

CYS U6 Suggested Coaching Curriculum

Principals of age appropriate development¹:

- Very young players love to play. Therefore, all practices should be based on fun games.
- Players must spend the maximum time possible in contact with the ball and experiment by themselves.
- For the first time the player has to build a relationship with other players.
- Basic motor skills like walking, running or jumping have to be combined with ball handling and ball control.

Skill Priorities²

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- No kicking allowed except when shooting on goal. It's about dribbling at this age. Discourage random kicking as it can become a bad habit that will need breaking in later years.

US Youth Soccer³ recognizes player development has four key areas: tactical, technical, physical and psychosocial. At this age group we do not introduce tactical but focus on:

TECHNICAL: Improve basic individual technique; dribbling; shooting

PHYSICAL: Develop coordination and basic motor skills with and without the ball

PSYCHOSOCIAL: Feel comfortable and confident with the ball; sharing; fair play

TACTICAL: Not introduced at this age. Keep it to where is the field and which goal to shoot at.

Recommended Formations:

Not introduced as such but individual games are essential for the players to experiment with the ball.

By end of U6 players should capable of:

- Handling the ball with at least one foot and both hands
- Occupying the original position during the game once an action is finished
- Running, jumping and stopping with and without the ball
- Kick the ball reasonably straight 8-10 yards.

Typical Characteristics of U6 Players⁴

- Focused on themselves – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel.
- Unable to see the world from another's perspective – it is "the world according to me" time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic.
- Everything is in the here and now – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.

¹ US Soccer Coaching Curriculum, Dr. Javier Perez, 2011, US Soccer Federation

² 21st Century Player Development Model, Michael Singleton, 2003 MA Youth Soccer

³ US Soccer Coaching Curriculum, Dr. Javier Perez, 2011, US Soccer Federation and Outline Progression for Teaching Soccer From U6 to U19, Sam Snow – US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching Education, 2006

⁴ MA Youth Soccer G Manual

- Heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore.
- Enjoying playing, not watching – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing.
- Limited attention span (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds.
- Effort is synonymous with performance – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm.
- Active imaginations – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- Look for adult approval – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- Unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic.
- Typically have 2 speeds -- extremely fast and stopped.
- Usually unaware of game scores – we should keep it that way.
- Often like to fall down just because it is fun – they are just children having fun
- Often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach

Practice Suggestions:

Week 1-2: Dribbling

Week 3-4: Shooting and Running with the Ball

Week 5-6: Ball control and Turning

Week 7-8: Kicking the ball (not really passing yet)

Please Don't Include⁵:

- tactics beyond simplest needed for “game”
- stretching – they don't need it at this age
- goal keeper training
- running for its own sake
- heading
- excessive discussion of rules

Reference:

Mass Youth Soccer U6 Weekly Practice Plans

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaching/practice_plans_u6.aspx

⁵ - Soccer Calling, A handbook for Youth Soccer Coaches, Dean Conway, 2005