



## COACHING U6 IN THE DUBLIN SOCCER LEAGUE

### PLAYER CHARACTERISTICS:

- ▶ Pretend play is becoming more complex.
- ▶ They can only handle one or two tasks at a time.
- ▶ Starting to understand others point of view and attention span is expanding.
- ▶ Gaining more coordination and are often excited about showing off their new skill.

### COACHING OBSERVATIONS:

- ▶ Short, clear and concise directions with a positive tone will be most effective. Give simple instructions such as look up when you're dribbling, look for a pass or dribble towards the goal.
- ▶ Teach the concept of playing in a triangle. When the ball moves so will the team in some sort of a triangle formation. It is helpful to coach off the ball when teaching a formation during a game.
- ▶ To kick off, have two players by the ball and on the whistle have one player roll the ball forward to the other player to try and keep possession.
- ▶ In training (while you are scrimmaging) and games, work with them on how the players should be positioned when your team has a goal kick. Have players kick in their goal kicks preferably out wide and towards a sideline to a player on their team.
- ▶ In training, work with players on how to set up when your team has a kick in when the ball has gone out of bounds along a sideline. Encourage players off the ball to move around so the player kicking it in options for them to pass it to.
- ▶ Encourage your team to move forward and back together as a "unit" and try to stay in a triangle formation. Watch for players staying way back standing in front of the goal they are defending while the ball is in the attacking half. Encourage them to push up and support their team and attack with 3 players (with 1 or 2 players at the bottom of the triangle in support).
- ▶ Make sure that all parents are sitting on the correct sideline at all times. Only coaches and players are permitted on the coaches sideline.

### POTENTIAL COACHING QUESTIONS:

- ▶ **What can I expect mentally from players at this age?** A very short attention span. Keep all instructions brief and no longer than one minute.
- ▶ **What can't I expect mentally from players at this age?** At this age some will not understand what it is you want them to do from only words. It is key to demonstrate to them what it is that you want them to do.
- ▶ **What can I expect physically from players at this age?** They can only go for a short period of time before needing to take a break. Read your group and depending on their energy level and attention span quick 1-minute water break to regroup and set up for a fresh new drill.
- ▶ **What can't I expect physically from players at this age?** That they will play with both feet. Be patient with this, as they have to learn how to play with their dominant foot first. Once they've built up some confidence using their dominant foot, you can start getting them to use their weaker foot. It is critical to get them using both feet at an early age.



- ▶ **How do I expect every player to act?** No two kids are alike, so don't expect them to all act alike. Give them some room to be themselves at this age; but they all need to be respectful of all coaches and players at all times. When you are talking, they aren't talking, all eyes and ears are on you.
- ▶ **What is the attention span for players at this age?** It is not long, so be patient! Keep all instruction short and sweet and you will keep their attention. Participating in some of the exercises yourself will help to engage the players more. Variety is important to holding their attention and make them look forward to what you will be doing next.
- ▶ **How long should each training session be?** At this age, 1 hour in length is plenty of time. Get them going right away and on time. Gage on when you think players need a water break. More breaks should be given on days when the temperatures are higher.
- ▶ **What should I talk about before each training session?** Tell them in 1 minute or less what it is that you will be focusing on in training that day. Many times, you can tie it in with things that didn't go as well as hoped in the prior match.
- ▶ **How should I warm them up before a training session?** At this age they don't really have developed muscle groups that need to be stretched and warmed up. If they're running around and shooting the ball before you start your session, they're already on their way. It is important to include a ball in their warm up with some sort of dribbling/footwork activity. Try to include a fun game for the warm up that includes the ball.
- ▶ **What should we work on in training?** Dribbling should be a priority at this age group. Getting players comfortable with the ball is key to player development. Do not spend a lot of time on tactics in training. Save working on spacing and such in the scrimmage portion of the training. Teach them the correct way to strike a ball when passing it by using the inside of their foot. Encourage them to learn the names of all of their teammates, as they will be playing with all of them throughout the year. Encourage them to talk to each other on the field, with simple things such as "Billy, I'm open" and "Billy, man on" and "Billy, take a shot". Encouraging them to talk in training will carry over into the matches and at the same time will engage all of them in the match. All of their communication with each other should be positive at all times.
- ▶ **How do I get each exercise in a training session going?** Ideally it is best to have all cones set up before you show the players the next activity. Tell them in words in 1 minute or less what the exercise is and then demonstrate it. For example, if it is an activity that is done in pairs, select a player to be your partner for the demonstration. As you begin doing the exercise, repeat verbally to them what it is that you're doing as you're doing it. Then tell them to get a partner and get ready to start quickly.
- ▶ **How much of a training session should be spent on just playing soccer?** Always have the players play the game at the end of a training session. In a 60-minute training session, spend the first 40 minutes doing soccer exercises/drills. You can use the last 20 minutes of a scrimmage at the end.

#### POTENTIAL MATCH QUESTIONS:

- ▶ **Before the match:** Your team will be playing on two fields that are side by side. You will share a sideline. Designate an additional coach to help run the other game for you. You want to get the team all together between the two small fields on which they'll play their 3v3 matches, this will include subs. Let each player know which side they will be on for the game. It is helpful to keep the players on the same field so they can get in a good rhythm with each other and the coach. Also, the parents won't have to move around as well. If you are low on players and need to move a player to the other field is not a problem.



► **What should I talk to them about before the match?** Put the players in the exact spots that they will be playing when the match begins with 2 forwards and a defender. Make the kids aware of their triangle shape starting off, but expect them to play “bumblebee” soccer, swarming around the ball. That’s okay, as you want them all engaged in playing the game. Teaching them spacing will come later. Don’t designate a player to stand next to the goal, as this defeats the purpose of the 3v3 format designed for frequent scoring. Remind them that you will be subbing at the mid-quarter mark, and that you play four quarters in a match and that everyone will get to play at least two of those quarters.

► **What should I talk to them about in between quarters?** Make sure that the players that were on the field and just came off are all doing okay. Then, immediately go over the names of the players that will be going onto the field for the second quarter. Repeat this process after each quarter. It may seem overwhelming to you during the first match, but it will only get easier, as the players come to know the routine. Don't over coach them, let them play. Try and coach players off the ball as much as possible getting into a good triangle formation.

► **What should I talk to them about after the match?** After they have acknowledged and clapped for the opponents, tell them to make sure to get everything that they brought with them and to not leave any trash on the sideline. Regardless of the outcome, in a minute or less be 100% positive to them as you talk about the effort that they put out, how hard that they played, passed the ball to each other, etc. Maybe highlight a player or two each game who did exceptional. A hand pile and team cheer is always a nice way to end things. Again, do this consistently and the players will learn that this is their routine to follow.

#### **COMMUNICATION AND COACHING STYLE:**

► **What should I expect from the parents?** It is ideal to have a team parent meeting early on, at the end of a training session while the kids are scrimmaging. Make sure to keep an eye on the players, though. Remind parents that you are a volunteer coach and that you are out there for the benefit of all of the players. Remind them that we are here to try and teach them the game and have a lot of fun. Ask parents not to coach any of the players from the sidelines. Encourage the parents to cheer for everyone and be positive at all times. If a player will not be at practice or a game, parents need to let you know so you can plan accordingly. Make sure that they all have your email and phone number to reach you should something pop up at the last minute. At this meeting, ask if someone would like to coordinate the snack schedule. This will help parents get to know one another as well.

► **How often should I communicate with the parents?** Ideally once a week. Do so via e-mail after setting up a distribution list for all families. In the initial e-mail, remind them of the upcoming schedule and that their child needs to bring a properly inflated size 3 soccer ball, plenty of water, soccer shoes and shin guards to every training session and match.

► **What should I wear to all training sessions and matches?** Dress the part. You might have another career during the day, but when you show up at training please dress the part. Wear tennis shoes or soccer boots if you have them. Don't wear sandals or go barefoot. Also please do not wear baseball caps or sunglasses. They need to be able to see into your eyes and you into theirs. For matches, always wear your DSL COACH shirt and the same type of shorts and tennis shoes or soccer boots that you do to training.



► **What should my coaching style be?** That is up to you and what your personality type is. Exhibit enthusiasm for the game and the kids and remember that you're coaching U6. The more fun you are having the more it will influence the players to have a fun experience as well. **Have Fun!**

#### **QUESTIONS DURING THE SEASON?**

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