



U7/U8

**COACH
HANDBOOK**



Introduction

Thanks very much for volunteering your time to coach this year. We hope that you enjoy the season.

Blaine Soccer Club is committed to providing a positive soccer experience for its players and you are a very important part of making this happen.

This manual is designed to give you some basic coaching guidelines and help you understand the developmental needs of the children you are coaching which in turn will hopefully help you have a positive coaching experience also. We feel this approach is better than just presenting you with a book full of drills, kind of like giving you a recipe but not showing you how to cook!! The manual also incorporates basic guidelines set down by US Youth Soccer.

Throughout the season please take advantage of all the resources that are available to you from the club. These include free Coaches Clinics throughout the year, reimbursement of fees for any MYSA License Courses attended, and Books, DVD's, and Videos available to borrow from the Blaine Soccer Club office.

If you have any questions about the manual or any other coaching queries please feel free to call me at the Soccer Club Office.

Have a great season

Scott Macleod
Director of Coaching and Player Development

General Guidelines

FUN – The players enjoying themselves and having a positive soccer experience is our Number 1 priority.

NO LAPS, NO LINES, And NO LECTURES – Eliminate any practices which involve the players standing around in long lines. We want to maximize the time they have with the ball and they will lose interest if they are standing in line. Running Laps is a waste of time. You don't run laps of the field during a soccer game. Refrain from long lectures. Children come to soccer to participate and be active not to sit and be lectured for long periods of time.

ACTIVITY VERSUS DRILL – We want our coaches to use games/activities rather than drills. Drills involve the repetition of movements/patterns exactly the same way each time which is unrealistic to what happens during a soccer game. Characteristics of Drills are: Lines, Military, Static, Little Thought, Boring, and Age Inappropriate. Characteristics of Activities are: Dynamic, Free Movement, Fun, Decision Making, Organized but Unstructured, and Age Appropriate. **WHICH DO YOU THINK BEST FITS THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN?**

PLANNING – Try to plan your practice sessions in advance. Copy the session planners in this manual and write your session on them for reference.

BALLS – Encourage all your players to bring a ball each to practice. Try to give your players some challenges to try (such as juggling or moves) so they can practice those before practice while waiting for everyone to arrive rather than just shooting on goal as usually happens.

BEHAVIOUR – Try to ensure that your team is well behaved at practices and games. Make them aware that when you are talking or demonstrating they should be watching and listening. Although we want all the players to have fun there is definitely a difference between 'Having fun' and 'Being disrespectful'.

COMPETITION – Please remember that soccer at age levels U5 – U10 is Non – Competitive. We all realize that players know if they are doing well or not during a game as they get older but the idea of non – competitive soccer is that the players are allowed to develop without the pressure of having to win.

PARENTS – Keep regular communication channels open with your team parents. It's a good idea to have short team meetings every month or so out on the field after a practice to iron out any problems and to give your opinions on how things are going. Encourage your team's parents to be 'Team Supporters' on the sidelines not 'Coaches'. Having lots of people shouting at the players will confuse them and younger players will usually listen to what their parents are shouting at them which may be different to what you want the player to do. **PLAYERS PLAY – COACHES COACH – PARENTS PARENT.**



The Principals of Coaching

Developmentally Appropriate

One of the most important aspects of structuring your training session is making sure that the Activities are ‘Developmentally Appropriate’ for the age group you are coaching. If an activity is too difficult the child will show signs of frustration. If an activity is too easy the child will show signs of boredom so it is important that as a coach you understand children’s varying developmental levels and how their development affects the way they play soccer.

Clear, Concise and Correct Information

It is vital to give correct information to young players and at the same time not to bore them with long lectures as too much information will overwhelm them.

Simple to Complex

Plan your training sessions to start simply then progress gradually allowing for ongoing modifications and new challenges.

Safe and Appropriate Training Area

Check the field for glass, large stones, and large holes. Make sure goals are secured and that the training area is appropriately sized.

Decision Making

We have to encourage opportunities for players to make decisions so that effective learning can take place.

Implications for the game

The training activities must in some way reflect the demands a player faces in the game.



Activity Checklist

Ask yourself these questions:

Are the activities fun?

Are the activities organized?

Are the objectives clear?

Is there maximum participation of all players?

Is creativity and decision making being used?

Is the space appropriate for the age group and numbers of players?

Is the feedback from the coach appropriate?

Are the objectives of the activity related to the demands they will face in a game?

Session Outlines

Age	U5/U6	U7/U8	U9/U10	U11/U12
Duration of Session	Max – 60 mins (45 mins good)	Max – 60 mins	Max – 75 mins (60 mins good)	Max – 90 mins (75 mins good)
Ball to Player Ratio	One to One	One to Two *	One to Four *	One to Five *
End of session scrimmage	3 v 3	4v4	6v6	7v7/8v8

* The numbers shown in the Ball to Player ratio are what we would like to be able to build up to as the session progresses. We still encourage training sessions for all age groups to involve players with a ball each for warm ups and the first activity or so but based on the development characteristics of the different ages we try to work towards those final ratios (For example U5's are egocentric so should have a ball each. At age U7/U8 children are learning to share more so we encourage some work in pairs)



General Characteristics of U7/U8

Once we begin to understand the following general characteristics of this age group it will help you plan age appropriate activities for practice sessions.

- Short attention span although now a bit longer than at U6
- Inclined more toward group activities
- Constantly in motion
- Psychologically easily bruised
- Physical and psychological development of boys/girls similar
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence
- Love to run, jump, roll, and climb
- Start to imitate older children and have role models
- Lack sense of pace – Go flat out until they drop

Typical U7/U8 Training Session

- Should not exceed 60 minutes
- Every child should have a ball for warm ups and first activities
- Introduce partner activities
- Lots of water breaks
- Give brief directions
- Emphasize familiarity and confidence with the ball
- Play 4v4 scrimmages to small goals with no goal keepers
- End with a cool down.

TACTICS

Change of Direction



U7/U8 – The Basic Coach’s Guide

Emphasis – Individual play with some fun passing activities. Trying to encourage the players to move away when players ‘bunch up’ and recognize moments to pass.

Game Knowledge – Understanding what constitutes a foul, proper throw ins, when to pass, what to do when we loose the ball.

Technical Skills – Coached indirectly through fun games/activities (NO DRILLS)

- 1, Running with the ball
- 2, Short passing with different parts of the foot
- 3, Shooting the ball with different parts of the foot.
- 4, Turning with the ball
- 5, Receiving the ball
- 6, Shielding the ball

Tactics – Breaking away from the ‘bunch’ and spreading out
Encouraging the team to attack and defend together
What to do when not in possession of the ball
Continual reinforcement to be ball orientated

Positions – Players should be allowed to run around freely during the game. They should NOT be made to stand around in a certain area. At kick offs, goal kicks etc players should be encouraged to set up in a diamond like formation with width, depth, length.

Practice – One or Two (max) 60 minutes sessions per week

Activities – One player-One Ball activities such as tag games with the ball, 1v1 games, 2v2 games, develop towards activities where two players work together with one ball between them, and small sided scrimmages (4v4). NO dribbling in lines around cones.

Player Equipment – Shin guards, water bottle, tennis shoes (or soccer cleats if they have them), Size 3 soccer ball.

If possible coach’s should try to attend the MYSA Youth Module course and free club clinics.