

TRSA Clinic Coaching Manual

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PURPOSE

In any recreational youth soccer club throughout the country, the groups of players that need the most attention are the U-6, U-8, and U-10 age groups. What happens at these age groups will have a very big impact on what happens later on. Recent studies show that 73% of all children in organized sports stop playing by the time they are 13 (Time Magazine, July 99). An age appropriate, child-centered learning environment plays a crucial role in the child's enjoyment of the sport. A supportive, positive experience in youth soccer is vital to the development of our sport. Most importantly it has to be fun. If it is not fun, they won't come back. We at TRSA understand that our greatest asset is the volunteer coaches that give a significant amount of their time and energy to the children of TRSA in order that they have an enjoyable and memorable experience. We understand from experience that one of the hardest parts about becoming a volunteer youth soccer coach is that many of us, regardless of what our playing background is (because most of us don't have any), know very little about coaching youth soccer.

This lack of knowledge leads to one of the greatest anxieties about coaching a team. It is important that you be able to connect with the children on their level. Our challenge as coaches of young players is to create game-like activities that aid the learning process and provide enjoyment for players. So much of what makes a coach successful at developing the young soccer players, in a FUN environment that makes the kids want to continue coming back is the coach's ability to create age appropriate, fun training sessions. This coaching manual was created specifically to help our coaches do just that.

In addition to this manual, Celtic Elite offers a coaching demonstration the morning of clinic and we also offer free programs run by our experienced staff. By offering clinics and coaching demonstrations we believe this helps in alleviating some of the anxiety associated with coaching a team. So much of what's important in being a "good" coach is having the confidence that you're doing the right thing with the kids. Nothing increases your confidence in your coaching more than taking the various state and national licensure courses that are available to coaches of all levels. These courses are available through New Jersey Youth Soccer (www.njyouthsoccer.com), NSCAA (www.nscaa.com), and the USSF (www.ussoccer.com). There is also a wealth of information in books and the internet also has tons of information available. Celtic Elite staff will also be on hand to help with practice sessions, to work with your team if you're looking for new ideas on what to work on at practice sessions. Basically, the resources we at TRSA have available to you as a coach are endless. Use them. Use us. It's why we're here. Contact Darren O Neill, Director of Celtic Elite 732-300-5810 if you have any questions regarding this manual.

AGE APPROPRIATE CONSIDERATIONS: U4 – U6

There are four main pillars of soccer, which are evident at every level of the game – **TECHNICAL, TACTICAL, PHYSICAL and PSYCHOLOGICAL.**

Clearly there will be different emphasis placed on each one depending on the age and ability of the player. **It is important that a coach has clear goals for himself/herself and for his/her team prior to working with any age group.**

Technical

Without a doubt, the most important skill for beginners is the skill of dribbling. Young players need to learn to dribble within a variety of playing situations. They need to learn how to dribble forward unopposed, how to change speed and direction, how to shield the ball from opponents, how to dribble past an opponent, how to dribble to get away from pressure, and how to dribble with all surfaces of the foot. The ability to dribble is absolutely critical since dribbling is the foundation and preparation for the other fundamental skills of soccer, such as receiving, passing and shooting. A creative dribbler will be able to give his/herself more time or room to pass or shoot.

The ability to dribble also helps maintain possession of the ball. Whatever the situation, if a player is comfortable with a ball at his/her feet, then the game becomes much easier and more fun. It is also much more enjoyable to watch!

TRSA would like to make sure that our coaches are all on the same page. If all the U4 – U6 teams are focusing on the same curriculum, the hope is that all the kids will be learning what is age appropriate for the 4 to 6 year old players. This also promotes continuity within the club. If we want our players to fully master the art of dribbling, the following conditions must exist:

- a) They must start learning to dribble early;
- b) We must provide ample opportunities for dribbling in practices and games, and
- c) We must create the right game environment where players are not afraid to dribble

U4 to U6 Curriculum

Schedules -	Themes	8 week program
Weeks 1-5	-	Dribbling
Weeks 6-7	-	Passing
Week 8	-	Shooting

Week 1 - Small, soft touches on the ball. Keep their head up while dribbling. The Stop Turn – stop the ball with sole of foot. Hop over ball putting same foot on ground first. Bring other foot through and take away with outside of foot.

Week 2 – Keep the ball close to them using small touches on the ball. Dribbling with their head up.

Week 3 – Use both feet, keep the ball close to them and dribble with their head up. Big Toe Little Toe - Learn Fake move

Week 4 – Using both feet with small touches and dribbling with their head up. Using the two moves – Stop Turn and Fake, during the games. Introduce Drag Back Turn. Use the moves to change direction and attempting to beat opponents

Week 5 – The Step Over Move – place both feet at the side of the ball with the strongest foot nearest the ball, take the strongest foot around the ball and place down on the opposite side, the upper body has moved downwards (to throw the defender off balance), and then the weaker foot takes the ball away in the opposite direction. Encourage all three moves to be performed under pressure in the games.

Week 6 – Passing the ball with the side of the foot, locking your ankle and keeping your eye on the ball. Dribbling under pressure.

Week 7 – Pass with the side of the foot, get close to the ball AND watch the foot making contact with the ball and strike the centre of the ball.

Week 8 – Strike the ball with the Laces and have your head over the top of the ball. Practice all the moves taught and all the top tips given over the eight weeks.

Tactical

Coaches need not concern themselves with tactical considerations when working with this age group.

There should be no emphasis on playing set positions at this age range.

At this stage of their development players are very egocentric and are not ready to make decisions on the field other than knowing when they are thirsty, tired or need to go to the bathroom. There should be virtually no instruction on the rules of the game, other than getting them going in the right direction.

Psychological

The main psychological goal for players at this stage of their development is to have **FUN**. Coaches need to ensure that their players receive an exciting and positive introduction to the game of soccer to ensure future participation.

There should be absolutely no emphasis placed on winning games.

Physical

Players at this age find it fun to be active. Keep them moving with a ball as much as possible. Any fitness that they receive should be as a result of playing the game of soccer. Use soccer games to improve balance and coordination.

Use of Goalkeepers

Using goalkeepers is not recommended for these age group. One reason for this is that goalkeepers must be able to control the ball with their feet and pass as well as field players. U6-U8 is a critical age in developing those skills which is best done when children play as a field player. **Goalkeepers will be used when players move up to the In-House program.** Another reason is that most children's hand-eye coordination is developed by everyday activities and other sports quite well; however foot-eye coordination is not. We need to make sure we spend every second we have developing foot-eye coordination. In addition, one bad catch that ends up with a ball hitting a player in the face may lead a player to be fearful of the ball for a long time. Currently, even the best goalkeepers in the world did not begin playing goalkeeper until after the age of 10.

U4 - U6 Coaching Guidelines

Objectives:

To allow players to develop in a **SAFE, FUN** and **EDUCATIONAL** environment.

1.) Keep things brief and simple! Remember players at this level have a very short attention span. Be careful with the language you use when communicating with young players – always be as positive as possible and include all players. A good rule of thumb is to get the exercise going in less than 1 minute.

2.) Demonstrate: It is important to demonstrate what you want the young players to do. Painting a picture for them will help them to understand what you want from them.

3.) Eliminate Lines, Laps and Lectures...

- having players stand in lines waiting for their turn results in the players losing interest. They came to practice to have FUN playing soccer, let them play.
- running laps, especially without a ball is a waste of time. All practice activities should take place on the field, preferably with a ball.
- lectures should be left for the classroom. Again, the kids are at practice to play soccer and be active, not to be talked to for extended periods of time.

4.) Make things FUN! Your energy and enthusiasm need to come through in every practice. Kids are very clever, if you are not into the sessions they will pick up on this and will not enjoy themselves

Allow players as much active time with a ball each as possible.

5.) Use your imagination! A successful coach with this age range is one who can make his/her session relate to how the young player views the world. Use Harry Potter or SpongeBob Squarepants as characters in your games to make them feel more involved.

6.) **ALL** players should be given plenty of opportunities to succeed and **ALL** players need to be kept motivated and challenged. Every activity that you set up should give the kids the ability to have success at their own skill level.

7.) Come down to their level and be part of their world.

To succeed in coaching players in this age range, you must have:

- **Patience** – they will not understand things right away. Although young they want and need you to be in charge. Be firm with what your expectations are but remember you are dealing with young children.

- **Flexibility** – recognize when something is not working and change it.
- **A sense of humor** – laugh with your players.
- **A very positive attitude** – give generous praise often.
- **And lots and lots of energy** – participate in practice.

Small-sided Games – 4v4 with no Goalkeeper

Every practice should conclude with a small-sided game. Remember that the game is the best teacher of all. Your main aim is to create a SAFE, FUN, EDUCATIONAL environment in which your players can develop. This should be the largest portion of your practice – about thirty minutes in length.

Organization/Guidelines

- 1.) Field Size: 30x20yds
- 2.) Use pug goals.
- 3.) Use pinnies to avoid confusion amongst players.
- 4.) Play with a SIZE 3 ball.
- 5.) Be flexible with your playing time– your main aim is that all players have a positive experience. You can vary the playing periods and make sure to allow time for substitutions and water breaks. **Rotate players every 5 minutes.**
- 6.) Use the parents – have the parents stand around the perimeter of the field and stop the ball and players from disappearing into the wilderness.
 - 4v4 will promote players touching the ball and being involved as much as possible.
 - Keep instructions clear and to a minimum and use your enthusiasm to keep all players motivated.
 - Generate excitement without putting emphasis on outcome.
 - Always stress the importance of fair play and sportsmanship and have the players shake hands/high five at the end of each game.
 - By the end of your session make sure that all your players have achieved some measure of success. Call the team in for a group huddle and say goodbye.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully you have found something in this manual that will help you. If you have any questions about topics that were not included, please call the Celtic Elite Director of Coaching and he'll be happy to help answer any questions you have. If you have further questions about topics listed in this manual, please contact us as well. Thank you for taking the time to read this manual and thank you for all the time you give to the children of TRSA.