following requirement. To count as the Monitor, the parent referee MUST agree to be present at their player’s 8U game and will act as the referee for that game.
 - To identify your team’s Monitor volunteer, please send an email to rra@ayso27.org. We will contact the Monitors to arrange for the training. With one Monitor per team, everyone is assured that there will be a person there to help manage the game and relieve the coaches to the job of coaching their players.

- Equipment:
 - The region provides uniforms for all of your players. You should look to your Team Parent to coordinate with our equipment team to arrange to get your uniforms and coaching “package”. If you need something, contact the coach team at coach@ayso27.org and they will arrange to get you what you are missing.
 - Most teams should have a couple Team Parents assigned but not every team has two. If you do not see two on your roster, work with your parents to find one or two Team Parents. We recommend two Team Parents per 8U team because we split the teams in 1 squads and it is good to make sure that each squad gets their refreshments at the breaks. If you have only one Team Parent that will probably be OK as they can ask another parent to help on Game Days. Their job is to offload logistical tasks from you so that you can focus on coaching. If you add one from your parents, that new Team Parent MUST contact our Team Parent coordinator right away. That person is Iyer Venkatesan and can be contacted at: vsirish@yahoo.com.
 - The region provides you with the equipment to help you with your team. We will provide you with some game balls for games, a ball net to carry your gear, a first aid kit “just in case”, a ball pump and some cones for marking out training games.
 - The coach admin team (coach@ayso27.org) will provide you with game cards. The game card lists all the players on your team and it is used to help track player time and to ensure that players get to play $\frac{3}{4}$ of every game. Always list the players on the card in order of jersey number.
 - Since we break the teams into 2 squads, you do NOT need 2 game cards. One will be sufficient. Simply track the playing quarters for both squads onto the single card. This makes it easier to swap players at half time.
- Training Sessions:
 - At 8U we train our players once a week. Everyone calls them “practices”, but the correct term is “training”. That is because, at your sessions, you are “teaching” new skills or techniques. Practice is something that your players should do outside of training sessions on their own. Yes, I know that almost no one actually practices outside of the weekly sessions, but that is not a good thing. We want to encourage players to play with their ball outside of your training sessions to get better at their technical skills.
 - To schedule your training session, please contact Andrew McRobbie, who coordinates with the UK coaches to try and get a UK coach to every one of your sessions. Andrew can be reached at: coachandrewmcrobbie@icloud.com.

This information should cover the questions that you, as a new 8U coach might have. If you do have further questions, please contact the coach administrative team at coach@ayso27.org.

And thanks again for volunteering!!

Charlie Bedard
(Region 27, Regional Commissioner)