

## **Mebane Youth Soccer Association – Introduction to Coaching U5/U6**

MYSA's goal is to provide access to the game of soccer for the children of Mebane and surrounding communities; to instruct children in a supportive, age appropriate environment; and to provide coaches, team volunteers, and parents with the information and instruction necessary to help their children learn and grow through all aspects of the game.

### **The U5/U6 Game**

At the age of 4-5, children are obviously not prepared to play soccer as adults would play. Their physical, emotional, and cognitive state is not yet capable of understanding the intricacies of full-sided soccer. Therefore, the approach to coaching children of this age relies on the use of games and activities that are engaging and fun for the children, but are "disguised" to help them learn the fundamental skills they will need as they grow older.

The coach plays THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE in how much children at these ages enjoy the game. The coach is not so much an instructor but a participant in the games and activities, helping to guide the players and establishing an atmosphere that is fun for the kids.

### **Responsibilities of the Coach**

- Establish Enjoyable Learning Environment
  - o Activity-based practices
  - o Large amounts of play time (talk less, play more!)
  - o Total team participation
  - o De-emphasize winning and losing, focus on the effort and improvement of your players
- Have Activities Geared Towards Achieving Success
  - o Start simple, progress to more complexity
- Show enthusiasm and be animated (play with them!)
- You are a role model
  - o Show respect for all players, parents, referees, and opponents
  - o Your parents will take on the attitude that you project during training and games
- Take an interest to educate yourself on the fundamentals and rules of the game
  - o Clinics and classes provided by MYSA and NCYSA (Youth 1 module, in particular)
  - o We are here to help...please ask questions!
- PROVIDE POSITIVE FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT AT ALL TIMES
  - o Reward effort, not just results
  - o Provide suggestions to help players succeed
  - o Seek player input
  - o NEVER criticize or use sarcasm

## **Understanding the Player**

They may be all the same age, but children are very different and will show significant differences from one another physically, psychologically, socially, and emotionally. As individuals, they will learn and progress at their own pace. It is critically important that coaches and parents understand that their criteria of "success" on the soccer field is normally not the same as that of the child. If the child feels like he or she has succeeded in some way then THEY HAVE, and this should be recognized. The child seeks praise and reassurance that their efforts were good, and we should give them that praise regardless of the outcome or results.

### **Psychomotor Development (physical movement associated with mental activity)**

- Minimal physical differences between boys and girls
- Fitness capacity
  - o Easily fatigued
  - o Recover rapidly with rest period

### **Cognitive Development (processes of thought, awareness, and judgement)**

- Short attention spans
- Concepts of time and space are just starting to develop
- Limited capacity to attend to multiple tasks
- Understand simple rules and objectives
- Effort is the same as performance: "If I try hard, then I did a good job", regardless of outcome

### **Psychosocial Development (psychological and social aspects, interaction with others)**

- Great need of approval from adults (parents, teachers, coaches)
- Easily bruised psychologically by peers and adults
- Intrinsic motivation to play is fun...not winning
- Embraces team identity
- Desire social acceptance, want everyone to like them

Understanding how kids at this age think and what they are able to understand and learn is half the battle of becoming a successful coach at U5/U6. The rest of it is learning how to organize your practices so that they keep the kids active and engaged.

## **Organizing your Training Sessions**

Training sessions for U5/U6 will not look like those of older age groups. The session will normally consist of anywhere from 4-7 separate games and activities that are designed to entertain while teaching basic ball handling skills. Some basic tips to keep in mind:

- U5/U6 players do not like to share the ball! Plan your sessions so that most of your activities have every player with a ball (i.e. passing drills are a bit beyond this age and normally don't work well)
- Keep the players moving and active and they will remain interested. Let them get bored and you will have problems
- Plan activities to last for 5 or 10 minutes with a short break in between for water and rest...this is particularly important in hot weather. Let your activities run a little shorter and your breaks a little longer when it's hot.

- When an activity isn't working or your kids are finding it boring, drop it and move to the next activity! Different groups have different favorites...after 3-4 sessions your players will start telling you their favorites!
- Take the time to plan your sessions. 10-15 minutes is all you'll need to organize the activities you want to do for a session and think about your field setup as far as layout of cones.
- When players take water breaks, use that time to rearrange your cones for the next activity. Make your kids wait for you to do this after their water break and you WILL have problems
- There are multiple places to go for training activities. Check the MYSAs site coaches info page for some links to good sites, Google and YouTube search for new ones, and check out USYSA books available at Eurosport ([www.soccer.com](http://www.soccer.com)) and/or local bookstores.

### Sample Session Activities

#### "Try This!" – A good warmup activity

- Coach stands with all players (without any balls) and has them do different stretching, twisting, jumping, and balancing activities
- This can be progressed to each player having a ball and then doing some skill with the ball (i.e. toe taps, side taps, pull backs, single scissors. Do these skills in place for now with the ball stationary, help the kids learn the basics of the skills at their own pace

#### Get the Ball Back

- Coach stands in the middle of the session space (usually a 20x20 yd space), players hand the ball to coach who tosses it away. Players must chase then dribble ball back to coach, pick up ball and hand to coach who tosses it again
  - o Progression 1: Have players use their hands to roll ball back to coach
  - o Progression 2: Have players alternate feet to dribble ball back
  - o Progression 3: Have players only use their "goofy foot" to dribble ball back

#### Army Marching

- Coach defines a 20x20 yard box and has players dribbling around. Coach calls out the following commands in an Army marching cadence. Start in numerical order, then start randomizing the calls. After each number you call, go back to Number 1 to keep kids moving
  - o Number 1 is on the run: players dribble around
  - o Number 2 is on the shoe: players stop the ball with the sole of their boot
  - o Number 3 is on the knee: players stop the ball with their knee
  - o Number 4 is on the floor: players stop the ball with their head (on hands and knees)
  - o Number 5 is stayin' alive: Everyone do a John Travolta/Saturday Night Fever dance!
  - o Number 6 is giant kicks: players try to strike the ball with power, like they are shooting
  - o Number 7 is off to heaven: players throw ball over their head and try to catch it/head it

#### Donkey

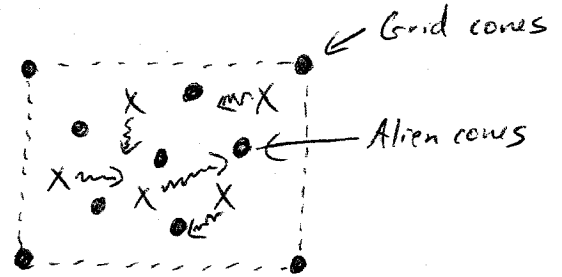
- 1-2 players have pinnies in the back of their shorts, like donkey tails. Players chase donkeys and try to pull pinnies out and bring back to coach, who then makes them a donkey and play continues. Play this without balls and in as big a space as possible

### Flip the Cones

Arrange cones in the playing area, half right side up and half upside down. Divide players into two teams. One team tries to turn all cones right side up, the other tries to turn all cones upside down. Play for one minute, count cones, declare winner, and reset to play again

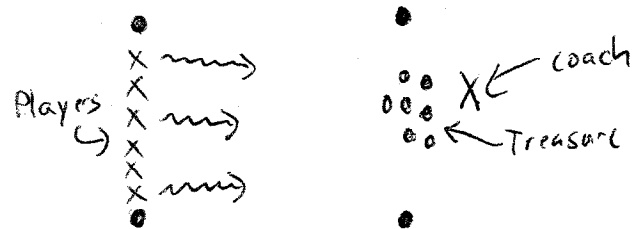
### Defeat the Aliens

Random arrangement of cones in the square, players attempt to hit cones with their ball as they dribble around. Be sure to tell a story the first time you play about how the aliens are underground and the cones are the tops of their heads. Hitting the cones keeps the aliens underground!



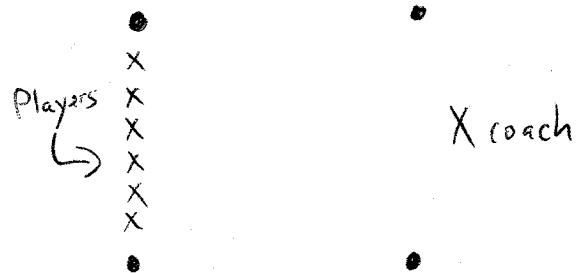
### Don't Wake the Monster

Coach is at one end of the playing area with cones around him as treasure and pretends to sleep. Players start at opposite end and all have a ball. When Monster goes to sleep players quietly and carefully dribble to the other end and try to steal the treasure. If Monster wakes up, he chases the others back (must dribble their ball back!) Let the kids take a turn at being the Monster.



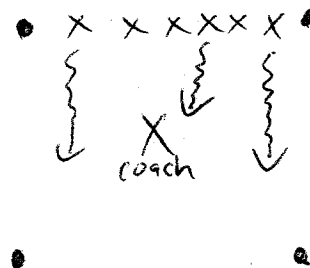
### What Time is it Mr. Wolf?

Coach stands at one end of the playing area with back turned, players are at opposite end and all have a ball. Players shout "what time is it, Mr. Wolf", and the wolf responds by saying what hour it is (1 o'clock-12 o'clock). Players take that many touches of the ball forward. When coach responds, "it's dinner time!" he turns and chases the players back to the starting line (must dribble their ball back!)



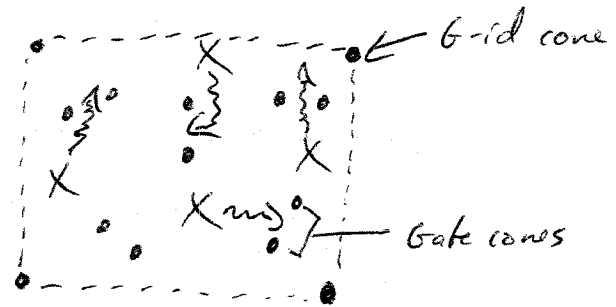
### The Crab

Coach gets down in "crab" in the middle of the playing area, players are on one side. Players try to dribble their ball across without the crab kicking it out of the space. When a player's ball is kicked out, they become a crab with coach. Last player still in wins. Player is not out until ball is out, so let them give chase to balls to keep them in play (kick some softly!)



### Gate Dribble

Put down a number of cone gates in the playing area. Players dribble around trying to go through as many cone gates as possible in one minute. Play multiple times, each time encouraging players to go through more gates than they did during the last round.



### Red Light, Green Light

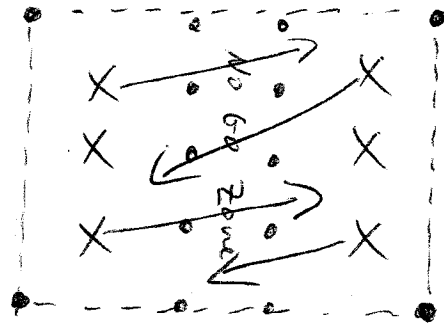
Players at one end of area, coach at other end of area with back turned. Play red light, green light as normal, but players have to dribble and control their ball. When coach yells "red light", players have to stop ball with sole of boot. Coach turns to see if anyone is moving; anyone who is has to go to the back of the field. On "green light" coach turns his back again and kids move toward coach again. Play until all kids have tagged the coach.

### Tag

Works better for U6...simply play tag in the area with all players having a ball. Players who are it can have a ball or be without, depending on how hard you want the game to be. 1-2 players are IT and try to tag the other kids. Those who are tagged pick up their ball and hold over their heads. They can be unfrozen if another player kicks their ball between their legs (a "nutmeg"). Change who is IT often

### Clean yYour Room

Using your 20x20 area, put a "no go" zone across the middle about 5 yards wide. Divide players into two teams and put one on either end of the no go zone. Each player has a ball. When coach says go players try to kick their ball and make it stop in the other team's area. Players try to get all of the balls out of their area and into the other team's. Balls that go out of the area are out of play. Play for 90 seconds then stop, declare winner, then reset to play again.



Finish the session with a 3v3 scrimmage to allow players to experience game situations. Use cones to outline your field and goals. U5/U6 does not play with goalies, so just let them play and have extra balls ready to send in to avoid delays in the game.

## **Technical Coaching Points for U5/U6**

Although most of the session will consist of games and activities, you can still make coaching points to the players to improve their technical skills. Here are some of the technical skill points to make to your players during the session:

- Dribbling skills: work on looking up to see where space is, don't bump into other players, use both feet when dribbling, maintain close control of ball, encourage use of all foot surfaces
- Passing skills: use instep of foot to pass with, discourage the use of the toe in passing, help players learn to kick the ball not just push it, step into the pass for more power, use both feet to pass with
- Shooting skills: use laces of foot to shoot with, discourage the use of the toe in shooting, step into the shot for more power, use both feet to shoot with