



Lake Wylie Athletic Association

U6 Coaching Manual

U6 players should be having fun with the ball by playing games/activities that encourage the children to want the ball at their feet, while learning new skills.

At this age, it is important to keep one player per ball. We want to give each player plenty of time with the ball at their feet with added encouragement, so they don't fear the ball. Encourage them to dribble, dribble and dribble.

- Sessions need to be organized where there are multiple goals and balls for the players to work with. Play games where they can change direction and see how fast they run. Let them deal with balls on the ground and with bouncing balls.
- Developing skill is about a love affair between the player and ball; it is not about coaching. So give them activities that are fun and that promote using the ball at their feet.
- NO LINES, NO LAPS, AND NO LECTURES!
- Get the players started in activities quickly so they don't have time to chat with one another and goof off. Stay positive with each players and encourage them, so they can build confidence at these ages with the ball.
- Finish training sessions playing 1 v 1, 2 v 2, or 3 v 3. Use multiple balls in the games too.

Get them in, active, and started as quickly as possible, so they enjoy the exercised and have fun!

Characteristics of Under-6 children:

- Short attention span.
- Most are individually oriented (me, my, mine).
- Activities based on characteristics should be individually based.
- Constantly in motion.
- Go flat out.*
- Psychologically easily bruised.
- Little or no concern for team activities.
- Physical and psychological development for boys and girls quite similar.
- Eye/hand or eye/foot coordination most primitive.
- Love to run and jump.
- Prefer large soft balls and Nerf balls.
- Catching skills not developed.
- Can balance on good foot.

*This refers to their racing about in games until complete exhaustion sets in, at which point they stop, breathe, and then restart at a torrid pace again.

Helpful Hints to Coaching Youth Soccer

What are you trying to do?

It is comparatively easy to construct a team of young soccer players who can win matches. All you have to do is teach them the basics, ensure they obey your instructions to the letter and (most importantly) don't let them think for themselves.

However, here are some suggestions:

- A. Encourage your players to recognize and solve the challenges of the game on their own and
- B. Be as concerned with developing their life skills as their soccer ability.

Following such a policy will, in the short term, mean that you will lose matches that you could have won. However, in the long term you will produce a set of clever, confident players who can go out and win a game without being told what to do. And more importantly, they will enjoy their soccer regardless of the match result.

Do I need any special attributes to be a good youth soccer coach?

Of vital importance is the coach's personality and character. Working with children requires patience, kindness and respect.

How should I go about it?

The most fundamental skill in soccer is individual mastery of the ball and the creativity that comes with it. This should be a priority in training and games, especially in the early years. As this skill is mastered, the rest of the game becomes easy - both to teach and to learn.

Practices should be built around facilitating the development of the skills necessary to move and control the ball well. As these individual skills and the creativity to make them come alive in the game are developed to a level of competence, the finer points, first of passing skill and later of team organization can be taught.

Some tips:

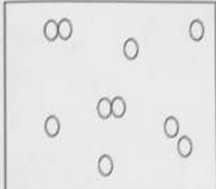
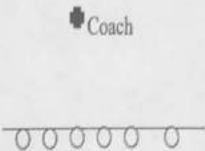
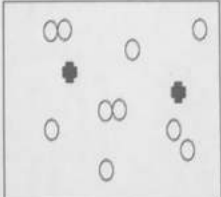
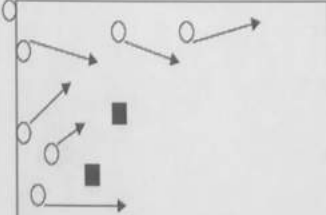
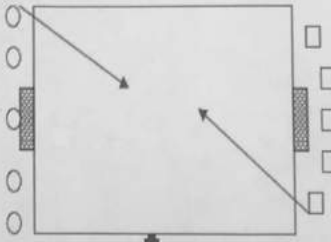
Set up situations where the players can learn by playing the game. Avoid the three Ls - lines, laps and lectures - and remember that the game is the best teacher for young players. This does not mean to scrimmage the entire practice, but to use "game" format in everything we do. Try dribbling the ball while there are two taggers trying to tag you?

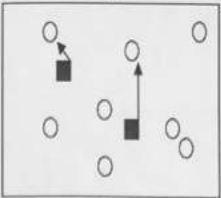
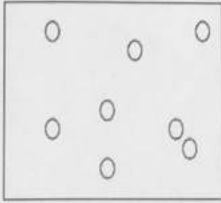
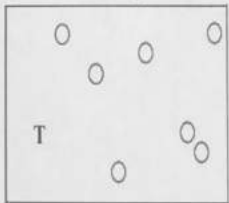
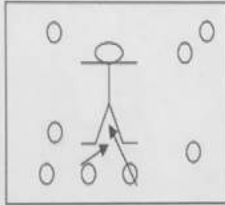
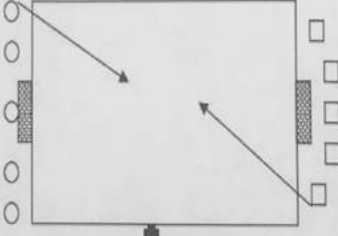
Communication is key. Coaches can often be more helpful to a young player's development by organizing less, saying less and allowing the players to do more. Set up a game and let the kids play. Keep most of your comments for before and after practice and during breaks. Comments should be kept

short and simple. Be comfortable organizing a session that uses small sided games 3v3, 4v4. Communicate your coaching philosophy and expectations to parents and players at an early stage.

- 1) Teaching and learning the game of soccer is a process: make your goals seasonal, as well as daily and weekly. Often, at the younger ages, the developmental efforts of one season are not noticeable in children until sometime in the next season.
- 2) Set age-appropriate goals i.e., know what the child is able to do at that age.
- 3) From a developmental standpoint, the young ages are the best ones for learning skills. Spend the time now encouraging this growth. By the age of 17 the capacity to pick up new motor skills begins to wane, while the ability to conceptualize team organization, tactics and strategy increases. As a coach, work with these strengths, not against them.
- 4) Do not expect games and practices to look like professional soccer. If you want to use high level soccer as a teaching tool, focus on the individual skill level of professional players, not their organization. Give your players opportunities to see what older, more skilled players, i.e, HS player or college player or an older brother or sister, can do with the ball. On occasion, invite some of these players to participate in your practice. Use them to model good soccer qualities. Let your players learn by experiencing the game alongside or against these better players. Older players can also be used as "neutral players." In this case, the neutral player helps whichever team has the ball i.e. he or she never defends.
- 5) Recognize and understand how the skills learned at each age are connected to preparing the player to move into the next phase of his or her development. Know what the next level of play is, and the general tools that your players should carry with them as they move on. Help them to be prepared.
- 6) Allow your players to develop these requisite skills in an environment where the main goal is to have fun with the ball and to demonstrate ball control.
- 7) The value of matches is that they provide youngsters with an opportunity to showcase their newly acquired skill and creativity. It is always nice to win, however that should not be your only focus at the younger age groups.
- 8) Have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish at practice. Create exercises/games that replicate and repeat the movements and situations that are found in soccer and that allow the player to grow comfortable and confident with the ball at his or her feet. Encourage players to move with the ball at his or her feet and deal with boundaries, opponents, teammates and goals. Keep in mind that soccer is a pretty simple game. If you're involved in soccer long enough, you begin to realize that all the many little exercises that work are really just variations on the same basic concepts. As long as the parameters that you have established in your exercises/small-sided games are true to soccer (goals for scoring and defending), creates the problems that you want the kids to solve (protecting the ball while dribbling, etc.), and allows your players to be challenged and find some success, you're on the right track.
- 9) Don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best.
- 10) Remember that the game is the best teacher for the players. Coaches and parents should think of themselves more as facilitators, monitors, guides or even participants, to provide a rich environment for the kids to learn from and enjoy. Your coaching style is important.

Lesson plans provided by US Youth Soccer:

Activity	Diagram
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) Greetings Game</p> <p>All the players run around randomly inside a rectangle. The coach calls out various types of greetings, which each players then has to carry out with others: shake hands, high fives (one hand), high fives (other hand), shoulder to shoulder, back to back, etc.</p> <p>Progressions: Add dribbling.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity Red Light, Green Light</p> <p>All the players start on a designated line with the coach about 15 yards away. With his back to the players the coach yells green light and the players try to dribble to the coach. When the coach yells red light he waits a moment and then turns his back to face the players. Anyone who is not stopped moving has to go back to where the person farthest away from the coach is.</p> <p>Progressions: Add a ball. The coach can move around to make the game more challenging.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity Ouch!</p> <p>Each player has a ball. The coach jogs around in a rectangle and the players try to kick their ball so that it hits the coach. The players get a point each time they hit the coach. The coach should yell "ouch" each time they are hit to make the game more exciting.</p> <p>Progressions: The coach can stop for three seconds or vary how fast they are moving depending on the level of the players. Specify how the players must strike the ball (laces, one foot, other foot)</p>	
<p>4th Activity Frog Attack</p> <p>The game takes place in a rectangle; all the players start off on one side of the rectangle and try to get to the other side. Two players who are frogs must hop and try to tag the other players as they try to get to the other line. When a player is tagged they become a frog as well. Play until only two children are left. Those children become the frogs for the next game.</p> <p>Progressions: Add a ball (for the players, not the frogs)</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) Disney Game</p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.</p> <p>Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	

Activity	Diagram
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) Identifiers</p> <p>All the players run around in a rectangle at random. The coach calls out the identifier or a group of players or individual players, who then become hunters. The hunters see who can tag the most players within one minute. The identifiers could be: color of the players' vests, hair color, T-shirt color, first letter of the players' names, etc.</p> <p>Progressions: Everyone has a ball.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity Dog and Master</p> <p>Each player (master) dribbles with a ball (dog). The coach calls out various commands: Keep him on a short leash (dribble keeping the ball close), the dog runs away and then is caught by his master (kick ball and run after it, catching it before it stops rolling), run with the dog, walkers swap dogs, etc.</p> <p>Progressions: Introduce tall cones as trees that the masters have to keep their dogs away from or an evil dog catcher that kicks dogs out of the game. The players have to see a park ranger before coming back in.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity Tigers in the Jungle</p> <p>Each child chooses to be a type of animal that lives in the jungle and makes the sound of that animal. Only tigers are not allowed. The tiger is going to kick the other animals' balls into the surrounding alligator infested swamp. When an animal gets their ball kicked away they have to doge the alligators, go get their ball, and stand holding the ball over their head making their animal noise. Another animal can unfreeze them by dribbling the ball through the frozen animals legs.</p> <p>Progressions: Animals dribble using only left foot, outside of feet, etc.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Swamp</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">T</p>
<p>4th Activity Tunnel Soccer</p> <p>Each player has a ball. The coach has no ball but moves about the field with the players. From time to time the coach stops and spreads his legs to form a tunnel. The players dribble after him and try to shoot through the tunnel whenever he stops. After three shots or so the coach moves on again. Who can score the most points in one minute?</p> <p>Progressions: The coach specifies how the players must kick the ball (laces, inside of foot).</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) Disney Game</p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.</p> <p>Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	

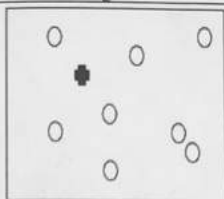
Activity

Diagram

1st Activity (warm-up) *I Can, Can You?*

Coach asks players, "I can do something without the ball, can you?" At this point the coach does some sort of physical movement without the ball (skip, walk and clap hands through legs, etc). After the coach does several examples he should ask the players if they have any suggestions and allow them to demonstrate.

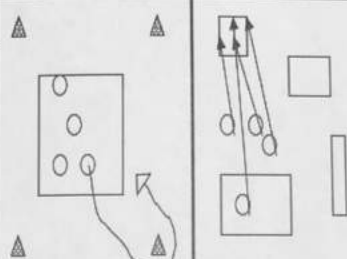
Progressions: Introduce the ball and have them move it with their hands, then have them play with the ball on the ground.



2nd Activity *Around the World*

Set out four or five cones on the perimeter of a large area. Ask the children for names of towns in their area. Assign each cone a town name. As the players dribble in the area the coach calls out a town name and the players must dribble around that cone and then return to dribbling in the area.

Progressions: This can be started without balls until the children get used to the game. Also, instead of having the cones there could be multiple small grids, each a different size. The children would have to dribble with speed when going from one town to the next.



3rd Activity *Cross the Ohio River*

The players go boating (run) from one shore (a line) to another shore. In the river between there are piranhas (start off with two) that try to tag the boaters. If tagged, the boaters either become a piranha as well or the two can switch places.

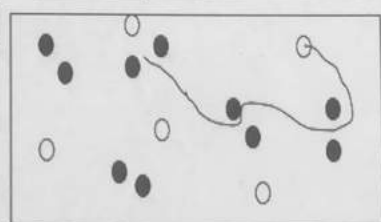
Progressions: Add a ball for the boaters.



4th Activity *Goal Chase*

The coach sets up several small goals or gates (two cones a yard apart) inside a larger area. There should be at least one or two more gates than there are players. Have the players start running around; on the coaches signal the players try to run through as many gates as possible, keeping track of how many. Play for 30 seconds at a time.

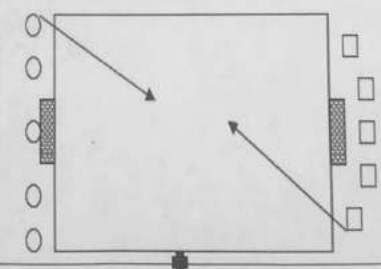
Progressions: Each player has a ball.



5th Activity (the game) *Disney Game*

Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.

Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.



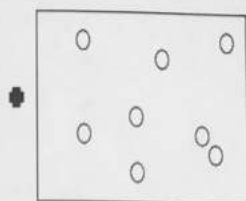
Activity

Diagram

1st Activity (warm-up) *Body Part Dribble*

Each player has a ball in an area. The coach yells out a body part and the players must move the ball with that body part. Examples include: hands, elbows, shoulders, feet, buttocks, patella (see what they do, it should be the knee).

Progressions: Introduce tick-tock (passing the ball between the inside of the left foot and the inside of the right foot back and forth) and tap dance (lightly touch the ball with the bottom of the right foot and then the bottom of the left foot, the ball should not move).



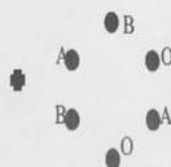
2nd Activity *Fruit Salad*

The coach makes a circle with cones; each player needs to stand by a cone (there should not be any extra cones, just one for each player).

The coach assigns a fruit name to each player (apple, orange, banana).

The coach calls out a fruit name and any player who has that fruit name must run to a different cone. When the coach yells fruit salad every player must run to a different cone.

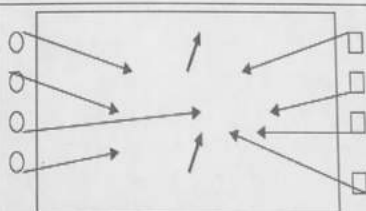
Progressions: Add a ball for each player.



3rd Activity *Cross the Bridge*

Divide the players into two groups, one on each endline of a field. Mark the centerline with a flag on each sideline, this is the bridge. On the coaches command the teams switch places, dribbling across the bridge. Which team can switch places the fastest?

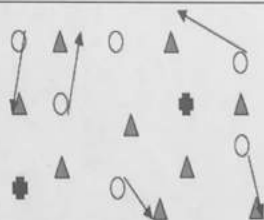
Progressions: Slide the cones towards the center of the field to make the bridge shorter. Add a bridge keeper to kick balls away.



4th Activity *Bingo*

A number of tall cones are distributed throughout the field. Two coaches are replacers. Each player has a ball. The players dribble around and try to knock down as many cones as they can, yelling "bingo" as they do so. The coaches stand the cones back up immediately. Who can get the most bingos?

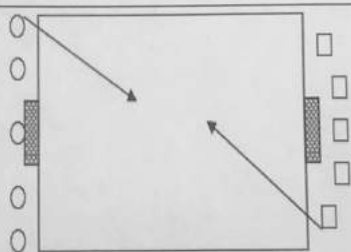
Progressions: Must be three yards away to knock a cone over, use the laces to strike the ball.



5th Activity (the game) *Disney Game*



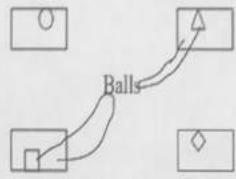
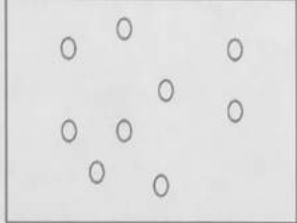
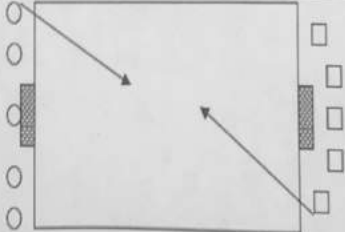
Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.

Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.



Activity

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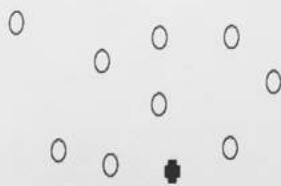
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) Ball Retrieval</p> <p>The coach tosses the ball for each player to bring back with his or her hands, elbow, forehead, etc. Have all the players gather closely around you, but not in a line. Each one hands you their ball, which you toss randomly into an open area where they have to go retrieve it and bring it back to you in the manner that you specify as quickly as possible. Progressions: Bring the ball back with two hands, one hand and one forehead, right foot only, etc. The coach should move around the area.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity Traffic Officer</p> <p>Set up four small grids in a large area. Have a group of players running around in each grid. The coach (traffic officer) stands in the middle of the large area and directs the traffic (players) where to go. Have a different colored vest for each group of players. Progressions: Add a ball for each player. Have the different grids be different sizes. Send multiple groups to the same grid. Dribble with outside of feet only.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity Steal the Bacon</p> <p>Set up a square and have one player stand at each corner. A supply of balls should be in the middle of the square. On the coaches command the players must run to the middle and grab balls with their hands and take them back to their corner. After all the balls are gone from the middle the players can take balls from other corners (no one can defend their own goal). Progressions: Players must dribble the balls.</p>	
<p>4th Activity Bumper Cars</p> <p>All players dribble a ball around in an area. Each player tries to kick his or her ball and have it hit another player's ball. If they hit someone else's ball they get a point. Progressions: Specify how players must kick the ball (laces, inside of foot).</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) Disney Game</p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1. Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	

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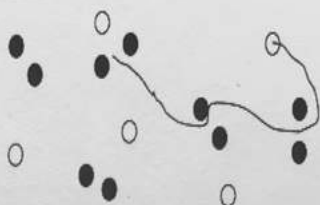
1st Activity (warm-up) *Musical Balls*

Everyone has a ball and is dribbling. The coach should sing or play music. When the music stops everyone stops dribbling and goes to find another ball. After a while, the coach can take a ball away each time. Whoever does not get to a ball must go report to the coach. The player should have to do some sort of task (Tick tock, tap dance, something with the ball) before they can get back in.
Comments: Tell them they will get their ball back at the end.



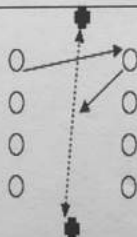
2nd Activity *Dribbling Maze*

The coach sets up several small goals or gates (two cones a yard apart) inside a larger area. There should be at least one or two more gates than there are players. Have the players start running around; on the coaches signal the players try to run through as many gates as possible, keeping track of how many. Play for 30 seconds at a time.
Progressions: Each player has a ball.



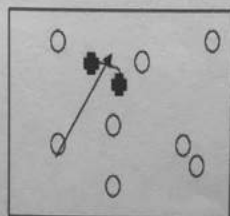
3rd Activity *Torpedo*

Have the players form two teams and face each other. Everyone on one of the teams needs a ball. Two coaches should pass the ball between the two teams. The players with the balls try to pass their ball (torpedo) to hit the ball the coaches are passing. If the player misses the person standing across from them collects the ball and tries to hit the coaches ball on the next pass.
Progressions: Kick with the laces, kick using a specific foot.



4th Activity *Moving Targets*

Everyone has a ball and is dribbling in an area. Two coaches hold a practice vest between them, forming a goal. The players must try to kick their ball through the goal. However, the coaches should move around into open space so that the players have to dribble around and kick their ball through a moving target.



5th Activity (the game) *Disney Game*

Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.

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