



U7/8 Community Soccer

Although U7-U8 children may begin to be more mature and physically advanced than U5-U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. **Dribbling** should continue to be the primary focus of our efforts, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. U7-U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and we should allow them to work in pairs (coach selected) often. We must continue to make sure that fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

Typical Characteristics of U7-U8 Players

Tend to play well in pairs – Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities

Are now able to take another’s perspective – they now have a sense of how others are feeling

Still unable to think abstractly – still do not have this capability, be patient

Heating and cooling system less efficient than adults– make sure to give frequent water breaks

Prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines, laps, or lectures

Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness

Beginning to have an understanding of time and sequence and cause and effect – they now understand “if I do this, then that happens”

Many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible unlike the U5-U6’s

Extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they will look for your reaction

Seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and

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you need to help build their confidence to feel free to experiment and try new things

Becoming aware of peer perception – a social order is beginning to develop, be sensitive to this.

Wide range of abilities between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge is to manage this range in your practices in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for each players individual development.

Some will keep score – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own comments/reactions. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age – it's not important. When the emphasis focuses on results, player development is sacrificed.

Beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting and repeating fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements

Less active imaginations than U5-U6 players – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that 6 year old players exhibit will not be appreciated by this group. Still use their imaginations; just watch their reactions to games to read how far you can go with things.

Skill Coaching Priorities

- EMPHASIZE - Dribble with all sides & surfaces of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble rather than just kick
- Dribble past someone to penetrate
- Dribble using a move to beat a player or quickly change directions
- Shielding to keep the ball away from opponent
- Soft first touch for control
- Introduce shooting technique using the laces
- Introduce passing using the inside and outside of the foot
- Introduce Juggling - HOMEWORK
- Keep it active and FUN! – No laps, lines, lectures



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Game & Practice Specifications

- Teams are made up of up to 8 players and games are played 4-A-Side with no goal-keepers
- Players should receive 50% playing time
- Balls should be size #3
- Practices should be 1 hour maximum
- End ALL practices with a game – this is why the kids are here and we want them to WANT to come back