

Coaching Education Guide

For U6 – U18

An insight into the world of youth soccer coaching! Learn the coaching techniques used by professional coaches to achieve maximum success for your players.

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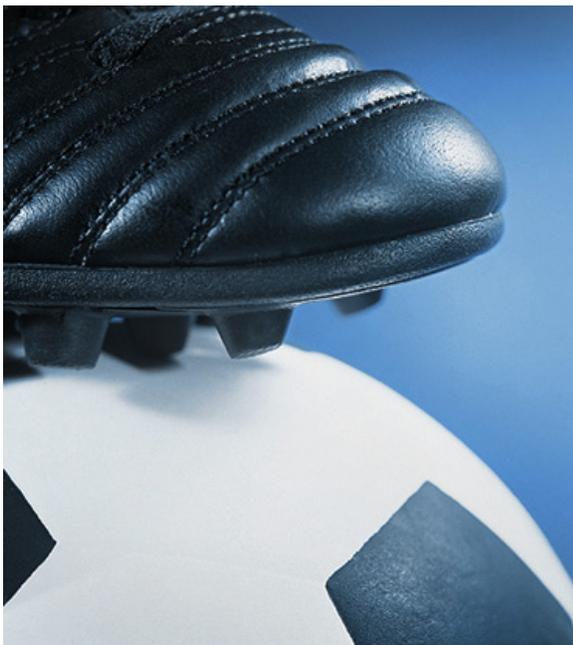
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Introduction/ Philosophy

The mission of the Sudbury Youth Soccer Association shall be to provide the opportunity and training for the youth of Sudbury, Massachusetts, to learn the game of soccer through the development of individual skill, fitness, teamwork, and fair play.



INTRODUCTION

As a coach of Sudbury Soccer it is important that each coach understands the ambition of the organization and how to help achieve our objectives.

This coaching guide is designed to get coaches to think about the most important person in soccer... the player.

Everything we do as a coach should be for the benefit of the player. If they are taught correctly at the grass roots level then they have a strong base to build from in the future.

PHILOSOPHY

The SYSA seeks to fulfill it's mission through the pursuit of the following objectives and philosophy:

- All players should have opportunity to play.
- Enjoyment, skill development, fitness and having fun are important goals for players, coaches and the program.
- Passion for soccer -- "love of the game" -- is a specific goal for the program.
- Sportsmanship is an important goal for the program.
- The Sudbury Soccer program is "child-centered" and promotes personal achievement, teamwork development and fair play.
- Sudbury Soccer is competitive.
- We strive to have a soccer program of the highest quality.

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Roles of a coach

Whether you are a rookie or a veteran coach it is important to understand your role and the effect it will have on players now and in the future.

1. FRIEND

Become their friend early and they will enjoy your sessions and be more receptive to your coaching points.

2. ORGANIZER

Arrive at least 15 minutes early to set up your area. This will help maintain control of the group from the beginning.

3. INSTRUCTOR

The players need to get instruction and knowledge from the coach to be able to master and develop their skill.

4. DEMONSTRATOR

Chinese Proverb "I hear and I forget, I see and I understand". Paint a clear picture when you are coaching. Do not over speak, be quick and to the point.

5. MOTIVATOR

One of the most important roles for a coach with youth players is to be a positive motivator. It can be challenging, but there is one magic ingredient for success: Enthusiasm! The more enthusiastic you are the more the players feed off of it. Enthusiasm does not necessarily mean jumping around, simply the tone, pitch and pace of your voice will be enough to engage your players.

6. ROLE MODEL

Above all, you are a role model! Remember this at all times when you are coaching. We must show respect to all from the team, to the officials, to the spectators, and the opposition.

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Understanding your Players

Players go through physiological and psychological changes as they get older. The way your players think is very important to understand if you wish to achieve success during the season.

COACHING BEGINNERS

Before coaching beginners you must first understand their wants and needs.

Children of this age play for many different reasons, and you must try to identify and understand the different individuals within your team to become successful.

1. FUN
2. FRIENDSHIP
3. SUCCESS

These 3 elements are vital in your preparation because everything you teach must contain them. They come through in your mannerisms and expressions, your words and demonstrations.

COACHING RECREATIONAL PLAYERS

Players at this level are playing soccer for fun and enjoyment. Not all players we coach will have the drive and motivation to progress as much as their potential may suggest. Understand this and you will relax as a coach, you will enjoy the sessions more and the players will get more out of it. A single terrible experience can switch a child off a sport forever. We need to recognize who we are coaching and why they are playing.

Recreational players range from U6 right the way through to U18, they have a love of the sport and are happy to be part of a team with friends having fun.

COACHING COMPETITIVE PLAYERS

Players of this level play for many reasons and are becoming more aggressive and passionate. They can now recognize which players on their team are the strongest and weakest, recognize winning and losing as being meaningful.

The main three reasons these players play soccer is:

1. Enjoyment
2. Competitiveness
3. Development

Players at this level will almost always follow the coaches instructions over their parents opinions if they believe what the coach is saying is true and going to help them succeed.

Winning is important to most players at this level but not at the expense of playing time or enjoyment. Players would rather be on a losing team but play every minute than on a winning team and not play.

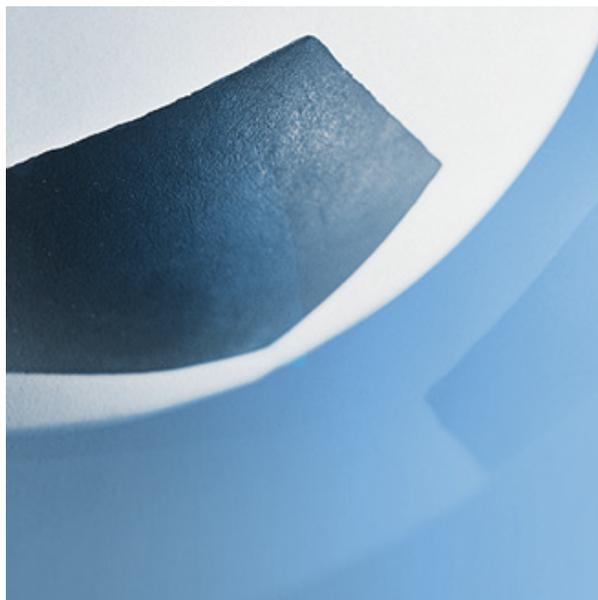
Competitive players become recognizable at the U9/U10 age and players can develop into such a player at any age thereafter.

COACHING ADVANCED PLAYERS

Advanced players are hungry for success, self-motivated, and passionate about the game. Their ability dictates their progress and development. These players play for different reasons than competitive and recreational players; they need new challenges and objectives to stay interested. If they are not given these, they either leave your team or drop/change sports

1. Development
2. Competition
3. Success

We begin to recognize advanced players at the U11/U12 age and players can develop into such a player at any age thereafter.



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Success is what you make it!

Good coaches will understand the difference between success and winning. Success can come in many forms and as a coach, you control what it means. Success could be a pass, a run, a dribble, holding the ball up, attempting a shot, or eventually scoring a goal.

Success in youth soccer does not revolve around which team or which player scores the most goals.

Rather than looking at the number of goals scored, let's look at some of what makes a good soccer player.

- Mastery of the ball
- Positive touches
- Strong in possession of the ball
- Can find channels on the field and can penetrate lines

Emphasizing winning over player development will lead to these following things during your season:

- Kicking the ball up the pitch aimlessly
- Poor control of the ball
- Inability to identify what is a good pass
- Panicking in front of goal

From the very first time you meet your team praise the small things your players do. This will raise their confidence and improve their play.

ALL of your players are there because they expect to have **FUN!**

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Goal Setting

Many times coaches are observed jumping from topic to topic, week after week, working on every aspect of soccer from throw-ins to springing an offside trap. STOP! It doesn't work like that!

Within the first two practices of the season, get a feel for the group and study each individual player. Once you have made a decision about their ability and mentality, plan a season goal. This will help tell you which topics you should be working on.

POSSIBLE SEASON GOALS:

RECREATION: *To have fun and enjoy practices and games*

COMPETITIVE: *To have each player individually master the techniques required to progress in soccer*

ADVANCED: *To maintain possession of the ball from the back, through the midfield so we can mount successful attacks*

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Break the season goal down into small weekly objectives. Ask yourself what skills the team or individual needs to achieve your goal?

Session topics should not represent what happened on the weekend, this is a short term solution to try and achieve a long term development plan. Look at the whole picture and see how each child fits into the plan rather than winning a few games in the league.

6

What should I work on?

While at the beginner level, players must only work on the mastery of the ball, more touches, more turns, more confrontation on the ball.

"The most fundamental skill in soccer is individual mastery of the ball and the creativity that comes with it. This should be a priority in training and games, especially in the early years. As this skill is mastered, the rest of the game becomes easier. Practices should be built around facilitating the development of the skills necessary to move and control the ball well. As these individual skills and the creativity to make them come alive in the game are developed to a level of competence, the finer points, first of passing skill and later of team organization can be taught."

**Player Development Guide
U.S. Soccer**

Once players begin to master the movement of the ball, we can start to look into other techniques of the game. The "fundamentals" are ball mastery, passing, receiving, finishing, and shielding. These should be the main focus of all players until mastered.

Coaches should forget about tactics as a coaching tool until the techniques can be performed to execute the tactic.

Without technique there can be not tactics.

Once the fundamentals are mastered they must then be maintained. We cannot forget about them! We start first with basic tactics to achieve success for our players and then work on systems of play with our advanced players.

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Coaching Methods

In each session we coach, there are different ways we can teach. We need to use different methods to achieve different goals for different players.

Below is the spectrum of teaching methods, briefly described.

STYLE A - COMMAND

The role of the coach is to dominate the session by running a set practice giving relative information in a structured manner. The player's role is to follow the instructions and reproduce the skill when needed. When this is achieved, players will perform a skill with precision, reproducing a predicated technique on cue following a set pace, rhythm or pressure. This will develop positive habits and routines and can build team identity and pride.

STYLE B - PRACTICE

The role of the coach is to provide individual 1-on-1 feedback during the session to players. The coach must assign individual tasks privately to challenge and help players develop. (For example, asking your best player to use their weaker foot or asking your weakest player to take an extra touch to help control the ball before passing). The player's role is to practice this given task and develop individually at their own pace. This will force players to cognitively remember the skill by themselves and place a level of independence on their own individual goal.



STYLE C – RECIPROCAL

The role of the player in this style is to become a leader and help a partner. Players will work in small groups or pairs, with 1 becoming the observer and the other becoming the doer. The role of the coach is to provide the task and objective for the players and identify coaching points to the observer. This will help the observer recognize personal mistakes quicker and will build confidence in communication and leadership.

STYLE D – SELF-CHECK

The role of the teacher is to provide the tasks and challenges during the session and the role of the players is to work independently and self-evaluate. This will allow the players to gain independence and take ownership of their own performance while learning how to self-evaluate and correct their technique to achieve success. Players will be able to recall the techniques learned in numerous different circumstances because they learned the skills themselves.

STYLE E – INCLUSION

This style of coaching is very common among soccer teams because of the varied ability level. The coach's role is to provide varied levels of difficulty of a skill and the players work at their own rate, mastering that level and then moving on. Players that are ambitious can attempt harder levels, potentially fail but will accomplish as high a level as they can. The player's role is focus and self-motivate and push to achieve a higher standard.

STYLE F – GUIDED DISCOVERY

The role of the coach is to teach the players through questions. The coach sets the start point of an exercise and the end product and guides the players to success without just telling them. The role of the players is to be interactive and respond to the question to gain success.

STYLE G – CONVERGENT DISCOVERY

The role of the coach is to provide an end point, a challenge to accomplish a task or exercise but will not explain how or why they must achieve this. The players must discover how to accomplish the task that has been set before them and why they think this is relevant to how the coach may want them to play.



STYLE H – DIVERGENT DISCOVERY

The role of the coach is to deliver an exercise and incorporate different skills that the players will need to produce the end product. Coaches will guide players a distance in the session and then leave the players to be creative and discover different solutions that will help them in the task. The player's role is to be creative with a purpose and try different ways to succeed. This will allow players to express themselves during games without fear of failure.

STYLE I – INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM

This style is among the most creative because it forces players to individually create their own objectives and work as part of a team to achieve a common goal. The role of the coach is to create an environment where players must create the situation and the end goal, while the coach provides coaching points along the way. (For example, during a 4v4 game, the players must try to achieve some form of success during the game, the players must be creative and decide what that success may be, it may be a goal, it may be a style of pass or how they decide to defend. This will build creative players that take ownership of their own performance).

STYLE J – LEARNER INITIATED

This style forces the players to state what they feel they need to work on to improve. It is a good style to use in soccer to build team bonding and cohesiveness by stating what do we need to work on? This will give players the opportunity to initiate what to work on. The coach can then design a session around what the players want.

STYLE K – SELF TEACHING

This learning style is one of the most important in the development of a child, the passion to teach themselves away from the practice field. The role of the coach is to challenge the players to work on a challenge at home. Players will go away and learn the skill by practicing at home and come back at the next session with another skill mastered.

These coaching styles should be used during the sessions you deliver. Often a mixture of styles work best during a session and often challenging individually will maximize your success rate as a coach.



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Coaching Points

Coaching points are the key to development. It is important they are delivered correctly and are consistent with the objective of the session. Coaches must follow three delivery points.

Firstly the coach must introduce the exercise without overloading the players with coaching points. This will reduce the time it takes to start the exercise and will engage the players from the beginning.

INTRODUCE

Once the player is settled with the exercise the coach must then teach the basic technique or concept. This will get the players to perform the skill repetitively.

TEACH

As the session develops, there will be different circumstances to utilize the skill that was introduced. This will teach the players exactly when and how to perform the skill or concept.

TUNE

The players will then begin to master the skill and it will require fine tuning to enhance the performance levels of the player.

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Let the players PLAY!

Players drop out of sport typically for 3 main reasons:

1. **It isn't fun anymore**
2. **too much pressure on winning (often by parents' attitudes); and**
3. **the coach presents negative attitudes!**

For players to develop they must, above all else play and play a lot. Only by playing can players learn leadership, team work, build character and create a willingness to push themselves beyond their own expectations.

HELP YOUR PLAYERS SUCCEED

Think of your own experiences, if you, as an adult, played a new/unfamiliar sport (often soccer) and you had 10 people all shout at you to perform better, to pass when they shout! To shoot when they shout! What feelings might go through your mind? – Embarrassment, fear, nervousness? Most would probably never want to put themselves into that environment again!

Now put yourself into the cleats of a child, those 10 people are now double their size, they don't have the reason or understanding to process fully what you are saying and to keep focused on the game, they are just a child and a U12's brain has not matured enough to handle these commands– What must they be thinking? Not only is shouting, yelling and screaming not needed, it's not best for your players nor is it fair to the child.

Children are not mini adults and should not be treated as such.

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Organizing a Session

Organizing your session correctly can make a huge difference in the control of the group.

Allowing limited, supervised down time will keep players focused on soccer and in turn will make the session run smoother.

- Arrive 15 minutes before practice
- Utilize your assistant – put them to work
- Set up field before the players arrive, it will help the session run smoother
- Scan area to make sure it is safe
- Have first aid kit and medicals in your possession
- Have all equipment ready to use:
Balls Pumped
Pinnies washed
First aid kit stocked up

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Running a Session

There are some key points to help you succeed during your coaching session. It is important to plan ahead and expect the unexpected.

Often you may plan a session and it doesn't work, so don't be scared to adjust the session and then reevaluate at the end to assess why it went wrong.

- Discover your coaching philosophy and live by it
- Engage players from the beginning
- Don't allow down time, their attention may go!
- Speak as little as possible and make your words have value
- Don't rush an exercise, allow the game to develop and move on when the players have accomplished all they can
- Try to stay one step ahead, have your assistant set up one exercise while you're running another

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Does it look like soccer?

It is important to make the game look like soccer early in the session. Each session goes through 4 phases: Related warm up, small sided game, expanded small sided game and then game.

Does your session follow these guidelines?

- Are the exercises you are running look like an element from the game?
- Are the players challenged from the start?
- Are there objectives in the exercise?
- Is there a winner and loser?
- Are the players responding positively to losing. Can you get them to bounce back? If so how long will it take them? If not, why not?
- Can you put them into live action as soon as possible because not enough US players PLAY enough soccer during the day in their own back yard?

13

Four Pillars of the Game

When organizing your training sessions, are you conscious of the four pillars of the game – the technical, tactical, physical and psychological?

Each exercise in your session should incorporate the four pillars of soccer.

1. TECHNICAL

Is there a ball involved in the exercise?

2. TACTICAL

Is there an element of decision in the exercise; choice of speed dribble v control dribble, short pass v long pass, a pass v a shot, etc

3. PHYSICAL

Are there physical pressures of the game in the exercise? It is important to train the way you play!

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL

Is the exercise competitive and are there pressures on the players to perform and respond depending on the situation?

Different pillars may be weighted differently depending on your team makeup and where they are in the season. However, the more you can combine the pillars into your exercises, the more effective your training will be.

14

The Coach's Tool Kit

The coach's tool kit is a coaching method adopted by US Soccer. It describes different ways to deliver your coaching points to your players/team.

The coach's tool kit starts with the basic philosophy of "let the kids play" and as you go through the tool kit, each level is a little more intrusive on the game itself. We should try to structure our session to utilize the early stages of the tool kit rather than constantly stop-start, stop-start the session.

TOOL ONE – ENVIRONMENT

Using the environment you create within your session can be a great way to teach players. It requires the coach to use rules and conditions to extract the skills required to be successful.

For example, if you want to force players to work on their mastery of the ball in a game situation you may make the field very narrow to force confrontation. **FONT/SIZE CHANGE**

Coaches talk very little yet the players stay engaged and learn through the convergent discovery teaching method

TOOL TWO – COACHING IN THE FLOW OF THE GAME

Coaching in the flow of the game does not mean this method must only be used in an actual game. It reinforces the philosophy of "let the kids play" and it requires the coach to give feedback to the team while the game or exercise is running.

Make the points relative to your coaching session only. If you talk about other concepts, the value of your words will diminish. Remember your points can be positive as well as corrective.

TOOL THREE – COACHING INDIVIDUALS

Coaching individuals can often get the most out of your players because the feedback is 1 to 1. It is important to use this method a lot when working with younger players

It is important to challenge your better players by giving them an individual task to try to accomplish as well as supporting those that are struggling. This feedback should be given discreetly.

TOOL FOUR – COACHING AT NATURAL STOPPAGES

Coaching in natural stoppages requires the coach to have a clear picture of what went wrong in the exercise and correct the situation during a stoppage in play – Throw in, free kick, goal kick

The coach must have a good knowledge of the game to recreate a REALISTIC picture of what went wrong. When using this method don't rewind the play too far, be patient and wait for the natural stoppage.

TOOL FIVE – “FREEZE” METHOD

The freeze method is the most intrusive and should be used rarely within the session.

“Paint a picture” of what went wrong and have the players recreate it. It is very important that you coach the players that are active and involved in the play but also coach the players that are off the ball and how the change in movement will affect them.

Come in and coach quickly and get the game going, players don't like to be stopped!

15

Working with mixed ability teams

Your goal as a coach is to give feedback, both positive and corrective in each of your sessions. This may sound easy, but in reality coaches often focus too much on perfecting the exercise and not enough on actually teaching each player.

Creating supports and extensions to each practice is a good way to ensure that you interact with all your players and help them develop individually.

Each exercise you deliver should have a general target audience, an exercise suited for the mass. This means you will automatically make the exercise too challenging for some and too easy for others.

SUPPORTS

Supporting an exercise means breaking the actual skill that is being worked on down to its simplest form. Allowing the weaker players to come to grips with the skill fundamentally and then building from there.

EXTENSIONS

Extensions are progressions to the original starting point, and are as valuable as supports because they help the better players develop at their own rate.

Coaching a mixed ability group is one of the hardest tasks for a coach in youth soccer. It takes careful planning and execution to teach the whole team in every session.

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Working with goalkeepers

Goalkeeper is a key position in soccer that can often win or lose a game. Although our focus in youth soccer is not necessarily to win games, the development of goalkeepers is important.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR GOALKEEPER!

It is often difficult to give goalkeepers the attention they need because coaches are too busy with the rest of the team. Coaches must be aware of this situation and try to find time to give feedback to the goalkeeper. The use of the assistant coach to give goalkeeper training can be very valuable.

Goalkeepers are often blamed for goals they concede. A coach must not get caught up in the excitement of the game and de-motivate a goalkeeper because of a mistake, as this may cause the player to drop out of the sport!



WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A GOALKEEPER

Commander

A good goalkeeper will communicate with the defense and dictate the shape of the back line and the height at which they press.

Resilient

Goalkeeping can be a lonely position. Errors are easy to make, but hard to forget. A good goalkeeper understands that everyone makes mistakes, and they must learn from them without getting upset.

Good hands

Goalkeepers face a lot of pressure during a game and are forced to call upon many skills. One of the most important skills is ball handling – a goalkeeper must have natural catching ability.

Flexible/Agile

Goalkeepers twist, bend, crawl, stretch, jump, and fall. They must do anything to stop the ball going into the goal, and so must be flexible and agile.

Brave

For the duration of the game goalkeepers get shot at. This requires an amount of bravery and strength.

FUNDAMENTAL GOALKEEPING SKILLS

READY POSITION

1. **Back Straight** Good posture results in good balance.
2. **Knees Bent** Knees must be bent in order to provide good stability and readiness to pounce.
3. **Feet shoulder width apart** Goalkeepers must be ready change direction quickly and therefore require a balanced center of gravity
4. **Hands close together in front of the chest** There are many different techniques for where goalkeepers' hands should go when they are in the ready position. Having their hands close together in front of their chest makes it quicker and easier to react to the ball.





MOVEMENT

1. **On the balls of your feet**
Goalkeepers must always be on the balls of their feet so they can react and reposition themselves in order to make a save.
2. **Shuffle** Do not run around the goal. Always face your body forward. Shuffle in the desired direction without crossing your feet.
3. **Do not stand on the goal line**
When moving around the goal, do not stand on the goal line. Stand 2-3 yards off the line and as you shuffle side to side.
4. **Attack vs. defense** When your team is on the attack you should stand on the edge of the box to counter a long ball attempt. As the other team advance up the field return to a more defensive position closer to the goal line.

HANDLING

1. **Keep your eye on the ball**
Focus on the ball until it is safely in your hands
2. **Set yourself** Move into the ready position
3. **Decision** Make a decision and stick with it (For example, catch, dive, punch...).
4. **Position** Move in line with the ball. Always catch the ball with your body firmly behind it
5. **Action** Be relaxed and perform the skill confidently
6. **Reaction** React quickly and decide the best form of distribution

DIVING

1. **Use your feet as much as possible** Diving is a last resort. Use your feet to cover as much ground as possible before diving.
2. **Decision** Your decision should always be to hold the ball, but if that's not possible push it wide of the goal.
3. **Stretch** When stretching during a dive it is vital to attempt to save the ball with two hands. It is lazy to stretch with one and settle for pushing the ball away. Use two hands and attempt to hold on to it.
4. **Collapse** When diving for the ball face forward and land on your hip, side, and finally your shoulder.
5. **Recover** Try to absorb as much of the shock from the collapse as possible to ensure the ball does not pop out.

DEALING WITH CROSSES

1. **Approach from deep** Attack the ball from deep to produce momentum to get to the ball at its highest point
2. **Stand open** Stand almost side-on to the cross so you can see where the attackers are. Do not stand closed (turned completely at the ball). This will cause you to lose site of the awaiting strikers.
3. **Communication** Tell your defenders if you intend to come for the ball. Shout KEEPER!
4. **Time your run and do not hesitate** Arrive at the ball at its highest peak and do not hesitate or you will lose your momentum.
5. **Protection** As you jump for the ball, raise one knee to protect yourself against oncoming attackers.
6. **Reaction** Often if a team is attacking wide they are vulnerable to a counter-attack. Land on 2 feet explode to the edge of the box and identify if that's the case and distribute the ball quickly.

DISTRIBUTION OF

FEET

1. **Preparation** Approach from on an angle to wrap your laces around the ball.
2. **Action** Strike the ball with the laces and lean slightly back to get the ball off the ground.
3. **Recovery** Thoroughly follow through in the direction of your target. (Often aim for your wide players, if the kick goes awry it will be away from the goal.)
4. **Strength** A poor kick often comes down to the strength of the leg. Players will naturally gain strength as they get older.

HANDS

1. **Height/weight** When throwing, aim for the player's feet as that makes the ball easier to control. Adjust the strength of the throw depending on the distance of the target.

1 ON 1'S

1. **Rush** Close down the angle for the striker to shoot at as quickly as possible.
2. **Be decisive** In a 1-on-1 situation it is important that you do not hesitate. One pause in your momentum will likely result in a goal being scored.
3. **Be big and brave** Make yourself appear as big as possible when you rush. Spread your hands wide with a big chest blocking the goal. This can seem dangerous, so be brave.
4. **Force the attacker into a mistake** First try to force the attacker wide and away from the goal. Do not dive to the ground too early. Stay big and force the attacker into a mistake. If you know what foot the attacker prefers, try to force them onto their weaker foot.

17

Phases of play

Understanding the four phases of play – possession, attack, transition/losing the ball and transition/winning the ball, can help players identify what decisions are best given the current situation of the field.

PHASE 1 – POSSESSION

Possession is the moment when we have the ball and are looking to mount an attack. Possession does not mean attack. Just because we have the ball does not always mean we should gamble and go forward. Many times in the game we should get comfortable and sit in possession and make our opponents work hard. Take care of the ball!

PHASE 2 – ATTACK

When possession is successful and there is an opportunity to break to opponent's line then an attacking phase can begin. During this phase there are many cues that players can react to when they know there is a goal scoring opportunity. Players then have the knowledge that this is a time to gamble going forward, unlike possession where we are simply keeping the ball.

PHASE 3 – TRANSITION

LOSING THE BALL

What shape is your team in? Can we press the ball or do we have to sit in because we are exposed in behind? These are situation decisions that the better players must try to recognize.

If we lose the ball in the middle of the park perhaps we can press immediately and the rest of the team must get in behind and become compact.

If we lose the ball near our own goal and it is a 1v1 situation, perhaps the player has to delay the pace of the attacker, don't press fully and allow team mates the time to fill in behind.

WINNING THE BALL

Recognize where your team is on the field and whether you can mount an attack quickly. The goal is to recognize which phase is presented, is it phase 1 to possess the ball or phase 2 can we attack.

PHASE 4 - DEFENDING

There is no hard and fast rule to defending and a lot of it is situational. If our team is organized then can we apply pressure on the ball to slow the play down or do we allow the pressure on to us until there is a threat and we apply aggressive pressure only in our own half? By our team moving as 1 unit rather than individuals we will be able to maneuver our opponents into negative space and reduce the number of options on the ball. If our team is disorganized can we apply immediate pressure to slow the attack down so we can allow our team mates to get in behind the ball.

18

Nutrition

SYSA is very lucky to have enthusiastic professionals willing to share their knowledge and expertise to benefit the club. This next section of information has come from nutritional expert Brendan O'Neil.

PROPER NUTRITION & HYDRATION FOR SOCCER

It is very important for players to learn how to properly fuel their athletic bodies to promote recovery and enhance performance. Parents and coaches also need to understand the importance of proper hydration and nutrition. Young athletes will respond to what they see not just what they hear. Focus on the healthy foods and fluids that your child likes, or find an alternative that they will enjoy. Finding the right combinations will be a process of trial and error. Please be patient and do not get discouraged. Your chances of success will increase if you serve up items that satisfy the palate! Young athletes need access to the right foods and fluids before, during, and after every game or practice.



TIPS ON HYDRATION: PRE, DURING, AND POST MATCH

PRE-MATCH

1. Drink water throughout the day.
2. 2 hours before; 20 oz. of water.
3. Young athletes are more likely to drink chilled water vs. room temperature.

DURING MATCH

1. Continue to drink water to match the amount of sweat loss.
2. During a practice or training session encourage frequent water breaks of 4-8 oz. per break.
3. At halftime of a match athletes should drink a 50/50 mixture of water and a sports drink (i.e. Gatorade).

POST-MATCH

1. Sports drinks will help replenish both fluid and electrolytes (i.e. sodium & potassium) lost in sweat.
2. Water alone is not sufficient. If a sports drink alone is too sweet for the athlete, consider diluting the sports drink with water.
3. Amount can vary depending on amount of sweat loss; encourage at least 20 oz.
4. Volume consumed should be greater than volume of sweat lost.

TIPS ON NUTRITION: PRE, POST, AND TRAVEL MATCHES

PRE-MATCH

1. Begin to fuel up 2-3 hours before with a carbohydrate and protein meal (ratio should 3:1, carbs: protein).
2. Through trial and error, players should eat foods they know work well for them.
3. Serving size should be substantial.

PRE-MATCH MEAL IDEAS

1. Spaghetti with meat sauce, whole grain bread, steamed vegetables(i.e. broccoli), salad with low-fat or no dressing, skim or low-fat milk.
2. Ham or turkey sandwich with vegetables on whole grain bread, fresh fruit salad, skim or low-fat milk.
3. Baked chicken breast, brown rice, steamed broccoli, skim or low-fat milk

Veggies: The darker the vegetable the better, eat a variety with each meal rather than eating a large portion of one kind, do not overcook to avoid burning off the healthy nutrients.

Fruits: Eat a variety of fruits during the day. You're better off eating fruit than drinking fruit juices in order to consume the healthy fiber fruit has to offer.

POST-MATCH

1. Athletes need to replenish muscle energy stores by choosing healthy carbohydrate foods within 45 minutes after a match or practice.
2. Sometimes young athletes do not have an appetite 45 minutes after a hard game or training session, so a great alternative is a recovery drink (i.e. chocolate milk, or a smoothie made up of skim milk, blueberries, banana, and ice).
3. Resume normal timing of meals of every 2-3 hours following recovery drink or meal.

POST-MATCH MEAL IDEAS:

1. Fruit (raisins, apple, peach, apricot)
2. Graham crackers & peanut butter
3. Oatmeal with skim milk and a chopped banana

Travel: If you're on a long trip to a road game and restricted to a cooler or you're only choice is a fast food restaurant, remember to make the best food choice possible!

Easy access snacks:

1. Granola bars or energy bars
2. Dry cereal
3. Cheese sticks
4. Oatmeal cookies
5. Yogurt