

COACHING GOALS FOR U7 TO U10 PLAYERS

The players in these age groups are fundamental to the growth and success of Mandeville Soccer Club. More importantly, what these players are taught during these years is the basis for their soccer future.

We need to teach them the basic techniques of the game and allow them to practice these techniques in a game like environment. **We do not need to teach them how to play as a team or how to play a position.** At U11 these players will be identified to play at one of three levels of soccer offered by Mandeville Soccer Club, Premier, Rec Plus or Rec. This decision will be made, based on their technical ability. How well you have taught them the fundamentals of the game between U7 and U10 will have a huge impact on not only the level at which they will be placed at U11 but also the level they will attain in later years.

Attached to this letter are the technical areas that we should be addressing and the components of these techniques, **the way you need to structure a training session**, and some ideas for teaching these techniques within this structure.

We must avoid kids standing in lines; the more touches and repetitions a player has the more learning opportunities they have.

We must play in smaller numbers; 3v3 or 4v4 at most. It makes the decision making process much easier for the players and they will therefore be more successful. It is also easier for coaches to identify coaching opportunities when there is less going on. Thus the information you give to your players is going to be much more useful.

We must come to practice prepared to coach a topic; pick a component of the game for your practice and prepare as per the model session attached. Coach only the topic; if you are coaching dribbling don't worry about passing, that is a topic for another day, and the players will get confused.

Give your players goals within the weekend games related to your practice that week. For example if you have been practicing tackling tell your players that you are going to count how many tackles they made in the first half of the game. At half time tell them how many they achieved and ask them to make more in the second half. Your team may lose 10-0 but if your players made more tackles in the second half than the first then they have been successful regardless of the score.

TECHNIQUES TO BE TAUGHT

RECEIVING: Receive balls with inside, outside and instep of both feet. Receive with both left and right thigh. Receive with chest and with the head. Teach in an active environment.

Coaching Points: Body should be in the line of the flight of the ball, choice of surface with which to receive ball should be made before ball arrives. Receiving surface should be offered up to ball and pulled away as ball arrives to take the pace off the ball. When receiving the ball the player should redirect the ball with their first touch away from pressure and into space. The ball should not be “killed”.

PASSING: Teach passing in an active environment (not a static drill). Motor skills development is greatly increased by random activity. In a game a player does not play the same pass time after time. Therefore have players passing and moving. Teach passing with inside, outside, instep, heel and toe of both feet.

Coaching Points: Inside of foot – Non-kicking or plant foot should be next to the ball and pointing towards intended target. Kicking foot should be at 90 degrees to non-kicking foot, toe should be up, heel down and ankle locked. Foot should strike ball through middle and foot should follow through toward target (similar to putting in golf).

Outside of foot – Non-kicking foot should be by the side of the ball pointing toward target. Kicking foot should have toe pointing down and slightly inward and ankle should be locked. Push through the middle of the ball with the outside of the foot.

Instep – As per outside of foot but with toe of kicking foot pointed down and not inward. Push through middle of ball with instep.

Heel – This allows players some improvisation and can get them out of some tricky spots. It is also not expected by opponents. Non-kicking foot is next to the ball and pointing in the opposite direction to the target. The heel makes contact with the middle of the ball as the leg is swung backwards.

Toe poke – This is a pass normally made under pressure, whilst reaching for a ball and as a last resort. Non-kicking foot is behind the ball, kicking leg is extended and ball is poked through the middle of the ball normally over a short distance.

MOVEMENT WITHOUT THE BALL: We currently have too many players who are only involved in the game if they have the ball or if they are about to receive the ball. Once they pass the ball they stop and they don't make a run to receive the ball until after the ball has been played. **THE RUN SHOULD INVITE THE PASS, NOT THE PASS ENCOURAGE THE RUN.** To achieve this we need to move away from drills in lines. When does this happen in a game? We need to scrimmage in 3v3 or 4v4 maximum as this promotes participation. The more numbers the more places there are to hide.

Coaching Points: Teach players to run to a support position after they have passed the ball. **N.B. THIS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE IN ADVANCE OF THE BALL; OFTEN THE BEST POSITION IS TO THE SIDE OR BEHIND THE BALL.** A good angle and distance is important. If a supporting player is too far they may not complete the pass, conversely if the supporting player is too close one defender can cover two players.

SHOOTING: Is passing with, sometimes, more force.

Coaching Points: Same as passing. Shooting attitude should be encouraged. Do not wait for the perfect opportunity. **Always aim for a spot in the goal otherwise a player will hit the goalkeeper more often than not.**

DRIBBLING: Dribbling is the art of beating a player, using deception and change of speed. **It is one of the most exciting sights in soccer and should be vigorously encouraged.** Players should be taught moves, how to turn using the inside, outside, sole and heel of both feet.

Coaching Points: Move should unbalance defender and make them think the attacker is going into an area other than the one they are actually going to. There should be space behind the defender (i.e. no covering defender). After the move has been made the player should accelerate past the defender. If the defender is next to the attacker, the attacker should dribble with the foot furthest from the defender and, when performing a turn it should be done away from the defender. Thus shielding the ball at all times. The ball should be moved, whilst dribbling, with either the instep or the end of the foot.

RUNNING WITH THE BALL: This is not the same as dribbling. Running with the ball happens when there is wide-open space in front of a player. In this instance instead of the ball being kept close, as in dribbling, the ball is played out in front and chased after. This is the fastest way for a player to move with the ball at their feet.

Coaching Points: Ball should be played as far out in front of player as possible, without the risk of interception. Player should have head up so that they can see passing opportunities and approaching defenders. Ball should be played with instep or end of foot as this is a more natural running style and gives players better balance and greater speed.

DEFENDING: Teach the correct stance, footwork and **TEACH THEM TO BE PATIENT!!** Do this in a 1v1, or 2v1 or 2v2 environment.

Coaching Points: Player should be sideways on to the attacker (shoulder should be pointed at attacker) with knees slightly bent. This way they are already in a running position should it become a race. They should be on their toes and their feet should keep moving. If a defender is squared up toward an attacker or if they get flatfooted they will be easily beaten by an attacker, as they will be off balance. The defender needs to be close enough so that if an attacker loses control the defender can tackle, but if the attacker

has good control of the ball and is dribbling, the defender needs to maintain this distance by backing up at the same rate at which the attacker is advancing and **BE PATIENT**. The defender needs to wait until the attackers control waivers and then try and win the ball. **IF THE DEFENDER IS PATIENT THE ATTACKER WILL PROBABLY MAKE A MISTAKE. IF THEY DON'T THE DEFENDER WILL STILL BE A BARRIER BETWEEN THE ATTACKER AND THE GOAL. IF THE DEFENDER IS NOT PATIENT, AND TRIES TO WIN THE BALL TOO SOON AND IS BEATEN, THE ATTACKER MAY SCORE OR PASS TO SOMEONE WHO WILL SCORE. SO PLEASE TEACH THEM TO BE PATIENT!**

TACKLING: Teach the block tackle the poke tackle, and the sliding tackle, with both feet.

Coaching Points: Block tackle – Similar to side foot pass. Plant foot is next to ball, tackling foot has toe up, heel down and ankle locked. Player steps into ball to get bodyweight over and through the ball. Ball is struck through the middle with the inside of the foot.

Poke tackle – This is made with the toe of the foot closest to the ball, either face on or from the side. Body is sideways to the ball. Player steps into the ball and plays it with either the toe or the outside of the foot.

Sliding Tackle – Is normally a last resort tackle. Is normally played from the side or sometimes from the front. **It is a violation of the Laws of the Game to tackle from behind.** Player slides on one leg or hip to play the ball with the other outstretched leg. Player normally is running fast, gets low to the ground before starting the slide tackle **(leaving the ground to “launch” a slide tackle is a foul)** and their momentum allows them to slide.

TRANSITION: This covers what players do when their team has lost the ball or when their team wins the ball back. Currently when possession changes from one team to another it is a cue to take a rest. This should be the time to work the hardest and take advantage of your opponent. Therefore we need to have practice situations that require immediate transition from attack to defense and defense to attack.

Coaching Points: When team wins the ball, the player in possession should look to attack immediately and the rest of the team should be taking up support positions. When they lose the ball someone needs to defend the player in possession to allow time for rest of team to take up defensive support positions.

TRAINING SESSION STRUCTURE

This is the format to use to run a quality training session.

Warm up: This should be an activity that prepares the players physically and mentally for the training session. It should also be the introduction to the topic of the training session.

Individual: This is where you break down the technique and let the players practice individually. This can be combined into their warm up.

Game Related: Here the players practice the skill in a 1v1, 2v1 or 2v2 format. For the younger players a fun game that demands the use of the technique taught might be better.

Game Conditioned: This is possibly the most crucial part of the practice. Here the players will scrimmage in a 3v3 or 4v4 (which is what they love to do) but by imposing a condition they practice the topic in a game (which is what you want them to do).

Game: This is where the players play freely with the minimum amount of coaching. Remember small numbers are best.

SAMPLE TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Here are some tried and trusted activities to use in your training sessions. Pick the relevant ones to produce your training session. Remember a warm up game that may be designed for an older age group may work as a game related activity for a younger age group so make adjustments to suit the level of player you have. Finally use these ideas to formulate your own activities or adapt these to suit your own style and age group and **if you find something that works share it with your fellow coaches and me.**

RECEIVING:

Warm up/Individual:

Each player has a ball. The player throws the ball in the air and as the ball hits the ground the player moves the ball away with the inside of the foot. Repeat with the outside of the foot. Throw ball in the air redirect and drop ball to ground using the instep. Repeat using the thigh to drop the ball to the ground and then use the foot. Repeat using the chest to drop the ball to the ground and then use the foot. Repeat using the head to drop the ball to the ground and then use the foot. Practice both left and right. Throwing the ball higher increases the degree of difficulty and simulates controlling a flighted ball.

In groups of three with one ball. When player receives the ball control towards the next player that they are going to pass to. Use different surfaces of foot to receive. Players are moving not static.

In groups of three. 1 throws to 2 who controls and passes to 3 who picks ball up and throws to 1 and so on. Players are moving not static.

Game Related:

Divide players into two groups. One group forms a circle and these players have a ball in their hands, they are the servers. The other players are inside the circle. They check to a server with a ball receive it and play it to another server. You can make this a team or individual competition by keeping count of the completed passes they make. Reverse roles. This can be used to practice one receiving technique or the players make the choice as to which technique they use given the trajectory of the ball.

Soccer volleyball – Can be played 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, or 4v4. Set up a court or multiple courts appropriately sized to the number of players. Have a gap between the teams to represent the net. Players serve by punting the ball over the net to the other team, who has to receive the ball out of the air. Once they have received it out of the air the ball can bounce and the receiving team try to get the ball back across the net (you may want to put a restriction on the number of bounces or touches). If the ball hits the ground off of a serve the servers score a point. If the ball lands out of bounds a point is awarded against the offending team. If the ball bounces twice consecutively a point is awarded against the offending team.

Throw Receive Pass/Catch – Player throws ball to teammate who controls the ball and passes, using their feet, to a teammate who picks up the ball and starts the sequence again. Game is played to goal. Goal is scored when a player receives the ball, shoots and scores. Play with or without goalkeepers. Use catch instead of pass if this works better with your group.

Game Conditioned:

Ball must be received with inside of foot.

Ball must be received with outside of foot.

Throw-ins must be received with surface that the coach chooses.

If ball is received and stopped, the other team gets a free kick (encourages movement with first touch).

PASSING:

Warm up: In pairs or groups of three passing and moving. Use different parts of foot or one part if you want to concentrate on one type of pass.

Game Related:

1v1+2. 1v1 to an end line or to goal with a support player on each side that the player in possession can play to. Use multiple fields so that there is no standing around. Can have a mini tournament format to make it competitive.

2v1. Two attackers against one defender to goal or end lines.

2v2. As 2v1. Could have mini tournament.

Passing Games:

Tag - Every player has a ball and is dribbling. Score a point by hitting another players ball with theirs.

As above, but players try and hit coach.

Freeze Tag – As per first game but in teams. If players ball is hit they must hold the ball above their head until a teammate unfreezes them by passing the ball through their legs. Team wins if they can freeze the other team.

Game Conditioned:

3v3. Every player has to touch the ball before going to goal.

Team has to play a certain number of passes before they go to goal.

Player has to take at least two touches (stops players just kicking the ball). If player just kicks it award a free kick to the other team.

Team has to pass with particular part of foot before going to goal (heel, outside of foot etc).

MOVEMENT WITHOUT THE BALL:

Warm up:

In groups of two or three passing and moving.

Use cones to make small goals all over field. In pairs, player 1 passes to player 2 through a goal and immediately runs off to another. Player 2 dribbles toward that goal and passes through the goal to player 1 and moves off to another goal and so on.

Make a triangle using three cones. In pairs, both players stand by a cone one with a ball. The player with the ball passes to the other and then runs to the empty cone.

Make a square with four cones. In groups of three each player stands by a cone, one player has a ball. The player passes to one of the other two players and immediately runs to the empty cone.*

Game Related:

1v1+2. 1v1 to goal with support players on each side. Work on movement of support players as ball moves up and down the field, and movement of player in possession after they have played it to the support player.

The three player game* above can be used with a defender in the middle.

2v1 to goals or end lines
3v2 to goals or end lines
2v2 to goals or end lines.

Game Conditioned:

3v3, or 4v4 keep away. Everyone on the team touching the ball counts as a goal.

3v3, or 4v4 keep away. Certain number of consecutive passes is a goal.

3v3 or 4v4 the player who passes the ball has to receive it back from that player before the team can go to goal.

3v3 or 4v4 a player other than the one that played the original pass has to receive it before the team can go to goal.

SHOOTING:

Warm up:

In groups of two or three moving and passing using the instep.

In pairs with one ball, make a goal with two cones have a player either side taking turns in shooting using their instep through the goal.

Each player has a ball and is dribbling around. When the coach calls a name that player dribbles toward a goal and shoots. Have at least two goals in action at all times so the players get lots of repetition. You can add a goalkeeper later if you wish.

Game Related:

2v1. Two attackers against one defender to goal with or without a keeper. Again have more than one goal in action and have the rest of the players dribbling the ball around. You can make it a team competition if you split the group into two teams.

3v2. Same as above.

Set up two goals about the maximum shooting distance apart for your group. E.g. if 10 yds is the furthest your players can shoot from then set the goals ten yards apart. Have three teams with two playing and one waiting. Place half the balls behind each goal. The team that scores stays on and immediately gets a ball from their net and attacks again. The team coming on has to get on quickly before the other team can score again. This makes for a fast moving game.

Game conditioned:

Reduce the size of the field to the size used in the shooting game above so there is more shooting and less moving the ball up the field.

Everyone on the team has to shoot to win.

Everyone on the team has to score to win.

Players can only score with their weak foot.

Players can only score with their toe, or heel, or instep, or outside or inside of foot.

Mark a line at halfway on the reduced field. Players once inside the attacking half cannot pass and have to shoot.

Players can only shoot from defensive half (this encourages long range shooting).

N.B. make sure the field is an appropriate size.

DRIBBLING/RUNNING WITH THE BALL AND CHANGING DIRECTION:

Warm up:

Each player has a ball and dribbles around and performs various turns or moves on coach's command i.e. stop turn, inside of the foot, outside of the foot, heel turn, scissors, Mathews, Cruyff.

1v1 with a passive defender. Defender runs by the side of player with the ball but doesn't try and win the ball. Player with the ball practices using different turns to learn to turn away from defender.

In threes with one ball. Player 1 runs with the ball to player 2 who runs back with the ball to player 3 who runs back with the ball to player 1 and so on.

Game Related:

Mark two lines about 15 – 20 yards apart. Two players stand side by side standing on one line facing the other line. The player with the ball is trying to get to the far line before the player without the ball can get there. But if the player with the ball changes direction they are both racing to the other line. Every time the player with the ball changes direction they race to the different line, until one of them makes it across. The player without the ball is not trying to win the ball.

1v1 to goals. On a field about 20 yards long, both players start on their own goal line, one with a ball. The player in possession can score in either goal but they have to cross half field before they can go back to the goal they started at. This encourages them to use both moves and change of direction.

1v1 as above but with four goals placed north, south, east and west.

Dribbling Games:

Knockout – Every player has a ball and dribbles inside a circle. The players try and kick each other's balls out of the circle. If a player's ball is kicked out of the circle they retrieve their ball, do five toe touches on the ball and are then back in the game.

Sharks and Minnows – If you don't know this game I guarantee there is someone on your team that does.

Red Light, Green Light – Players dribble a ball and when coach says red light they stop the ball with the sole of the foot. When the coach says green light they dribble again. You can make this more fun by choosing different body parts with which to stop the ball.

Game Conditioned:

Players must perform a particular move or turn before going to goal.

In the attacking half of the field they must try and beat a defender before passing or going to goal.

3v3 or 4v4. Number players on both teams 1, 2, 3, 4. Player 1 can only be tackled by player 1 on the other team, thus if the attacker can beat the defender they can go to goal.

DEFENDING AND TACKLING:**Warm up:**

In pairs with one ball, player dribbles slowly up the field while defender practices body position and retreats in front of attacker.

Repeat but this time at regular intervals the defender steps forward and puts their leading foot against the ball.

Block tackle – two players stand with their left foot either side of the ball. On the count of three they block tackle the ball. They should just block against each other. Start of gently and increase the strength of the tackle.

In groups of three with one ball, players pass ball around until one of them puts his foot on the ball. At that point the others close in on the ball quickly but don't touch the ball.

In threes again, this time player stops the ball to signal that they are the attacker and the other two try and win the ball while the attacker tries to keep possession. Whoever wins the ball becomes the attacker immediately.

Game Related:

1v1. Set up a goal for each pair and play 1v1 to their goal. The goals should be randomly placed with no out of bounds. If the defender wins the ball they immediately become the attacker.

Split the group into two teams. Each team goes to their own side of the field and every player has a ball. Match each player on team 1 to a player on team 2. So Jack from team 1 is matched up with Jill from team 2. Everyone dribbles their ball in their teams half of the field. When the coach calls out Jack he attacks the other goal and Jill leaves her ball and defends him. By calling a name from both sides you can have players going to both goals simultaneously.

2v2. In an area 15x15 yards place two goals in corners diagonally opposite each other. By placing goals in this position there is nowhere in this area that you cannot score from. This means defenders can never relax.

1v1 + gk – On a short field with a goal at each end. A defender starts by the side of the goal with a ball. They play the ball to an attacker at the other end and then defend. If the defender wins the ball and shoots they gets 4 points, if they can force the ball out of bounds they score 3, if they block a shot 2, if the forward shoots off target the defender gets 1 and if the defender allows a shot on target they get 0.

Defending Games:

Knockout – Each player with a ball dribbles around in a circle. One player without a ball tries to kick the other player's balls out of the circle. Players that have their ball kicked out of the circle become another defender.

Bulldog – Players line up at one end with a ball each. One player faces them with out a ball. The players with the ball try, as a group, to dribble their ball to the other end of the

area. The defender tries to kick balls out of the area. If he succeeds then those players join them until everyone has lost their ball.

Conditioned Games:

4v4 number each player on each team 1, 2, 3, or 4. 1 can only defend against 1 on the other team. Therefore if they defend recklessly and are beaten their team will give up a goal.

TRANSITION:

Warm up:

In pairs with one ball. Player with ball dribbles slowly forward while defender backs away at same rate. When coach calls change they immediately change roles.

Game Related:

As above but between two lines. Player with the ball attacks an end line when coach calls change they immediately change roles. Can the person changing from defense to offense attack quickly to take advantage of the defenders lapse in concentration and can the attacker adjust to defense quickly.

This game can be repeated in 2v2.

Game Conditioned:

As above but in 3v3 or 4v4.

3v3 or 4v4. Regular game except that for a goal to count all attackers have to be in offensive half and if all defenders are not back in their half goal counts as two.

