

Vigo County Youth Soccer Association
Age Group Curriculum
Mike Aycock, Director of Coaching

Preamble

This curriculum is intended to give us broad guidelines that are consistent with reasonable, forward-looking goals for children of different ages that we serve. The first thing we should remember is that every child is an individual and deserves to be treated as such. The next thing we should remember is that every child deserves to have fun, to be respected as a person, and to be allowed to play *as a child*, not as an adult *until adult expectations are appropriate*. If we focus on player development that is appropriate to the child, we will have the other successes we seek. This is consistent with the stated mission of VCYSA.

For this reason, we have included some broad goals to remind ourselves of the larger picture of development that we hope to foster with the world's greatest game. Under these broad goals, though, we have suggested the kinds of activities that we believe can foster the player development we want for our kids. These guidelines are *flexible* and will remain under review as we test them, become better at expressing them to each other, and use them. They are also condensed. Some ideas are left understood. For example, as possession becomes a value for players and coaches, and is listed as such in the curriculum, it is *understood* that coaches will apply the simple principles of width and depth appropriately with their players.

Resources

VCYSA website will feature links and example exercises

<http://www.vcysa.org>

Indiana Soccer website has both links and access to a nice collection of CDs, tapes, and books, as well as the excellent features in the "Coaching" menu, from articles to example sessions.

<http://www.soccerindiana.org>

Director of Coaching Mike Aycock, *Director of Player Development* Kyle Baker are available for consultation to rec and travel coaches

Mike - maycock@smwc.edu

Kyle - mendell.baker@gmail.com

Courses: We highly recommend appropriate coach training, some of which is entirely painless! Having taken the Youth Course at the national level, I can echo what so many top coaches around the country say: the Youth Course curriculum is the best thing that's come along in years for *any coach* because it teaches so much about how players develop. Coaches are urged to use clinics or symposium opportunities whenever they're available.

U6 & U8:	IYSA Youth Module I
U10 & U12:	IYSA Youth Module II, IYSA Youth Technical Course
U12 travel:	IYSA "E" Course
Middle school:	IYSA Youth Technical Course, IYSA "E" Course
U14 travel:	IYSA "E," "D" Courses
U16 travel:	IYSA "D," USYSA "C" Courses
Over 16:	IYSA "D" and higher

Under 4

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun playing with other kids (“I LOVE to come to soccer!”)

Cognitive: Hearing and implementing very basic directions

Overall Motor: Movement, balance, exploration

Technical: Running and kicking ball

Tactical: “The goal is that way.”

More specific direction for coaches:

The entire focus of this age group is to discover having fun playing soccer with other kids. Period. There should be very little structure in the play. Coaches can help children best by providing very simple, imaginative games and activities, but mostly by letting them play. (See Youth Module I for excellent hints in the way children develop and can be nurtured at this stage of life.) Be positive in relating to the kids. Praise.

Every child should have a ball whenever possible. They will not want to share and may not conceptualize that very well. They should have every chance possible to discover how the ball rolls and bounces and how to perform simple movements themselves. Don’t worry about rules or technique or that some activities have them touching the ball with their hands. They will learn the rules as they go and need to explore how their body works. Provide a number of activities, each of about 5 minutes or less, with breaks between.

Avoid: negative reinforcement, lines, complex or over-structured activities, activities that leave children out *even for a short time*

Appropriate activities might include:

Bring ball back to coach (according to directions)

Simon Says, or I Can Do This, Can You?

Monster Tag (Coach may have to be the Monster.)

Red Light, Green Light

Score Anywhere!

(In an area with cone goals all around it, each player with a ball, each player tries to score as many goals as she/he can in a given time frame.

Three minutes is a long time. Each player retrieves ball and goes on as needed.)

Cross the River

Braveheart

Flock of Geese

3v3 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
2. Clear, Concise, and Correct Information
3. Simple to Complex
4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
- Are the players ENGAGED?
- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Organizing training sessions

Coaches should attempt to plan training sessions around a single topic, moving from games that are more simple and have less pressure to games that are more complex. They should always end with some form of the game to two goals with even teams, probably small-sided. Many age-appropriate sessions are available in this section of the Indiana Soccer site.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: focus should be on 1/1.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 30 minutes to 40 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~3 minutes

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*. The *partial* exception for U6 is helping them by being on the field during matches. Try not to be so directive that you take the game away from them. It is still their game and their fun to go get the ball. It's a toy and all of them want it.

Under 6

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun playing with other kids (“I LOVE to come to soccer!”)

Cognitive: Hearing and implementing very basic directions

Overall Motor: Movement, balance, exploration

Technical: Running, kicking ball, dribbling

Tactical: “*Our* goal is that way.”

More specific direction for coaches:

The focus must remain having fun playing soccer. Children of 4, 5, and 6 are still at an age of imagination and motor exploration. The Youth Module I is the key learning tool for coaches of this age group. Coaches can introduce boundaries and how to restart the game when the ball goes outside those boundaries. In training, use a lot of maze games, as well as directional games.

As many activities as possible should have every child with a ball. With the exception of chances to shoot, almost every activity should feature dribbling. Do not expect much passing, even between pairs of pals. This is the time to start becoming comfortable with the ball at our feet. Games should use the imagination. Plan for many activities of short duration (3-10 minutes) with breaks in between. Find things to praise. Have as much fun as the kids are having.

Avoid: negative reinforcement, games that require too much passing or positions, activities that leave children out even for a short time

Appropriate activities might include:

Bring ball back to coach (according to directions)

Simon Says, or I Can Do This, What Can You Do?

Monster Tag

Everybody’s It

Cross the River

Flock of Geese

Red Light, Green Light

Gate dribbling

Goal on the Move

Hospital Tag

Follow the Leader

Duck Hunt

(Shooting exercises set up to keep every child active)

3v3 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
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3. Simple to Complex
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5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
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Organizing training sessions

Coaches should attempt to plan training sessions around a single topic, moving from games that are more simple and have less pressure to games that are more complex. They should always end with some form of the game to two goals with even teams, probably small-sided. Many age-appropriate sessions are available in this section of the Indiana Soccer site.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: focus should be on 1/1.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 30 minutes to 45 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~5 minutes

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*. The *partial* exception for U6 is helping them by being on the field during matches. Try not to be so directive that you take the game away from them. It is still their game and their fun to go get the ball. It's a toy and all of them want it.

Under 8

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun playing with other kids, including partner work

Cognitive: beginning recognition of time, space, movement

Overall Motor: Picking up pace and fluidity in movement; reading ball flight, roll

Technical: Dribbling, passing/receiving at least in pairs, some striking with laces

Tactical: "There are other people on the way to the goal."

More specific direction for coaches:

While every child still wants to have the maximum fun possible ("When do we scrimmage, Coach?"), at this age they begin to look beyond the difficult skill of just controlling the ball at their feet. They are ready to accept that they might pass to a friend, if not teammates, and begin to see other people and see advantages to passing. Capitalize on this development by doing some passing/receiving activities, *primarily as pairs*. Use games that keep the first touch live and emphasize movement.

Activities should still maximize touches, using multiple balls and games that either include everyone or use small numbers playing in groups. Coaches should now become more aware of the sequence of activities in every training session, moving from simple to complex, from low pressure with many repetitions toward the full pressure of the game. This is a subject treated in all the coaching courses. *Please* become familiar with it.

Avoid: negative reinforcement and the 3 L's: lines, laps, and lectures.

Appropriate activities might include:

Dribbling in grid; gates

Hospital Tag

Freeze Tag (Defrost Tag)

Pac-Man

Knockout (with the option to return to the grid after completing some task)

Passing in pairs:

Pass Through the Windows

Siamese Pac-Man

Pairs in grid, 4 corner goals, parents open/shut on coach's signal

Gates in the grid

Pairs in grid, one pair trying to win a ball and make another pair defend

Junkyard Soccer

Get Outta Here

Keeper's Nest

4v4 to 4 goals

4v4 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

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Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
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Organizing training sessions

Coaches should attempt to plan training sessions around a single topic, moving from games that are more simple and have less pressure to games that are more complex. They should always end with some form of the game to two goals with even teams, probably small-sided. Many age-appropriate sessions may be found at this section of the Indiana Soccer site.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: focus should be on 2/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 30 minutes to 60 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~10 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our players may need more work with:

- when dribbling, go right with the right foot, left with the left
- take a live, intentional first touch
- receive across the body when possible
- face the field, not the ball

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*.

Under 10 (both Recreational and Travel)

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, some self-motivation, identification with team, bits of responsibility

Cognitive: beginnings of tactical awareness (“why we do stuff”) and seeing more of the game situation

Overall Motor: Further pace and fluidity in movement; moves; technique

Technical: Dribbling, more passing/receiving, finishing, defending, some heading

Begin goalkeeping with multiple players

Tactical: “How can we get the ball, keep the ball, and make ‘em pay?”

More specific direction for coaches:

This can be thought of as a transitional age. Recreational and travel players should train similarly, with some differences in quality. While they are not yet ready for all the complexities of the game, players will be able to demonstrate beginning skills in most technical areas. They will be able to use a dribbling move to pass another player, make a pass to feet or to space, begin to receive balls out of the air and control them. They may play games in the back yard on their own. They will want to be responsible for their own equipment.

Coaches have two important jobs in this age: Nurture technical skill and introduce *simple* tactical concepts that help them succeed. I emphasize simple. Appropriate ideas are support angles for passing, stretching the field, and getting goalside to defend. As players gravitate toward defending, attacking, or distributing, give them time there, but let them try all roles. Let the diamond shape of 4v4 teach players the rudiments of tactics. Don’t impose a complex scheme of play. Don’t make defending a punishment.

Avoid: negative reinforcement and the 3 L’s: lines, laps, and lectures.

Appropriate activities might include:

Grid, gate dribbling

simple Coerver exercises

Pac-Man

Big Square, Small Square

3v3 line soccer

Sequence passing

Roxborough Square

English Passing, Dutch Passing

Get Outta Here

Team Knockout

4v2 Keepaway

Keepaway games played to target players

4-Cone Game

Shooting games with goals close together

World Cup

Games with “bumper” players on sides and attacking end line

4v4 games and 6v6 to 4 goals

6v6 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

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4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
- Are the players ENGAGED?
- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Progression method of organizing training sessions

Coaches at this level are expected to understand and use the progression method for planning training sessions. It is central to developing advanced players and is available in USSF and NSCAA coaching education curricula, as well as materials from Indiana Youth Soccer. Evaluations will address this basic part of the coach's preparation. For technical topics, activities should progress through three stages:

fundamental/warmup (many touches, low pressure, topic-related)

match-related activities (limited pressure, application in the game)

match condition (full pressure and transition, goal-to-goal, emphasizing topic)

For tactical topics, we would expect either individual to group to team progressions or a movement from free space to limited space to one goal with counterattack possibilities to two goals with even numbers and full transition.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: focus some on 3 or 4/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 45 minutes to 75 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~12 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our players may need more work with:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| when dribbling, cut more on the outside surface | face the field, not the ball |
| take a live, intentional first touch | keep feet live defending |
| receive across the body when possible | |
| for shots, strike center of the ball, toe down | |

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*.

Under 12 Recreational

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, self-motivation, team synergy about learning/improving, sporting behavior

Cognitive: solve problems in the game; *understand* “why we do _____”

Overall Motor: Early mastery of *some* techniques; “putting it together”

Technical: Some competence in all major technical areas, including flighted balls

Tactical: Possession, penetration, individual defending, some support

More specific direction for coaches:

This is the so-called “age of mastery.” It’s the time when most children first become clearly interested in how things work, how they can do something, why they might make certain choices on the field or play a given system. Goalkeeper specialists will emerge. In other words, it’s prime coaching/learning time.

Now the idea of building skill truly becomes important. They want to be able to dribble past another player or pass around another player, and may become frustrated if they don’t succeed. They care a little about doing things well and can judge better who are the most (and least) successful players. Coaching that provides a real change in their technique brings smiles and turns on light bulbs.

Similarly, they are ready to think about group shape, positions, combination play, and tactical ideas like changing the point of attack *for a reason*, not just because they’ve seen other players do it. Enjoy this age!

Avoid: negative reinforcement and the 3 L’s: lines, laps, and lectures.

Appropriate activities might include:

Grid, gate dribbling

Coerver exercises

Big Square, Small Square

Sequence passing

Roxborough Square

English Passing, Dutch Passing

Team Knockout

4v2 Keepaway

4v2 continuous in 2 zones (4v4 with only 2 defenders winning ball)

Keepaway games played to target players

4-Cone Game

Goal on the Move

Shooting games with goals close together

World Cup

Games with “bumper” players on sides and attacking end line

4v4 and 6v6 games to 4 goals

6v6 and 8v8 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
2. Clear, Concise, and Correct Information
3. Simple to Complex
4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
- Are the players ENGAGED?
- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Progression method of organizing training sessions

Coaches at this level are expected to understand and use the progression method for planning training sessions. It is central to developing advanced players and is available in USSF and NSCAA coaching education curricula, as well as materials from Indiana Youth Soccer. Evaluations will address this basic part of the coach's preparation. For technical topics, activities should progress through three stages:

fundamental/warmup (many touches, low pressure, topic-related)

match-related activities (limited pressure, application in the game)

match condition (full pressure and transition, goal-to-goal, emphasizing topic)

For tactical topics, we would expect either individual to group to team progressions or a movement from free space to limited space to one goal with counterattack possibilities to two goals with even numbers and full transition.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: focus on 4 to 6/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~15 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our players may need more work with:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| when dribbling, cut more on the outside surface | face the field, not the ball |
| take a live, intentional first touch | keep feet live defending |
| receive across the body when possible | defend forcing a direction |
| for shots, strike center of the ball, toe down | |

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*.

Under 12 Travel

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, self-motivation, team synergy about learning/improving, sporting behavior

Cognitive: Solve problems in the game; *understand* “why we do _____”

Overall Motor: Early mastery of technique; “putting it together”

Technical: Competence in all major technical areas, including flighted balls

Tactical: Possession, penetration, support in defending, some combination play

More specific direction for coaches:

This is the so-called “age of mastery.” It’s the time when most children first become clearly interested in how things work, how they can do something, why they might make certain choices on the field or play a given system. Goalkeeper specialists will emerge. In other words, it’s prime coaching/learning time.

For travel players, skill building is a prime concern. They want to be able to dribble past another player or pass around another player, and may become frustrated if they don’t succeed. They care about doing things well and can judge well who are the most (and least) successful players. Coaching that provides a real change in their technique brings smiles and turns on light bulbs. This is where the real “obsession” for players who want to compete in travel really takes hold.

Similarly, they are ready to think about team shape, positions, combination play, and tactical ideas like changing the point of attack *for a reason*, not just because they’ve seen other players do it. Introduce the skills of flighted balls and longer passing choices. An experienced coach can *begin* almost any tactical idea if she/he starts *simple*. Good progression practice planning is a *must*.

Avoid: negative reinforcement and the 3 L’s: lines, laps, and lectures.

Appropriate activities might include:

Grid, gate dribbling

Coerver exercises

Big Square, Small Square

1v1 dribbling games

Sequence passing, colors passing

Roxborough Square

English Passing, Dutch Passing

4v2 Keepaway

Zone keepaway games (4v2 continuous; 3-zone 4v4v4)

Keepaway games played to target players

4-Cone Game

Goal on the Move

Chip n’ Dale

Shooting games with goals close together

World Cup

Games with “bumper” players on sides and attacking end line

4v4 and 6v6 games to 4 goals

6v6 and 8v8 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
2. Clear, Concise, and Correct Information
3. Simple to Complex
4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
- Are the players ENGAGED?
- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Progression method of organizing training sessions

Coaches at this level are expected to understand and use the progression method for planning training sessions. It is central to developing advanced players and is available in USSF and NSCAA coaching education curricula, as well as materials from Indiana Youth Soccer. Evaluations will address this basic part of the coach's preparation. For technical topics, activities should progress through three stages:

fundamental/warmup (many touches, low pressure, topic-related)

match-related activities (limited pressure, application in the game)

match condition (full pressure and transition, goal-to-goal, emphasizing topic)

For tactical topics, we would expect either individual to group to team progressions or a movement from free space to limited space to one goal with counterattack possibilities to two goals with even numbers and full transition.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: focus on 4 to 6/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~15 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our players may need more work with:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| when dribbling, cut more on the outside surface | face the field, not the ball |
| take a live, intentional first touch | keep feet live defending |
| receive across the body when possible | defend forcing a direction |
| check to balls side on, sneaking a look | covering defender talk |
| for shots, strike center of the ball, toe down | |

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*.

Middle School

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, self-motivation, identification with school, sporting behavior

Cognitive: Solve problems; pick up speed of thinking for speed of play

Overall Motor: Early mastery of technique; “putting it together”

Technical: Some competence in all major technical areas, including flighted balls, goalkeeper training

Tactical: Possession, penetration, support in defending, some combination play

More specific direction for coaches:

Middle school play is a unique kind of opportunity that our association provides. It gives kids from a broad range of skills a chance to play in school-oriented groups with numbers that still concentrate on their development. It’s fun, and the social outcomes can be great. Most of the technical and tactical development should be similar to the Under 12 Travel curriculum, where technical mastery is most important, followed closely by simple tactical ideas, including positions and simple systems of play. Because their size and strength will mean a lot of flighted balls, help them with serving, striking, and receiving them. Look for ways to incorporate longer play into the game.

Some players will be using Middle School play to prepare for high school opportunities. Others will be playing because it’s a team identified with their school, and it’s fun. Both can be served if the coach challenges all players with games that emphasize technique and brings out the fun of the competition among middle schools. Let players play in positions they’d like to try. Try out schemes of play that fit the players.

Avoid: negative reinforcement and the 3 L’s: lines, laps, and lectures.

Appropriate activities might include:

Grid, gate dribbling

Coerver exercises

Big Square, Small Square

1v1 dribbling games

Sequence passing, colors passing

Roxborough Square

English Passing, Dutch Passing

4v2 Keepaway

Zone keepaway games (4v2 continuous; 3-zone 4v4v4)

Keepaway games played to target players

4-Cone Game

Goal on the Move

Chip ‘n Dale

Shooting games with goals close together

World Cup

Games with “bumper” players on sides and attacking end line

4v4 and 6v6 games to 4 goals

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
2. Clear, Concise, and Correct Information
3. Simple to Complex
4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
- Are the players ENGAGED?
- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Progression method of organizing training sessions

Coaches at this level are expected to understand and use the progression method for planning training sessions. It is central to developing advanced players and is available in USSF and NSCAA coaching education curricula, as well as materials from Indiana Youth Soccer. Evaluations will address this basic part of the coach's preparation. For technical topics, activities should progress through three stages:

fundamental/warmup (many touches, low pressure, topic-related)

match-related activities (limited pressure, application in the game)

match condition (full pressure and transition, goal-to-goal, emphasizing topic)

For tactical topics, we would expect either individual to group to team progressions or a movement from free space to limited space to one goal with counterattack possibilities to two goals with even numbers and full transition.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: 1/1 to 16/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 60 minutes to 90 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~15 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our older players may need more work with:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| when dribbling, cut more on the outside surface | face the field, not the ball |
| take a live, intentional first touch | keep feet live defending |
| receive across the body when possible | defend forcing a direction |
| check to balls side on, sneaking a look | covering defender talk |
| for shots, strike center of the ball, toe down | |

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*.

Under 14 Travel

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, self-motivation, sporting behavior, altruism for team

Cognitive: Becoming students of the game, thinking ahead more than one pass

Overall Motor: Smooth movement, balance under challenges, beginning use of power and leverage

Technical: Confident dribbling, technical speed, passing/receiving under pressure, air play, goalkeeper training

Tactical: Possession/penetration, speed & rhythm of play, group defending, some systems of play

More specific direction for coaches:

At this age, we see many players who can perform most techniques, including several dribbling moves and fairly smooth passing/receiving with good first touch, *given adequate space and time*. At this age they are also becoming fast enough, smart enough, and powerful enough to truly challenge everything that happens on the field. This means that we need to focus on helping players perform techniques under pressure and making decisions much faster.

They have the idea of combination play, but must learn to use wall passes, overlaps and takeovers at speed, recognizing cues and accelerating to beat defenders. They should be challenged to make a lot of 2-touch and 1-touch appropriate choices and be learning to do so smoothly and accurately. Hone skills of receiving and turning under the immediate pressure of a defender.

Tactically, coaches should work toward 3 players and up. This means checking runs, targets and different support angles. It means defending with pressure, cover, and balance. Much of this will be new but workable. For obvious reasons, it's the first age when players can make their way into state pools in ODP.

Appropriate activities might include:

Grid dribbling to 1v1 sequences, including Coervers, maze games, etc.

Sequence passing concentrating on checking, playing on time

Passing games: pairs (partner pass tag), 3s, challenges with groups of different colors

Roxborough Square without or with pressuring player

4v2 Keepaway

3v3v3 or 4v4v4 keepaway

Zone keepaway games (4v2 continuous; 3-zone 4v4v4)

Keepaway games played to target players

Very limited functional training pattern play (Don't expect position roles to be sophisticated.)

4-Cone Game, 4 goal games, channel games

Chip n' Dale

Shooting games with goals close together and full pressure, from World Cup to 6v6

Games with "bumper" players on sides and attacking end line

Larger group games

11v11 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

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Activity Checklist:

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- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
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- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Progression method of organizing training sessions

Coaches at this level are expected to understand and use the progression method for planning training sessions. It is central to developing advanced players and is available in USSF and NSCAA coaching education curricula, as well as materials from Indiana Youth Soccer. Evaluations will address this basic part of the coach's preparation. For technical topics, activities should progress through three stages:

fundamental/warmup (many touches, low pressure, topic-related)

match-related activities (limited pressure, application in the game)

match condition (full pressure and transition, goal-to-goal, emphasizing topic)

For tactical topics, we would expect either individual to group to team progressions or a movement from free space to limited space to one goal with counterattack possibilities to two goals with even numbers and full transition.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: 1/1 to 22/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 75 minutes to 90 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~15 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our older players may need more work with:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| when dribbling, cut more on the outside surface | face the field, not the ball |
| take a live, intentional first touch | keep feet live defending |
| receive across the body when possible | defend forcing a direction |
| check to balls side on, sneaking a look | covering defender talk |
| for shots, strike center of the ball, toe down | |

Finally, remember that soccer coaching has to be done in training, *not during the game*.

Under 16 Travel

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, self-motivation, sporting behavior, altruism for team

Cognitive: adult tactical ideas, such as roles of the 2nd and 3rd defender

Overall Motor: Smooth movement, balance under challenges, use of power and leverage, strength and endurance, adult levels of agility

Technical: Confident dribbling, technical speed, passing/receiving under pressure, air play, advanced goalkeeper training

Tactical: Team concept of possession/penetration, good sense of risk and reward choosing passes, speed & rhythm of play, group defending, some understanding of systems of play

More specific direction for coaches:

At this age, we see many players who are approaching their adult size and power, though not all. As they become more self-confident and grown up, they will often make great strides in playing under pressure and at speed, but not seem to make as much progress tactically. They have many distractions and may seem harder to “mold.” They are acutely aware of peers and relative abilities. This is a time when the coach will be challenged to provide environments that truly challenge each player and provide methods, both technical and tactical, that help players master those environments. Coaches who can do this will be rewarded with respect, attention, and progress. Team management will be an important skill.

Continue work to build speed of play through first touch, passing/receiving under pressure, and a wide range of tactical choices. Every player should look at long passing choices that might take advantage *first*, then middle and short range choices. Players should be able to ping balls at distances and receive them at full pace. Work to build team systems, rhythms and patterns of play, and roles for each player. Be approachable. Talk about tactical choices. Keep working with tactical groups of 3 or more. Do finishing work with pressure and goalkeepers.

Appropriate activities might include:

Grid dribbling to 1v1 sequences, including Coervers, maze games, etc.

1v1v1 cone game

Sequence passing concentrating on checking, playing on time

Roxborough Square with out and with pressuring player

4v2 Keepaway

3v3v3 or 4v4v4 keepaway

Zone keepaway games (4v2 continuous; 3-zone 4v4v4)

Keepaway games played to target players

Split-field games with uneven numbers in halves of the field

Serving and receiving/shooting games

Games that focus on defending 1v1, 2v2, and group involving 3rd defenders

Functional training pattern play

4 goal games, channel games, games that knock down cones

Numbers-down games, such as attackers vs. 3-4 defenders and GK

Shooting games with goals close together and full pressure

Games with “bumper” players on sides and attacking end line

Larger group games

11v11 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

Principles of Coaching:

1. Developmentally Appropriate
2. Clear, Concise, and Correct Information
3. Simple to Complex
4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

Activity Checklist:

- Is the activity FUN?
- Is the activity ORGANIZED?
- Are the players ENGAGED?
- Is CREATIVITY and DECISION MAKING used?
- Is the SPACE appropriate?
- Is the FEEDBACK appropriate?
- Are there implications for the GAME?

Progression method of organizing training sessions

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For tactical topics, we would expect either individual to group to team progressions or a movement from free space to limited space to one goal with counterattack possibilities to two goals with even numbers and full transition.

Specific advice for training

Player to ball ratio: 1/1 to 22/1. Please remember that all successful programs train using small-sided games as an integral part of sessions.

Length of session and games/exercises:

Sessions: 75 minutes to 120 minutes. Each exercise: up to ~20 minutes

Crucial coaching points:

Among the standard points for all technical and tactical skills, we would feature a few that our older players may need more work with:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| when dribbling, cut more on the outside surface | face the field, not the ball |
| take a live, intentional first touch | keep feet live defending |
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Under 17 Travel (and up)

Broad Desired Outcomes

Social: Fun, self-motivation, sporting behavior, altruism for team

Cognitive: adult tactical ideas, such as roles of the 2nd and 3rd defender

Overall Motor: Smooth movement, balance under challenges, use of power and leverage, strength and endurance, adult levels of agility

Technical: Confident dribbling, technical speed, passing/receiving under pressure, air play, advanced goalkeeper training

Tactical: Team concept of possession/penetration, good sense of risk and reward choosing passes, speed & rhythm of play, group defending, good understanding of systems of play

More specific direction for coaches:

At this age, most players will have a strong technical base and some reasonable ideas of tactics, though circumstances of our association, including things like late-blooming players and the IHSAA 6-player rule, will often dictate that *not all of them do*. Distractions and peer pressure are an even greater factor. Only the strongest travel teams will keep players developing and reaching higher without problems of filling roles and fielding players. We have to meet this challenge.

Because there will be broad ranges of skill and tactical understanding on teams, coaches at this age must be able to assess their team members very well and be flexible enough to provide them the proper challenges and support. All the way through college and further adult play, players will *continue* to develop technical skills. *Keep working on them*. It is up to the coach to find the areas of need and work with them. Advanced tactical concepts can be introduced: flank play, zonal defending, counterattacking, use of target players, isolation of opposing defenders, and combinations that create scoring chances are all worthwhile topics.

Appropriate activities might include:

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1v1v1 cone game

Sequence passing concentrating on checking, playing on time

Roxborough Square with out and with pressuring player

4v2 Keepaway

3v3v3 or 4v4v4 keepaway

Zone keepaway games (4v2 continuous; 3-zone 4v4v4)

Keepaway games played to target players

Split-field games with uneven numbers in halves of the field

Serving and receiving/shooting games

Games that focus on defending 1v1, 2v2, and group involving 3rd defenders

Functional training pattern play

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Numbers-down games, such as attackers vs. 3-4 defenders and GK

Shooting games with goals close together and full pressure

Games with “bumper” players on sides and attacking end line

Larger group games

11v11 games

Concepts to Remember Coaching Any Age

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3. Simple to Complex
4. Safe/Appropriate Area
5. Decision Making by PLAYERS
6. Implications for the Game

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