

Reading United Soccer Club

Spring 2009

Micro Soccer Rules

Thank you for volunteering to coach soccer this season. We look forward to making Spring 2009 the most fun season of soccer our kids have experienced. But we will also take strides this year to improve the skill training aspect of the program. Several towns around us already work on skill development at the micro level, and we hope to incorporate a similar program in Reading over the next few years. Key to this effort, however, is ensuring that the sport remains fun and exciting to the kids. After all, who cares if the kids *know how* to play if they don't *want* to play?

RULES FOR K-/Pre-K PROGRAM (All of these sessions will be played at the Stadium Turf Area from 11:30 to 12:30)

1. At least one coach from each team should be at the fields no later than 11:15 in order to organize and greet their teams.
2. For the first 30 minutes, the kids should be brought through a few fun games and/or skill development exercises.
3. Scrimmages will begin at 12:05.
4. For the scrimmage, each team should field 3 to 4 players at all times if possible.
5. THERE ARE NO GOALIES.
6. Please follow out-of-bounds rules closely. There will be several games taking place at any time in a relatively confined space. It would be helpful to ask for a parent volunteer for each sideline.
7. There should be a 5-minute half-time break after 15 minutes.
8. Play should be stopped abruptly in the case of injuries. Please encourage the kids to care about their friends and teammates.
9. Try to rotate the kids into the game, using full groups of players at a time if possible (as opposed to one-at-a-time), and do your best to give all kids the same amount of playing time.
10. Do not worry about positioning, but do try to keep the kids spread out for safety.
11. Encourage the kids who are resting on the sidelines to cheer on their teammates and pay attention to the game if possible.

RULES FOR 1ST/2ND GRADE PROGRAM

(Most of these games will also be played at the Stadium Turf Area from 11:30 to 12:30 , but 4 teams each Sunday will play at the Longwood playing area on Pearl Street from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m.)

1. At least one coach from each team should be at the fields no later than 15 minutes before start time in order to organize and greet their teams.
2. For the first 30 minutes, the kids should be brought through a few fun games and/or skill development exercises. A list of fun games to play with them is detailed below.
3. Scrimmages will begin at 12:05 Stadium Turf/12:35 at Longwood. As the season progresses, the game-time can be lengthened at the discretion of BOTH coaches, but should not start before 11:55 Stadium Turf/12:25 at Longwood.
4. For the scrimmage, each team should field 6 players at all times if possible.
5. THERE ARE NO GOALIES. Most of the kids this age are taller than the net itself, making it pretty hard to teach true goalie skills to them.
6. Starting with this age, we will begin to teach the kids the concept of positions. To do this, we ask that 3 kids on each team wear pullover “pinnies.” These kids will be considered “offense.” The other 3 kids on each team will be “defense.” The offense is not allowed to come back behind their own side of mid-field. Similarly, the defense is not allowed to cross mid-field going forward. This will naturally keep the kids spread out, encourage passing (a novel concept!), teamwork and prepare them for advancement out of Micro soccer. This system is used successfully in several other local “Micro” programs.
7. Please follow out-of-bounds rules closely. There will be several games taking place at any time in a relatively confined space. It would be helpful to ask for a parent volunteer for each sideline.
8. There should be a 5-minute half-time break after 12 minutes. It is okay for games to end at 1:05 for first few weeks.
9. Play should be stopped abruptly in the case of injuries. Please encourage the kids to care about their friends and teammates.
10. Try to rotate the kids into the game, using full groups of players at a time if possible (as opposed to one-at-a-time), and do your best to give all kids the same amount of playing time.
11. Encourage the kids who are resting on the sidelines to cheer on their teammates and pay attention to the game if possible.
12. Keep it fun... even if you choose to keep score.

Thank you again for your involvement in Reading Micro Soccer. We look forward to another great season!

Suggested Activities and Practice Games

Here are a few suggestions for the micros. The pre-k and K players should be just warming up with any kinds of ball touches and then moving on to games, preferably 4v4. I stress 4v4 because it gives the kids the opportunity to play in a very basic formation that will be with them throughout their soccer lives. Triangles are the most basic distribution of players on the field, and diamonds are the next most common formation they'll encounter. Playing this way teaches them – over time – to use the space on the field and to look out for their teammates. The object of all these games is to get maximum touches on the ball so that the players can figure out how to handle it in all circumstances.

Grade 1 players may be able to get a bit more structured, but many will prefer to just play like the younger kids.

Grade 2, and some (or possibly all) grade 1 players, can move on to different games that provide lots of skills training. In general, it's best for any given day to focus on one skill, like passing or dribbling, followed by 4v4 games – assuming the numbers work out.

Red light green light. Using a confined area, everybody has a ball and dribbles around in random directions. Red is stop, yellow is dribble slow, green is dribble fast. Some towns have even more different colored traffic lights – throw in different 'skills' like pullbacks to change direction, drop and hide behind the ball (usually followed by green to encourage getting up faster after falling), stop and dance around the ball, etc. Sometimes it's fun to let the kids pick a color and activity, as long as it includes something to do with soccer, e.g., pick your nose on silver...while tapping toes on top of the ball. Coaching points – keep the ball close to you for control, heads up to look for traffic.

Four squares dribbling. Players start evenly distributed along the sides of a square. On signal, they all dribble straight across, reverse direction at the other side and repeat. Coaching points, heads up to look for traffic, ball close to body, keep an eye on the ball when turning with a pull-back or any other kind of turn.

Sharks and minnows. Using a confined area, players line up and dribble across. A shark is stationed in the middle and tries to win the ball from any of the others. The shark takes any won ball to the end line and the ball deprived minnow becomes a shark. Variation – random directions within the area rather than straight across. Coaching points – look up, change directions and speed.

Knock-out. Using a confined area, players dribble around and try to knock other players' ball out of the area. Knocked out players retrieve their ball and do some activity – 10 toe taps, dribble to a point and back, etc. before re-entering. Re-entry tasks can change at any time – or remain the same. Variations – knock balls out by hitting them with your ball, set up teams and keep score (of knockouts). Coaching points, heads up, shield the ball.

Cone gates dribbling. Set up randomly distributed pairs of cones. Players start (all at the same time) to dribble through each set of cones. Make up any sequence or no sequence, have to go through all before repeating – anything you wish. Variations, change directions at each gate with a pull-back, pass the ball through the gate and run to the outside of the gate to retrieve and continue dribbling, etc.

Cone gates passing. Pair up and partners run to each gate (one of them dribbling the ball) and pass to each other through the gates. Can be free-for-all or (more advanced) make rules about which foot and/or which part of the foot to use for passing and receiving. Receive the ball with one foot, balanced on planted foot with the leg of the receiving foot relaxed and ready to 'give' a little to receive under control.

Random passing (fairly advanced). Using a confined area, have all players running around within the area with 1 ball for every two players. Find someone open to pass to then keep running. Coaching points, head up, look for another player that you can see is looking at you before passing.

Crazy cones. Set up a 20 yard circle (smaller with small number of players, with cones randomly distributed within. Players stay on the outside and try to knock the cones over. Variations – set up teams and keep score, use different surfaces of the foot, different feet. Coaching points – don't let them kick with their toes – beyond that, let them figure it out. Any particularly high level players can start getting 'coaching' on proper passing and shooting technique.

Target shooting. Split the group onto two lined ~10 yards apart (farther apart if it gets too easy). Place a ball in the middle and load up each side with the remaining balls. Object is to knock the center ball over the other team's line by hitting it with their ball.

Clean-out your back yard. Set up a 10 yard (can be made wider or narrower, as needed) 'moat' or neutral zone with players evenly divided on each side. Every player with a ball – kick it to the other side. After a set time, team with fewest balls in their yard wins. Variations – set up one or two cone goals on each side to add a scoring component to the competition – let them figure out the best blend of defensive and offensive strategies, then make rules to adjust (no putting 2 keepers in front of each goal, etc.)

As you might guess, the list could go on and on. Basically, its best to have a few games up your sleeve – if the kids don't get it, or are otherwise dissatisfied with it, switch to something else. Having fun is more important than any coach's objectives