

Marblehead Youth Soccer Association



Coaches Handbook

Fall, 2011

Welcome to Marblehead Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) soccer!

MYSA's purpose is to develop and deliver superior soccer programs, for the youth of Marblehead, that develop sportsmanship, fitness, confidence and team spirit among our young athletes. MYSA seeks to provide soccer training that is fun, supportive of all skill levels, and is inclusive in its orientation.

We want to thank you for taking the time and having the patience needed to be a wonderful mentor for so many kids. This program relies on people like you to make it work!

The purpose of this Coaching Handbook is to provide parent coaches with a reference guide to prepare for the season, and for each practice and game. As such, we have included the Mass Youth Soccer (MAYS) curriculum, training drills and sample practice plans. While this should be a useful resource, is not a substitute for the Mass Youth Soccer coaching courses. Please consider the following MAYS introductory coaching courses:

G Course: Intended for U6 & U8 coaches, it covers how to organize practices, prepare for games, ideas on parent education, learning theory and demonstration of basic skills and techniques including dribbling, passing, and shooting. The class is 4 hours.

F Course: Intended for U10 & U12 coaches with some experience, it covers how to structure progressive topic-focused practices, games and exercises for practices, and more thorough demonstration of techniques including receiving, heading, and goalkeeping. The class is 8 hours and you must have completed the G course in advance.

Please visit the MAYS (www.mayouthsoccer.org) website to sign up for a course. MYSA will reimburse you the cost of the course.

This Coaches Handbook is the first of its kind for MYSA and is a work in progress. We welcome comments and suggestions for improvement.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 - a. Coaching expectations
 - b. Guided discovery
 - c. Standard practice plan template
 - d. Implementing a practice plan

2. Mass Youth Soccer (MAYS) Statewide Curriculum
 - a. U8
 - b. U10
 - c. U12
 - d. U14

3. Practice Plans
 - a. U8
 - b. U10
 - c. U12
 - d. U14
 - e. Goalkeepers

4. Other Resources
 - a. Risk/Injury management
 - b. Styles of play
 - c. 10 Tips for parents
 - d. Sample Communications

MYSA Coaching Expectations

A good MYSA youth soccer coach will:

1. Make the game and practices fun and safe for all!
2. Stress good sportsmanship and fairness
3. Know and abide by the rules of the game and teach them to your players
4. Pre-plan all practice sessions so they will be instructional, fast paced, and involve all team members as much as possible
5. Minimize directional coaching from the sidelines during games. Screaming during the game accomplishes nothing
6. Refrain from profanity or vulgar language
7. Treat the referee with respect, no matter what the call.
8. Discourage negative remarks and/or harassment of players, referees, and other spectators

GUIDED DISCOVERY (From MAYS)

If you ever attended a youth soccer game, you were likely to hear many specific directions from coaches and spectators alike. We then expect this young player to sort through the information and then make a quality decision. All the contradicting information interferes with the player's ability to solve the problem. As a result, the player now tries to kick the ball as far as possible or lower their head and run with it. It's simple and sometimes gets results; however, that doesn't make for better soccer players.

If we asked these players to explain their decisions to us at the end of the game, or even immediately after their actions, it is unlikely they would be able to provide us with a rational explanation. If these players are placed in the same situation at a later time, they will not have experience from which to draw upon when faced with a similar situation. Many times the player will continue to make the same mistake or randomly try something else in order to please the adults.

So what can we do as coaches to prevent players from making the same mistakes and feeling a sense of frustration? We could continue to yell louder and hope they are listening to us. Of course, that will continue to make the game less enjoyable for the player. A better choice is to provide the players with the tools to make these decisions for themselves. If our players understand when it is best to kick the ball forward or to run forward with the ball and why they are making all the decisions they are making during a game, then they will be able to improve their own play and be rewarded with success. Further, if they become thoughtful, strategic players, they will have more fun, gain confidence, and your team's performance is more likely to improve continually.

By asking our players questions to which they must come up with answers, we can insure that our players are thinking, as opposed to mindlessly following our directions. By asking guided questions, we can help maintain focus and direction for our team and help provide learning experiences for our players.

When referring to guided questions, we mean that our questions should place our players on the right track (guide) in order to be able to solve the questions we pose. Some such questions may be quite direct and simplistic, such as:

- What part of the foot do you use to make a short pass?
- Where should you aim when shooting on goal?

Questions such as these are called — low order questions as they demand factual, memorized answers. In contrast, we could ask —high order questions that challenge our players a bit differently by asking them to weigh options within the framework of a larger process. High order questions beg interpretation and comprehension over memorization or recall. Examples of —high order questions include:

- How can we get the ball down the field quickly?
- Why should we play high-pressure defense?

- In a 3v3 situation, what's the best way to get the ball to your teammate? Try it!
- What happens when you pass the ball behind your teammate? Let's try it!
- Why didn't that pass work? So, how should we do it next time?
- How can we get the ball to the other side of the field?
- Why is it important for you to lift your head up when you have the ball?

Utilizing questions such as these will help our players learn and retain information that will aid them in making optimal choices as they play.

Through the use of guided questions, players develop confidence and learn to trust their own decisions. Of course, we must temper the difficulty of our questions to insure they achieve the success necessary to help build their confidence. Players may be a bit uneasy at first when asked these types of questions (especially high order) at first. For this reason, it is a good idea to provide a few positive words before asking a question. For example:

- Great....so how could we do it faster?
- I like that answer...what other skill can we use to get the ball to our teammates?
- Now you're getting the idea! Where could you position yourself so that you could see both the player you are defending as well as the ball?

Now armed with the confidence and skill to evaluate situations and make decisions on their own, these players will look within themselves (not toward the sideline) in order to determine what choice to make on the field.

MYSA PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

Coaches should organize their practice session in a progressive manner, easy to difficult or simple to complex. It must provide for individual, small group, large group and/or team activities.

The MYSA standard practice plan is:

A. Warm-Up/Stretch (~10 minutes) – the warm-up prepares the player both physically and mentally for what is to follow in the training session. Warm-ups should incorporate a technical and/or tactical element as a lead in the training session. Stretching should be integrated throughout the warm-up.

B. Small Sided Activity (~20 minutes) – small group games that provide a lead into larger group games. Small group activities will provide the majority of work within your coaching session and should cover your one chosen topic (Ex. dribbling OR shooting for one session).

C. Expanded Small Sided Activity (~20 minutes) - small sided games that now include more players and closely resemble the game of soccer. This activity must be directional and include a goal (can be multiple goals, end-lines or target players). Your topic still needs to be focused and taught during this activity.

D. Free Scrimmage (~30 minutes) – this does not necessarily mean 11v11. It means a game including as many players as you can up to the number that play in your league games. A U12 team should try to end with 8v8 and a U14 team should end with 11v11, as in league matches.

E. Cool Down (~10 minutes) – following the training session a cool down of light, low intensity exercise and static stretching aids the player to recover from the training session. They have worked hard and this will help them to unwind physically and mentally.

MYSA Practice Plan

Practice Topic: _____

	Organization	Coaching Points
Warm up activity		
Small Sided Activity		
Expanded Activity		
Free Scrimmage		
Cool Down		

Example Practice Plan



2011 - U12 - Lesson Plan - Week 1



Topic: Passing and Receiving for Possession

Objective: To improve the players' ability to pass, receive, and possess the soccer ball when in the attack

Technical Warm up	Organization	Coaching Pts.
	<p><u>Dutch Square:</u> Half of the players on the inside of the square (with soccer balls), half on the outside. The insiders will pass the soccer ball to the outsiders. The outsiders will pass the ball back with one or two touches to the insiders. The insiders will receive the soccer ball and look for another outsider to pass to. After a few minutes, switch insiders with outsiders. Coach: have players pass and receive with the right and left foot.</p>	<p>Passing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toe up (inside) or down & turned in (outside) • Placement of non-kicking foot and good balance <p>Receiving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep feet moving before ball arrives and go to it • Keep ankle of receiving foot locked and body behind ball • Eye on ball at instant of reception <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 15 minutes</i></p>
<p>Small Sided Game</p>	<p><u>3v3 5 Goal Game:</u> In a 20x30 yard grid, five 2 yard goals are spread out throughout the grid. The teams score by passing and receiving through any of the goals to a teammate. Coach: Emphasize the importance of being in good supporting positions and good attacking shape. 3 Players need to be in a triangle.</p>	<p>Coaching Pts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech of passing and receiving • Players in good supporting positions • Pace and accuracy of the pass • Finding the open gate or goal • First Touch – Directional • Clear communication (demand the ball) • Good team shape <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 15 minutes</i></p>
<p>Exp. Small Sided Game</p>	<p><u>4v4 or 5v5 to Four Small Goals:</u> In a 30x35 yd. grid with two small 3 feet cone goals on each of the 35 yard lines, near each corner. Each team defends and attacks two goals. If playing with 4 players, the attacking shape should be a diamond. If attacking with five players, the attacking shape should be a 3-2 or 2-1-2.</p>	<p>Coaching Pts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess the ball to look for an opportunity to score • Players in good supporting positions • Decision making: safety versus risk • Communication • Good team shape <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 20 minutes</i></p>
<p>Game</p>	<p>Organization</p>	<p>Coaching Pts.</p>
<p>6v6 to 8v8 Scrimmage</p>	<p>If 6v6, play in a 45x60 yd. field. If 8v8, play in a 55x80 yd. field. Play with Goalkeepers and encourage them to communicate with teammates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Time: 30 minutes</i></p>
<p>COOL DOWN</p>	<p>Activities to reduce heart rate, static stretching & review session. Time: 5-10 Minutes</p>	

IMPLEMENTING A LESSON PLAN

During a session, a coach must recognize a **coachable moment** to give information to their players. A coachable moment is when a technical or tactical issue arises, based on the topic for the session. Each activity in a session plan will create a coachable moment. As coaches, we watch for these instances so that we can make our coaching points and teach our topics.

Once a coachable moment is recognized, there are several methods coaches use to give information to the players. These methods are called “the coaches toolbox” and are listed from the least to most intrusive.

These methods are explained below:

- Allow the conditions of the practice game to coach the topic
 - Use touch incentives (one touch, two touches, mandatory two touches)
 - Adjust the size of field and/or size of the goals
 - Use a neutral player to provide a numbers up opportunity
 - Let your players play the game
- Coach in the natural stoppages of the activity
 - Wait for the ball to go out of play, then recreate the coachable moment
 - Natural stoppages are throw-in's, goal- kicks
- Coach in the flow of the activity (large group)
 - Information must be concise and clear to all of the players you are speaking to
 - This is instruction, not a running dialogue with your team
- Coach individual players as the activity continues
 - Talk to one player either from a distance or close
 - Clear, concise information must be provided
 - Have a player step out of an activity and then provide them with short instructions
- Coach using the —freeze method
 - Stop play when the —coachable moment occurs
 - Players must stay exactly where they were when the freeze was called - if not, the picture of what is being taught changes completely
 - Review what happened, rehearse what they could have done to find success, and restart play from a point prior to the point of your stoppage.

Regardless of the chosen method, remember to keep instructions short, detailed and topical (30 seconds for your coaching point). As we coach, we need to allow our players to play the game. Making a maximum of four coaching points per activity, using any of the methods discussed above, will help keep your activity flowing yet still providing instruction to your players. We do not need to coach every mistake that

pertain to your topic that occurs as we would be stopping play too often. Pick your times to make your points and teach your players!

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 - b. U10
 - c. U12
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Mass Youth Soccer Statewide U8 Curriculum

The U8 Age Group

This is the age where players can begin to understand the concept of working with a teammate. The notion, or willingness, to intentionally pass the ball to someone is just beginning to take hold. Coaches and parents will have more success encouraging players to pass the ball in the seven to eight year old age group. In this age group, the player begins to think beyond their personal needs and actively begins to cooperate with a teammate. However, players in this age group must continue individual ball work.

Typical Characteristics of U8 Players

- *Tend to play well in pairs* – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- *Are now able to take another's perspective* – they now have a sense of how other's are feeling
- *Still unable to think abstractly* – still do not have this capability, be patient
- *Heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults* – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- *Still much prefer playing to watching* – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- *Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task)*
- *Extremely aware of adult reactions* – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently
- *Seek out adult approval* – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age
- *Some will keep score* – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U8 age group is to be a sensitive and patient teacher with an enthusiastic and imaginative approach. It is helpful if they have the ability to demonstrate and very important that they understand technique.

What to Teach U8 Players

- Techniques (skills):
 - Dribbling
 - With outside of the foot
 - Change of speed and direction
 - Receiving
 - Ground balls with inside, outside, and sole of foot
 - Bouncing balls with various body parts
 - Ball lifting and juggling
 - Passing
 - Inside of foot and laces
 - Throw-ins
 - Shooting
 - With inside of foot and laces
 - Tackling
 - Toe-poke
 - Goalkeeper Catching
 - From self and from partner
 - Rolling, bouncing, and air balls
- Tactics (decisions):
 - Being exposed to all positions
 - 1 v 1 attacking
 - 1v1 defending
 - 2v1 attacking
 - Introduce the names of positions
 - Shape (triangles)
- Rules:
 - Review the kick off
 - Review the goal kick
 - Review hand ball
 - Review physical fouls (pushing, holding, striking, tripping)
 - The corner kick
 - Direct kicks
 - Throw-ins

The Training Session

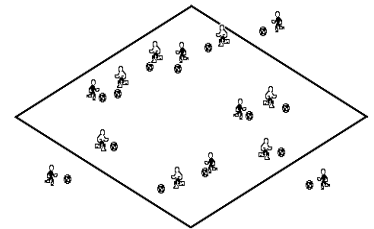
General Information

- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities.
- ✓ Light coaching on simple technique is appropriate (dribbling, passing and receiving)
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, and 3v3 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 4v4 game without goalkeepers.

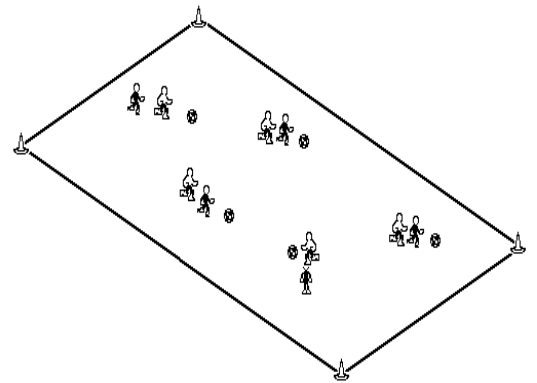
Some Recommended Games for U8 Players:

- 1) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

- 2) Knock Out---In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times).



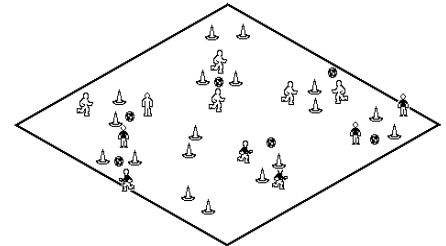
- 3) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.



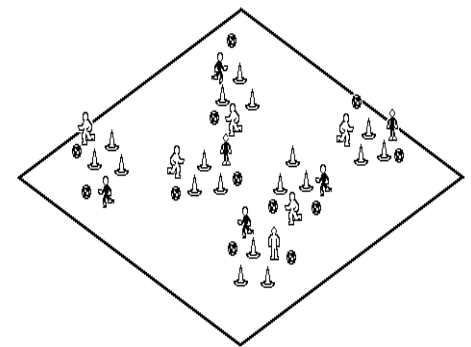
- 4) Marbles---Players are in pairs, each with a ball. This time instead of chasing each other, one player plays out his ball and the partner passes his own ball in an attempt to strike the ball his partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turns at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1's ball, then player 1

immediately runs to his own ball and tries to hit player 2's ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back. etc. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. Hint: If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back.

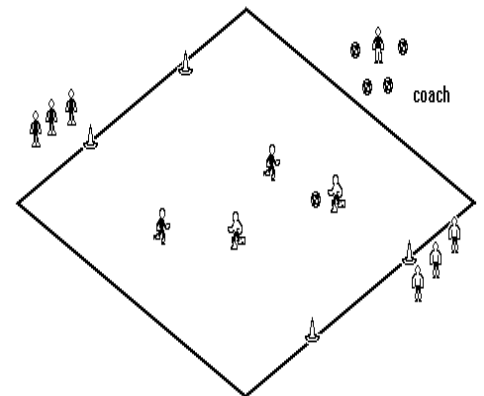
- 5) Gates Passing---Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.



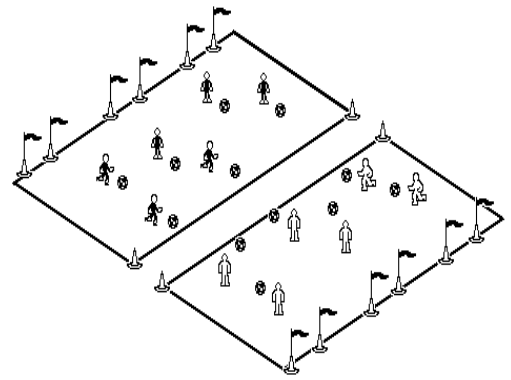
- 6) Triangle Tag---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is "it". However this time the player who is "it" tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player's ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither play can go through the triangle. *Version 2:* Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle. *Version 3:* Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner. Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag.



- 7) Get Outta Here---Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta here" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling "get outta here" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. *Version 4:* Have the first two or three players from each group come out each time a new ball is played and play 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3.



- 8) Clean Your Backyard--- Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals.



- 9) 2 vs. 1 keepaway---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 vs. 1 continuous keepaway. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in.
- 10) 1 vs. 1 to Endlines---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one endline and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player's endline. *Version 2:* You can make this 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4.

Mass Youth Soccer Statewide U10 Curriculum

The U10 Age Group

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age level. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games. The game itself should be central to all skills training. Small-sided games continue to be the method of choice for this age group.

Typical Characteristics of U10 Players

- *Attention span lengthens from U8---they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions*
- *They start to think ahead and think “If this, then that”*
- *Demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility*
- *They start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts*
- *Children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure*
- *Players at this age are extremely rule bound—remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like to live*
- *There is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams this is still a crucial age for technical skill development*

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U10 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods.

What to Teach U10 Players

- *Techniques (skills):*
 - Running with the Ball
 - At speed
 - Under Pressure
 - Passing

- With outside of the foot
 - Heading
 - Instep Drive
 - Shooting
 - Crossing
 - Receiving Ground Balls with the Inside and Outside of Foot
 - Away from pressure
 - Past opponent
 - Receiving Air Balls
 - With the Instep (cushion) and sole, inside and outside of the foot (wedge)
 - Throw-In
 - Short and long distances
 - Moves in Dribbling
 - Half-turns
 - Step-overs
 - Introduce Heading
 - Juggling (alone and in small groups)
 - Feet in contact with the ground
 - Introduction to jumping
 - Tackling
 - Balance foot and contact foot (block tackle)
- *Goalkeeping (skills)*
 - Ready Stance for Goalkeepers
 - Foot positioning
 - Body posture
 - “W” Grip
 - Positioning of thumbs
 - Fingers spread
 - How to Hold a Ball After a Save
 - Ball to chest
 - Forearm protection
 - Catching Shots at the Keeper
 - Body alignment path of ball
 - Punting
 - Distance and accuracy
 - Throwing
 - Bowling
 - Over-arm
 - Goal Kicks
 - Distance and accuracy

Fitness (conditioning):

- Endurance
- Range of motion-flexibility
- Proper warm-up is now mandatory

- Introduce cool-down

Tactics (decisions):

- Roles of 1st attacker and defender
- Roles of 2nd attackers and defenders
- 2v1 attacking (simple combinations)
- Man-to-man defending
- Throw-ins to teammate's feet
- Introduction to the tactics of set plays/restarts (goal kicks, corner kicks, other free kicks)
- Introduction to setting up walls

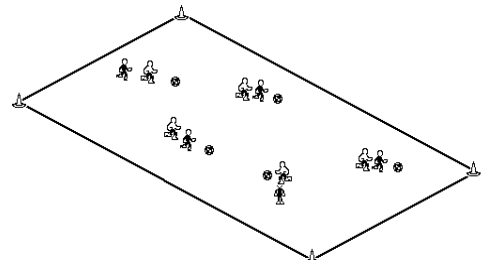
Rules: Review Fouls and Misconduct

The Training Session

- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- ✓ Coaching technical skills is very important at this age as well as light tactical concepts.
- ✓ The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique, or passing and receiving, or combination play.
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as 3v3, 4v3, 4v4, 5v4 and 5v5 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 6v6 game with goalkeepers if possible (5 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team).
- ✓ The duration of the training session should be 75-90 minutes.

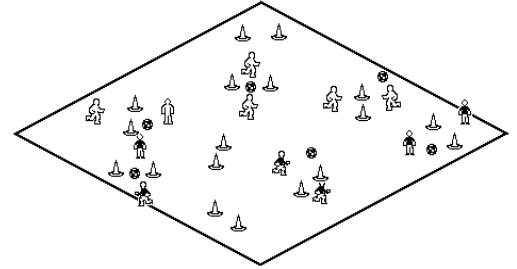
Some Recommended Games for U10 Players:

- 1) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction. *Version 3:* Make the game a knockout game in which players try to knock each other's balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own. Note: You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times. You do not want players sitting out.
- 2) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players



the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

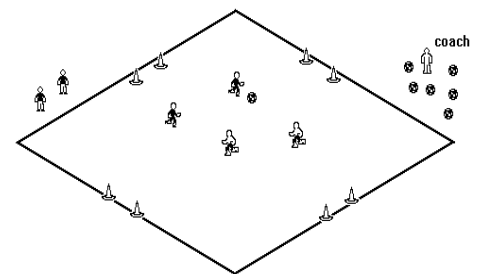
- 3) Gates Passing---Same set up as previous game. However players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Similar to previous game, have them pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.



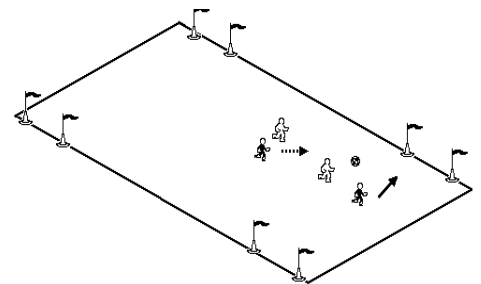
- 4) 1 vs. 1 To lines---In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite line to also score a goal. The players switch to the opposite line if a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other. *Version 2:* Make the grid larger and make this a 2 vs. 2 or a 3 vs. 3 game.

- 5) 1 vs. 1 To Two Small Goals---Same grids as above except now there is a three foot goal in the middle of each line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players switch sides after a goal or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

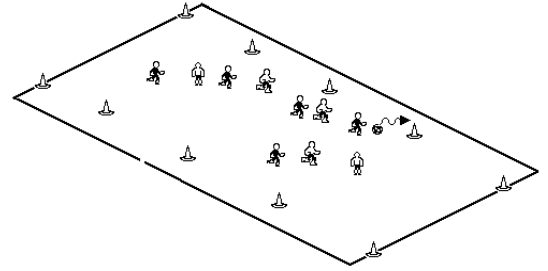
- 6) 2 vs. 2 to Four Cross Goals---Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three, you must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10yd X 10yd. Have one team of 2 on deck, they come on when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately.



- 7) 2 vs. 2 To Four Small Goals---In a 15 X 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner teams of two attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated every three minutes until all groups have played against each other. *Version 2:* 3 vs. 3 in a 20 X 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.



- 8) 4 vs. 4 Endzone Game---Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponent's end zone (created with discs). The player cannot go into the endzone until after the ball has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.



- 9) Triangle Goal Game---Make a triangle with three cones in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except they both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he just throws it out so the game continues. *Version 2:* Use two balls at the same time.
- 10) 4 vs. 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 vs. 3 but now players must show a diamond shape in attack.

Mass Youth Soccer Statewide U12 Curriculum

The U12 Age Group

The effect of the role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. Players at this age can be extremely self-critical. This is the “Golden Age of Learning” and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing.

The period this age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly. Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely. Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases.

Typical Characteristics of U12 Players

- *Players need to warm-up and stretch---muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise*
- *Players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations*
- *They like to solve problems*
- *Peer evaluation is a constant*
- *Egos are sensitive*
- *Coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt*
- *Technique still needs to be reinforced constantly*
- *Playing too much can lead to overuse injuries*
- *This is the dawn of tactics!*

- *Keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks---we never want them to stop doing these things*

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U12 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods. Specifically, individual and small group tactics should be the focus of the training sessions.

What to Teach U12 Players

- *Technique (skills):*
 - Dribbling
 - To beat an opponent (penetration)
 - To possess (shielding)
 - Feints with the Ball
 - Subtle body movements to unbalance the opponent
 - Receiving Air Balls with Feet, Thighs and Chest
 - Away from pressure
 - To beat an opponent
 - Heading to Score Goals and for Clearances
 - Accuracy (direction)
 - Timing
 - Finishing
 - Chipping
 - Bending
 - Toe
 - Introduce Half Volley and Volley Shooting
 - Passing
 - Deceptive use of foot surface (toe, outside of foot, heel)
 - Crossing to Near Post and Penalty Spot Space
 - Driven
 - Flighted
 - Introduce Slide Tackle
 - Timing
 - Poke Tackle
- *Goalkeeping (skills)*
 - Footwork for Goalkeepers
 - Post to post (lateral)
 - Forward
 - Diving
 - Step and Collapse (low)
 - Step and slide onto forearms and thighs (forward)

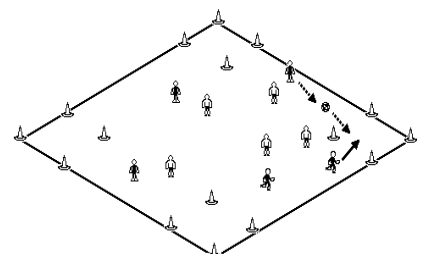
- Angle Play
 - Fast footwork
 - Body shape
- Introduce Parrying and Boxing
 - One hand
 - Two hands
- Fitness (conditioning):
 - Speed
 - Strength
 - Aerobic exercise
 - Proper warm-up and cool-down now mandatory
- Tactics (decisions):
 - 2 v 1 through 3 v 3 attacking & defending
 - Introduce the principles of play
 - Verbal & visual communication for all players
 - Half-time analysis
 - Beginning to identify potential roles for players (goalkeeper, defender, midfielder &/or forward)
 - Commanding the goalmouth by the goalkeeper
 - Near post play by the goalkeeper
 - Saving penalty kicks
 - Simple set play patterns
 - Speed in setting up walls
- Rules: Offsides

The Training Session

- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- ✓ The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique and/or 1v1 decision-making.
- ✓ Introduction to functional training (position specific) is appropriate.
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as: 4v4, 5v4,5v5, 6v5, 6v6 and 7v6 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 8v8 game with goalkeepers if possible. (7 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team) The duration of the training session should be 90 minutes.

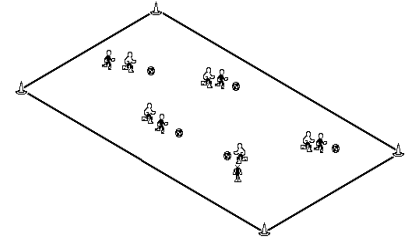
Some Recommended Games for U12 Players:

- 1) Four Square Passing---Form a grid 35x35 with squares roughly 4 yards across in each corner. Two teams of 4 to 6 players try to score by passing the



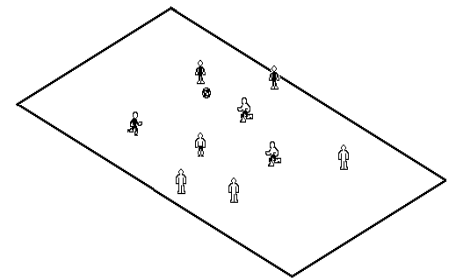
ball to a teammate who makes a run into one of the four squares. Players in the squares cannot be defended against they can pass or dribble the ball out. Balls out of play can be passed or dribbled back into play.

- 2) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield. *Version 2:* make this competitive by breaking the group into two teams and seeing which team has more balls at the end of the time.



- 3) Colors-Warm Up---Half of the players in red pennies, half in blue. Teams playing together in the same space combine in the passing sequence blue-blue-red-red-blue-blue-red-red etc. etc. Ball can never stop, players can never stop moving, and ball cannot leave area of play. Coach can limit touch-count, mandate which foot to pass with or which side of foot to pass with as sees fit. When players can do first sequence adequately and without frequent errors change the sequence to blue-blue-blue-red-red-red-blue-blue-blue etc. etc. Stress communication and technical passing points throughout. Make this activity competitive by counting errors and setting goals by lowering allowed errors.

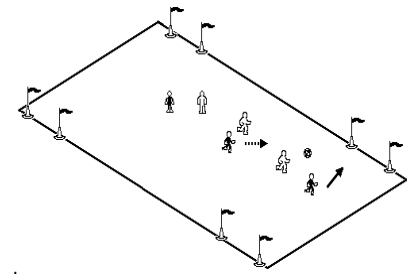
- 4) 2v2+2 or 3v3+3---Three distinct teams in colors (red, green, white), one team starts as defenders and the other 2 teams play together to keep the ball away from the defense (so it is actually 4v2 or 6v3). When the ball is taken by the defense, the color (two/three players) they stole it from becomes the new defenders. Players must pay close attention to who the defenders are, to score the teams in possession must make 6 passes before losing possession. If they do this, both teams on offense receive 1 point.



- 5) 2v2 with 2+2---In a grid 15x15 yards, each team has two players in the grid and two on the outside, on opposite sides from each other. The teams score by either making six passes (with teammate inside the grid or support players) or by executing a 1-2 (wall pass) with a support player. After 3 minutes switch inside and outside players.
- 6) 5 Goal Game---4v4+2 in 35x40 yard grid. Five 2-yard goals are spread out throughout the grid. The plus 2 players are always on the attacking team. The teams score by passing through any of the goals to a teammate. Must receive with inside of foot, then outside, weak foot inside/outside are different expectations that can be put on the players. First team to 10 points wins. Players

need to be able to see where the open goals are, and receive with a “picture” of what is around them. With this in mind, if the players are advanced enough, the player receiving through the goal must play 1 touch. Coach could require receiving player to perform a feint before touching ball.

- 7) 3v3 or 4v 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30x30 yard grid, two teams attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The goals are three feet wide and setup near each corner. With three attackers the players now have the 1st attacker (ball) and 2nd attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1st defender (pressure), 2nd defender (cover), and 3rd defender (balance). This game can be played to lines, goals with keepers, four squares or targets.



- 8) Bread and Butter---Typical 4 vs. 4 but with an additional 4 players who stand on outside of field and can be used by either team as outlets (with only 2 touches). If a team gets scored upon, they become the team on the outside and the outside team plays on the field. Use approximately a 20x25 yard area. Stress correct technique, receiving sideways on, and facing where they wish to play. May restrict the players to 2/3 touch to force quicker decisions, and better body position before the ball arrives. Keep score and make the game competitive.
- 9) 6v6 team touch---Play a normal 6v6 game except for the fact that every player on a team must touch the ball before their team can score. This forces players to show for the ball, to communicate, and to spread out the field. Version 2: If players are advanced, you can enforce a 3 or 2 touch limit on players.
- 10) 8v8 dual sided goal---Using a coerver goal or setting up a goal in which the goalie must protect both sides of the goal, play 8 against 8. Both teams can score from either side of the goal. If a goalie makes a save she just punts the ball out. Teams must learn to change the point of attack and must give support to each other and communicate constantly. This will help teach teams to make the field big when on offense and to try to compact the field on defense.

Mass Youth Soccer Statewide U14 Curriculum

The U14 Age Group

The extremely wide range of development seen in these age groups will result in your coming across children who seem ready for college and others who seem more like frolicking children. Development is still happening at these ages and in order to fully understand these children and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U14 children.

Typical Characteristics of U14 Players

- Increasingly able to move quickly and appropriately without the ball
- Concerned about their body and how it appears to others
- Increasingly appreciate effort as a factor in evaluating their performance (better able to distinguish between performance and outcome)
- Seeking autonomy (may be critical of authority)
- Finding their identity (may experiment with other roles, activities, and interests)
- Able to think in abstract and hypothetical terms (better able to grasp strategic and tactical aspects of the game)
- Girls generally nearing the end of the growth spurt and sexual maturation
- Boys generally at the beginning or in the middle of the growth spurt
- Strongly influenced by peer interactions

Technical and Tactical Development of 14 Year Olds

We must still stress technical development at these ages. In particular, players need to be able to perform ball skills when under pressure. This pressure may come in the form of speed of play or in the form of a defender. Below are recommended guidelines for you to follow in your work with these players.

- Increased technical speed of play
- Ability to play accurate, driven crosses

- Introduction to transition play
- First touch finishing
- Full understanding of roles of 3rd attackers and defenders

As we move to U14, the fields are getting bigger and dribbling is not always the best solution. At this stage, players need to learn when to dribble out of trouble and when to pass. As always, aimless kicking should be discouraged. Players at the U14 level should be learning to combine with teammates around them, using wall passes and other creative combinations to move the ball forward. Players should understand how to support teammates with the ball and be learning to recognize where defenders are not (and hence where to attack).

U14 players should continue to show a better understanding of the game. Deciding when to attack directly versus when to attack through build-up is a decision these players should be able to make. When to switch fields and when to take advantage of numbers up situations should be tactical concepts with which these players become well familiar.

The 14 year-old should demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the roles of both 3rd and 4th defenders and attackers. They should know when and how to deliver a ball to a teammate to maximize their chances to making something positive happen. Sometimes balls should be played to the left foot or the right foot or to space.

Don't spend too much time on tactics, skill development is still important at this age. Spending all of our time teaching tactics will not only detract from skill/motor-control development, but it will not guarantee tactical knowledge, as children will only be able to comprehend a limited amount of knowledge. These players are still children and have many years to learn all the nuances of the game that we see and understand as adults.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 - a. Coaching expectations
 - b. Guided discovery
 - c. Standard practice plan template
 - d. Implementing a practice plan

2. Mass Youth Soccer (MAYS) Statewide Curriculum
 - a. U8
 - b. U10
 - c. U12
 - d. U14

- 3. Practice Plans**
 - a. U8 (Go to marbleheadsoccer.net)**
 - b. U10 (Go to marbleheadsoccer.net)**
 - c. U12 (Go to marbleheadsoccer.net)**
 - d. U14 (Go to marbleheadsoccer.net)**
 - e. Goalkeepers**

4. Other Resources
 - a. Risk/Injury management
 - b. Styles of play
 - c. 10 Tips for parents
 - d. Sample Communications



GOALKEEPER ACTIVITIES

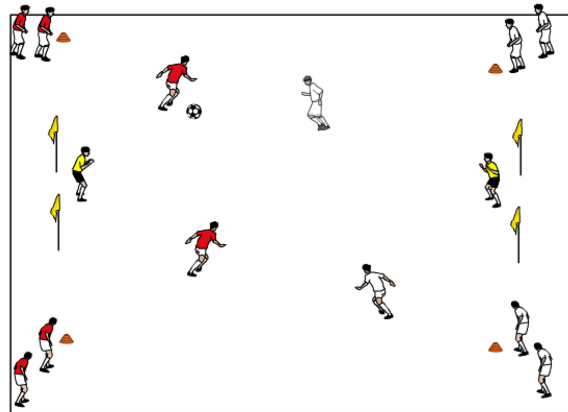
U10 through U16



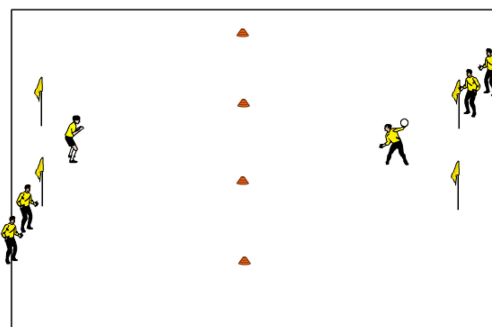
Keep in mind that we do want our goalkeepers to have quick reactions, being able to respond to multiple shots. But, throughout all goalkeeper activities, allow the goalkeeper to get into proper position and have their feet set before having them respond. This will allow the goalkeepers to fully develop their skills.

Handball — Split the GK's into two teams. Keep possession by passing to teammates with round house throw, taking a maximum of three steps when holding the ball. Keepers must catch the ball in the air past the end line in order to score. If ball hits the ground, it is the opposite team's ball. Can defend opponents within an arms length away from them. (Maximum activity length: 20 minutes)

2v2 to goal — 2v2 to two goals (or flag/cone goals) on a 35-40 yards long by 50 yards wide field. Field players should be divided into two teams (each team at a goal standing in a line at each corner flag). First player in each line comes out to make it a 2v2 game. If a team scores, the two players stay on the field, turn and receive a new ball passed in from their team standing in lines on the post, and attempt to score another goal. If scored on, rotate out. If ball goes out of bounds, both teams rotate off.

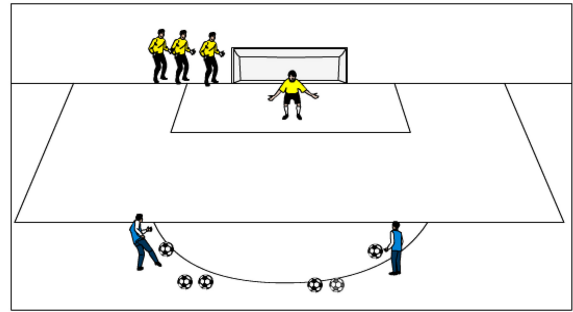


Mini GK Wars — In an area 30 yards long by 20 yards wide, use two cones or corner flag goals facing each other, one GK in each net, with a halfway line marked off. GK's can round house throw, baseball throw or bowl to score on each other. Ball must bounce in other players half for the goal to count. If scored on, next GK rotate in (about 3

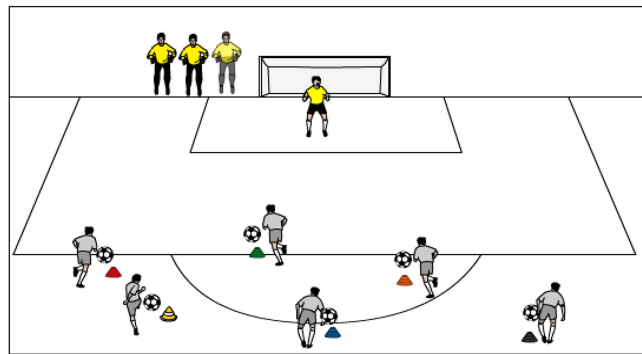


GK's per goal on one of the posts.) If no goal is scored within a 1-2 minute time period, both GK's rotate. Encourage proper technique when distributing and diving. (Maximum activity length: 20-25 minutes)

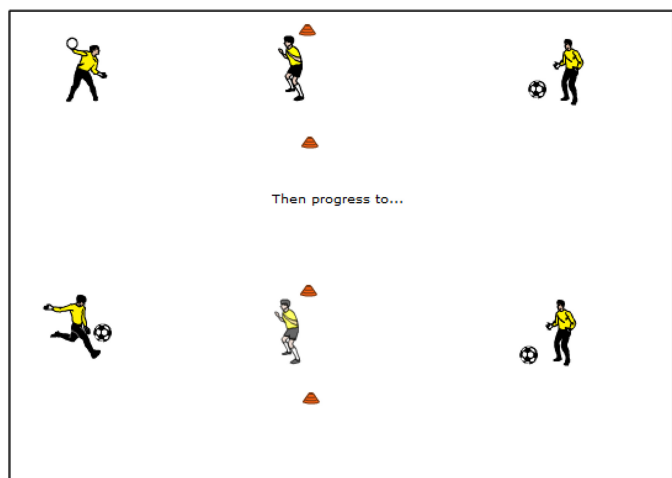
Shots on Goal—Have two servers (coaches), each centrally located at the top of the 18 yard box. Each GK should handle 4 shots total, alternating from each server then rotate out. The first few rounds the shots should be at the goalkeepers, warming them up and building their confidence, then begin to challenge them. Rotate quickly to keep the keepers active. Maximum 5 goalkeepers per goal. (Goalkeepers should handle about 20 shots or more each)



Color Shots – There are different colored cones or jerseys on a central arc about 16-20 yards outside of a goal, each with a server and several balls. One GK starts in net and as the coach calls out a color, the GK must adjust their positioning and be ready for the shot, based on what color the coach calls. Rotate after 5 shots. Each goalkeeper should rotate through at least 4 rounds of saves.



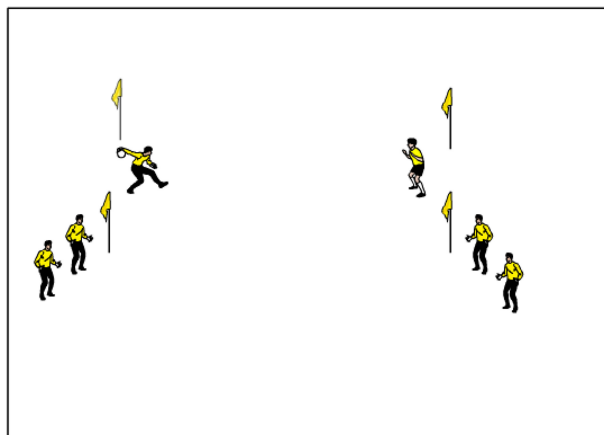
Two Saves –GK's in groups of three with two cones 6 yards apart. One GK stands between the cones, the others are about 15 yards away on each side of the cone goal. GK faces one server who shoots the ball at the keeper to make the save. While this is happening, server 2 is moving their ball so after working GK makes 1st save they must turn to server two



behind them and find the new positioning of the ball to make the save. Keeper immediately turns and finds the other ball and shooter who has moves again. Each keeper makes about 8 saves successfully then rotate. To start, the service can be a roundhouse throw, then progress to a foot service (shot) from the ground. Allow the Goalkeepers to have two rounds with service from a throw, then two from the ground.

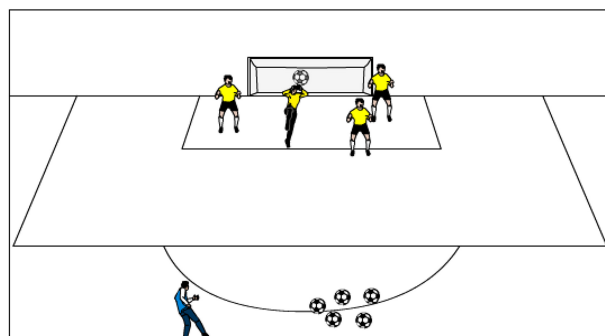
Partner Catching / Distribution –

Two lines of players, each in between a cone goal, facing each other with one ball (maximum players per line is 3). GK A BOWLS (and then follows their service) to GK B who scoops it up and brings it in to their body. GK B then BOWLS to the GK behind GK A to continue the cycle. After several rounds, balls should be



BASEBALL THROW, then ROUNDHOUSE throw at head level, then to high balls. *Version 2:* Within each round, have the server put slight pressure on the working GK. *Version 3:* Now the keepers have to shuffle through 5 cones in a vertical row in front of their net, and set for the service. Each goalkeeper should make about 8-10 saves per round of distribution. (bowl, baseball throw, roundhouse)

Number high balls — All GK's in the 6 yd box with a number (Maximum 6 GK's), coach is outside the 18 yard box centrally with balls. Coach yells out a number and serves a high ball towards the top of the 6. The GK must work their way through traffic and get the ball at the highest point, using the proper leg for protection calling out "keeper".

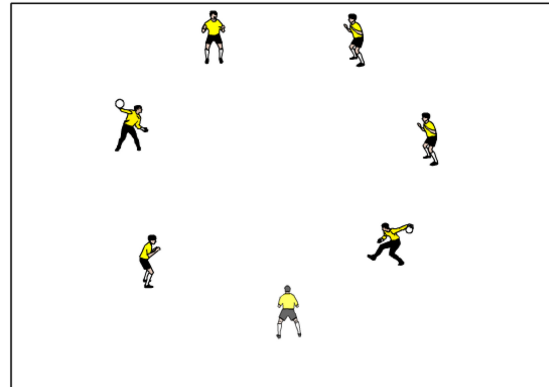


Version 2: Coach can move to the outsides and serve from there so the GK's now have to deal with balls served in from the flank. Coach can also call out two numbers so the GK's have to compete for it. (Maximum length of activity 20 minutes)

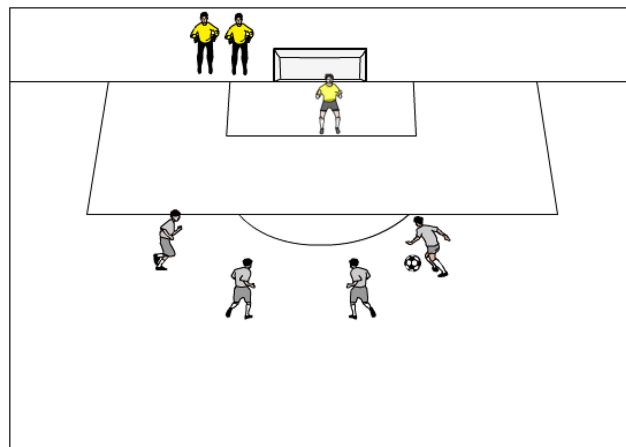
Crosses, GK+1v1 — One keeper in goal plus one defender and one attacker (gray). Coach or server is on the flank beyond the side of the PK

area serving crosses. After about 5-8 repetitions, players switch rolls. Then rotate to the other side. Each keeper should get three; 5-8 repetition rounds per side. GK must be loud in yelling “keeper” or “away”. Encourage the GK’s to test their range. Also, have them recognize on a driven ball, their range will not be as far out as if the ball is lofted into the box. Keep score for a competition for how many balls dropped or scored upon. Field players are passive at first and then begin to increase pressure.

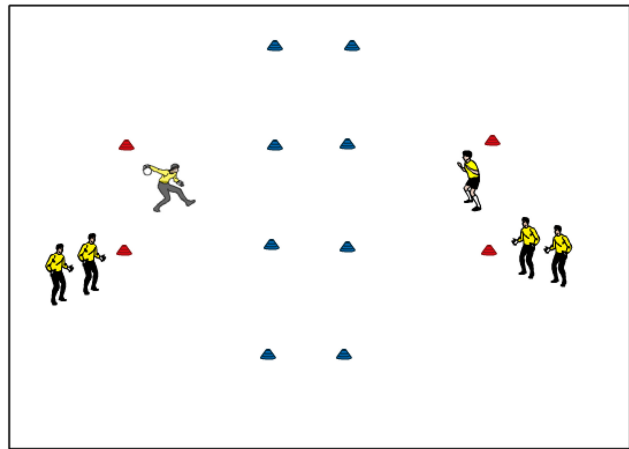
Two ball Circle –GK’s stand in a 10-15 yard diameter circle with one ball involved that can be passed at the shoulder height level to anyone except the player next to you. A second ball can be added once a rhythm is obtained. Then progress onto to skip balls, and rolling balls with pace. Instill into the players proper footwork to get their body behind each ball. There should be a high amount of communication between the keepers. Instill proper, accurate distribution. (Maximum activity length 15-20 minutes)



Moving ball - three or four players are on the arc around the 18 yard box (centrally) passing one ball while the working GK is using their footwork to constantly reposition themselves to be ready for a shot. At any point, a server can take a shot, especially if they think the keeper is out of position. Rotate after 5 shots. Each goalkeeper should get at least four rounds in the net. Servers should look to move the ball quickly to make it challenging for the goalkeeper.



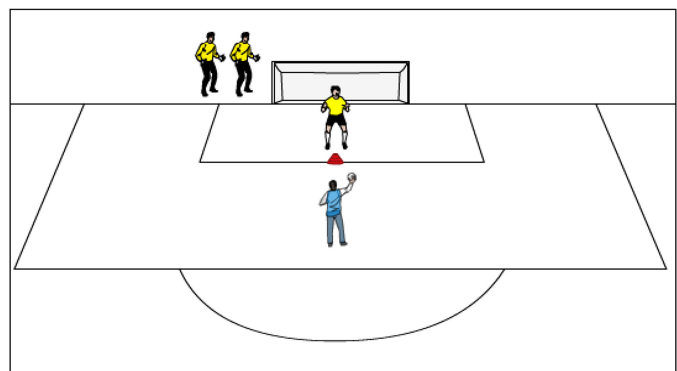
Small Goal Saves -- Two lines of players, each in between a cone goal, facing each other with one ball and extras on the sides. (maximum players per line is 3) Goals should be about 35-40 yards apart with a 10 yard buffer zone in the middle. Keepers are now trying to score on each other by either throwing or bowling it but the ball must bounce on the opponents half before a goal is scored. GK gets a point for a goal. Once a GK gets scored on, next person in line hops in. (Maximum activity length: 25 min)



Three Saves- Three servers on the top of the 18 yard box, one centrally, one on each corner of the 18. Each server has a number (1, 2 or 3) and yells out their number when they are going to shoot next. GK's need to make sure to cut down the angle and set their feet before each shot and are not still moving when the ball is struck. Take about 5-8 repetitions and then rotate the goalkeepers. Each goalkeeper should have at least 4 rounds.

Extension Diving for height –Work in pairs, one server, one GK. The keeper kneels with one knee on the ground, one knee up (this is the side they are diving to). Server holds ball in palm of one hand about head height a few yards away from the keeper and a bit in front. Keeper pushed hard with the near leg and drives to the ball, catches off server's hands and lands properly. Working goalkeeper performs about 3-5 dives each side, then rotate. Goalkeepers should go through about 3 rounds total.

Parrying over the bar– Have goalkeepers come off of one post, touch a cone about 6 yards in front of the center of the goal, and a ball is served from the about the 16 yard line over their head to one side. Keepers now must do the proper footwork (drop step, then either a shuffle or crossover step), they should use their opposite hand to deflect the ball upwards over the crossbar. At first, indicate the direction



before the throw. As the keepers get more comfortable, increase the difficult of the throws by making them more direct and at a faster pace. Keepers should go one at a time, maximum three keepers per goal. GK's should get at least 15 repetitions per side.

Pass back— GK in net, server is centrally about 25 yards out with all of the balls. Targets at half field (or closer) near the touch line in a 10 yard box. Server passes a ball back to the working GK who takes two touches and connects to one of the grids. Version 2: One touch the ball from the server and connect to targets. Version 3: Have a defender put pressure on working GK, starting their run from the 18 yard line so the GK has to make the right decision to play to the left or right, one touch or two touch. The goalkeepers should take about 15-20 repetitions per round. (two touch, one touch, with defender)

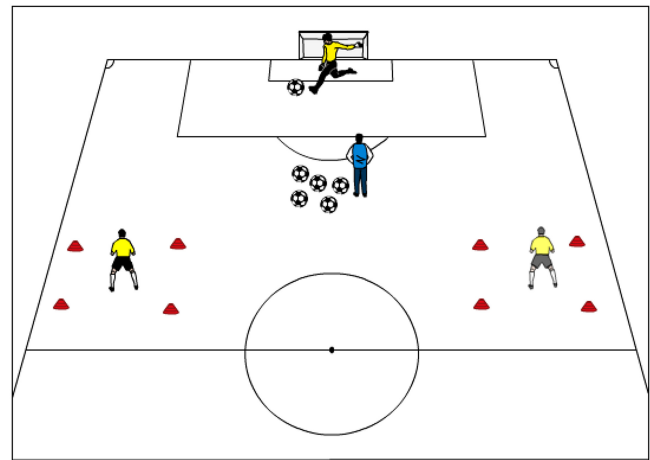


Table of Contents

1. Introduction
 - a. Coaching expectations
 - b. Guided discovery
 - c. Standard practice plan template
 - d. Implementing a practice plan

2. Mass Youth Soccer (MAYS) Statewide Curriculum
 - a. U8
 - b. U10
 - c. U12
 - d. U14

3. Practice Plans
 - a. U8
 - b. U10
 - c. U12
 - d. U14
 - e. Goalkeepers

- 4. Other Resources**
 - a. Risk/Injury management**
 - b. Styles of play**
 - c. 10 Tips for parents**
 - d. Sample Communications**

RISK/INJURY MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION

An integral component of all coaching and playing activity throughout the season must be the prevention and management of injury to players (and coaches). There are numerous simple tasks a coach can and should do in order to secure the health of his or her players. Before the season begins, the coach should make sure all parents know the emergency procedures for all situations (injuries, accidents, weather problems). This procedure should be clear and simple. If it includes cell phone use, the coach should make sure he/she gets reception at all playing sites.

Field Safety/Weather Conditions

Before starting practice or a game, it is important to check the field for dangerous objects. Often glass and other sharp objects can be found on fields, as well as holes and other hazards. Goals need to be inspected and anchored properly, or moved away from the playing area if not being used. When moving goals, it is important to utilize adults and to supervise them, as often it is the first time they are moving goals. They may not know how to move them or realize how heavy they are.

At every field, look to see where you could go in case of lightning or heavy rain. Is there a building or public bathroom nearby where you could fit all the children? If not, do enough parents stay to watch practices and games in order that all the children could fit in their cars in case of severe weather? At the first sign of lightning, get the players into a safe environment. This is where your written emergency plan comes into use. Lightning detectors are already in use at many of the parks in which you play. Make sure you know the meaning of all signals coming from this system. If you do not have a lightning detection system, seek out ways to get one installed.

Seeing all the Children

Players can not be let out of your sight. Often times, young players need to go to the bathroom. Make sure they are supervised when they go (preferably by their parent). Never allow a child out of your sight without adult supervision.

Second Adult Present

Always have a minimum of two adults at every practice. This allows one person to care for injuries or bathroom breaks as the other tends to the rest of the team. It also provides for another witness in the case of injury or accident. Make sure that both of you are present until the parents of the last child arrive. You should stress to parents they should arrive on time to pick up their children.

Injury Prevention for Common Injuries

Heat Stroke – If a player shows signs of heat stroke their sweating will stop, the player may be confused or dizzy, have pale skin, an extremely dry mouth or be unconscious. It is important to call an ambulance immediately. This can be life threatening. While

waiting for the ambulance, similar steps to that which are taken for heat exhaustion should be followed. Making sure your players are properly hydrated will help prevent heat injuries.

Fractures & Dislocations - If a body part does not have a normal appearance or function, then suspect a fracture. Do not move the player, keep warm and make comfortable, call 911. With a possible dislocation, the joint will have a marked deformity with intense pain. If a player can walk, immobilize the joint and immediately transport to hospital. If the player is unable to walk, call 911.

Abrasions - Abrasions are very common sports injuries that are usually caused by a fall on a hard surface. As the athlete falls or slides on the ground, friction causes layers of skin to rub off. General treatment of abrasions includes treating the area by cleaning the wound with mild soap and water or a mild antiseptic wash like hydrogen peroxide, and then covering the area with an antibiotic ointment and a dry dressing. Be sure to wear latex gloves before you treat the player!

Sprains, Strains and Contusions - R.I.C.E. Principle (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) is the best method of dealing with these injuries. Using these four immediate first aid measures can relieve pain, limit swelling and protect the injured tissues. The R.I.C.E. Method of Acute Injury Treatment:

- Rest: Resting is important as it will allow the injured area the time to heal itself as well as help prevent further injury.
- Ice: Use ice bags & cold packs to limit swelling by reducing blood flow to the injured area. Do not leave ice on an injury for more than 20 minutes at a time. Compress or wrap the area with an ACE bandage around the swollen part of your body. If throbbing occurs, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- Compression: Compress or wrap the area with an ACE bandage around the swollen part of your body. If throbbing occurs, remove the bandage and re-wrap the area so the bandage is a little looser.
- Elevation: Elevating an injury reduces swelling. It's most effective when the injured area is raised above the level of the heart. For example, if you injure an ankle, try lying on your bed or sofa with your foot propped on a couple of pillows.

Two important factors with dealing with field injuries of this nature:

- 1 If you see clear visual evidence of abnormal deformity to the injured area, call emergency professional care immediately.
- 2 If symptoms persist (pain, swelling, severe bruising) after 24-48 hours of using the R.I.C.E. method, consult your doctor.

SYSTEMS OF PLAY

Although we would love to be able to recommend a perfect system of play to you and save hours and hours of consternation, we cannot. There simply is not one system of play that has been proven most effective at any level.

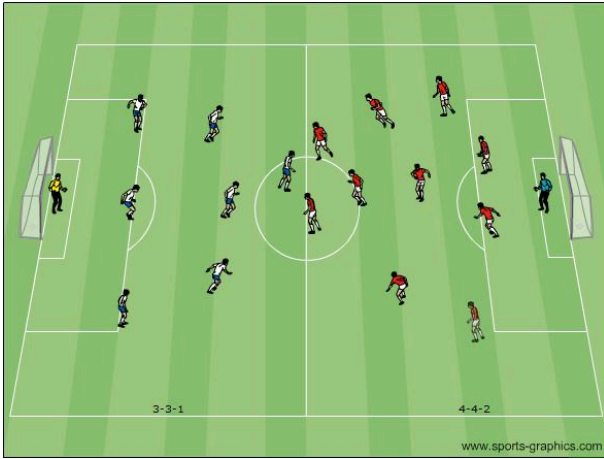
A system of play is simply a way to organize the players in hopes your organization will allow your team to apply the principles of play better than the other team. Through a specific arrangement of players on the field, the coach tries to close dangerous spaces when defending and take advantage of open spaces when attacking. This requires a great deal of understanding of the role of each position and capabilities of each of your players. Soccer is all about the players, their skills and personalities. A system must fit the abilities and characteristics of your players. Too often a system is seen as a solution to all problems and is forced on unwilling players. When a coach at any level imposes a particular system on players in disregard of their abilities, success is highly unlikely.

The importance of systems of play is exaggerated. It should be understood there is no system which will overcome inaccurate shooting or inaccurate passing; there is no system which caters to players who will not support each other and there is no system which caters to players who will not or can not run. No system can improve ball control; no system can improve decision-making; no system will accommodate a lack of aggression or composure or confidence. However, a coach should be able to teach their team how to employ different systems when the game dictates the need for a change.

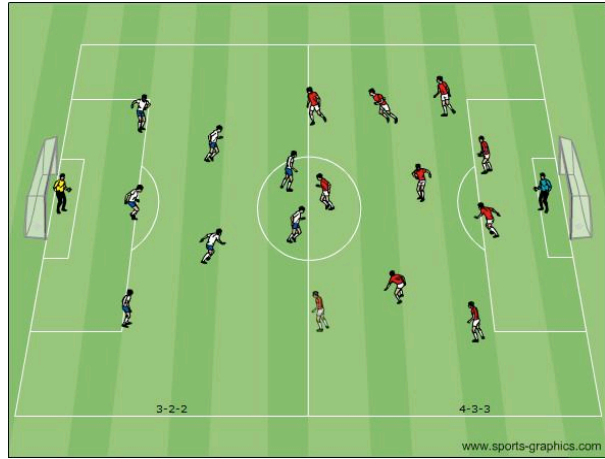
When discussing organization within a system of play we talk of lines of players from back (defense) to front (offense) and these lines are generally arranged into three groups (defense, midfield, offense). For example, a 4-4-2 is comprised of 4 back players, 4 midfield players and 2 forwards. The GK is a constant and need not be mentioned.

The following factors can be taken under consideration when selecting a system:

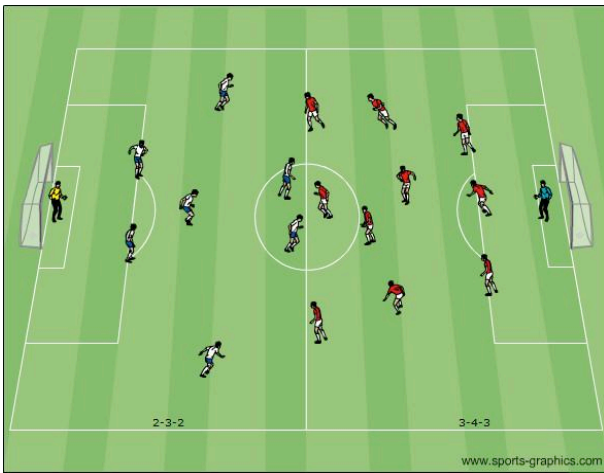
1. Technical ability of the players
2. Tactical understanding by the players of their roles in the game
3. The fitness required for particular systems
4. The system, style of play or the strengths and weaknesses by the opposing team
5. Game situations



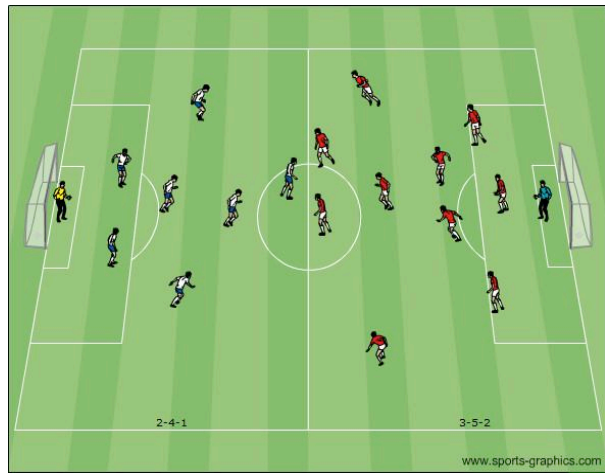
3-3-1 to 4-4-2



3-3-2 to 4-3-3



2-3-2 to 3-4-3



2-4-1 to 3-5-2

TEN TIPS TO BE A BETTER SOCCER PARENT

(“Touchline” magazine, Spring 2000)

1. Soccer is a team sport.
2. Our children are on the team, not us.
3. If you want your child to improve his/her skills and performance, then leave it to the coaches.
4. If you think you can offer good advice to one of the coaches, then arrange to take the coaching certification exam.
5. If you want to coach from the touchlines without coming to team practices, coaches clinics or coaches meetings, keep the thought to yourself until you can watch soccer on TV.
6. Although coaching advice from parents is generally not appreciated, communication is very important. If anything at all is bothering your child, let the coach know as soon as possible so that he/she has an opportunity to adjust if possible to make your child’s experience more rewarding and enjoyable.
7. If you think you can offer good advice to a game official...(see #5 above)
8. A soccer match is not won or lost by any child. (see #1 above)
9. Follow the rules and use good judgment and everyone will have a great season.

SAMPLE U12/U14 PARENT MEETING AGENDA

Team Goals: Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players.

I hope to be able to teach the players to perform skills under pressure and at full speed, which will help them improve in the game. I also hope they learn how to make basic tactical decisions on their own during the games. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills and on basic tactics. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like —real soccer. Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, tactical awareness, team-building, and enjoyment.

Style of Play: I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills and make tactical decisions in the game. We will try to move up and down the field as a team, use combination plays, and give proper offensive and defensive support. I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. It is my hope that the players will be coaches on the field for each other and will encourage each other as well.

Attendance: I will be at every practice and game foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 30 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

Discipline: I have been told I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior without it detracting from the rest of the players' experiences on the team.

Communication: I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at soccercoach@sampleclub.com. Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 508-555-1234 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let's schedule a time that works for both of us. Please do not ask to talk to me during a practice or game or immediately before or after the game or in front of your child. I do encourage open communication and questions, as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

Sideline Behavior: Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if

everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

Overall: I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let's all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let's keep open communication.